CHAPTER VI

MODERNISATION AND THE LEATHER-WORKERS OF ATHANI

In the post-World War II period modernisation of societies has become a universal phenomenon. This is true of the developing as well as less advanced societies. This is due to the fact that while colonialism accelerated the process of modernisation of some societies, some others have taken to modernisation due to their exposure to the western culture and civilization in the course of the war. The impact of modernisation on these societies however has varied from case to case or situation to situation. For example, the Indian society, unlike other societies has been exposed to modernisation for quite some time and in the process it has absorbed many elements of modernisation although it has also adapted its own traditional institutions to suit the demands of modernisation.

In the Indian society, especially the Hindu society, which is highly stratified, the groups situated at different points in the hierarchy, have taken to modernisation in different degrees. One important point that is observable is: Higher the
group, greater the degree of modernisation. The lowest groups in the hierarchy, though they have been exposed to the process of modernisation, have still a long way to go before they reach the level of modernisation achieved by the upper classes. Since this study relates to the modernisation of the lowest classes, we concentrate on these groups only.

The groups which are referred to in this study are further stratified into subcastes. Again the leather-workers are divided into different subclasses, each subcaste group being completely autonomous. A general analysis of the data on the scheduled castes in Athani which includes the leather working castes reveals that the leather working group and among them a group named Samgars have become better off and as a result one can clearly observe the modernisation process in the economic, political, and other spheres. This may be due to the fact that the leather working group is a skilled one and when a skilled group is given encouragement and assistance, it is easy for it to improve its condition. This appears to be true of all the castes including the upper castes. Take the case of Brahmans. They were the first to get exposed to westernisation and because they had the literary traditions and skills, they could seize opportunities and improve their situation stage by stage.
Yogendra Singh states that "In relatively modernised societies of the west, there was a gradual but spontaneous upsurge of values and motives which laid the foundation of modernisation." Such a thing did not happen in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In these countries the process of modernisation took a different path altogether. To quote Yogendra Singh again, "Yet within the structural framework of these micro-structures there is a relative scope for organisation of role in such a manner which reinforces the process of structural or cultural modernisation without basically altering the essential nature of the functions they perform."

In the Indian situation, the basic structures like caste, family, kinship and the village, as a continuity, have continued to exist in their traditional form in spite of the onslaught from exogenous forces. But all these institutions have undergone internal changes to fulfill the changing social needs in the wake of modernisation. "As for modernisation in India, we find a growing trend that traditional role structures are giving way to modern ones. But persons following these roles often retain categorical values of tradition instead of those of modernity.


We have mentioned how caste itself is adopting many functions which properly belong to rational corporate groups. Generally, ritual order and religion which are essentially based on categorical values of a traditional nature do not show evidence of decline, nor is there any easy possibility of their disappearance in the near future. Since many of these categorical values differ from one society to another, there may always be a possibility of unique combination of traditional values with modern ones; the categorical values can hardly be falsified by scientific proof and hence the spread of science may not logically lead to obsolescence of traditional categorical values.*

With this background, let us examine, in the following paragraphs, the process of modernisation that is taking place among the cobblers of Athani.

**Process of Modernisation**

The leather-workers of Athani are a fairly well informed people. Their social and political awareness is noticeable. The older people have learnt through suffering while the younger

ones have learnt through socialisation. When a conversation with these people, one invariably gets the evidence of the "blue collar wisdom" which has dawned on them in recent years.

The leather-workers, i.e., the cobblers are a well defined, coherent social group. Their families are well constituted and the interpersonal relationships are firm and sound. Older people are respected. The intelligent, younger ones are patiently heard. Though male dominance is amply evident, the authority of the mother at the domestic level cannot be underestimated. Decisions concerning social issues are taken by the head of the family. Often elderly males within the clan are consulted. These days friends and well-wishers are also consulted. Fellowship and understanding mark various activities. The pattern of living in clusters indicates beliefs in a social hierarchy. Within and among the scheduled castes the belief of social distance persists. (This is because of the practice of dedicating women in the service of God — Devadasis; and eating beef and carrion.) Intermingling even for dining is not witnessed. (In the new colony built by the Lidkar, it is reported that the Madars and the Samagars have begun to mingle and eat together.) The belief in pollution continues in some form. Intercaste marriages are not approved. In the Paragaon-galli area both the Samagars (cobblers) and the Dhors (tanners)
live in their respective clusters. There are two wells nearby within a distance of 15-20 feet; each community has used its own well separately. Members of one community had no right to pollute the well of the other community by using it. This is said to have gone on for over a century. Now both use the wells in common, but with a clear understanding that the water of one well is meant exclusively for domestic use and the other for use in tannery.

On issues of immovable property and wealth only the head of the family decides. Often knowledgeable persons and well-wishers are consulted. In a way, economic decisions are independent of the community and other influences.

Education

The views of leather-workers on education have considerably changed over the years. The community has come to recognise the value of modern schooling and higher education which is secular in character. Today, parents not only send their children to school but also encourage them for higher education. There has been substantial progress in this direction. The community has a medical graduate. There will be another when the present student in the medical college passes out. A few young men have engineering degrees and diplomas. There are half a dozen
graduates and two postgraduates; some young men are still in colleges and schools. Girls also are encouraged to study at all levels. A few years ago girls were encouraged less especially after they attained puberty. The number of girls seeking higher education is steadily on the increase. The role of women in the upliftment of the community appears to have been taken cognisance of. A young lady with some formal education is considered a better home manager than the one without schooling.

Educational Advancement

The leather-workers in Athani have progressed well in the area of education. The progress among Samagars who are in a majority is remarkable. It has been thought relevant to review the progress among Samagars separately. The Samagar community has an adult population of about 1500. There are a little over 600 children in the age group of 5 to 14. Of these, over 90 per cent are enrolled in schools. But a considerable number of them drop out at some level. The number of dropouts is placed around 40 per cent. (One of the main reasons for enrolling in the school is reported to be the attraction of receiving free school uniforms from the town municipality.) This information is given by the members of the community Panchayat.
The chairman of the Charmakar Seva Sangha (Samagar Caste Association) proudly supplied in 1984 the following information as to the level of education attained by the members of the caste in the younger generation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>No. of persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Standard</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculation/SSLC</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEES</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma Holders</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduates</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The educational levels attained by the Samagars in Karnataka (according to the 1961 census)* would help us appreciate the educational advancement recorded above.

The figures are reproduced here for comparison.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of Persons</th>
<th>Level/Stage of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7631</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Under the protective discrimination policy of the Bombay Presidency administration, the Samagars were important beneficiaries. The concessions and encouragement were extended to these people way back in 1930s. Yet the community members it appears, have not taken advantage of this patronage adequately.

The opening of the office of Charmalaya seems to have awakened the people here. The thirst for knowledge and the attraction of free school uniforms provided by the municipal office appear to be responsible for the increased enrolment in schools. Though the school dropout rate is higher, one can clearly notice this urge to learn. But all children, whether enrolled or otherwise, are found gainfully employed in their traditional occupation — leather work and trade. Even the
educated unemployed have retained their traditional skill and are found fully occupied in the preparation of footwear.

The Harijankeri Samagars are covered by the following schools:

1. Primary School (referred to as Woddarkeri School in Municipal records).
2. Balawadi (Harijankeri).
4. Kannada Boys School No.4

From the other two localities children go to their nearest schools. There appears to be no dearth of educational facilities for the willing children.

The Kittoor High School and Shri Shivayogi Murugendra Swami College of Arts, Science and Commerce and the G.A. Junior College offer facilities for higher education.

Common Festivals

The community observes Gajaman Utsava; Naralayya Jayanti; Basaveswara Jayanti and Durga Devi festival on a grand scale. These festivals are celebrated publicly. All members of the community participate and pay their contribution voluntarily. The other religious celebrations are held at the family level.
About 15 years ago the community attempted to build a temple of Sharama Haralayya, but did not complete it due to paucity of funds and weak and incompetent leadership. Now the temple construction work is complete and the idol of Haraleswara Shivalinga was installed on 26th June 1986. The Prathisthapana (sanctification and installation) function was conducted by His Holiness Shri Shri Shivalingeswara Kumarendra Mahaswamigalu of Savalagi Mutt which is in the Gokak taluka. (It is an important Veerashaiva Mutt with a large following.)

The associated functions were spread over three days beginning with June 24th 1986. A cross section of the population of the Athani town participated in it. Among those who spoke on the occasion were Mr. M.V. Patil (an eminent advocate of the town, a Brahmin by caste); two professors of Navalgund and Athani colleges and a high school teacher. Besides religious discussions Bhajans and Kirtans were rendered by outstation singers. (All these persons belong to different castes.)

Religion

Affluence has given rise to two factors: (1) greater mobility and (2) greater devotion to God. Many apply marks of Vibhuti on their forehead. This gives an impression of the degree or strength of devotion. A majority are seen observing
the moon cycle; new moon-days and full moon-days are noted to visit various temples. Nowadays, many people visit the Kokatnoor Yellamma temple which is 17 kms. from Athani.

Visits to the annual fairs (Jatras) in and around Athani have become a routine. Hardly anyone in the community misses them. This basically emanates from their devotion to religion.

It is of interest to note that none from this social group has become a Christian or a Buddhist. (In the adjoining state of Maharashtra, a good number have become neo-Buddhist.) There is no trace of Christianity in the whole taluka including the Athani town. There are no churches despite the fact that the place is in close proximity of Miraj-Sangli city which has several missionary institutions.

Communal Riots and Atrocities

Communal conflicts or riots are relatively unknown to the present generation. The local people have lived with dignity and a sense of brotherhood prevails all around. No communal riots are reported. Harmonious relations seem to exist among all groups. The local police officials say that the Saraagars are a docile people and are basically incapable of taking to protest or violence. Their work participation keeps them
confined to the normal round of activities. They do not seem to waste their time and energy in the pursuit of distant goals in the political sphere. They seem to speak and work to the point and not beyond. They seem to be quite aware of their capabilities and limitations. The Samgars' relations with the other religious groups like Muslims, Jains and the caste Hindus are normal and peaceful.

Untouchability

The practice of untouchability is not reported around here (i.e., in the town) in the recent past. Most services are fair and helpful to members of the community. The hotels and restaurants entertain them. Contacts with barbers, washermen, tailors, businessmen, and other service groups appear normal and smooth.

What is astonishing is perhaps the practice of untouchability in a mild form amongst the different social groups of the scheduled castes. Reason for this could be anything other than the sense of population. Maybe it has something to do with the assertion of a community's superior rank — a prestige issue. Thus doing away with the caste differences does not seem to be an easy task so far as these caste groups are concerned.
Language Factor and Border Dispute

The Samagars of the Athani area are multi-lingual. They speak Kannada, Marathi, Hindi and Urdu. The Marathi numerals are used extensively while talking in Kannada, Hindi or Urdu. None of them seem to have any difficulty in adjusting to any linguistic group. For their trade, they frequently travel to Maharashtra and sometimes they go not only up to Bombay but reach even Baroda in Gujarat.

Among Samagars themselves some families speak Marathi while the others speak Kannada. Another reason for the harmonious relation between Kannada and Marathi speaking Samagars in the region is the frequent marriage alliances across the border.

All are aware of the interstate boundary dispute. They are aware that they are living in the disputed border area. When questioned, they do not pronounce their judgement. They seem to favour the idea of maintaining the status quo. They do not want anybody to precipitate the matter. They are, in a way, for sinking the linguistic differences and for the promotion of national integration.
Attitude Towards Planned Parenthood

The programme of planned parenthood launched by the government has appealed to nearly all. All the ten heads of households interviewed during the field survey (in 1984) approved of it. This was found to be true after a discussion with the medical personnel of the local primary health centre. Some heads of families regret having many children. They agree that "Gone are the days when children were considered a wealth of the family." They are for the nuclear family. This is amply evidenced in the survey conducted in 1986. A large number of couples who are in the reproductive age group have undergone surgery to stop having children. There is evidence of their acceptance of family planning in the spacing of children. The personnel of the primary health centre are happy with the response they are getting from this section of the population.

Habitation and Economic Condition

To a large extent habitation determines the social status and economic background governs the participation aptitude. Since the Samagars were associated with leather work which has to do with dead animals, carcass removal and the like, they came to be pushed out of the main sections of human settlement and eventually segregated.
Habitation

Today hardly any Samagar family lives in a thatched hut. Many have one or two room tenements. Their living habits are by and large good when compared to those of other social groups in all the three localities which are overcrowded as far as the public sanitary facilities are concerned. New homes built with the Dutch government aid are provided with sanitary sections. Yet the occupants do not use the flush latrines for want of sufficient water. When the locality is supplied with the required quantum of water, the habits of other residents of the locality may also change for the better.

Economic Condition

Economically, the leather-workers are better placed than the other occupational groups. The skill and leather craftsmanship of these people is put to better use than before because of the marketing facilities assured by the KVIC and the Lidkar. Both the development agencies take substantial quantities of local leather product and market them all over the country. In recent years they have also exported the footwear. If the procurement figures of the Chawalaya and the Lidkar are any indication, there is nothing to doubt the remarkably improved economic condition of these people. The amount of money that has flown
into this community in the last ten years is enormous. As a consequence of the better performance of the trade their economic status has improved.

Many persons who earn well also spend their money on liquor and also lose a lot in betting games. The awakened leather artisans as well as the social workers complain about the harm the lifting of prohibition has done to the members of the leather-worker community. A substantial part of the money earned by these artisans finds its way into the liquor shops as well as the illicit betting which is rampant in these localities. (The betting is familiarly known as Matka or O.C.) These habits (liquor and betting) drain the community of much of the money earned the hard way. Because of this, the individual savings seem to be small.

True, these habits have affected only a few persons. But the harm caused is serious enough. They live on day-to-day earnings. They borrow money often to cover medical and other unforeseen expenses. They also borrow money for celebrating social occasions like marriage or naming ceremony etc. and thus become indebted to money lenders or traders. The community is in dire need of an institutional credit facility for meeting expenses on social needs. At present they are getting credit and assistance for promoting their occupation and trade only.
Political Awareness and Participation

Scheduled Castes Elites

It is reported that nearly 300 persons belonging to the various segments of the scheduled castes are serving in the central and state government offices. A few are also reported to be working in semi-government establishments, aided institutions and in public sector and private sector organisations. As stated earlier, the Samagars constitute only a part of the scheduled castes in the town.

Among these, some 60 to 70 persons are said to be holding important positions. These are the elites. It is difficult to segregate only the Samagars from these position holders for evaluation and account for their role in the modernisation process of leather-workers. What is clearly noticed around here is the concerted action of all the scheduled castes elites and the cumulative effect of their combined activities. For a good understanding and appreciation of the situation, a few names with their respective designations are recorded here.

Mr. Dundappa Ramappa Ghatakamble retired as Deputy Commissioner. It is reported that he was the first scheduled
castes member to occupy such an important position in the Belgaur division. (Division here refers to the revenue administrative region comprising four districts — Dharwad, Karwar, Bijapur and Belgaur — and the division is headed by a Commissioner — a person belonging to senior IAS cadre. The head of the district is a Deputy Commissioner.)

Mr. Yalamalli, IAS, is an upcoming administrative officer. In 1984 he was attached to the Deputy Commissioner's office, Bijapur. Mr. Yalamalli belongs to the Samgar caste and is a native of Athani.

Mr. S.R. Rayannavar retired as an Assistant Commissioner. He is a close relative of Mr. B. Shankaranand who represents this constituency in the Lok Sabha. Mr. Shankaranand is a member of the Council of Ministers at the centre right now. He has also served in the previous (central) government led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. He has an all India image and this has its repercussions on local (Athani) affairs. Mr. Rayannavar is a much respected person and has a large following. He is certainly a force to reckon with.

Other important persons are: Mr. P. S. Rayannavar, A.E.O; Dr. D. S. Rayannavar, MBBS (Medical Officer, Indian Aluminium
Company, Belgaum); Mr. Siddappa Adavappa Pattan, B.E., Engineer, RWD, Karnataka; Mr. Y. K. Ghastri, Sericulturist, (recently trained in Japan) serving in the state government; Mr. Muruldhar Shivappa Ghatakamble, Customs department, serving in Gujarat (during 1984); Mr. H. C. Nooli, Customs department, serving in Bombay (during 1984); Mr. R. S. Rayannavar, Field Officer, State Bank of India; Mr. B. B. Pattan, serving in the Posts and Telegraphs department; Mr. Ashok Gopi Nooli, a diploma holder in Engineering, serving in Goa; Mr. K. S. Pattan, retired army captain; Mr. Kadam, retired officer of the Excise department; Mr. S. B. Pattan, an auditor; and Mr. Tukaram Hanumant Pattan, an Advocate practising at Belgaum. These take a keen interest in the welfare of the scheduled castes in Athani.

All these persons can be undoubtedly be considered as agents of change. They play an important role in all the social and political matters concerning scheduled castes. Their local (i.e., in Athani) involvement in bringing about change leading to modernisation cannot be summed up easily. All of them have personal connections with people holding important positions in Bangalore (the Karnataka state capital) and New Delhi besides important taluka and district headquarters and several other towns and cities of both Karnataka and adjoining Maharashtra.
There is a very good rapport between the scheduled castes elites living and working elsewhere in the country and the scheduled castes living in Athani and its surrounding region.

Leadership

In one of the dominant leather working castes a kind of collective leadership is functioning at the moment. This is in the Samagar (cobbler's) community. In the other caste of tanners (Dhors) the leadership rests with Mr. Narayan Harashiram Kadam who is also the secretary of the Janata party's local unit.

The collective leadership in the cobblers' community has developed principally because the old and dynamic leaders have vanished from the scene. One leader, Balu Siddarama Soudagar, died in 1975. He was an active municipal councillor during 1940s. He fought for the right of the scheduled castes to the use of public wells and restaurants etc. On the Congress party ticket he was elected as an MLA twice, first to represent the Raibag constituency in 1962, and the second time to represent the Chikkodi constituency in 1967. The other powerful leader was Jakkappa Payappa Takat Rao. Takat Rao was a dynamic leader and acted as Chairman of the All India Haralayya Samaj. He was a broad minded leader who was acceptable to the local
Lingayat majority (also). In 1975, he was made the Chairman of the local Basava Jayanti Celebration Committee. His trouble is that he is very old and physically weak now. He is now 62 and lives with his children in Bombay. This is how the leadership vacuum among the Samagars has occurred and has paved the way for the collective leadership. It is right now provided by the nine members of the Charmskar Seva Sangha. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Approximate Age</th>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mr. Gangaram Ramadev Kamble</td>
<td>37 Years</td>
<td>SSLC</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mr. Shekhar Sanashuran</td>
<td>31 Years</td>
<td>7th Std.</td>
<td>Vice-Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mr. Babu Ramanna Ajarao</td>
<td>30 Years</td>
<td>6th Std.</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mr. Narugappa Satwaji Sinhe</td>
<td>52 Years</td>
<td>4th Std.</td>
<td>Member, Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mr. Sudashiva Ningappa Honkatt</td>
<td>34 Years</td>
<td>Illiterate</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mr. Tukaram Vedku Jadav</td>
<td>53 years</td>
<td>2nd Std.</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Mr. Yellappa Rama Sankapal</td>
<td>57 Years</td>
<td>4th Std.</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Mr. Karuthi Siddaraya Marathe</td>
<td>37 Years</td>
<td>4th Std.</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mr. Gangaram Prabhu Yelmalli</td>
<td>47 Years</td>
<td>2nd Std.</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These persons are active community workers and are devoted to the welfare of the Samagars. They are serving the interests of the community whole-heartedly. Their contacts with the other community chiefs, administrators and politicians are well balanced. In times of necessity, they contact knowledgeable persons of the other communities also. Despite their (internal) differences on certain issues they stand united for the benefit and betterment of the community.

There is not much to complain as to the composition of the leadership. (The rival factions are too weak to disrupt the functioning of the Charsakar Seva Sangha.) The average age of the members works out to 40, the age at which maturity may not be questioned. Their educational background is fair enough. Nearly 89 per cent are literate.

Political Party Affiliations

It is difficult to assess authentically one's party affiliation if one is not an office bearer in the party or is not actively associated with its activities. Those persons who are economically well off or are much occupied in their traditional occupation — leather work — do not seem to feel the need to talk on the subject. However some old people
(both men and women) continue to declare openly their admiration for the Indian National Congress. They recall the names of great leaders like Gandhiji and Ambedkar. For many of them the feeling and talking about the Congress party, its leaders and their own association with the party means a lot. They are inclined to think that they belong to the influential stock in the country. They feel elated to talk at length on any subject of public importance.

Political parties woo these people for their votes during the election time and some of them are even enrolled as party's primary members. The significance of this lasts for that grand day of voting. Thereafter both the parties and the members of the communities seem to forget one another and renew their contacts again only when the next election comes.

On the whole their awareness of the political process and their participation in the periodic elections is practical and sound.

Elections to Local Bodies

The prominent persons of both the communities — Samagars and Dhors — express their willingness to contest the civic
elections and gain control of authority at the municipal level. They are unhappy about the performance of the town municipality. They are eager to represent their locality in the municipal council. Unfortunately, the Athani municipal elections were suspended because of a legal tangle. Mr. Manohar Prabhu Yelamallli, one of the sample interviewees, came down heavily on the state government for its neglect of the municipality. He said the municipal council was not properly constituted for the last 18 years. He expressed the view that each councillor should be held responsible, for the neglect of the area he represents, by the municipal administration. His views are recalled here because he is a nominated member of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the twenty point programme in the Athani town municipality.

Pressure Group

The Charmukar Seva Sangha referred to earlier was floated as the Samagar community association in 1983, prior to the municipal elections. One of the objectives of the association is to strengthen the political participation and enhance the chances of community members in the local elections. The members have realised that political power is important to solve their civic problems and that power in the hands of Samagar leaders is necessary to help their community.
There is no such move (to enter public life) in the Bhor community. They have their caste association called Kakkayya Samaj. The members by and large go with the existing leadership. They are fortunate in having a person like Mr. Karayan Kadam who is an able and active leader.

Reservations

The members of both the caste groups approve of the constitutional provisions providing preferential treatment in schools, colleges, recruitment and promotions in various services, and representation at all levels to the elected bodies etc. They know that these provisions were incorporated in the constitution and they want these to continue for a few more years. They accept that the "protective discrimination policy" is a progressive policy if only it is implemented for a specific number of years. They are against these measures on a permanent basis.

Voting

In the elections prior to 1980s both the Samagars and Dhors seem to have voted en bloc. This is not without reasons. The candidates they supported in the elections were identified more as individuals than as party candidates. Incidentally, both the
candidates they supported belonged to the Congress (I) party. The candidate for legislative Assembly both the times was Mr. B.B. Pawar Desai who hails from a royal family. He is known for his philanthropic attitude and he is reported to have shown more than a routine concern for the poor in the region. He is said to have donated acres and acres of land to the landless poor much before the government thought of land legislation and policy of land for the tiller. Even now the royal family gets its due at the social level although "dynastic rule" and monarchy vanished at the political level with the inauguration of the Republic of India in 1950.

For Lok Sabha the candidate was Mr. B. Shankarama. The constituency is reserved to be represented by a scheduled castes member and it is needless to elaborate on why the local leather-workers voted for him en bloc.

Added to this, both Mr. B. Pawar Desai and Mr. B. Shankarama contested on the Congress party ticket and their opponents were insignificant.

In recent years, especially in the two state legislature elections, the story has been different. Mr. Pawar Desai has opted for retirement from public life; and the division of votes
among the parties is quite sharp. It is a Janata party candidate who has been returned to the state legislature now.
The leather-workers appear to be clearly divided so far as this election is concerned. In fact, it was a sight to see the youth of these communities working for the BJP candidate. However for the Lok Sabha elections, there seems to be no perceptible change as Mr. B. Shankaramananda has continued to be the candidate.

Information from Interviewees (1984)

It is interesting to note the bits of information provided by the interviewees on some of the political questions.

Seven interviewees, i.e., 70 per cent, showed an adequate knowledge of the political parties. They could state the names of the political parties and reveal adequate knowledge of each political party's manifesto. One of them recited the names of seven political parties and even mentioned the names of independent candidates who had contested in the previous election as well. He went on to forecast the emergence of Raita Sangha as a political party in the coming years. The interview coincided with rasta roko (which means 'block the road') agitation of farmers. He said the farmers would play a prominent role in the coming elections. He commented upon the role of the
independent legislators in the Karnataka's lower house and explained how the present government headed by Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde was relying on their support. He said that he is a primary member of the Congress (I) party. Two persons stated that they were primary members of the Janata party. One of them had a sound knowledge of the political process and the current events that occupy the government's attention. He could mention the names of leaders and political parties at all levels: district, state and national.

Professor M.M.Srinivas has observed that "with the passing of political power to the people, castes have become pressure groups, and are competing for power and for the fruits of power." * This general observation is apt in the context of the leather-workers of Athani. Politically, these people have been aware of the importance of participation in the socio-political activities. They have come to appreciate the importance of elections and the numbers game in democratic politics. Formerly these people were virtually socio-political destitutes. Today they have developed an esteem of their own. In what further shape this trend develops needs to be observed.

because some low status communities are believed to suffer from development sickness when rapid economic growth lead them to superior social plane that bring them nearer the seat of authority. *

---