CHAPTER-V

ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE OF ELITE STATUS
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The most basic and fundamental question is often asked as to what indeed brings in the motivation in an individual to be involved in the matters of community welfare and eventually emerging as an elite? There have been several theories proposed to answer this question from time to time. Some of the most important ones are: the astrological theory which seeks to explain that it is the stars at the time of birth of an individual that determine his destiny. If the stars, that are responsible for making a person an elite, are present in the Horoscope at the time of the birth of the child, he is destined to be an influential personality in future. The phrenological theory, on the other hand, seeks to explain that certain visible physical indications like mole marks, polydactylity etc., are symbolic determinations of one's future status. The pseudogenetic or bio-psychological theory emphasizes the functioning of particular glands and secretion of hormones inside the body as the determiners of the status of an individual. Some sociological and psychological studies, however, challenge the above speculative theories and have attributed the impact of family, religion, ethnicity and class situation etc., as significant in achieving status by an individual. ²

It is strongly felt that the role of socialization in

the early childhood is the most impelling force for an individual to be inspired and motivated to choose a particular profession in future, and is a strong conditioner for those who emerge as elites. Socialization means "the process by which the individual especially the child, spontaneously acquires and assimilates the values and modes of behaviour of his society - this constitutes his actualization as a social being". In a broader sense, however, socialization refers to "designate the learning of any orientation of functional significance to the operation of a system of complementary role expectations. In this sense, socialization, like learning, goes on throughout life. The case of the development of the child is only most dramatic because he has so far to go".

The process of socialization starts with the family and hence, the family environment is significantly vital in building up the future career of the child. For example, the stimulus and formative influence of a community-oriented family is essentially conducive to develop community interest in a child, nourished and brought up in that family environment. With this assumption, the selected Khamti elites were asked about the influence of their family members on them. Only 36.3 per cent of them confessed that they were directly influenced by their fathers/elder brothers to take interest in the community issues. The analysis of the social background of these elites reveals that their fathers or elder brothers

were either office-bearers or men of eminence in the traditional
structure of the Khamti society. In a typical Khamti family,
the relationship between a father and a son is based on
respect and love, which is also true for the relation between
the elder and younger brothers. But there is no overt
response from the elders to train the youngers in a desired
direction. Once the Khamti attains the age of about fifteen
years, he is allowed to mix freely with other boys of his
age-group. Gradually his physical presence in the house is
reduced, and he becomes a member of the village youth group,
which is responsible for many voluntary works like maintaining
village monastery, public institutions, organizing festivals,
and helping the villagers in the organization of marriage,
mortuary and other rituals. As all these works are the
responsibilities of the village youth and as all the young
men are to be present in such works, the parents feel constrained
to restrict their movement, which is not conducive to the
existing social norm. Eventually, the time span of interaction
between a father and a son does not exceed a few hours a day,
and hence, the intensity of influence of the elders on the
youngers is less. Nevertheless, the impact of the family
tradition on the adolescent mind helps Khamti boy to a large
extent to choose a career.

A majority of the Khamti elites, about 63.7 per cent,
expressed the view that the near relatives and friends outside
the family, had induced them to community service. This was,
according to them, possible due to constant interaction with
them. In a society like the Khamti, the relatives also play
a significant role in influencing a young mind. Relatives
of the same village as that of the ego, may be consanguinal or affinal, but the degree of interaction is so high that the entire village operates as one unit for any body outside the village. The members of the same clan in the village address each other as brothers, and the relationship between members of a particular clan is intensely intimate. They cooperate in all the social and economic matters with each other and maintain the clan unity with all sincerity. On the whole, the villagers are so close to each other that the role they play in inducing one of them seems vital. Friends or age-mates find the best opportunity to influence each other due to prolonged company they enjoy with each other. They play together, work together, plan together and organize things all together. Therefore, the friends' role as inductors is highly important for the Khamti.

While 54.5 per cent of elites preferred to opt for 'public request' as their source of induction to community service, 36.3 per cent of them told to have preferred that for personal liking only. Public request may be explained as the request by members of the society, other than the family members, relatives and friends. In a tradition-bound society like the Khamti, where the kingship still exists to some extent, it is not incredible that a section, which strongly believes in the supremacy and spiritual sanction granted to the royal clans, might have requested members of the royal clan to take up the responsibility of guiding the society. It is also a common phenomenon that the old and experienced people in the society are requested to lead the masses in the right direction.
A small minority of them, about 18.1 per cent revealed that their induction to public life was due to the nomination by the Government of India. It may be pointed out here that till 1972 there was the provision of nomination of representatives to the Lok Sabha from Arunachal Pradesh, and to the State Legislature till the first general election in 1978. There are instances that two Khantí leaders were nominated by the President of India as Members of Lok Sabha, and they have attributed the Government nomination as the major source of induction to public welfare for them. The sources of induction is presented in the following table with respect to the Khantí elites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major sources of Induction</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Members</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatives and Friends</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Request</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Liking</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Nomination</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant inference can be drawn from the table presented above, in connection with the role of kin groups in inducing an individual to achieve the status of an elite. The first two sources unambiguously refer to the kin members, the difference between them being the matter of degree only.
The third source of induction, that is, public request also can be interpreted as the request of other distant kin members. Since the area is predominantly inhabited by the Khamti and other communities are in negligible proportion, public request can be equated with the request by Khamtis of distant villages, to which kin relation can be easily extended, as the Khamti are bound by inter-village kin ties. Since other two sources like personal liking and Government nomination play low keys in the process of induction, it can be construed that the role of kin groups and kin ties is overwhelmingly significant as a source of induction to elite status in Khamti society than other possible factors.

MAINTENANCE OF ELITE STATUS

After the process of acquiring the elite status is over, the most important aspect that follows is to maintain it. It is found that most of the elites enlisted for the present study got into the field of community service while they were in Colleges and Schools; and those who did not have any formal education were involved when they were in the age group of 15-30 years. Most of them have maintained the elite status for a period of 20 years or more. The tactics followed by individual elites to maintain and consolidate the elite status varies, depending on the situation. In order to determine the factors that reinforce and maintain elite status in the Khamti society, all the elites were asked specifically and categorically about the secrets of maintaining their status for such a long span of time. On the basis of their
answers, the following criteria were identified:

**PRIMARY GROUP NEXUS**

The role of the primary groups is exceedingly important not only in motivating an individual to choose a career, but also in maintaining it due to the timely help and co-operation extended to him. Despite several interpretations of the primary group, the most general and simplistic view is that "The primary or face-to-face group is based on direct personal contact, in which the members deal immediately with one another". And Cooley observes in the same way that, "By primary groups I mean those characterised by intimate face-to-face association and co-operation.... The most important spheres of this intimate association and co-operation - though by no means the only ones - are the family, the play-group of children, and the neighbourhood or community group of elders. These are practically universal, belonging to all times and all stages of development, and are accordingly a chief basis of what is universal in nature and in human ideals". If it is assumed that the primary group is constituted by the family, close-kin members and the village members, then about 36.3 per cent of the elites attributed the primary groups being responsible for their maintenance of the elite status. They posed confidence on the members of their family and village in the matter of supporting their cause and coming to their rescue either at the time of election or during some community-level decision-taking. The low rate of dependence of the Khamti elite on the primary groups seems contrary to the commonly held notion about the role of these groups, the members of which are bound by

intimate ties of inter-personal relations.

SECONDARY GROUP BASE

The secondary group differs from the primary group with respect to the degree of intimacy in the inter-personal relations among its members. Secondary group is referred to the group where, "... human contacts and relations extend their range, but they become superficial and undefined...", and to be more specific, the relations ".... become impersonal, secondary and formal". Nevertheless, the secondary group constituted by other prominent leaders or professionals in the field but not related to the Khamti elites and only are attached due to similar interests, was found responsible by only 27.2 per cent of the total Khamti elites for maintenance of their elite status. It is apparent, therefore, that secondary groups do not have much grip over the Khamti elites, precisely due to the most formal and superficial nature of relationship among its members.

ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION

Membership in voluntary associations and participation in the issues of community interest by the elites are the means to gain popularity among the masses. Particularly, participation in community affairs by the elite impresses the masses due to the concern expressed by them for the welfare of the community. A majority of the elites selected for the purpose of this study, about 72.7 per cent, revealed that the secret about the

8. ibid.: p. 36.
maintenance of their elite status was due to their active participation in community issues. Several issues of prime importance were listed by them, where they had participated in the form of motivating the masses, meeting and convincing the local officials, Ministers and appraising the bureaucrats at the State capital of Itanagar. They have expressed unambiguously that people had accepted them by their activities of rendering service to the community, and would cease to favour them, if they did not maintain the tempo of social service. Therefore, apparently, highest priority is given by the Khamti elites to organizational participation for the maintenance of elite status, followed by primary group nexus and secondary group base, as is clear from the following table:

**TABLE 5-2: MAINTENANCE OF ELITE STATUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main factors expressed by elites.</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Group Nexus</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Group Base</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Participation</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although each of the elites under study furnished a list of community issues in which they participated actively, some major issues are chosen here to delineate the *modus operandi* of the elites to handle them and eventually to impress upon the masses their concern over the community problems. The issues are: (a) restrict trading licence to non-Arunachalis,
(b) demand for Statehood to Arunachal, (c) installation of T. V. Transmitter at Tezu, (d) permanent bridge over Noa-Dihing river, and (e) establishment of a College at Tezu. All the issues are of crucial significance to the Khamti community in general and each Khamti individual in particular. The elites have been banking upon these issues and by the process of making people aware, preparing and submitting memoranda, and raising the issues in Anchal Samiti, Zilla Parishad and Legislative Assembly meetings etc., to gain popularity. Although demonstrations are rare, call for strike is often given by the elites and every effort is made to make it successful with the help of followers and volunteers.

The elites having a traditional base are in a privileged position so far as the maintenance of the elite status is concerned, due to the social, economic and political supremacy gained by them through inheritance. Nevertheless, they are also found to be active in many of the community issues, which accrues benefits from two sides. Primarily, they consolidate their elite image by making themselves involved in community issues, and secondly, they are to first reap the benefits of any development of the community than the masses. Whether it is the issue of T. V. Transmitter or communication; establishment of College or Statehood to Arunachal, the elites who have already achieved the base, are to be benefitted immediately than the majority of the Khamti population. Those of the elites who do not have a traditional base strive for the maintenance of their elite image by actively participating in the community issues with greater genuine concern, so that the community including them would be benefited.