

CHAPTER-IV

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PRESENT MOVEMENT OF THE CHAMARS

All Dalits are not deprived and destitute. Similarly, social discrimination, untouchability and economic exploitation are very high in Nepal Terai particularly in Lahan. A kind of superiority complex exists among the Dalits, but not found among the Chamars. Chamars lack free access to tea stalls, temples, educational institutions and other public places. They are restricted from studying in various Sanskrit Educational Institutions. But situation is improving day by day after their movements. Most of the Chamars are landless and without resources. Their major occupation is to work in farmland as labourers. Their traditional occupation was not regarded respectful. Discrimination was found in terms of wages between men and women for the same nature of work. Being regarded as untouchable, they cannot work in hotels, own shops of trading consumer goods and milk. It is difficult for them to get agricultural credit and employment. Due to malnutrition, illiteracy, hard work and child birth every year, women are living with deteriorated health condition. Their average age is 50 years whereas the national life expectancy rate of women is 55 years. They are also suffering from unwanted social discrimination, family violence, social and economic exploitation and rape. The Chamars of Lahan are now socially and economically in a better position in comparison to the past, because of their movements.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHAMAR MOVEMENT:

Some organizations were initiated and constituted to strengthen and continue the movement. Role of the prominent persons and organizations in the movement have been mentioned here.

JANACHETANA DALIT SANGAM:

It was established in 1999 under the Chairmanship of Baldev Ram and was formally registered in 2001. The organization is struggling for the attainment of the rights of the *Dalit* and abolition of untouchability and all kinds of social discriminations. The members of the organization meet every month. Presently *Janachetana Dalit Sangam* has been expanded to five Village Development Committees and efforts are being made to expand it in other Village Development Committees and constituencies, too.

Besides organizing *Dalits* to strengthen the movement, the organization is also supporting the movement by finding out issues for the future, mobilizing *Dalits* for small saving and motivating them to send their children to school. Programmes for capacity building and institutional development of *Janachetana Dalit Sangam* are also going on continuously.

NARI SANGAM:

Nari Sangam have been established in those communities where 15 Regenerated Frarian Literacy Through Empowerment Committee Technique Circles were conducted by Şaraswati Community Development Forum under regional development programme assisted by Action Aid, Biratnagar, Nepal. They organize interaction programme on various women related issues. They have also started collecting of small saving to enhance capacity of *Dalit* women for income generation. They collect Rs. 10 to 20 every month. There are 10 to 15 members in a women saving group. They conduct awareness programmes and support *Dalit* Sangam in the movement related issues.

DALIT JATIYA ORGANIZATION:

There are many *Dalit* organizations in Siraha district. Prominent among them are: *Nepal Ram Kalyan Sangh*, *Bishwokarma Samaj Kalyan Sangh*, *Rastriya Dalit Sewa Sangh* and *Nepal Ram Kalyan Sangh*. They have contributed a lot by organizing *Dalits*, working as pressure group and collecting fund for the movement. They are also providing support to *Dalit* movement by coordinating among and between various organizations.

DALIT JATI UTPIDAN BIRUDHA SANYUKTA SANGHARSHA SAMITI:

About 500 *Dalits* took part in the gathering of Kachandaha Village Development Committee of Saptari district on August 21, 2000. They established *Dalit Jati utpidan Biruddha Samyukta Sangharsha Samiti* under the Convener ship of Ramprit Paswan. This committee has been working actively for the Restoration of *Dalits'* rights by organizing protest rallies, conducting signature campaign, constituting various committees, collecting fund, presenting ultimatum to the local government to decide future strategies for the movement.

SARASWATI COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FORUM (SCDF):

Saraswati Community Development Forum is one of the non-government organizations working for social and structural change of *Dalit* communities by conducting service and right base community development programmes. The organization is conducting integrated community development programmes in different Village Development Committees. Action Aid, Nepal, Biratnagar is assisting the organization by providing technical and financial support. Beside this, it is also conducting occasional issue base programmes in various Village Development Committees of Siraha.

The organization has played a very important role to strengthen the *Dalit* movement by organizing and educating *Dalits* in various related issues. It is also helping to internationalize *Dalit* issues by using various public advocacy forums.

ROLE OF THE SOCIAL ACTIVIST:

Action Aid Nepal supported the Dalit through “Social Activities” as facilitator in various issues, it tries to develop the positive feeling among Dalits i.e. “I can do”, “I can win” etc. The social activists facilitate supports to Dalits to organize themselves to deal with various issues. They collect, analyse the issues and problems of Dalits and they suggest or educate them to achieve Dalits legal and social rights. The program supports the various phases of the movement. Parallely, social activists help Dalits by coordinating, sharing ideas, and establishing network among communities and organizations. Role of the social activist is to find out the problems of Dalits and make them public issues and to assist them to solve these problems through any means like – legal, social.

Membership:

The movement that occurred in Lahan was a strong campaign against untouchability, social discrimination, exploitation and suppression. Dalits played a very important role to lead the movement ahead. The Dalit community, Non-Government Organisations, International Non-Government Organisations, media, local authorities, local administration and political parties had actively participated as a member of the movement.

DALITS COMMUNITY:

Dalit communities have actively participated in the process under the initiative of Dalit organizations. They have supported the Dalits in the process of

selecting their issues and plan for the movement. Both men and women have been actively participating in every plan of action. They have organised protest rallies, picketing and other activities of the movement. Similarly they have contributed to raise and manage fund for the movement. They have initiated for establishing and expanding their organisation and networks from Village Development Committee to constituency level. They have succeeded a receiving support from different organisations. Women along with children have also participated actively and enthusiastically in the movement. By establishing coordination and network with the Village Development Committee and districts, they have become successful in expanding the movement nationwide.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs):

Appreciable role has been played by Social Development Organizations to facilitate the *Dalit* movement ahead. In this process, Saraswati Community Development Forum has played a very important role. It has supported women through education and other activities. It is helping the Dalits by empowering them by creating circles among and between them. It is co-coordinating and facilitating the Dalits by Uniting Dalit communities to run Dalits welfare programs. These organizations are helping Dalits by conducting training, workshop, seminar, interaction programs to boost the working capacity and confidence of Dalit leaders and organizations. The role of social organizations has mobilized journalists and media persons to highlight Dalit issues and problems. They are playing the role of mediator between the local authorities and administrations when necessary. Likewise, social organizations are providing financial, physical, technical supports to strengthen the movement. They are also facilitating Dalits by managing and conducting various activities such as rallies, picketing, publicity and mass meetings. The role of Social Development Organizations is important and they are working very seriously.

MEDIA:

Various local and national newspapers helped the *Dalit* movement by publishing news, articles and features. Prominent among them are: - Janadesh, Jana Awaj, Saptari Awaj, Aajako Watawaran, Suchana, Saptari Sandesh, Saptari Janakrosh, Trishna, Blast Times, Janak Awaj, Lahan Times, Nava Udaya, Nava Jagriti, Kantipur, The Kathmandu Post, Nepal Samachar Patra, Himalaya Times, Chhalphal weekly etc. Similarly, Radio Nepal, Nepal Television and British Broadcasting Corporation-Nepali Service have also given coverage to the movement by broadcasting and highlighting various events and issues through their stations and channels. However the media sometimes also play a negative role regarding the movement.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES:

Local authorities did their best for the movement by actively taking part in the meetings, sharing ideas, providing moral support and financial assistances and helping to withdraw the blockade. For example: Lahan Municipality provided financial supports to organize *Sahabhaj* (co-feast) along with providing, various food items to *Dalits* during the blockade. Mayors' role in this regard was appreciable. Similarly, Madhupatti Village Development Committee also supported the movement by providing tractor to carry community people to the rallies and playing supportive roles to lift up blockade imposed on *Dalits*.

As expressed by *Dalits* in some Village Development Committees, role of representatives and the local authorities have been very negative. Human right activists, journalists, *Dalit* delegates were beaten up with the help of local authorities/representatives. Vice Chairman in Hariharpur Village Development

Committee, and representatives of local authorities in Manraja came out against the movement actively.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION:

Human right activists, social and political workers, journalists have played important roles in pressurising local administration to act and response quickly to solve *Dalit* problems. Some of the incidents have been mentioned below:

An all-party meeting was held in the presence of District Development Committee Chairman, representatives from various political parties and social organizations in District Administration Office followed by a visit of Hariharpur to study the situation on 6th September, 2000. Five *Dalit* representatives were also included in the team. A comprehensive discussion was held on the issues of the blockade and the movement by bringing together the victims of the movement and *non-Dalits* who were directly involved in creating disorders. Chief District Officer declared that legal action would be taken against those persons who were involved in imposing blockades on *Dalits*. On 8 September 2000, the team also visited Kochabakari. Village Development Committee Chairman Baijanath Jha took responsibility and made his commitment to take steps for withdrawing the blockade in Kochabakari.

An all-party meeting was held again and Chief District Officer assured to withdraw the blockade within a month. It was also agreed that the *Dalits* could meet Chief District Officer without any administrative hassle. Ram Prasad Yadav, the Vice Chairman of Hariharpur Village Development Committee was arrested and legal action was taken against him for his deeds during the blockade. Later on, he was released on bail. Similarly, a group of *non-Dalits* who were heading for the

blockade were restricted from doing so in Lahan. Chief District Officers' role to solve the crisis in Lahan is praise worthy.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS:

The Human Right activists supported the movement in various ways. They worked as pressure group to conduct enquiry, they also advocated and mediated to solve the crisis. They also supported, to some extent, to motivate, organize and coordinate the movement in various levels.

POLITICAL PARTIES:

Leaders and workers of various political parties have provided their support for the movement in various ways. After the events that occurred at Hariharpur, Navaraj Subedi of *Rastriya Janainorcha* and Govinda Neupane of Communist Party of Nepal actively participated in the public meeting organized at Rajbiraj on September 2000. Govinda Neupane supported the movement playing the role of a mediator between *Dalits* and the local administration.

In Lahan *Rastriya Janamorcha* and different sectors, organizations of Communist Party of Nepal have contributed a lot to lead the movement ahead. Man Bahadur Biswokarma and local leaders actively participated in the movement and helped considerably. Local leaders and workers of Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal participated in the public meeting. More than twenty thousand people had gathered for the meeting.

SOCIAL ACTIVISTS:

The role of social activists have been very much prominent and important in the movement. Social activists have been making frequent visit to the

communities and conducting meeting with the *Dalits* for identifying and analyzing their situation. Discussion and interaction *is* centered on their social and economic problems. They are being educated and motivated by the activists to enjoy their social and legal rights provided by the constitution.

The social activists are providing moral and physical support, motivating *Dalits* to send their children to school, birth registration and receive citizenship. The *Dalits* are being helped by the social activists to organize themselves to build community based organizations and to strengthen their working capacity along with their skills. The social activists have played a very important role by disseminating information to lead the movement strongly in an organized way.

The social activists have done their best to strengthen the capacity and confidence of *Dalit* communities and organizations by conducting meeting, seminar, study tour and training programmes. Training in leadership development, organizational management, right based approach and procedures have been provided to 130 *Dalits* from Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Dhankutta, Kanchanpur and Morang districts.

Among the *Dalits*, *Doms* are the most backward and depressed community. Social activists held a *Dom* convention to educate and improve their level of life in consultation. In this regard, the role of the social activists was very prominent. The social activists have also played the role of facilitator and mediator in various phases of the movement related activities. Their role in getting the *Doms* to enter into the temple of *Chinnamasta Bhagawoti* temple is quite praise worthy.

The *Dalits* were exploited and oppressed in the past by so-called property owners and high caste families. They were compelled to keep themselves mum against their acts. Social activists have helped to build up the confidence, made

them strong enough to react upon the behaviour and dealings after the movement. It has in turn helped to raise the existing wage rate.

Although, the social activist are limited to Chhinnamasta and Lalapatti, they have extended their services as mediator and facilitator to Rajbiraj, Kalyanpur, Sambhunath, Banauli, Amaha Chowk, Kathauna, Bagbira, Pakri, Prasawani, Hariharpur, Kabilasa, Kushaha, Terhauta and Lahan in course of organizing and strengthening the movement. Besides this, they are keeping in touch with *Dalits* of other districts for movement related activities.

ACTION AID NEPAL:

Action Aid Nepal has been working in Nepal since 1982. It is conducting right based and service delivery programmes by using participatory and empowerment process. It is also conducting poverty reduction programmes in eleven districts of Nepal in collaboration with its partner organizations. Social, economic and political situation of the country play a very important role in this regard. Therefore, *Action Aid* Nepal is helping various agencies in policy influence, issue based advocacy and action research. The target groups as specified are underprivileged and marginal people of the society, women, children and *Dalits*.

One of the major objectives of Action Aid Nepal is to help the *Dalits* and oppressed community by educating and increasing their access to information, basic services and resources. It is also conducting meeting, seminar, workshop, training and discussion and interactive programmes to establish network for pro-public advocacy on various existing issues. It has also provided professional inputs for the formation of *Dalit* Commission and draft of *Dalit Bill*.

The Action Aid Nepal is conducting Area Development Programmes in collaboration with its partner Saraswati Community Development Forum. The Dalits from below the poverty line are being supported for their social and economic development using empowerment process and providing financial and technical assistance. For performing all the programmes, a system has been developed by following participatory process and considering the decision of target groups.

Similarly, technical assistance has been provided by Action Aid Nepal to run various circles. Its positive results can be seen in various fields. Due to the influence of the movement, *Dalits* gave up carcass disposal work and raised their voices to increase the wages. Action Aid has facilitated and rendered support to establish women and *Dalit* organizations along with strengthening capacity and skill building.

Action Aid Nepal has been supporting the non-violent *Dalit* movement is Lahan. It is supporting them by conducting awareness camps, building and institutionalizing their organizations through social activists. It was the effective facilitating role played by the Action Aid Nepal that helped build ownership and belongingness of *Dalit* communities towards the movement.

Action Aid is playing an active role in propagating the movement in national and international arena. It is conducting "Cross Border" activities and other programmes. It is also coordinating with various organizations and journalists to make *Dalit* organization strong and sustainable.

It is helping the *Dalits* in finding out their problems, issues and solution by educating them, lobbying inside and outside the countries and conducting awareness and empowerment activities. It is helping the government in managing

Dalit Awareness Radio Programmes and in broadcasting tele-serials related to *Dalits* and networking in national level. Action Aid is also providing its technical and financial support to study and assess the causes of caste based discrimination and its solutions at national level.

NATURE OF THE LEADERSHIP:

Social movements are said to have “entropy”; that is, they will disintegrate over time if energy is not expended to keep them together and active. Therefore, leadership must be constant in a movement, always again uniting it, motivating it, and directing it.

The role of a leader in a movement is a matter of prime importance. In this context, community members have made their frontline workers play the role of the leaders. Selection of leaders from different communities were performed in a participatory way. Selection of leaders was based on quality, performance, understanding about *Dalit* problems and sound vision of the movement. Thus a democratic process was adopted in course of selection of leaders.

The centrality of communication and the need for continual organization in a social movement makes their leaders particularly important. Leaders speak in the social movement to develop the sense of joining with others in shared concern.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MOVEMENT:

The main objective of the movement are to reform and amend the caste discriminative rules and regulations in law and order framed by Hindu supremacy so as to form the equitable society. As far as possible, customary law has to be changed in socio- cultural practice. It helps to formulate the *Dalit* related laws and policies to transform the social and economic condition of the *Dalits*. Another

latent objective is to create the access of basic services and power structure to the Chamars.

Another objective of the movement is to reduce the socio-cultural and religious distance of socially discriminated unequal groups to create harmonious society. Likewise, awareness campaigning, inviting Dalits in religious and other social gathering, participation of Dalits in mass meeting are set up as the goal of Chamars Movement. The other objectives to bring intercommunity solidarity by reducing social inequality between the Chamars and non-Dalits through enhancement in social index like-education, gender and health. To create equitable society the Government (including civil society, political parties, NGOs etc.) aims to launch special programmes for the Chamar communities. Similarly, it is aimed to remove of the Chamars in participating in public occasions. To achieve this goal, the government is formulating various strategies, such as, – compulsory enrollment of Chamars' girls in schools, maintaining the legal age at marriage, removing sexual, social and other types of harassment of Chamar women. It also aims to increase the enrollment of Chamars to fillup the reserve quota for the Chamars in formal, informal, vocational and technical education.

Similarly, in the field of health, it aims to launch various programmes to improve the health and living conditions of the Chamars, then food habits and sanitary behaviour. The government has also taken steps to fill the reserve quota in the employment sector. To empower the Chamars economically the government has launched poverty alleviation programmes.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS OF THE MOVEMENT:

According to the *Dalits*, the Movement was not their desire, but a consequence of social and economic exploitation for a long time. To initiate any

movement, people should be organized and made conscious about their legal and constitutional rights. The ultimate goal of any movement is to get rid of all kinds of undesired exploitation. The *Dalits* have a very clear vision of the movement. According to them the movement is a process which should be conducted and organized continuously using peaceful means and participatory approach.

Women also participated actively and enthusiastically in this process. Children also participated in protest rallies and processions. The Saraswati Community Development Forum, Action Aid Nepal, ERO Biratnagar and social activists also played an important role in the movement. Participation of the *non-Dalits*, political parties, human right activists and media are also noteworthy.

Empowerment process is recognized as one of the most important factors of the *Dalit* movement. Various Non-Government Organisations and social organizations have supported the *Dalits* in this process. Short description of various agencies, which have supported them to make the movement effective and participatory have been mentioned below:

EMPOWERMENT:

The *Dalits* have understood empowerment as a process of enhancing capacity and strength to enjoy their rights. They have been provided training and education to increase their skill and strength during the period of the movement. Both men and women participated actively in the process. During the training and education programme, skills were transferred to the *Dalits* to organize and conduct the movement according to the action plan. Similarly, they are also provided with the skills and knowledge to review the progress along with activating community people and their strength. Because of the orientation and training, the level of awareness about their rights among the *Dalits* have increased to a considerable degree.

ORGANIZATION BUILDING:

The *Dalits* have realized that they are compelled to launch the movement, because of the social and economic blockade imposed upon them. Their leaders have played a pertinent role in organizing them. Shouting slogans, participation in rallies, picketing and conducting protest rallies carrying lantern are some means used by the agitators. They are also trying to expand their organizations in various Village Development Committees along with strong networking.

SELECTION OF ISSUES FOR THE MOVEMENT:

Economic and social blockade were imposed upon the *Dalits* when they decided not to throw carcasses. These events led to the movement. No differences were found among the *Dalits* regarding the selection of issues for the movement. Extensive discussion were held among them, local authorities, various castes and communities of the *Dalits* after the blockade.

SELECTION OF LEADERSHIP:

The role of a leader in a movement is a matter of prime importance. In this context, the community members have made their frontline workers to play the role of the leaders. Selection of leaders from different communities is performed in a participatory way. Selection of a leader is based on the quality, performance, understanding about the *Dalit* problems and sound vision of the movement. Thus a democratic process is adopted in course of selection of leaders.

REVIEW OF THE MOVEMENT:

Meetings are organized for reviewing the progress of the movement and they have developed it as a system. During such meetings, they discuss about the

shortcomings of the movement, selection of future issues, and preparation of action plan and resource management extensively. Community people and workers of various organizations, who participate in the movement directly or indirectly, are also invited at the district level review meetings for their valued opinions and ideas.

PRIMARY PROCEDURE FOLLOWED IN THE MOVEMENT:

Different events that occurred in various localities, Village Development Committees and districts are collected at first. These events are communicated and conveyed to a gathering of eight to ten people. Women also help in this process. After the discussion, they reach to a conclusion. This conclusion is discussed in a larger gathering of 15-20 people. New events are added during this process. Children up to the age of 12 to 15 years also take part in the discussion. Special time is provided to women to share and express their ideas. Generally, decision is made unanimously.

EMPOWERMENT PROCESS IN DALIT MOVEMENT:

Empowerment is not only a process of movement, but it is very imperative too. The *Dalits* are making every effort to get rid of untouchability and social discrimination along with utilization of their constitutional rights without any hindrances. This feeling would not have developed among the Dalits without the supports of Non-Government Organisations, social activists and others. The movement is going ahead systematically in Saptari and Siraha districts.

Women have established *Nari Sangam* after being educated through Regenerated Frarian Literacy through empowerment committee technique Circles conducted by Saraswati Community Development Forum in 5 Village Development Committees of Saptari. Women have been a great source of

motivation for men to abandon their traditional occupation. This kind of boldness and confidence in turn encourage *Janachetana Dalit Sangam* of Madhupatti to execute and implement this decision.

The *Dalits* encounter various problems in avoiding carcass disposal. They decide to solve the problems through non-violent movement. Their movement which started from a small village of Madhupatti Village Development Committee is now converted into a national issue.

CHANGE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHAMARS (During and after the movement):

The discussion have been made to identify and summarize the main changes that had taken place in the life of Chamars and also to analyze and explain the nature and factors responsible for change. Changes has been noted and described in subsequent paragraphs especially in relation to the self image, demographic characteristics, religious beliefs and practices, rituals relating to birth and death, marriage and family life, dress and diet, habitation and housing, occupation pattern, ownership of land, modern commodities, political consciousness, association and participation.

AREAS OF CHANGE:

Change in self image: The year 2006, served as reference point for this survey. This year witnessed the change in the image of Chamars about themselves has changed. They started considering themselves as “Ram”, and as also regarding themselves separate and superior to other Dalits in the region of Terai.

Traces of change in their self image first became noticeable around 2000 (as per the testimony of other castes’ respondents), when some of their caste leaders (Baldev Ram, Dhodai Ram) after their visits to different places including

India, started introducing themselves to the officials and other outsiders as “Ram” and not as Chamar, and it gained momentum when they found that by calling themselves Ram, they could reasonably claim to be the highest of all sub-castes of Dalits and also reduce the possibilities of their immediate identification as lower caste members, who have been all along considered to be associated with leather work.

Several factors are responsible for this change and these include education, change of occupation, income, standard of living, contact with the outside world and above all, their strong shared desire to secure a higher position in the caste-hierarchy.

This change is in line with the change that has taken place not only in the area, but also in other areas among the lower castes, especially the Chamars. They started describing themselves as Balmiki and associated themselves with the famous epic writer and Saint ‘Balmiki’. It is observed in studying the change of status among the Chamars. They refused to use of the word “Chamar”. They said that they should not be called Chamars because they are Ram. This incident indicated the strong repugnance of the word “Chamar” for them.

Change in demographic characteristics: Over the period of 6-7 years significant changes have taken place with regard to their position, population strength in village, sex ratio, proportion of married population, literacy rate and educational standard.

Numerically they have replaced the other Dalits. It has strengthened their political influence, especially in the municipality which they have started using for improving their economic position.

Their sex ratio has increased. This is the outcome of the change that had taken place in the village and in the surrounding areas. The number of women in the village increased. Better care of women and availabilities of improved medical facilities, particularly during delivery are considered to be largely responsible for the increase in proportion of female population.

During the period, the proportion of married population among them has also decreased. The decrease in number of married population is also a common feature of the village and this decrease is because of comparative increase in the age of marriage and change in the attitude towards marriage. Explaining the increase in the age of marriage, one Chamar respondent said “earlier a person was given for marriage practically without any consideration, except family background, whereas presently marriage is usually arranged only when the boy becomes capable of earning something and this automatically delays marriage”.

There has also been a marked increase in the literacy rate and educational standard among the Chamars between this period. Their literacy rate has become proportional to national literacy rate. The literacy among them has increased. This change in the literacy rate has also initiated change in the literacy rate among women. Along with the change in the literacy rate among them, there has been a change in their educational standard, even though none of them have attained any specific skill in art, science and literature. The improvement in educational standard is more among the younger generation.

Closely following the change in the educational standard, the change has occurred with regard to the number of technically qualified and trained persons. The number of technically qualified and trained persons has increased, despite the fact that this technical qualification and training is still confined only to the males.

The change in their educational standard among the younger generation is the result of accelerated educational facilities in the form of the primary and middle schools in the village, development of communication, and introduction of several special governmental facilities for promotion of their educational and, above all, changes in their outlook and motivation for education.

This change in the literacy rate and educational standard among them has brought about change in the general literacy rate and educational standard of the people. The general literacy rate in the village has changed. The number of women literates has increased. It is significant to indicate that, while there has been an all round increase in the general literacy rates, the literacy rates of the middle and lower castes Chamars still remained low. The Chamars have higher literacy rate and educational standard in comparison to other lower castes.

The difference in the literacy rate and educational standard among different castes can be attributed to their different motivation and outlook towards education. The Chamar today visualizes educational achievements not only as an end of itself, but also as means for further change in their position in the social hierarchy.

Although the change in literacy rate and educational standard is a general feature, in comparison to other higher castes, the Chamars and other lower castes have taken up the education late. Earlier, there were practically no educational facilities in the village, and the villagers in general had little motivation for education. It was after the establishment of a school in the villages, mainly the higher castes Chaudharies, started sending their children regularly to the school. The Chamars and other lower castes people began sending their children to school regularly only during the Movement.

The Chamars realized that in order to improve one's own position and to get the acceptance of the people, one must have education and a higher status in occupation. Accordingly, they began to send their children to school and also persuaded their relatives to send their children regularly to school. This set the process in motion and the families of other Chamars and other lower castes also started sending their children to school.

Change in religious beliefs and practices: The Chamars, over the period, have adopted the worship of sanskritic deities like Rama, Krishna and Shiva and subsequently modified and altered their motivations, modes and place of worship.

They started worshipping Rama, Krishna and Shiva in their efforts to raise their position and to be identified with the higher castes through the process of adoption of their deities. Prior to this period, they worshipped mainly matas (Kalimaa, Sitlamata) and other spirits. Rama, Krishna and Shiva were considered by them as the deities of higher castes. And they were in earlier afraid of worshipping them due to fear of displeasure of the deities, as they considered themselves too low to worship them, and they also feared reprisal by higher castes, as they believed that the higher caste members would not tolerate their worship of those deities reserved for them. They started worshipping them with their changes in education and occupation, which instilled in them a desire to change their status and encouraged them to worship the above mentioned deities. Furthermore, with education they started feeling the strength of their population. They realized that the higher caste members would not like to come to direct confrontation with them because of their numerical strength. Whatever little apprehensions they had were removed with the enactment of Untouchability Offences Act. It provided them strength and legal support in their efforts to adopt the deities of the higher castes. Their faith on their caste's strength and the Act helped them to overcome their fears about the reprisal from the higher castes. Initially the worship of these deities

was started collectively by a few individuals and subsequently it was taken up by the caste panchayat. The caste panchayat, in its desire to change the status of the caste members, held a meeting which was attended by elderly Chamars including women. In the meeting of the panchayat they tried to identify the areas in their religious life which created differences between them and the higher castes, and decided to worship the above mentioned deities and also to shake away greatly their traditional religious practices, like animal sacrifice and predominance of spirit worship.

Along with the adoption of these sanskritic deities, another new phenomenon was their motivation for attaining salvation of the soul. Earlier their religious motivation was mainly their desire to secure protection from disease, death and destruction and also to obtain blessings for leading a happy life. Worship for the purpose of salvation of the soul is comparatively a new development and has been adopted as part of the general effort to fall in line with the mores, values and practices of the higher castes.

Their modes of worship have also been diversified along with their adoption of these sanskritic deities for worship. They make floral offerings, vegetable preparations and light lamps and burn incense, as part of their worship to Rama, Shiva and Krishna. In the past, by contrast to these sanskritic rituals, animal sacrifice formed the main mode of worship. Animal sacrifice becomes obsolete, particularly after the decision of the castes panchayat to initiate concerted efforts to raise their status, through assimilation of higher castes practices in the worship of deities.

With the adoption of these sanskritic deities and subsequent modifications in their motivations and modes of worship, the services of the Brahmin priests gradually began to be used by the Chamars. While the worship of "matas" and

(Kalimata and Sitalama) spirits among them is still performed by the elderly men of their own caste or caste priests, worship of these adopted deities, in some cases, is done by the Brahmin priests of the neighboring villages, as this village does not have any priest. This change has taken place with their adoption of deities like Rama. The other factors which have helped this change include change in their education and occupational position. Gradual decrease in the pre-occupation of Brahmin priests with the general loss of influence of the religion also facilitated this change. The adoption of these deities has also promoted them to enter into village temples and offer their worship, especially on occasions like Ram Navami.

This change in the religious beliefs and practices is not only confined to the Chamars in the village, but has also taken place among other lower castes of the village and the surrounding areas and have helped for reducing the gap between them and the higher castes. The other lower castes in area, besides the Chamars have been also found to worship Rama, Krishna and Shiva and make floral offering and vegetable preparation. Attaining salvation of the soul has also been found to be their goal. But, in comparison to other lower castes, the extent of change has been more among the Chamars. For instance, hundred percent of the Chamar families were found to worship Rama, Krishna and Shiva,

It is significant to note that, despite these concerted group efforts to change, the Chamars have not been able to bridge the gulf between them and the higher caste Hindu especially, with regard to their religious beliefs and practices. They have not been able to assimilate totally the cardinal concepts of Hinduism, i.e. the theory of rebirth, the Karma, because of their ignorance, and their desire to adopt the behavioural pattern of the higher castes without giving sufficient time to understand, assimilate and internalise the values and concepts which determine the behaviour. It has been observed, that they do not celebrate important religious days and festivals, such as Janamasthami, Dashera, and Ramnavmi which are

observed by the higher caste Hindu of the area. Going to temples to worship the deities has still not become a regular custom among them, not only because of the fear of opposition of the higher castes, but also to some degree because of their diffidence and lack of habits.

Change in rituals relating to birth and death: While the rituals and practices relating to death have almost remained unchanged among the Chamars, the adoption of the practice of immersion of ashes (phool) in the Ganga, and performance of saradh (termi) on 13th day after the death, instead of 30th day, i.e. reduction in the length of period of death pollution, the rituals and practice relating to birth has changed. Those who can afford it have started celebrating the news of new pregnancy and rituals, like Chatti Puja and Kuan Pujan respectively on the 6th day and 21st day following the birth of a child.

The observance of Chathi Puja and Kuan Pujan and performance of Termi on the 13th day after the death of a person are all recent phenomena. They rarely observed these rituals because they considered them as the rituals of the higher castes. Their poor economic conditions and their inability to secure the services of Brahmin priests also dissuaded them from performing such rituals.

The adoption of higher castes rituals by Chamars of the village, especially the rituals relating to birth, is not an isolated fact. This has become common to all the lower castes in the village and its surrounding areas. During my stay in the village, I observed two termi ceremonies and a chathi pujas performed by the Chamars and other lower castes in the village.

Change in Marriage: While the concept of marriage (marriage is a sacrament and not a contract) has remained unchanged and very little change has taken place with regard to selection of marital partners, arrangement of marriage,

attitude towards remarriage, and marriage ceremonies, certain changes have taken place in the marriage age and rituals associated with solemnization of marriage.

“Asura” form of marriage, which was the common form in earlier, has been practically replaced by “Prajapatya” form. It was observed, during the period of data collection, that Prajapatya form of marriage is practiced by them because of their desire to reduce the differences between them and the higher castes and thereby to improve their status (the higher castes in the village exclusively practice Prajapatya form), along with their change in education, occupational pattern and income. They thought that, along with their efforts to improve their position through adoption of higher castes values and practices like adoption of Rama, Krishna and Shiva for worship and use of the services of the Brahmin priests, this should also be noted that this has also contributing to bridge differences between them and the higher castes. It is worth mentioning that this change in the form of marriage has resulted in the adoption of payment of dowry in the place of bridge price.

Age of marriage of the Chamar boy and girl has also significantly changed, even though, in comparison to statutory regulations relating to the age of marriage, it is still an early marriage. Age of marriage of a boy and girl has increased. Increase in the age of marriage is mainly due to the changes in their socio-economic conditions and also in the attitude towards marriage. The change in the attitude towards marriage can be explained in the words of the Chamar respondents, “earlier, while arranging marriage for a boy, nobody thought about his capacities to maintain a family. Now a father would not like to arrange marriage for his son unless he has a job or is going to get a job, even though this delays the marriage”.

Solemnization of marriage presently is not done exclusively by the caste priests or elderly male members of the bride's family which was earlier practiced, but also by the Brahmin priests, even though the use of the services of Brahmin priests in the solemnization of marriage is confined mainly to the richer families. Services of the Brahmin priests in marriage are gradually being used by them as a consequence of their adoption of the Prajapatya form of marriage and as part of their effort to assimilate some of the higher caste practice with a view to improve their position.

The change in the form and solemnization of marriage are more marked among the Chamars than other lower castes, while the increase in the age of marriage is common to all the castes. Others are still found to practice predominantly Asura form of marriage and get their marriage celebrations performed by their own caste priests or elderly caste members. The differential level of change in the practices associated with marriage among the lower castes can be explained on the basis of their differences in education, occupation and finally motivation for change of status.

Change in Family Life: Several changes have taken place in the family life of the Chamars and these include change of polygamy by monogamy and joint families by nuclear families, decrease in family size and sharing of family authority.

Polygamy, which was earlier very common among the Chamars, has been almost completely stopped. This change is the result of various factors, which can be classified into two categories viz. external and internal. The former refers to restrictions imposed by the government on polygamous marriage by Hindus and increase in expenditure in marriage. The latter factor covers changed attitude of the Chamars towards marriage and family life and their desire to reduce the

distance between them and the higher castes. This is a change which has taken place among all the castes as a natural process of change along with the change of time and situation.

There has been a rapid reduction in the number of joint families among the Chamars. This change is largely perceived by the interviewees to be because of their desire to avoid conflicts and preference for living independently due to the increase in their levels of education. While the general reduction in the number of joint families is common to all castes, the rate or speed of reduction differs on the basis of landownership and economic conditions of the family. The higher castes owning land, for instance, have more joint families than others. Within the lower castes, Chamars have more joint families because of their comparative better economic position.

Closely following the change in the structure of the family brought about change in the size of the family. Reduction in average family size is a common phenomenon and it has taken place among all irrespective of castes, due to increase in age of marriage, spread of education and dissemination of family planning knowledge, increased expenditure in child rearing and change of joint families into nuclear families.

Male heads of families are gradually sharing their authorities with other family members, which was previously. The sharing of authority within the family, mainly with old parents, wife and grown up children is most noticeable with regard to matters of education and occupation of the children, arrangement of marriage, purchase of property and entering into legal suits. Sharing of authority by the male head with other members, especially with the grown up children, is common to all and has gradually started taking place along with the spread of education among the younger generation.

The changes that have occurred in the family life of the Chamars are, paralleled to the changes that have taken place among all other lower castes. While monogamy has become common to all, joint families are more among the Chamars than other lower castes.

Change in Dress and food: The Chamar men wear dhotis folded up to their knees, their women use only two pieces clothes as of the earlier times. They are, with the change in their economic conditions, using the same dress pattern as that of the higher castes. This change has been also found among other lower castes in the village.

The Chamars have started giving preference to vegetarian food. Increasing number of them has changed over to vegetarianism, which was only confined to about low percent earlier. Preference for vegetarian diet is a recent phenomenon among the Chamars not only of the village, but of the region as they were traditionally non-vegetarian, having no compunction against taking various varieties of flesh including mutton, pork and fish. The influence of the higher caste and the values attached to the vegetarianism has brought this change. The initial change in the food pattern was initiated collectively by a few individuals. The caste panchayat of the Chamars decided to change do given to priority their food pattern and asked their members do given to priority to take the vegetarian food. The present change simultaneously took place line with the instructions of the caste panchayat. Another significant change which has taken place among them with regard to diet, due to change in their economic conditions, is that they have stopped accepting the left-over food after feasts held by various higher castes. Among the lower castes, this change is more marked among the Chamars.

Change in the housing pattern: While there has not been any change in the location of their housing sites, significant changes have taken place in the

nature and structure of houses. They still live in the localities fixed for lower castes for the purpose of housing construction. They also do not get any house on rent in the higher caste localities. Changes, however, have taken place with regard to their housing pattern and facilities, even though there is an acute accommodation problem. They no longer live in kutchha houses whose lands are owned by others. Majority of them live in pucca houses, some of their houses are double storied, having one or two rooms, mostly two, with or without a kitchen, but with one attached verandah and an open space in front. The overwhelming majority of the houses have electricity. Some houses have hand pumps for drinking water. Most of the houses, irrespective of the nature of their construction i.e. pucca or kutchha, have an assortment of furniture, such as benches, tables, chairs and stools meant mostly for guests. The household possessions have also increased both in quantity and quality. The earthen vessels have been replaced gradually by those of aluminum, brass, glass, and ceramics. The general standard of cleanliness in the house is good, although many of the houses lack proper ventilation.

The change in housing pattern is a common feature among all villagers irrespective of castes, and is mainly due to change of economic conditions. Along with this factor, the governmental facilities offered to the lower castes and housing sites have further facilitated the change in the housing pattern among the lower castes. This change took place around after movement, when large scale change and diversification of occupation occurred.

Change in occupation: Occupation is another area where significant changes have taken place among the Chamars. Not only has there been an increase in the size of working population, including the number of working women, but there have been also diversification and disassociation with traditional occupation. Significant changes have also taken place in the number and nature of their self

employments. (Working women here are taken to be women either employed or self-employed in some economic pursuits).

The number of working population among them has risen. The number of working women (in the sense defined above) has increased and diversification of employment opportunities, along with the spread of communication and education, has largely contributed to this increase in the size of working population. Along with the increase in size of working population, diversification of employment and dissociation with their traditional occupation have also taken place. Working population are still carrying on their traditional occupation, i.e. leather work of field labour, whereas the great majority are now engaged in agriculture as cultivator, trade and business which were not followed earlier.

The number of self employed persons among the Chamars has increased. Change and diversification of their occupations have also brought about changes in the nature and sources of their self employments. They are employed now in trade, business, agriculture, besides their traditional leather work, which was the only source of self employment earlier.

Several factors have contributed to these change and these include the spread of education, greater entrepreneurships and desire among them to change their traditional occupation and carry on occupations like agriculture, trade and business which were once considered the occupations of higher castes. Development in communications and change in economic life in the village which increased the diversification of business and attracted many people to start business further accelerated the process of change of occupation. Of all these factors, improved communication, greater desire amongst them to take up occupation of the higher castes along with the spread of education, constitutional privileges provided to them and increased job facilities in other places are most

important, and these facilitated their efforts to change their occupations with the objectives of improving their social and economic position.

There changes have taken place at a much more rapid pace. Diversification of occupations has taken place with the entry of a number of Chamars into the field of agriculture and trade and business. In the field of trade, they are now working as tailors and cycle repairers.

The changes in occupation among the Chamars are a general change and these have affected all the people irrespective of caste both in the village and its surroundings, primarily because of increase in employment opportunities, spread of education and communication. But within the lower castes, the diversifies of occupation have taken place more among the Chamars than others.

Change in land ownership: It is also worth mentioning here that, although they do not own more agricultural land, some of them have taken agricultural land on lease from others. Change in the economic condition, organizational support and the desire among them to adopt occupations of the higher castes have greatly contributed to the change.

Taking up cultivation as an occupation is prevalent not only now among them in the village, but also in the neighbouring areas. None from any other lower castes have taken up cultivation. They are doing this in order to identify themselves as agriculturists.

This change-over, i.e. from landless labourers to cultivators however, has not been a very smooth affair. The higher caste people in general, who had all along controlled agriculture, did not encourage them to take up agriculture and work as agriculturists. Initially they refused to extend their support and guidance to their Chamar fellow brothers, who lacked knowledge about the intricacies of

agriculture and also the required ability in planning cropping pattern and using inputs. As a result, in the beginning they faced several problems in cultivation, especially with respect to use of agricultural inputs and subsequently incurred loss. In their efforts to overcome their problems they attended farmers' training programmes organised by the government (agriculture Office), visited the Agricultural Research Centre participated in the agricultural activities and took up the other agriculturists as their reference group. The moral support from their own caste members also helped them to overcome the problems. Their persistent and determined efforts have helped them to overcome the initial antipathy of the higher caste agriculturists and to gain their support, though not their recognition as agriculturists, which they (Chamars) feel is not an easy affair, particularly in the absence of permanent ownership of land.

On enquiry from higher castes cultivators, it has been revealed that the Chamar agriculturists do not lag behind much with respect to adoption of new agricultural practices and in agricultural production. On the contrary, they carry on their agriculture on the same lines as other agriculturists and have been able to produce good crops. Within a few years of their taking up of agriculture, they are able to produce paddy, wheat and vegetables. A brief description of their agricultural practice is given to reveal that their agricultural practices do not differ from that of other agriculturists of the area.

Changes in the ownership of modern commodities: Changes, both quantitative and qualitative, have taken place among the Chamars with regard to possession of modern commodities. They now own radios, cycles, watches, furniture, fans and stainless steel utensils, which was unthinkable for them earlier primarily because of their poor economic condition. While the majority of these commodities have been purchased by them along with their change in economic

condition due to change in their occupational pattern, a few of them have been received by them as gifts.

Change in the ownership of modern commodities has taken place among all people irrespective of caste in the village, but the quantity and quality of commodities owned by individuals depend on their economic conditions.

Change in political consciousness: The Chamars are not neither politically ignorant, nor do they presently consider politics to be a domain of only the rich, higher caste people and the educated few. They are now aware about the national problems, leaders and their background and parties and their ideologies. Furthermore, they have also become conscious about the intricacies of politics in their village life, importance of their vote and also roles played by different political leaders including their caste members in ameliorating their conditions, whereas few years ago they were completely ignorant of all these aspects of politics.

The factors which contributed to arousing political consciousness among them particularly, lower castes in general are many and these include development of communications, government, parties and above all, elections on the basis of adult franchise and the election campaigns organised at different levels. These factors, especially the development of communications and universal adult franchise broke down the isolation of the village and first affected the higher castes people and then percolated to lower castes. They gradually started understanding the importance of politics when the people belonging to different parties approached them for their votes during the general elections and made several promises to improve their conditions. According to one Chamar respondent "it was for the first time I was told by one of the election campaigners

during the parliament election that if I vote for them they will help me to secure a job for my son, and loan for purchasing animals and land”.

The first incident, which marks the beginning of politicization among Chamars, was the visit of one party member from Lahan who addressed them in a meeting. This meeting was attended by them in a large number and this for the first time provided them with an awareness of the vastly changed situation brought about by the new constitution of the country. They came to know that they could expect a new deal from the government, since untouchability has been constitutionally abolished and protection of their interests and several special privileges for their development had been ensured. They were also informed that there are people from among their communities who have been accepted and regarded as leaders not only of their own community but also by others. And last but not the least; they realized that there is a machinery to protect them and to save them from day to day humiliation and social disabilities. The people were also told about some Dalits leaders in their efforts to improve their status.

No doubt, the meeting had a great impact on the minds of the people, but beyond that it failed to produce any long term results partly because it was not followed up by further discussions and meetings and partly due to the fact that they were still governed by their traditional thinking that politics was not their cup of tea. Therefore, they continued to remain apathetic and indifferent to politics and gave little thought to their involvement in local or regional politics to assert their rights and secure benefits.

The factors that really shook them from their centuries of apathy and ignorance and forced them to think about politics, was the elections held at different levels of the Local, Regional and Parliament. The general election helped them to realize the importance of the vote as well as the benefits they could derive

from their vote, because they found the contestants of the elections, even if they were higher caste people, came to their houses, listened to their problems and promised to solve their problems and grievances. This was something, which was absolutely new to them and they had not bargained for it. An elderly Chamar respondent expressing his state of mind at that time said “I was awestricken when I found men belonging to higher castes of my own village coming to my house. I was first afraid, but after some time I came to know that they had come to me to solicit my vote. They talked politely and told me they would help to improve my conditions”. These election campaigns further enabled them to understand that they could exercise influence, if they could unite as a group both in and outside the village and use the influence for their own benefits.

A few years after these elections, the new municipality was introduced which offered statutory representation to the lower castes at the Local level. The Local election was held in the village with great enthusiasm. This brought the village people, particularly the Chamars, face-to-face with politics and brought about a change in their thinking process with regard to their position and status in the village. The Chamars, especially the educated people among them, realized that they could not stay away from politics for long but could bargain for their votes in the local election in order to strengthen their power and influence both in and outside the village. Since then, they gradually started taking interest in the local elections and lately have started playing important roles in these elections, through alliance and reliance with different groups according to their own needs and interests. They have been successful in using the local body to gain several benefits. For instance, many of them succeeded, through their representatives to get loan for construction of houses very easily. The local body also reconstructed the lanes in their locality with bricks.

Another factor, which has greatly contributed in raising and developing political consciousness among them and also in their emergences a group of political influence not only in the village but also outside the village, is the establishment of the Dalit organisations, relating to untouchability and representation in different bodies brought them closer to party politics and enabled them to understand the root causes of their political and social subservience and methods of dealing with them as a group.

They have also brought their caste people closer to other members of the village and their inter-relationships have fostered a healthy political life in the village, which even spread to other parts of the territory.

The efforts for arousing political awareness, which started by an active political worker reached its culmination when some Chamars became active members of the Political party. It was through their efforts that the party became popular among the lower castes who felt that their own good lay in the strength of the Political party and its ideologies. They were told of the benefits they could derive by supporting the Political party, which was then a ruling party and in a position to deliver the goods to them. Due to their efforts, the majority of the adult Chamar males became aware not only of the different political parties and the importance of the vote but also of the particular of politics in their village life. Almost all of them now know the broad policies of different political parties. Particularly of the then ruling party, the programmes of the Government and the roles played by different leaders including their caste leaders in ameliorating their conditions and improving their status.

Changes in political association: Change in the political consciousness among them has also brought out corresponding changes in their political association. From the silent ignorant onlookers at the hinges of politics, they have

turned into active supporters, even active members of political party, which was then the ruling party.

Their association with the ruling party was a matter of convenience, rather than of ideology. The majority of the respondents whosoever talked of their political associations, said that they support Congress because it is in a position to help to improve their conditions. They were of the opinion that the Congress alone can provide the desired results because it had necessary strength.

This close political association of the Chamars with the political party had become possible because of a number of factors, namely (i) the influence of the Chamars of the village over other lower castes because of their numerical strength, better economic conditions and political influence; (ii) closeness of the village to the city and development of communication; (iii) emergence of caste leaders, who are comparatively educated, understanding, young and command respect and support not only of the Chamars but also of other lower castes; (iv) increased political awareness among them and realization of the importance of political association with the ruling party for betterment of status within the village – almost all the young Chamars feel that their political association with the political party has made them to change their economic conditions and, thereby, to improve their status; and (v) realization by the political party leaders of the importance of the Chamar leaders and their influence over the lower castes.

Changes in political participation: Growing political aware and close political association with the Parties have contributed to the political participation of a few Chamars, in both regional and local politics even though the nature of participation has remained confined to organize the election campaign and selection of contestants for election.

While changes in political consciousness, association and participation have appeared to be common to all castes, the nature of Chamars is not the same among all the castes, particularly among the lower caste Chamars, in comparison, to other lower castes, have changed more with regard the above mentioned areas because of their comparatively higher education, better occupation, and above all the leadership. For instance, none from any other lower castes have become active members of the parties. The memberships in the Local body have all along been confined to Chamars. At no time during the period of data collection, any political leaders from outside was found to visit their houses. In all the meetings, they were found to follow the decision of the Chamar leaders.

NATURE OF CHANGES:

The analysis of the changes that have taken place among Chamars in various aspects of their life reveal that the change is mainly marked by the change in their education and occupation combined by their desire to improve their position and thereby their status in the social hierarchy. The characteristic features of this change are:

Continuities and discontinuities: Many aspects of the life of the Chamars have almost continued to remain the same as it was in the earlier times, despite various changes. The areas which have remained almost unchanged include mainly their concept of marriage, selection of marital partners, arrangement of marriage, attitude towards remarriage and death ceremonies etc. The areas which have changed include primarily the religious beliefs and practices, their rituals relating to birth, their family structure and size, their literacy rate and educational standard, occupational pattern, ownership of land, modern commodities, and their political consciousness, association and participation etc. An examination of the aspects of continuities and discontinuities reveals; (a) elements of change are more

pervasive in comparison with elements of continuity, and (b) continuities are more noticeable in some areas of their socio-ritual life. The factors which have contributed to the continuity of the above mentioned aspects are many, but the most important of them is that they, while making their efforts to improve their status much, also wants to retain their own identity as a group or community i.e. as Chamars.

Gradual and Cumulative change: Changes in different aspects of their life is both gradual and cumulative and has taken about years to come about. The first sign of change was seen in the areas of education. This change set a series of uncomitant changes, by increasing their awareness about their own position vis-à-vis other castes. This found expression in the meeting of their caste panchayat. Wherein they discussed the factors which were differentiating them from other higher castes and took a decision to put an end to such practices and adopt those practices which would help bridge their gap from the higher castes and, thereby, facilitates their efforts to change their position. Educational change was followed by important economic and political changes. Change of occupation gave them a diversified field of employment, ensuring higher income and an important role to play in the economic life of the village, particularly in the formation and functioning of the cooperative society. The changes in all these aspects lead to changes in certain aspect of social life. An important political effect of the solidarity of the lower castes with the Chamar leaders was that it gave them a political edge in the election to the Parliament and other local bodies. This was also a factor which helped enable the Chamar leaders to exercise their significant influence in the village as a whole and outside it as well. Their support to the ruling party brought many direct and indirect benefits to them in particular and to the village in general. In projecting their leadership in political and other fields, Dalit Sewa Sangh has played an important role. As a result, the leaders of their

community, on their part, continued their fruitful association with these institutions.

Result of both individual and collective efforts: Changes in different aspects have been the result of both individual and collective efforts, each of which has supported and supplemented the other to change their status. Of these two, individual efforts were started earlier, by some Dalits learned from their life experience that for improving one's own position and gaining acceptance of the higher castes people, one must have education. Accordingly, they persuaded their fall castes members to send their children to school. The efforts to diversify the occupational pattern also started with the individuals like them. But the Chamars in their own efforts to change their status have given greater emphasis to collective efforts because of their gradual realization of (a) the strength of their own united action, and (b) the fact that change of socio-religious status calls for collective action. The chief instruments through which collective efforts have been channelized are the caste panchayat of their own village.

An intimate relationship between the areas in which efforts for change have been initiated and the area of actual change has been observed. Individual efforts for change have started more in secular (non-religious) areas, like education, occupation, whereas collective efforts have been made more in the socio-religious spheres such as adoption of deities of the higher castes, and also the methods and modes of their worship, besides their food pattern.

General and specific: The changes that have taken place in the various aspects of the life of the Chamars have been both general and specific in nature. These changes may be regarded as general which have take place universally among all categories of people in the village The degree of change may differ because of their different levels of aspiration and socio-economic conditions of

specific group. Such changes include changes in family structure and size, literacy rate and education, occupational pattern and housing structure. Specific changes are those changes which have taken place only among the lower castes, especially among the Chamars, and these cover the changes that have occurred in the area of religious beliefs and practice marriage, diet pattern, and land ownership pattern, political consciousness and participation. Within the specific changes, there are so changes that have taken place only among the Chamars are not other lower caste and these include changes in the ownership of land and political association and participation. It is worth mentioning that general and specific changes are also related to the areas of change. General changes have taken place in more secular areas, (non-religious areas which include for instance education, occupation etc.), whereas specific changes have occurred mainly in social or spiritual areas.

Selective and planned: The changes that have taken place among the Chamars in different spheres do not include all the members of the community. They are also not indiscriminate. On the contrary, it has been observed that in certain spheres of the activities, they are particularly planned and selective. The selective qualities of changes are determined by the fact that in certain spheres, like religious belief and practices they have retained several items of their traditional pattern of behaviour. It appears that they have selected certain items for changing and in most of the cases; these changes are brought about in a planned way. The whole community in a planned manner tried to bring changes in their position by adopting some new deities, and accordingly, they have tried to modify their mode of worship. They have also tried to use the services of the Brahmin priests, adopted prajapatya form of marriage, and vegetarianism. Some of the changes particularly in occupational structure, literacy rate and educational standard however cannot be regarded as deliberately planned at least at the village level, as these types of changes were observed all throughout the country.

Absence of Uniformity: Changes that have occurred among the Chamars are not uniform either in terms of their population coverage or area. The changes have taken place particularly in educational and occupational pattern, more among the younger generations. The younger generation has shown more willingness to the forces of change than the older generation. Within the different area of change, changes have been mostly marked in the areas of education, occupational and housing pattern. In the areas like religious beliefs and practices, marriage, rituals relating to birth and death, changes are qualified and partial. Change is total, in other words, in only those spheres where change is dependent chiefly on their own efforts and draws legislative and organizational support from the wider encapsulating system.

Periods of change: Changes have taken place in different areas in different periods of time and it has taken a total period of about 7 years to arrive at the present situation as mentioned earlier. An effort to compare the changes in between the year 1998 to 2006 reveals that changes have taken more during the earlier period. In fact this period could be regarded as decade of change, as during this period many of the major changes in the life of the Chamars, have started taking place especially in the field of education. The year 1998 was a land mark in the history of change, as the change, in the socio-religious life started taking place with the active support from municipality.

Changes are more among the Chamars than other lower castes: The changes in various aspects of life have occurred more among the Chamars than other lower castes. Multiple factors have worked for differential level of changes between the Chamars, but most important of them are differential level of aspiration and leadership among the Chamars brought about by their improved education, better occupation, greater contact and unity among their caste members.

FACTORS OF CHANGE:

The changes that have occurred among the Chamars in various aspects of their life are not the result of one single factor, but an inter play of a large number of factors, of which about 20 aspects are given below and they include spread of education, change in occupation, change in population size, desire to improve position by reducing the gap between the higher and lower castes; increased income, spread of communication, changes in the attitude towards marriage, contact with outside world, migration, better care of women, improved health facilities, increased age of marriage, governmental facilities provided to Dalits, adoption of new deities, adoption of prajapatya form in place of Asura form, governmental restriction over polygamy, increase in expenditure on marriage, preference of independent life, desire to avoid conflicts, greater entrepreneurship, political consciousness, election and votes and organizational support.

Of all the factors stated above, education is most important. It has, along with other factors, directly contributed to the different areas of change. Change in education set in motion a number of changes by initiating change in occupation, income and aspiration of the Chamar. Change of occupation and desire to improve the position by reducing the gap are respectively second and third important factors of change and they have individually attributed greatly to the changes in areas of different aspects of their life.

Factors of change can be broadly classified into two categories: universalistic and particularistic. Universalistic factors as we have already noted, are those which have contributed to the change in different aspects of life not only among the Chamars but also among other higher castes. Particularistic factors cover only those which have attributed to the change mainly among the Chamars. Universalistic factors include all, except the desire to improve the position by

reducing the gap, governmental facilities provided to the Dalits, adoption of new deities and adoption of prajapatya form of marriage in place of Asura form, which are categorised as particularistic factors.

Several factors of change serve to reinforce other factors of change, the results of one factor becoming in turn the cause of another. For instance, adoption of deities, which is the result of change of education, occupation and legislative support, has in turn brought about changes in modes, motivations and venue of worship of the Chamar. Furthermore, change in political consciousness has brought about change in political association and participation.

This serves to underline the fact that the different factors of change that have been identified should not be treated in isolation. They have been differentiated only for analytical purposes, but in real life they operate as a complex matrix of factors inextricably intertwined, in a manner relative to the specific situation obtaining in an area.

CHANGE OF STATUS:

In the previous chapters, various aspects of social, economic and political life of the Chamars during and after the Movement have been analysed, and the changes brought about along with the factors of changes have been identified and explained. Based on the analysis, an attempt has been made in the present chapter to describe and explain the change of status among the Chamars, both in ascribed and achieved status.

Change of status among the Chamars refers to alterations that have come about over time in the ascribed and achieved positions occupied by them. This change of position among them has been studied and indicated in detail while explaining the term status with reference to several parameters reflecting

important areas of social privileges and status symbols. These parameters are as follows:

1. Adoption and worshipping sanskritic deities;
2. Temple entry;
3. Using sanskritic literature;
4. Using the services of the Brahmin Priests;
5. Serving of food to higher castes;
6. Entering in the houses of the higher castes;
7. Use of common wells;
8. Use of common schools;
9. Use of village roads;
10. Mode of address;
11. Education;
12. Occupation;
13. Housing pattern;
14. Participation in the village economic life;
15. Participation in the municipality; and
16. Participation in the village politics.

The changes in most of the above areas have been far-reaching as well as complex. Before the nature and factors of change in each sphere is discussed in detail, a highly simplified summary of the broad direction of change among the Chamars in between and after the Movement have been stated.

CHANGE OF STATUS: AREAS, NATURE AND DIRECTION:

Adoption and worshipping Sanskritic deities: Changes in the worship of deities have been discussed. Based on the discussion, it can be said that worship of deities is another area where significant changes have taken place and the trend of

change is towards adoption of sanskritic deities for the purpose of worship. The Chamars worshipped mainly the matas (Kalimata, sitlama) and the spirits (prêt, pisach and rakshasas). The worship of Rama, Krishna and Shiva was not in vogue among them mainly because of their fear of displeasure of the deities as they considered themselves too low to worship them and the feared incurring the wrath of higher castes.

Earlier, they were observed to worship Rama, Krishna and Shiva along with their traditional deities and spirits. They were also found to observe fasting on important days like Rama Navami, and Shiva-Ratri. They started worshipping them (Rama, Krishna, Shiva) along with their changes in education and occupation. These changes installed within them a desire to adopt the deities of the higher castes in their efforts changed their status. Their efforts were further strengthened with the enactment of the Untouchability Offences Act, combined by their faith in their own castes strength. By providing them the legal and mental support has helped them to overcome their fear of reappraisal from the high castes. To start with, the worship of these deities was initiated by and confined only among a group of few individuals; subsequently it became a practice because of the encouragement and support of their caste panchayat of the village. This change is very significant along with this change; the Chamars had modified their motivation and mode of worship and also started entering into the temples of higher castes etc. For instance, they not only worshipped to secure protection from disease and death. Securing salvation of the soul has also become their motivation for worship. In the same way, animal sacrifice, which was once their primary mode of worship, is gradually becoming obsolete.

The worship of Rama, Krishna and Shiva has not only been adopted by the Chamars, but also by the other lower castes in the village in their efforts to reduce

the gap between them and the higher castes along with the changes in their education, occupation and income.

TEMPLE ENTRY:

Along with the adoption of sanskritic deities, changes have taken place in the areas of temples entry for the purpose of worship, even though it has yet to become a regular practice. The Chamars worshipped matas and the spirits in their own houses or shrines. The worships were performed mostly by their caste priests or by the elderly men from the families. Animal sacrifice was very common. During this period they neither felt the need and urge of entering into the temples of Rama, Krishna, and Shiva, wherein the higher caste members offered their worships, nor did they have the courage because of their fear of resistance from the higher castes.

The Chamars has been found entering into the temples of the higher castes, even though this has not become a regular practice. They have been observed to enter in the temples only on special occasions like Rama Navmi and Janamasthami, largely because of their acquaintance within the traditional forms of worship, either in their own homes or in their own shrines.

The question of their entering into the temples arose along with their adoption of Rama, Krishna and Shiva for worship and subsequent changes and modifications in their motivations and modes for worship after and during the movement. Initially, a few Chamars, performing non-traditional jobs, like agricultural cultivation and service, and were strongly motivated to change their position along with their adoption of the above mentioned deities, felt the urge of entering and subsequently started entering into the temples of the higher castes for offering their worship. The Untouchability Offence Act and their caste panchayat

provided them the required legal and mental support. The efforts of this group caught the attention of others and they also started entering the temples.

Temple entry, thus, is the result of their effort to adopt higher castes values and norms with regard to deities and modes and motivation for worship initiated by change in their education and occupation. Legislative enactments and organizational support further provided them to acquire strength in their effort to improve their position. This has become a common practice also among other lower castes, even though in comparison to Chamars, temple entry is confined to other lower caste families. About the lower caste respondents other than Chamars have not yet entered any temple.

USING THE SERVICES OF THE BRAHMIN PRIESTS:

Using the services of the Brahmin priests in the worship of the deities, and also in the performance of rituals relating to life cycle (birth, marriage and death), is becoming common and finding a favour particularly among the well-to-do Chamar families, which is completely a new phenomenon among them. Prior to 1998, this was unthinkable, partly because of their inability to secure the service of the Brahmin priests and partly due to their traditional practices and poor economic condition. Traditionally, they used the services of their own caste priests, or elder persons of their own families to worship and in the performance of other rituals. No Brahmin priest was also willing to serve them because of their (Chamars) low social position.

After the movement, using the services of the Brahmin priests had become a common practice, for those who can afford it, i.e. pay the fees demanded by the priests. As a result, it has remained confined to only rich families. These families have started using the services of the Brahmin priest in the worship of deities, like

Rama, Krishna and Shiva and also in the performance of many other rituals like Kaun Pujan, Chhathi etc. This change has taken place after the movement with the active support of the caste panchayat.

This change has occurred only among the Chamars and not among other lower castes because of their differential level of changes. Two factors have worked for this change. Firstly, the changes that have taken place among the Chamars. The Chamars, along with the changes in their education, occupation and income, adopted deities like, Rama, Krishna and Shiva and also other sanskritic rituals, and in this process started utilizing the services of the Brahmin priests. Secondly, the changes that have taken place among the Brahmin priests. The Brahmin priests are gradually becoming less pre-occupied due to general lack of faith in the religion. As a result, they are finding it difficult to maintain their own families and are, therefore, accepting the offer of better-off Chamars, who pay higher fees.

USE OF SANSKRITIC LITERATURE:

Along with the use of the services of the Brahmin priests, the Chamars have started using the sanskritic literature. The sanskritic literature in the worship of deities were not used by the Chamars earlier. They followed their traditional forms of worship, which were performed by their own caste priests. In 1998, the Chamars have been found to use sanskritic literature, even though it has remained confined among those who have started using the services of the Brahmin priests.

This change has occurred along with the changes in their religious beliefs and practices along with the changes in their education, occupation, income and also in their aspirations. The process of this change has also been facilitated by

their caste panchayat, which in a meeting decided to shake off some of their traditional beliefs and adopt the values of the higher castes people.

This change has taken along with the change in use of the services of the Brahmin priests. Among the other lower castes members, this change has taken place only among the Chamars.

SERVING OF FOOD TO THE HIGHER CASTES:

Changes are also taking place with regard to serving of food to the higher castes. Serving food to the higher castes in the earlier period was simply unthinkable. None from among them dared to serve food to the Brahmins and other higher castes. But the situation in this is not the same. They had started serving food to the higher castes including the Brahmins, even though it has remained confined to serving of food outside one's own houses. The higher castes including the Brahmins do not mind taking food from them, even from among the other lower castes, outside their own houses, and mainly outside the villages. In fact the Chamar respondents have stated that the Brahmins and other higher castes people have accepted food from them outside the village. Some of them said that the higher castes people have accepted food from them even from the village tea-stalls. The adherence to double standards with regard to acceptance of food by the higher castes can be explained on the basis of their fear of social condemnation, which they may receive because of violation of tradition rules relating to acceptance of food. One of the Brahmin respondents said, "Personally, I do not mind taking food from the Chamars in their houses, but I am afraid of doing so". The same feeling was shared almost unanimously by other higher castes respondents. The Chamars are also aware of this and therefore, even if they invite the Brahmins and other higher caste people to their houses during marriages or other festivals, they do not insist on their taking food in their houses.

These changes have occurred not only among the Chamars, but have also taken place among all lower castes. These are the result of changes in the socio-economic and political conditions of the people in general and the lower castes in particular as well as changes in the attitude of the higher caste people. All the higher caste respondents, who were interviewed, stated that they did not mind taking food from the lower castes provided that it was offered to them outside their own homes. They do not take food at the houses of the lower castes, because of several social and cultural pressures in the village. For instance, if a Brahmin takes food in the house of a Chamar or lower castes then he is looked down upon by his fellow caste members because this is still considered a violation of caste rules regarding commensality. This problem does not arise if they take food from the Chamars outside their houses.

ENTRY INTO THE HOUSES OF THE HIGHER CASTES:

A change in the norms regarding entry of Chamars into the houses of the higher castes is nothing sort of dramatic. Before the movement, entry into the houses of the higher castes was practically forbidden, excepting on certain special circumstances like delivery of a child, which was a job of a Chamar or a lower caste Dai. They could not even expect to enter within the courtyard of the houses without a specific reason, whereas none of them, irrespective of sex, face any restrictions with regard to their entry into the houses of the higher caste people. On the contrary, many of them, like the Teachers of the School, Postman, Dai and caste leaders are welcome in the houses of the higher castes. They are also offered a seat in the rooms of their houses when available and served tea and snacks. On official occasions, they are also invited to have food with them, even though the food is served in separate utensils, usually glass or stainless steel.

This change has also taken place gradually after movement not only among the Chamars, but also among other lower castes. It is the result of overall changes in the society and the changes in socio-economic positions of the lower castes, brought about by changes in their education and occupation followed by their increased involvement in the socio-economic and political life of the village.

USE OF WELLS, ROADS, SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS:

Changes have also taken place with regard to the use of wells, roads, schools and hospitals by Chamars. Before movement, Chamars faced several disabilities with regard to the use of wells and roads. None of them were allowed to draw water from the common well, and had to depend on the favour of other for getting their pitchers filled with water, if they wanted to have water from the wells used by the higher castes. They were also not parallelly, allowed to use the roads of Brahmins and other higher castes localities, except in special circumstances when the higher castes people required them, such as at the time of delivery. During the movement, the situation has changed vastly. None of them now face any problem with regard to the use of wells and roads. They are not prohibited to draw water from the wells used by the higher castes, if they did not go to do so, nor they are prevented to use the common roads and enter into localities of the higher castes. This change has taken place not only among the Chamars but also among the other lower castes gradually along with the change in the socio-economic conditions of the lower castes people and the introduction of new legislations providing punishments to the individual for imposing caste disabilities on the Dalits.

MODE OF ADDRESS TO PERSONS:

With regard to modes of address to the person, not much change has taken place during the movement. Chamars never expected that the higher castes people

will call them by names without using derogatory terms. The Chamars addressed the higher castes people by using such honorific terms like 'panditji' (for Brahmins), 'Malik' (for Chaudhari), and Lalaji (for Kayastha), and the higher caste people called them by taking their first name. Adherence to these modes of address was very keenly and enthusiastically observed by the higher castes especially the elderly people, because of their desire to maintain the social distance and violation of this by the Chamar people would bring punishment to them.

Despite several changes in their socio-economic and political life, not much change has taken place in this regard. It has occurred in only those Chamar persons, who are mostly either matriculate or have studied above matric standard, performing non-traditional occupation and established some leadership over their caste people because of their contact and influence with the political leaders. Only these people have been found to address the higher caste people by taking their names or by using some honorific and turn address by them in their own names without any derogatory term, Malik, which has become a common term is address an important man.

All efforts of the lower castes to bring about change in the modes of address because of the changes in their education, occupational and economic conditions and style of life have been, in general, frowned upon by the higher castes. And they have not been able to gain much, although the members of the younger generation, among them, have decided to carry on their resistance in respect of the modes of address.

EDUCATION:

The change in the educational sphere of the Chamars has been already dealt in detail in earlier chapters, while indicating the change in the literacy and

educational standard of the Chamars. It has been observed that the changes in the educational level of the Chamars before the movement have been nothing short of dramatic. From the initial situation, where there was among them very little motivation and awareness of the need for education. After the movement the educational position of the Chamars has improved immensely.

This change, as already indicated, is the result of a complex factor, the most important of which are the increase in the motivational level of the Chamars with regard to education and their increased awareness of its importance combined with the establishment of the basic educational infrastructure in the village and facilities made available to them through constitutional provisions.

Two points should be noted in this regard, based on earlier information; one is that the rise in the educational level of the Chamars is broadly in consonance with the general rise in the education level of the village, although the Chamars have performed much better in this regard than other lower castes of the village. The second point to be noted is that within the Chamars, the increase in educational standard has not been uniform. It has been a more conspicuous among the younger generation.

OCCUPATION:

The change in the occupational pattern has been already discussed in the previous chapters, on the basis of the available information, that occupation another area where significant trend in this process of change has been increased diversification of occupation among the Chamars, and as a consequence of this, a relative disassociation from their traditional occupation. Before the movement the working Chamar population was engaged in agricultural labour or leather work. During the movement the situation has been vastly changed. All, with an

exception who are still now agricultural labour or who deals with leather work, are engaged in occupations other than their traditional occupation. Another significant change is the entry of the Chamars into agricultural cultivation on leased land and business for the first time. Last but not the least, there has been an increase both in the number of self employed persons and also in the sources of self employment. The number of self-employed persons has increased. The sources of self employment have also increased leather work, business, trade and commerce and agriculture.

According to the available sources the trend towards seeking new-traditional occupation, most often linked immediately with rise in social status is perceived more among the younger generation. This may be explained by the greater spread of education among the younger generation as said above, combined with a much higher level of entrepreneurship and aspirations among them. They have also been assisted significantly in their quest for new occupations by the statutory reservations in services and also by the development in communication. Also this trend of diversification of occupation is a greater or lesser degree a common trend observable in all caste during the period of study. However, as with education, it is noted that the Chamars have taken greater advantage of the new employment opportunities available to them in comparison to other lower castes.

HOUSING PATTERN:

The changes in the housing pattern of the Chamars have again already been indicated. Based on this information, it can be said that the housing pattern of the Chamars have changed considerably and has become very similar to that of the higher castes, even though the limitations with regard to the location of their habitation sites have almost remained unchanged. Before movement although

Chamars had lived in the houses that they owned, these were only kutchha single storied houses without basic amenities including electricity and drinking water facilities. After the movement they live in pukki houses, including some double storied houses. Majority of these houses are provided with electricity and with drinking water facilities. Most of these pukki houses have an assortment of furniture such as benches, tables, chairs etc. meant for the guests.

The changes in the housing pattern have not remained confined only among the Chamars. It has occurred also among other lower castes. But the degree of change, as indicated earlier, is more among the Chamars comparative increase in income followed by change in occupational and aspiration pattern combined with governmental assistance contributed greatly to this change. There is yet another factor that is the Local body, which greatly helped them in securing financial assistance from the government. It should be mentioned that their influence in the Local body because of their numerical strength in the village and their political association, greatly helped in moving the municipality to take necessary steps to help them.

The only aspect in this context with regard to which no change can be observed is the location of their houses. The Chamar colony remains separated from the colonies of higher and middle castes, despite the improvement in their economic conditions reflected in better houses. The Chamars who are living in rented house have acquired these only from among their own and other lower castes members, and not from the higher caste colonies. In this regard, no difference has been noticed between the situation of the Chamars and that of the other lower castes.

PARTICIPATION IN THE VILLAGE ECONOMIC LIFE:

The participation of the Chamars in the economic life of the village beyond the traditional sphere of their caste has market a beginning, all though this is confined to the males. This is evident from the Chamars contribution in the field of agriculture cultivation, tradition and business as observed earlier. Prior to this, their participation in the wider economic life of the village was virtually nil, primarily because of their lack of entrepreneurship and the absence of organised institutions in which they could participate combined with the various factors obstructing the spread of education and diversification of occupation among them.

The major factors which have contributed to their wide economic participation, along with the change in their education followed by change in their occupation and ownership of land and animals and the formation of the cooperative society in the village, are changes in the levels of their aspirations and political association as well as influence and control over their own caste members and other lower castes. For example, all the Chamars, who are members of the cooperative, are literate and educated and are engaged either in the prestigious non-traditional occupations of cultivation or business, besides being active members of the ruling party. They are also regarded as leaders of the Chamars and other lower castes.

Among all the lower castes in the village, only the Chamars have been only able to participate in the village economy, although this has been confined to a few members of the Chamar caste. Nobody amongst other lower castes has been found to be engaged in agricultural cultivation or business. Also none of them are the members of the Multipurpose Credit Cooperative Society. Differences in their large levels of entrepreneurship and political influence have largely contributed to this differential level of participation in the economic life of the village.

PARTICIPATION IN THE MUNICIPALITY:

The Chamars participation in the municipality was taken indirectly, that is through their caste representatives. Prior to the period, they had no participation in the municipality, although there was a municipality functioning in the village. Membership of the early municipality was confined to higher castes and there was no provision for compulsory representation of the lower castes. So far, some persons have represented the Chamars and other lower castes in the municipality at different periods of time. All of them have been elected.

Despite the opportunities made available to them the participation of the Chamars in the municipality mainly at the initial period was far from satisfactory. Earlier, the Chamar members rarely initiated any discussions and most of the time performed a passive role mainly because of their initial inhibitions, ignorance and lack of understanding about their role in the municipality. It is only after the movement the situation changed considerably and the Chamars have now started playing important roles in the municipality through their elected caste members.

The Chamars now perceive the municipality as an instrument for their own development and they try to utilize it for the betterment of their socio-economic conditions and, thereby, improve their power and influence in the village. They not only play an active role through their representatives in the decision making process of the municipality, but also determine a great extent the functioning of the municipality and election of its office bearers. The Chamars, through their strength of votes make a decisive impact on the victory of their chosen candidate. Owing to their electoral strength, the contenders for municipality election try to

appease them, which have further contributed to the increase in their position and influence in the village.

Among the lower castes, participation in the municipality be it village organization has remained confined mainly to the Chamars. The factors which have facilitated their election and participation in the municipality, besides the statutory provisions and caste-wise population strength, are their organizational ability, education, adoption of new occupation, political awareness and participation.

PARTICIPATION IN VILLAGE POLITICS:

The participation of the Chamars in the village politics is a recent phenomenon and it has been facilitated by their participation in village economy and the municipality. In early, their participation in the village politics was nil because there was no scope for participation and partly due to the fact that they had very little ideas about the details of politics or votes and they considered politics and the domain of higher caste and educated people. The municipality elections held and they called for their participation in the village politics and it was further strengthened with subsequent elections held at different levels. It was around this time that the educated among them started realizing (1) that politics is not an exclusive preserve of the higher castes; (2) that they also have a role to play in the political process and (3) that their involvement in village politics as a group would strengthen their power and position. The realization found expression in their active participation in the municipality.

The participation of most of the Chamars in politics is mainly an indirect one, as this is done through their leaders who happened to be the members of the

municipality at certain period of time, and are also the members of the Political party.

The political participation and dominance of the Chamars, which started gradually with the understanding of politics and involvement in the municipality, reached its culmination when the political leaders, recognizing the strength of their votes and influence entrusted the Chamar leaders, along with others, the responsibilities of organization of the election campaign in the parliamentary election in the village and its surrounding areas, not only among the lower castes but also among others. Their political dominance was given further momentum when the leaders in the municipality elections informally ascertained their views prior to selection of contestants for the area. All these, while resulting in their recognition as a political force in the village, strengthened their political participation and dominance in the level of the village. All the political discussions, like the political creditability of the persons seeking nomination, the organization of the campaign, and decision regarding the village are now regularly made after consultations with their leaders. The people, interested in political contacts for recommendations of employment or other reasons often come to them and seek their guidance and assistance.

FACTORS OF CHANGE:

The analysis of change in the different spheres of both ascribed and achieved status reveals that change of status among the Chamars is directly related to the changes that have taken place in different aspects of their life, as well as in the life of the whole village.

The information reveals that multiple factors have contributed to change of status and these include mainly change in aspiration, change in motivations for

education, increased education, diversification and disassociation with traditional occupation, change in ownership position, and entrepreneurship, increased income, development of political awareness, political association and participation, adoption of higher castes deities as well as their modes and motivation of worship, use of service of the Brahmin priests and sanskritic literature, adoption of vegetarianism, governmental support in the form of legislation and finance, development in communication, and infrastructure, and change in the general attitude of the people have also greatly contributed to the change of status.

Of the above stated factors of change of status, individual education has been found to be most important and this is evident, along with other factors, education have helped in initiating change in 12 different areas of status. Next to education, is occupation and governmental legislative support Change in aspiration of the Chamars themselves has worked as the third important factors of change.

Many of these factors serve to strengthen and reinforce other factors of change, the result of one factor becoming inturn the cause of another. For example, change in education has brought out change in occupation, housing and aspiration which intern promoted the Chamars to adopt and internalise the values, norms of the higher castes.