

particular castes in new rural power structure witnessed an important shift in power-dependence relations in rural Bihar. The analysis of historical data and the present scenario in the present work provides the reader a clear-cut understanding of the changes in community power structure of the rural Bihar. The work is very useful not only for academicians but also for general readers interested in the historicity of the current processes of change in the society of Bihar.

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Abbasi, Parvez A. 1999: *Social Inequalities among Indian Muslims*, Udaipur: A. C. Brothers, pp.x+ 128, Rs. 180 (HB).

Social inequities of status, class and power-rank formed of influence, income and dominance originate from the unequal distribution of prestige, wealth and power (resources) among human beings. Such a distribution is inherent in the differences of moral consciousness, technical efficiency and regulatory legitimacy of human energies operated in the time-space context. Hence, the social inequalities present a universal phenomenon of vertical, complex and dynamic nature. This trinitarian (Weberian) model of the inequality formation in social, economic and political dimensions offers a vast variety of combinations ranging from a perfect co-relation to a clear-cut separation among the three types. With egalitarian values forming the core of the Islamic faith and the Indian society grounded in the institutionalized inequality, the Indian Muslims attract special attention of social scientists with strong field orientation. Systematic studies of recent origin on inequalities among Indian Muslims show the existence of caste-like groups; namely, the Ashrafs (pure Muslims descended from the Sayyid, etc.) and the Non-Ashrafs (Converts) attributed with membership by birth, endogamy, traditional occupation, *Biradari* (caste) panchayat and secular orientation substituting for the Hindu rituals. The structural (caste) inequalities persist even on conversion to the Islam and the Christianity as is evident from a number of social movements for the recognition of 'backward caste status' among them.

The study focuses on the Gaddi of Western Uttar Pradesh, originally an offshoot of the Ghosi, associated with the pastoralism-based traditional occupation of vegetable-growing and dairying and, now, caught in the process of social transformation. The occupation determines their status as a lower middle order of clean occupational castes, i.e., near to the Jat and the Ahir in the social hierarchy. The Meerut region, the extreme western part of Uttar Pradesh, in the 'upper doab' between the Ganges and the Jamuna that came increasingly under intensive cultivation in view of various infra-structural developments taking place right from the Mughal period and remained in the centre of political activities, social reforms and revolutions in the vicinity of the national capital is the regional setting of their social organization. Rural hard work ethos of the middle and lower order peasantry are quite dominant in the region.

The internal organization of the Gaddi that reflects a process of their traditional adjustments to the ecological change transformed from the pastoral life characterized by 'pahalwan' (wrestler) as the status symbol of the Biradari (community) as a whole to vegetable-growing and dairying and, later, to mechanized agricultural activities for producing grains for domestic consumption and potatoes for marketing. In the town setting the traditional occupation gets along through the selling of *Khoya* (a milk product) in and around the capital city. Consequently, the Gaddi peasants have been transformed into farmers amidst whom the pahalwan has now lost lustre and the Chaudhary

(head of their Biradari panchayat) has become the status symbol. Even occupational diversification occurred in the allied sector of agriculture wherein a cold storage for potatoes was constructed jointly by a Gaddi and a Mahajan. Profits from the venture were at first used by the Gaddi owner to buy a car for commuting his children to a convent school at Meerut. By this, other children also got inspired to go to school in the village. Educational and political exposures attempts for reforms in the Biradari by the elites to replace feast for *sharbat* (soft drink) and to scale down dowry but these were opposed by the muscle power. The strains of modern and traditional forces led to the split of the Biradaris into the Sharbati and the Dawati. Unification efforts of a lawyer during the Meerut riots (1982) could not succeed and the two Biradari became endogamous by restricting vertical ties and extending horizontal ties through lineage exogamy in a regional boundary. The Biradari panchayat headed by a Chaudhary (ascriptive position in a lineage) maintains and strengthens the caste-like structure and solidarity but without the practice of any rituals according to the sanctity to caste.

Interactions of the Gaddi with their neighbours- both the Muslims and the Hindus- operate on the basis of *jajmani/faslana* or partially in commercial terms. Six caste-like groups (Barber, Carpenter, etc.) provide services of various kinds, who are paid at the crops or partially paid in cash. Of the three Hindu caste in the village, the chamar provided labour for agriculture and the Bhangi performed the function of cleaning. When the Bhangi withdrew their services of cleaning night soil during the Meerut riots, the Gaddi persuaded some members of a lower Muslim group, the Bhisti, to carry out the task. The other Bhisti members opposed their action and, later, this led to the split of Bhisti into two Biradaris. Therefore, the Gaddi are the patrons served on the *jajmani* lines cutting across religious boundaries. Their reference model is the Jat who consider themselves equal to the Rajput and not lower than the Brahmin.

Evidently, the study provides very clear theoretical and methodological perspectives for understanding a social phenomenon. Sociological enquiry of a single caste needs attention to interactions among castes. An overlooking of such interactional pattern of castes would limit the attention of the enquiry to attributes of a caste and, thereby, miss the existing ground reality. The concept of Biradari taking scholars one across rural-urban dichotomy adds a new dimension to the existing regional studies. The phenomenon of fission or sub-caste formation occurring not only due to occupational differentiation but also due to reforms and power dynamics is clearly revealed here. Besides, it explains the situation of peculiar cultural ethos of a minority which undergoes the self-generated development without being pressurized by majority.

This study comprising six chapters, a bibliography, an annexure, an acknowledgement, a preface and a foreword by Professor M.S Agwani, former Vice Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University and member, Minority Commission, India, is simple, short and thought-provoking. It is to serve fully all those scholars who are interested in probing structural and cultural phenomena in Indian society. Finally, having a fine get-up, an attractive printing and a pretty style of presentation this book is unfortunately missing the numbering of chapters and a rigorous proof reading which can, if incorporated, add more to its utility and lustre.

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