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DOWNWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY: SOME OBSERVATIONS¹

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Downward social mobility has not yet been analysed adequately by sociologists. The objective of this paper is to highlight some of the dimensions and contexts, forms and factors, of downward social mobility in Indian society. Why has downward social mobility not engaged the attention of social scientists? The belief that downward mobility is involitional and not desired at the levels of group, individual and family and, therefore, it does not occur, appears to have been responsible for its neglect. Such a view is unwarranted and unfounded. Downward social mobility does occur and is a complex process involving social and economic, cultural and motivational, factors.

Furthermore, we need to distinguish between *specific* downward status mobility and *generalised* downward status mobility, for in India a lag has been observed between upward socio-religious mobility and economic or political mobility. Several sanskritizing castes have moved up in the caste hierarchy by discarding their "polluting" callings without, however, a corresponding change in their economic and political position [Harper 1968:36-65; Sharma 1970a: 1537-43]. Indeed, when the lower castes imitate the cultural traits of upper castes, their economic position often declines owing to the abandonment of lucrative economic activities. When this lack of fit between a rising social (caste) position and a declining economic position persists for a period of years, their generalised status may decline below what it was when they started to emulate the upper castes. Downward economic mobility here is an unplanned consequence of planned upward social mobility. Efforts to change the agrarian social structure, such as land reforms, would also force lower status upon the landlords. This 'withdrawal of status respect' (Hagen 1962: 77, 83) has varied motivational and other repercussions on the privileged sections of the society. Downward social mobility is, thus, a structural and historical reality observable in diverse forms and in different contexts.

I

Social decline may affect a lone individual or a social group as a whole (Sorokin 1964: 133). Mobility is not a symmetrical phenomenon (Miller 1969: 325-340). The patterns of mobility do not bear a definitive character. A nation can be high in one measure of mobility and low in another. The same may be found with an individual and/or a group. Therefore, sometimes it is difficult to connect the mobility of one kind with another. A nation may have most downward movement and may also have most upward mobility at the same time. It may be difficult to relate the aspects of downward movement with that of upward mobility at the national level. Similarly, an individual may have upward economic movement and downward social movement simultaneously and *vice versa*.

As a result of industrialisation (Miller 1969) the agricultural and manual workers become non-manual and skilled workers, but the sons of elite fathers are not always entitled to or able to enter their fathers' social positions. Thus, downward mobility is more indicative of social fluidity than upward mobility. Whatever combination of upward and downward mobility may prevail in a society, it is clear that when a society drops the sons of the privileged strata out of their original positions or blocks their entry into these positions, it is more open and mobile than a society which has only progressive upward mobility but no mechanism for downgrading the elites. Thus, there are societies having more upward mobility without having more fluidity in social structure and *vice versa*. On the basis of Miller's data two essential points emerge: that downward and upward mobility indicate greater fluidity than upward mobility alone and the two can appear in four combinations which are as follows:

- (a) High downward and high upward mobility (+ +);
- (b) high downward and low upward mobility (+ -);
- (c) low downward and high upward mobility (- +); and
- (d) low downward and low upward mobility (- -).

Our purpose in this paper is to locate the processes of downward social mobility in Indian society rather than to examine the applicability of Miller's model. We submit that downward social mobility has not been very much pronounced in India partly because of

the organically closed character of its social system and partly because of the political structures and conditions that existed in the past. In our view upward mobility has also been quite slow in India for the same reasons.

Downward social mobility is generally unplanned, non-deliberate and involitional (Saberwal 1972: 121). Saberwal distinguishes between : (a) a change in the society's *organisational* principles, and (b) a *positional* change for the individuals concerned. For the first case he cites the abolition of princely privileges and the leather workers' decline due to a growing preference for factory-made shoes in the town he studied. With regard to positional changes Saberwal cites an example of a candidate who repeatedly contests and loses expensive elections and consequently his position declines compared to what it had been earlier. Saberwal's remarks on downward mobility are, however, casual and incidental, and his main concern was with upward status mobility. A satisfactory framework for analysing social mobility, we submit, must allow adequately for motivation or consciousness. Downward mobility due to organisational change should be related to structure, ideology and behaviour of the people and its consequences also should be taken into consideration. Thus, there is a need to investigate social decline in the context of both organizational or structural change and positional change. In other words, downward social mobility resulting from social and economic innovations and transformations on the one hand, and the failure of the groups and individuals to maintain the status of the ascending generation on the other hand, has not been seriously investigated.

II

The possibility of social mobility in the 19th century and earlier in the caste system is now generally accepted. Burton Stein (1968: 78-84) has noted the case of a group of Sudra Srivaishnavas who achieved upward mobility through religious roles at the Tiruvengadam Temple at Tirupati in the fifteenth century. Elsewhere, some castes have been able to upgrade their caste rank by getting political power and royal decrees. In course of time these upwardly mobile castes received priestly recognition and also underwent changes in nomenclature, traditional occupation and ritual idioms. A number of lower castes in course of time achieved Kshatriya status

by migrating to other places and establishing dominion over the native people (Panikkar 1955: 8).

While the fact of upward caste mobility has been noted by many analysts, its consequences for those whose position has remained unchanged has not been adequately explored. Our point is that upward mobility, if restricted to some caste groups only, accentuates structural cleavages and imbalances. Some castes move up, and others remain where they have been. This differential movement adversely affects those castes which remain static. Some castes which were inferior in past may now move up to a higher position in the caste hierarchy. This is true not only of castes; but within the caste, different families and within the families different individuals are also differentially affected by such a group-specific upward mobility. Thus without moving down or even without being affected by generalised decline, the relative position of groups, families and individuals might decline as a result of the upward mobility of other units of society. Such a consequential decline has been conspicuously neglected in sociological analysis and only upward mobility has engaged the attention of sociologists so far.

Ahmad (1971: 171) reports that low or 'backward' castes advancing higher status claims went on increasing at different censuses in different states from 1901 to 1931. In 1901 the number of castes claiming high status was only 21. The number increased to 148 in 1931. In many cases a single caste made more than one claim and these claims changed in the successive censuses. A number of castes claimed Kshatriya status in 1921 census and the same castes claimed the Brahmin status in 1931. Similarly, many castes claimed Vaishya status in 1921 and Kshatriya status in 1931. It would be necessary to know about the castes which superseded and the castes which were superseded and the factors which contributed to this discriminating mobility.

Since the field of downward mobility is still largely unexplored, we are more interested here in analysing its manifestations than its structural constraints. This would enable us to postulate some hypotheses for empirical investigation. Thus, we propose to analyse the processes underlying downward mobility. However, in this paper it will not be possible for us to analyse interactional relations between those who slide down and those who go up in social hierarchy. Again, our analysis is limited to the phenomenon of sliding down in economic hierarchy mainly in village societies, but we

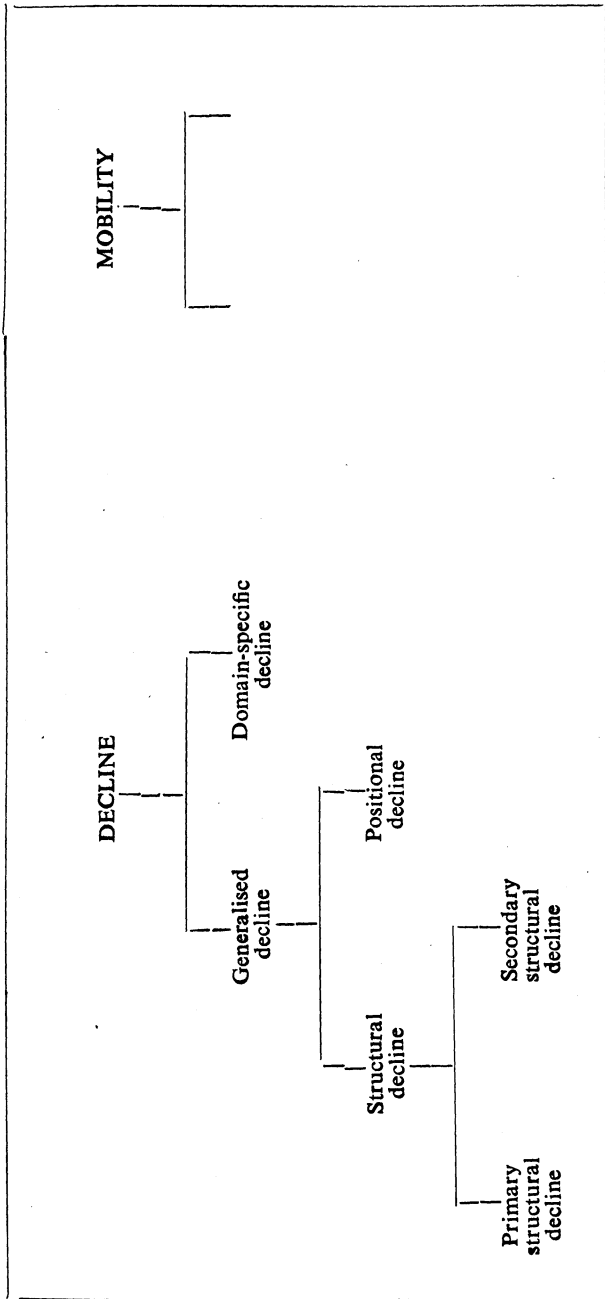
would also relate it to caste segments and to other aspects of social life. We present first a formalised view of the forms and contexts of downward mobility and in the last section of the paper we refer to concrete cases of downward mobility.

In this paper the term '*mobility*' means upward mobility and the term '*decline*' refers to downward mobility. Decline can be categorised into: (a) *generalised* decline, and (b) *domain-specific* decline. Generalised decline refers to total decline of a unit of society, i.e. individual, family, group and nation. Domain-specific decline would mean downward mobility of these units in a particular domain or aspect. Domain-specific decline may also result from mobility of a particular type, or as an unplanned or unforeseen consequence of a particular type of mobility. Generalised decline can be categorised into '*structural decline*' and '*positional decline*' on the basis of the nature of the decline itself. Structural decline follows changes in the organizational principles of the society; positional decline, in contrast, implies only a movement of persons within a continuing structure of society. Structural decline can, on the basis of the nature of its effectivity for the units, be further classified into "*primary structural decline*" and "*secondary structural decline*". Primary structural decline refers to radical changes which may be due to pressure from above; for example, from the threat of war by a big power and/or from elitist reformatory policies, or from pressure from below, e.g. from a Maoist revolution. In either case, the decline would reflect certain normative pressures. However, the nature of the normative pressure would be different in these two situations of primary structural decline. Secondary structural decline refers to indirect and immediately less effective changes to which individuals and groups are exposed. Primary structural decline is brought about by the direct impact of these forces of change on the affected groups whereas the decline of these groups may set off, though indirectly, the decline of other groups as well. Secondary structural decline may be an intended or unintended consequence of the structural changes. The analytical diagram² of downward social mobility and its various forms have been presented in Chart 1 on p. 64.

PRIMARY STRUCTURAL DECLINE

Primary decline may follow the creation of new structural principles, organizations and units which replace the old ones. Such a

CHART I
UPWARD AND DOWNWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY



change may restructure the existing status system, including property relations, denying the erstwhile privileged groups and individuals their traditional prerogatives and conferring these upon the underdogs of the old order. The abolition of the Jagirdari and Zamindari systems, for example, expropriated the rights of the old landowning classes and conferred peasant proprietary rights on the ex-tenants. This is the formal situation; we shall consider the realities shortly. Changes in organisational principles and structural innovations, such as non-recognition of the traditional village and caste councils and installation of statutory Panchayati Raj agencies, have also led to downward mobility. The effects of these measures could be seen on the office-bearers and landowners in terms of their statutory non-recognition and sliding down socially, politically and economically in the village community.

Primary decline takes place when highly placed sections or groups are forced by the militant pressure groups to come down to a lower level at par with the commoners. It is symbolic of structural upheavals and revolutions. The privileged have no choice but to accept the dictates of such an organised force. Such a pattern of decline of old established groups requires a high degree of mobilization accompanied by intense polarisation of interests and sharpening of ideological conflict. Naxalite movement in West Bengal, Kerala and in some other parts could be said to have caused the decline of *jotdars*, absentee landowners and rich peasant proprietors at least to some extent and for some time. However, this enforced downward mobility was foiled through a counter-offensive launched by the youth-wing of another political party after some time. Our point is that ideological and class polarisation is always found operating in the background of primary structural decline as a result of pressures from below. These form part of a strategy of structural change and the emergence of a new social order. Primary decline can also occur as a result of 'elitist' intervention from above.

SECONDARY STRUCTURAL DECLINE

Changes in organisational principles may affect some people directly and immediately as we have noted above; they may affect some others indirectly, as for instance, the dependents of the landed gentry cosequent upon Zamindari Abolition. Land reforms have also led to secondary structural decline of working peasants and margi-

nal tenants. Since land reform gave tenurial stability, it motivated the big tenants for agricultural innovations and mechanisation of farming. "With agriculture developing along capitalist lines the process of ruination and proletarianization of the bulk of the peasantry is growing more intensely all the time" (Kotovsky 1964:160). The emergence of rich capitalist peasantry on the one hand and pauperisation of the working peasant households and their reduction to the status of proletarian households on the other has also been identified (Saith and Tankha 1972 : 712) as an indirect result of the 'green revolution'. The process of impoverishment of most small peasant households has increased recently. Saith and Tankha observed that rapid expansion of the forces of production has intensified the process of differentiation and, consequently, of polarisation of the peasantry. This process transforms the rich surplus-making peasants into machine-using capitalist farmers. "The same process, however, spells the ruination of small working-peasant classes. An inescapable conclusion must be that the 'diffusion of prosperity' hypothesis (we referred to in an earlier section) . . . does not stand up to scrutiny" (Saith and Tankha 1972 : 723). The accentuation of economic inequalities denoted by the emergence of capitalist farmers on the one end and pauperised peasant-workers on the other was perhaps an unintended and indirect consequence of land reforms and later of the 'green revolution. Thus, secondary structural decline results both from intended and unintended consequences of innovations and it takes place both at the level of individuals and of groups. It forms part of the generalised decline.

POSITIONAL DECLINE

Positional decline can be defined as decline of an individual or a group from one social position to another. A number of factors or a combination of factors may be responsible for this decline. Demotion of individuals due to changes in occupations, or due to transfer of persons from one place to another and such other setbacks could be identified as positional decline. These downward movements do not involve a change in the principles of the structure. Positional decline, however, affects the dominant status of persons and groups and, therefore, it would affect other domains of social life of those groups and individuals.

Positional mobility and positional decline are characteristic fea-

tures of a relatively stable society. Srinivas (1966 : 7) observes that as a result of the process of *sanskritization* only positional changes in the system have taken place. He writes: “. . . a caste moves up, above its neighbours, and another comes down, but all this takes place in an essentially stable hierarchical order. The system itself does not change” (Srinivas 1966 : 7). Saberwal (1972 : 121) also states: “In contrast, there may only be *positional* change for the individuals concerned, resulting from an imprudent use of scarce resources as, for example, in repeatedly contesting and losing expensive elections, or in failing to maintain relationships important for generating resources which sustain one’s status”. Positional decline is thus a part of generalised decline, and as such it is related to policies and programmes and their implementation. But it does not result from structural changes as such. Positional decline does not pose a threat to the existing structures.

Bailey (1957), Lynch (1968: 209-240) and Rowe (1969 : 66-77) have also brought to our notice certain processes of social mobility. Though some of these processes represent “unsuccessful” attempts (Rowe 1968: 66-77), others were related to the “decline” of the landowning castes (Bailey 1957). The unsuccessful attempts refer to positional decline of the lower castes who aspired for higher status. The decline of the landowning castes refers to structural decline. However, both unsuccessful attempts and sliding down of landowners are a part of generalised decline.

DOMAIN-SPECIFIC DECLINE

Domain-specific decline stands in contrast to generalised decline. In fact, it is to some extent unplanned and unexpected because it results from upward mobility, and the actor’s motivation is directed towards going up in the hierarchy. As such domain-specific decline takes place as an unforeseen consequence. However, it is not coercive as the affected persons can also neutralise the negative consequences by retreating to the position they had before they moved upward. Hypothetically we could say that if the actors apprehended the specific dysfunctional consequences, perhaps these could have been avoided either by non-activity or by deploying some mechanisms to avert the negative repercussions.

We do not mean that these changes are irreversible. There could be counter-mechanisms and instrumentalities by which some people

might undo the positive consequences of mobility. But our point is that in the case of domain-specific decline, choice to avert it is considerably greater than in the case of the two other forms of structural decline, i.e. primary structural decline and secondary structural decline. Since domain-specific decline is generally a result of volitional mobility, its avoidance is also possible when its cost becomes much more than the gains of mobility.

A certain amount of simultaneous rejection and acceptance of caste ethic is also clearly observable. In seeking ritual identity with the higher castes, the lower castes seem partly to reject the ideology of the caste system; but by imitating the behaviour pattern and cultural idioms of the upper castes, with a view to upgrade their rank, these castes also accept very much the caste ideology. The lower castes, on the other hand, have united against the upper castes through political participation in order to have adequate representation in different agencies and institutions. All these accounts of mobility, both upward and downward, reveal that these mobility movements have not secured the claimed higher status for the lower castes because status acquisition is now more a matter of command over resources (Sharma 1970: 1537-43). Therefore, imitating discarded life-ways of the upper-castes, or adopting new caste names would be unhelpful for upward status aspirants. In these accounts domain-specific decline is implicit and this has not been analysed. We shall discuss this point in detail in the next section of this paper.

A number of *sanskritizing* castes have adopted upper caste names, such as Singh, Rawat, Verma, Sharma, Berua and Bariba. They have adopted the sects or cults, such as Kabir, Raidas and Ramdeo Panth, Vaishnava Sampradaya and Bhagat Sampradaya (Sanyal and Roy Burman 1970 : 1-31). Recently on March 22, 1973 in Delhi thousands of Harijans embraced Buddhism. The manifestos of these castes are related to socio-cultural reforms including rejection of the 'polluting' callings. These castes have mobilised their members through traditional caste Panchayats. However, some formal associations have also been active in the mobility endeavours (Sanyal and Roy Burman 1970 : 1-31). The analysis of these mobility movements have not taken cognisance of 'substantial' mobility, that is, the status accorded to the aspiring low castes by the upper castes and the gains they have received actually in terms of higher education, standard of living and active participation in

decision-making in different spheres at various levels.

III

The problem of decline is not as simple as it appears to be. The dilemma arises from the gap that exists between our legal-political structure and the existential conditions. Ours is a system which is perhaps most open in theory (i.e. in terms of the principles of the Constitution) but at the practical level chances of upward mobility are limited to only certain sections of the society. This is obviously because of historical and institutional reasons. Therefore, upward mobility and primary structural decline have not been simultaneous and movements seeking upward mobility have generally been "unsuccessful". The movement of workers from manual to non-manual positions and *vice versa* has not been crucially significant because of the conspicuously low rate of industrialisation. Structurally speaking, the most significant perhaps are the changes resulting in the decline of a section of the erstwhile landed aristocracy. At the same time, the same institutional changes have also resulted in the upgrading of peasant proprietors and big tenants on the one hand and the pauperisation of the poor peasants and village functionaries on the other (Kotovsky 1964; Joshi 1971; Saith and Tankha 1972). Thus these changes do not necessarily ensure a reduction in inequalities. This is what we call unintended secondary decline.

Domain-specific decline could also be related to differential resource ownership. Socio-cultural upward mobility demands a different set of means and resources than what upward occupational or economic mobility would require. The effectiveness of these institutional changes is minimised when there is no substantial difference between the magnitude of downward decline and that of mobility taking place at a given time and when the operational norms too at the upper level continue to be the same. Thus, because of differential prerequisites for mobility in different spheres, it is quite possible to find a group which is not capable of moving up in one sphere, but is capable of upward movement in another domain. We have also evidence to prove that the affluent peasants are those who were big tenants and who enjoyed security of land in the past. Thus, a complex of factors in diverse forms constitutes the existential background of downward mobility.

Jagirdari and Zamindari were two systems of land tenure the abolition of which affected differentially the people under these systems. Jagirs constituted bigger estates than the Zamindaris. Jagirs were granted to certain military commanders, ministers and courtiers by the state chiefs or princes. The grantees appropriated the revenue for their own support or that of a military force which they were bound to maintain. Thus, the Jagirdar was an intermediary between the tiller and the state, but for all practical purposes he acted as the master of his Jagir not only in relation to the tenants but also in relation to the entire people under his command.

'Charge' lands were Zamindari lands. A person appointed to manage the tract under his influence was designated as the landholder or the Zamindar of his territory. The duty of such a Zamindar was strictly to collect revenue and retain only his sanctioned share of the total revenue. The Jagirdar was the sole owner of his estate, and generally the jurisdiction of a Jagir spread over several villages. There were a number of Zamindars (particularly in 'severality villages') in the same village who shared the benefits accruing to them from the Zamindari system. On the other hand, a Jagirdar used to manage his land through Zamindars and a 'formal bureaucratic' organisation, i.e. the Jagirdar had several Zamindars as his grantees. The Jagirdar had to pay only a fixed amount as tribute to the king, and he was free to manage his Jagir in his own way. Thus, the systems of Jagirdari and Zamindari were different on the basis of their size, resources, rights and privileges. The diverse nature of the Jagirdari and Zamindari systems affected differentially the rural class structure in the two types of villages as a result of the abolition of these systems.

Several Zamindars shared land on the basis of their 'charge' right or kinship status. Therefore, size of their landholdings was quite small even before the abolition. The small size of the landholding made it possible for them to retain the major portions in their own accounts by claiming for themselves a self-cultivating status at the time of the abolition.

The situation in the case of the Jagirdar was different. He was the sole owner of his estate and, therefore, only he was affected by the abolition (though several retainers were also affected and perhaps much more than the Jagirdar). The number of substantial beneficiaries in the Zamindari villages (in many 'severality villages') was quite insignificant. But the number of substantial beneficiaries

in the Jagirdari villages was quite significant. The Jagirdar being the sole owner of the land could retain only a small fraction of it at the time of the abolition. Consequently, a number of tenants received land rights due to the abolition. However, the big tenants were benefitted more than the small and marginal ones.³

It was found in our study of six villages in Rajasthan (Sharma 1968) that in some villages Rajputs, Brahmins and Jats who were Zamindars before the abolition, cannot now support themselves on the meagre or uneconomic landholdings they have retained after the abolition and, consequently, they have to work as manual and agricultural labourers. The retainers and the Zamindars under the Jagirdars were left with uneconomic holdings. They could not seriously anticipate the gravity of the abolition and, therefore, did not eject their tenants. Secondly, their dependence upon the Jagirdars was so much that they could not think of their independent existence after the abolition. In fact, they associated their existence with that of the Jagirdar. The number of such sufferers is, however, quite small.

Some of the Rajputs who are impoverished today work as manual and agricultural labourers either on the construction sites or on the farms of the rich peasants who are lower to them in caste hierarchy. Recently (December 1972) the author found in one of the six villages that a Rajput who enjoyed social prestige was working as a labourer on the famine relief-work site alongwith the ex-untouchable labourers. Some other Rajputs have been working as labourers for a decade or so. Some Brahmins, Gujars and other clean caste persons were also working as labourers. In 1965-66, about 15 families of ex-Zamindars were engaged in manual activities in these six villages. We may add here that none of these poor ex-Zamindar families worked as wage-labourers before the abolition of Zamindari system. However, some of them were partly absentee landlords and partly self-cultivators and worked casually on their farms in the capacity of owner-cultivators.

Similarly the positions of Jagirdars and some big Zamindars have declined considerably. The Jagirdars of the two of the six villages owned lacs of bighas of land before the abolition, and had jurisdiction over a number of villages. After the abolition, they have not only slid down socially, politically and juridically but their economic position too has declined enormously as they do not own land now even half a per cent of what they owned in the past. But they are still better-off than even the richest peasants in these

villages.

The processes of mobility affect differentially the various sections of the rural society. Those who have moved up affect negatively those who could not do so. Earlier the landowners were at the top of class hierarchy; now the ex-landowner-cum-cultivators and ex-tenant-cum-proprietors are at the top of it. The studies by Saith and Tankha, Kotovsky and Joshi reveal that the agrarian system has changed from the feudalistic to the commercial and the capitalist type. This change has led to the ruination of the working peasants further.

It has been noted (Singh 1969: 352-64) that as a result of the Zamindari abolition the Zamindars initially stayed away from statutory village Panchayats. But later on they found that the statutory Panchayat could be a forum through which they could exert some influence and exercise their power. So this led to heightened tensions and conflicts between the Zamindars and the climbers. Since the Zamindars still owned major resources they were able to get control over statutory Panchayats. But the shock of the 'withdrawal of status respect' produced, especially among the Jagirdars, apathy and withdrawal from village polity, decision-making and welfare activities (Sharma 1968).

In one village, to a Jagirdar who had ruled over a dozen revenue villages, the rough and tumble of village politics seemed to be too degrading for involvement. The Jagirdar's tendency to withdraw, thus, allowed the rich peasants to rise without a confrontation. In another village the Jagirdar was unanimously elected Sarpanch for two consecutive terms, but he did not take any interest in the village affairs, and stayed away at Jaipur. People started criticising him for his lack of interest in village activities. When he came to know about this criticism, he withdrew from Panchayat elections for the third term, but asked one of his subordinates to contest. The nominee of the Jagirdars was defeated with a big margin by a Jat candidate. Thereafter the Jagirdar completely withdrew from village politics.

It may be noted that, as compared to the Jagirdar, the Zamindar was closer, in terms of social status, to the peasant proprietors; and the abolition of intermediary tenures reduced the gap still further. Consequently, the political arena has now numerous contestants, ex-Zamindars as well as new peasant proprietors.

We have already made it clear that domain-specific decline has

been pronounced in the case of the depressed and lower castes. These castes aspired for higher status generally within the caste hierarchy. The upper castes frustrated their efforts and they also lost their traditional occupations and found themselves in a state of under-employment and hardships. The other effect is the bifurcation of these castes into 'deviants' and 'conformists'. Those who conformed to the new norms were deviants but since they constituted the majority, they claimed higher status; those on the other end who conformed to the traditional norms were a minority and were labelled as conservative and given a lower status as they were still associated with degrading styles of life and occupation.

The barbers decided to discard cleaning of defiled plates which was a part of their traditional obligations. They, however, retained other activities including hair-cutting. All the barbers did not abide by this decision. This created another sub-caste of barbers. Those barbers who conformed to the traditional norms received more patronage now than before. On the other hand, those barbers who conformed to the new norms had to face economic hardships due to the displeasure of the patrons as a result of this change. Some of the families, however, silently carried on the traditional activities though overtly they claimed that they had left these polluting activities (Sharma 1968).

Similarly, the Balais (leather-workers) tried in vain to elevate their status by imitating Brahmanical customs and practices. They gave up leather-work, disposal of carcass and colouring of raw-hides, etc. As in the case of the barbers, this led to a division among the Balais. They also had to face acute difficulties like the barbers and perhaps much more because of their greater dependence upon the upper castes. Their meagre lands were not adequate for their livelihood. Under-employment resulting from their move compelled them to migrate to the cities in search of employment as construction labourers.

The Regars (leather-workers) took to leather work fifteen years ago when the Balais left their callings. Recently, however, they have discarded working with leather. The Regars protested against the atrocities of the patrons (particularly Jats) saying that they exploited them even more than was done by the ex-zamindars. The movement to discard these obligations spread during 1971-72 from Rajasthan to Delhi, Haryana and parts of Western Uttar Pradesh. They were harassed by the Jajmans and even beaten up at many

places during the period. For about six months they stuck to their own decision. Within this small period they had to face difficulties of employment and alienation. After about six months they returned to their original position. Unlike the Balais, none of the Regars came to Delhi before this incident. Drought has further accentuated the consequences of discarding traditional occupational obligations.

This is a very short period to establish the existence of downward mobility. This shows that the system does not allow upward mobility to certain sections of society in a given context. It also becomes clear that the Regars were successful in discarding their occupations but could not stick to their decision. The pains of coming down economically could not be borne by them and, therefore, they retreated to their original position. The other castes who left their traditional obligations and had to lose some economic support include Brahmins, Naiks, (ex-untouchables) and Meenas (watchmen).

Domain-specific decline has really been demoralising for the affected groups and individuals particularly when they had to revert to their original positions. Firstly, they were harassed when they left the traditional and Jajmani obligations and, secondly, their persecution increased when they, accepting the supremacy of the Jajmans or patrons, retreated to their original position. Such a mobility has also resulted in a heightened sense of insecurity. Migration became inevitable in many cases when the sanskritized groups and individuals did not revert to their traditional position.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Downward social mobility is a complex process involving social, economic, cultural and motivational factors, and occurs in different contexts and forms. We have made a distinction between domain-specific decline and generalised decline. Generalised decline could be further categorised into structural decline and positional decline. Structural decline consists of primary structural decline and secondary structural decline. Our scheme takes note of direct as well as indirect consequences of the structural changes on the affected persons, families and groups. Positional decline can be defined as decline of an individual or a group from one social position to another. Such a decline does not involve a change of principles of the structure. All generalised mobility is related to normative pressure. Domain-specific decline is not a part of generalised

decline. It takes place often as a negative consequence of mobility, but is not coercive because retreat to the original position is possible. Downward mobility lends greater fluidity to the social structure than upward mobility.

We have noted that different land tenure systems and their abolition have affected differentially the people under these systems. In the case of the Zamindars downward mobility has been less compared to the Jagirdars. But the ex-Jagirdars still occupy dominant economic position. The abolition, that is, the withdrawal of status respect, has led to their detachment from village politics. The Zamindars have, however, emerged as potential rivals to the emerging peasant proprietors. Again, as a result of the abolition some sections of the people have gone up and others have come down in social hierarchy. Both unequally and equally placed people have been affected differentially by the same measure. Domain-specific decline is generally a consequence of upward mobility. It is a characteristic feature of the depressed and lower castes who try to go up by discarding certain traditional occupations and obligations.

NOTES

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2. This diagrammatic presentation has been suggested by Dr. Satish Saberwal.
3. Similar observation has been made by P. C. Joshi (1971) in terms of differential transfer of landholdings as a result of land reforms in the Zamindari and ryotwari areas. The latter had peasant proprietors and the former consisted of absentee landowners. Therefore, the distribution of land as a result of the abolition among the tenants has been much more in Zamindari areas than the ryotwari areas. We would say that in Jagirdari areas the impact of the abolition has been still greater due to the reasons discussed in this paper.

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