

Money \propto Human Status in Every Sphere of Life : A Parameter of Human Relations

* Harasankar Adhikari

Abstract

Wealth/property has been a key determinant of an individual in our society historically. The different phases of a political-economic system (from the slave system to capitalism/imperialism) significantly occupy its social and economic relations. The struggle for socialism for strengthening the social health of people is a prime issue, and it is manifested by all the political parties in India in their electoral campaign. The socio-economic status of people generally defines the income of an individual through his/her intellectuality, that is, education is its key factor. The main focus is to maintain a harmonious relation determining the development and progress of a country. Unfortunately, rapid urbanization, new employment avenues as well as globalization have cultivated a world of consumerism, and the income pattern is not so much determined by education of an individual. Various venues of income give birth to corruption and other methods of easy money making. Consequently, the people become more prone to consumerism and violence. The respect/prestige of an individual is determined by how much money he/she earns and how he/she bears his/her life style and life choices. The human relations are defined according to wealth/money. The effect shows the broken family relations, violence within and outside family, and addiction to consumerism. Education has become a style of living. The value system in human relations is in crisis. The present paper examined the above issue through some case studies from both rural and urban areas. It described the crisis in human relations and shows how education has become a valueless input in our society.

Keywords: Money, human relations, education, human status, violence

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“Money gave value to a piece of paper and now that piece of paper itself is evaluating man!”

- Swami Purushottamananda
Ram Krishna Mission, Belgaum

W ealth is a great transforming agent, which has the power to cure all. Money can be used to show off one's success as well as to repay those who in the past slighted, rejected, or humiliated one. Money is powerful driving force, and it is 'ugly and unacceptable face of capitalism'. Money is, in and of itself, inert. However, everywhere, it becomes empowered with special meaning, imbued with special powers. Psychologists have studied the behavior of people towards money and its effect on human relations (Farnham & Argyle, 1998). Historically, wealth/money is the marker of social and economic relations. During the various phases of the political system - from the slave system to capitalism/imperialism, it occupied a pivotal role to determine human status. The struggle for socialism is an issue of political agenda because this hard task could not be achieved easily. The government, policy makers, and others are able to restore the social health of people anywhere.

According to Russell (1973), “a society is healthy when there is equal opportunity for all and access by all to the goods and services essential to full functioning as a citizen”(p. 67). The social health of individuals refers to that dimension of an individual's well-being that concerns how he/she gets along with other people, how other

* *Social Worker*, Monihar Co-operative Housing Society, Flat No-7/2, 1050/2, Survey Park, Kolkata- 700 075, West Bengal.
E-mail : jaoya123@yahoo.co.in

people react to him/her, and how he/she interacts with social institutions and social mores (Russell, 1973). In fact, it incorporates elements of personality and social skills. Then it replicates social norms and lastly, it bears a close relationship to concepts such as “well-being,” “adjustment,” and “social functioning”. In 1947, the World Health Organization (WHO) included social health as a parameter of health, and it emphasized that one patient/suffering would be treated as a social being and his/her integration with the community would be helpful to recover faster from disease and on the other part, social isolation would be a risk factor for prolonged illness (WHO, 1980). Hence, social health may be defined in terms of social adjustment and social support or the ability to execute usual roles in society. It also cultivates social capital, which is mutual trust and reciprocity in a community as an important indicator of social health. Particularly, in the Indian context, the issue of social health of its citizens has almost been ignored, except for some schemes for poor, dalit, and other minority groups suffering from social isolation and several social, cultural, and economical misfits. According to the National Centre for Educational Statistics (2008), the socioeconomic status is a total measurement of a person's work experience or an individual's or family's social and economic position based on income, education, and occupation. The development of people would be sanctified when an individual's education would depute him/her in a meaningful employment (Dreze & Sen, 2002). Tagore said that human relations are a basic parameter of a prosperous society, and education bridges this relation after removal of society from darkness. The knowledge and information would reshape the personality of an individual and enhancement of his/her value system would yield a progressive society as well. According to Sinha (2010), meaningful occupation through education is a survival strategy. Education for money making would desperately break our value system.

Urbanization as well as globalization is obvious to compete with global progress. Urbanization is a function of various ingredients of economic, social, and political development processes spurred by a relatively resilient monetary economy, a shift from agricultural to nonagricultural employment, including that in industrial enterprises and services, the spread of social amenities and drastic changes in socio-cultural systems, which have transformed urban environments (United Nations, 1969). Historically, urbanization has been found to be positively related to economic development in the developing countries (Lampard, 1955), and is considered to be an integral part of economic transformation, which can be guided into a socially desirable pattern.

They are places, not merely in which new commodities were traded and where new markets and sources of supply were explored and conquered, but in which appeared the first signs of new class relations based on alterations in the social division of labour (Hoselitz, 1971). In developing countries, cities play a catalytic role in their national economic growth and development (Hoselitz, 1971). Urban areas are agents and points of diffusion of social change, especially in their immediate hinterlands. New ideas which eventually embody national policy, and new leaders often emerge in cities before they diffuse elsewhere in the national framework. The paramountcy of economic motives of rural-urban migration underlines the role of urbanization in improving, as well as its impact on, urban household incomes and in instituting urban-rural income differentials.

Migration is a catalytic process which reflects not only the "urban bias" of development (Lipton, 1977), but also the "rural-bias" of urban migrants as they try to make the best of both worlds (Ouch, 1988). It has been argued that urban bias is actually a "rich-person bias, ...the bias in public policies, investments and services (including hospitals, schools, and housing) largely favours the better-off inhabitants and more powerful industrial and commercial concerns" (Hardoy & Satterthwaite, 1989, p. 112). It has also helped to transform the knowledge in overall living style and acculturation is the key indicator of their changing attitude. The social influences, patterns of relationship and interaction, food habits, and other various determinants of daily life have been importantly given a new shape to bridge between rural and urban. It adversely affects our society through production of consumerism and marketism. It pushes individuals to money-making processes, and that is one of the causes of violence and corruption. The society does not accept education as a good investment for family as well as the society if it does not yield money/wealth for enjoyment of modern lifestyle and choices. A culture flourishes through measurement of one's wealth and lifestyle, and the money making processes are not concerned (Chandhoke & Priyadarshi, 2009). Casteism is not a barrier for social inequality, while economic status becomes prime hindrance of belongingness and connectedness (Sharma, 2009).

The objective of this paper is to examine the changing dynamics of human status proportionate to money and how human relations change with the acquisition of wealth and status.

Methods

For this study, 50 informants were selected by random sampling from both rural and urban areas with a ratio of 1:1. The respondents were within the age bracket of 20-40 years, irrespective of race and caste. For rural informants, villages of East Midnapore, West Bengal located about 60 km away from Kolkata, which is an educationally well-developed district of the state, were selected. For urban informants, Kolkata Metro city was selected. In both the areas, urbanization has been attained through connectivity and mobility in terms of education, occupation, trade, and commerce. The data were collected through informal interviews with informants, parents/siblings/relatives of informants and their neighbors to know the history related to their social, economic, and educational status and changing dynamics of their status, neighbourhood relations, and their impact for a period of 6 months during 2014. The analysis was done through case studies and interactional observations.

Results and Discussion

🔗 **Demographic, Educational, and Occupational Status of the Informants :** The study revealed that majority of the informants (76%) were from the Hindu community (Table 1). Of them, 32% were women. According to their age, 56% of the respondents were within the age group of 30-40 years, and 44% of them were in the age group of 31-40 years, and 30% of them were from rural areas. Altogether, 40% belonged to SCs and OBCs.

From the Table 2, we can infer the occupational status of the informants according to their education. It can be observed from the data that 36% of the respondents had obtained high school education (upto higher secondary-10 +2). Among them, 2% both in rural and urban areas were engaged in public sector jobs (in rural areas, all of them were female) ; 8% of the respondents were engaged in the private sector in rural areas, and in urban areas, 8% of the male and 2% of the female respondents were engaged in the private sector. Of them, in the rural areas, 4% each were engaged in technical jobs (i.e. jewelry works and electrical work, etc.) and agricultural and other sectors, respectively. Of them, 6% (including 2% female) were in other jobs. In rural areas, 2% graduates (male) were engaged in agriculture/private tuition/rural artisans, while in urban areas, 2% of the graduates (male) were engaged equally in private and other jobs, respectively. I also observed that 2% of the male respondents in the rural areas had completed their post graduation, and they were engaged in agriculture/private tuition/rural artisan

Table 1. Demographic Status of the Informants

Age groups	Rural(a)										Urban(b)										Total (a+b)
	Hindu					Muslim					Hindu					Muslim					
	Gen		SCs		OBCs		Gen		OBCs		Gen		SCs		OBCs		Gen		OBCs		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
20-30 years	4	2	2	-	4	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	-	28
	(8%)	(4%)	(4%)		(8%)	(2%)	(2%)		(2%)		(4%)	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(4%)	(4%)	(4%)	(2%)	(2%)		(56%)
31-40 years	3	1	1	1	2	-	1	-	1	-	4	2	1	1	-	-	2	1	1	-	22
	(6%)	(2%)	(2%)	(2%)	(4%)		(2%)		(2%)		(8%)	(4%)	(2%)	(2%)			(4%)	(2%)	(2%)		(44%)
Total	7	3	3	1	6	1	2	-	2	--	6	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	2	-	50
	(14%)	(6%)	(6%)	(2%)	(12%)	(2%)	(4%)		(4%)		(12%)	(6%)	(4%)	(4%)	(4%)	(4%)	(8%)	(4%)	(4%)		(100%)

Table 2. Occupational Status with Respect to Education

Educational status	Occupational status														Total (a+b)
	Rural(a)								Urban(b)						
	Public		Private		Tech job		Agril, rural artisan and private tution		Public		Private		Others		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Lettered	-	-	1(2%)	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	8(16%)
					(2%)		(4%)	(2%)					(4%)	(2%)	
Primary	-	-	1	-	2	-	4	2	-	-	1	-	4	2	16(32%)
			(2%)		(4%)		(8%)	(4%)			(2%)		(4%)	(4%)	
High School (upto XII standard)	-	1	4	-	2	-	2	-	-	1	4	1	2	1	18
		(2%)	(8%)		(4%)		(4%)			(2%)	(8%)	(2%)	(4%)	(2%)	(36%)
Graduate	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	3
							(2%)				(2%)		(2%)		(6%)
Post Graduate	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	5
							(2%)				(4%)		(4%)		(10%)
Total	-	1	6	-	5	-	10	3	-	1	8	1	11	4	50
		(2%)	(12%)		(10%)		(20%)	(6%)		(2%)	(16%)	(2%)	(22%)	(8%)	(100%)

jobs. However, each of the 4% of the post graduates in urban areas were engaged in private sectors and other jobs, respectively.

Wealth/Money as Change Agents

From this study, it is clear that money brought meaningful changes in the living patterns of both rural and urban informants. In rural areas, about 68% of the respondents had become landed from their landless status. Their overall lifestyle and choices became a remarkably significant point of attraction for others. Their migration to urban areas reshaped their living standards differently that might be compared with the so-called higher class people of their community/villages. They had not only secured their food, shelter, and clothing, but they had generated other movable and immovable assets (domestic). In urban areas, the informants (42%) changed their living patterns matching with the emergent modern consumerized patterns of living. But the value system in both cases were restricted and limited with their money making processes in an open marketing system.

➤ **Case 1 :** Ranjit (23) was the eldest son of landless labourer parents of a village in East Midnapore, West Bengal. After completing his secondary examination, he migrated to Mumabi and engaged himself in the jewelry industry. His parents only had a cottage, and they had no other source of income rather than their daily labour. Within 3 years of his work at Mumbai, he built a two storeyed 'pakka' building. He incurred luxurious expenses for his two sisters' marriage. He had a handsome bank balance also. Gradually, he purchased 14 decimals of land in his locality. Earlier, Ranjit was not allowed to participate in the decision making process in his community. The villagers were disrespectful to Ranjit and his family due to their social and economic position. However, their prosperity changed their position in the same community. His father was invited to participate in the decision making processes of the community, and the village people started respecting them.

On the other hand, Sudipta (40) was the eldest son of a public servant father, and they were socio-economically and educationally reputed in their community. He completed his post graduation and sat for various examinations to secure a job. However, he failed to clear the exams. He became unemployed in the true sense, and became a

private tutor and cultivator on a part-time basis. He became a central point of gossip in his neighborhood. His community and neighbors did not respect him and even his participation in the decision making process was ignored by his neighbors and his community members. The case study indicates that education is a change agent - a highly educated individual is able to secure a well-paying job for himself/herself and is able to amass wealth. If they fail to access it, their education and lifestyle would not be a motivational or influential factor.

➤ **Case 2 :** Karuna (39) and Aruna (36) were two sisters of a weaver's family of a village in East Midnapore, WB. Both of them completed their graduation. They used to work as weavers and gave private tuition because they could not secure any other job. They were unmarried, and their family was poor and belonged to the scheduled caste community. They used to face the problem of social isolation and boycott.

Besides this, Sukanya (29) was the second child of her parents of the same community. She earned secondary qualification, and she was employed as an Angwan Wadi Worker (AWW) under the Integrated Programme for Child Development Scheme. She was divorced and had remarried. She did not face any isolation for her participation in functions in her community.

It is a fact that money/wealth is a marker of status of every individual in every society. In this study, we find that social status according to the informants' social background (castes) was not a determined factor when they earned their prosperity. Social inequality was not a barrier to establish their social status. Nevertheless, in rural areas, they earned social prestige and power for participation in decision making processes in various functions of their community/village. In both rural and urban areas, those who were capable of earning handsome money, which reflected in their lifestyles and choices, were a motivational power to others of their community/village.

➤ **Case 3 :** Suhrid (40) was a teacher of a private high school in Kolkata. He was born and brought up in Kolkata. His father was a public servant, and his family occupied an ownership flat of about 100 sq.ft. After completing his post graduation, he worked for 10 years. He used to maintain an ordinary lifestyle because he had no two wheeler, and neither did he have an affiliation with an urban lifestyle.

On the other hand, Susanta (40) was a marketing manager of an MNC and was posted in Kolkata. Both Suhrid and Susanta were childhood friends and neighbours. They studied in the same school. Susanta was poor in his academic performance in school than Suhrid. His father was an employee of a private company. After his graduation, Susanta did not get chance to complete his post graduation. His father got him enrolled in a private B-school in Kolkata from where he completed his MBA. He was placed in a low profile job of a sales executive. However, after 2 years of his job, he was promoted to the position of junior marketing manager. He used to avail a good package of incentives. He bought a four wheeler, and he purchased a duplex flat of 1440 sq.ft. near his earlier flat. Now, he became an inspiration and example for his neighbours, while Suhrid could not acquire such possessions, even after being better in academics than Susanta.

It is clear that educated individuals, who were incapable of earning money had a poor social status in spite of belonging to higher social and economic classes. Education was a bad investment to others of their community/village in the era of marketing economy as well as in the consumers' world.

Correlation Between Education and Occupation in Terms of Money Making/ Wealth Generating Processes

Education is a basic instrument through which darkness in society is removed. It polishes an individual's personality and values ; it rebuilds society as well as human relations by removing taboos and injustice. Secondly, it influences to choose one's occupation in a healthy way. However, I observed that education was less important in the study to make money/wealth as majority of the informants' prioritized making money, while education was secondary for their survival. According to this, the occupations that provide better prospects of earning become the influential determinants for others.

➤ **Case 4 :** Kalu (28) was a lettered person and migrated from an adjacent district (South 24 Parganas) to Kolkata. He lived with his family for the last 12 years in Kolkata. He was engaged as a construction worker for 3 years. Thereafter, he used to work as a broker of the real estate business. His responsibility was to act as a mediator and negotiator for sale or renting of flats/buildings/land for which he charged an amount from both owners and rentees. His lifestyle and dignity in his community changed because of his prosperity. His body language and personality were sharpened. He generated his movable and immovable assets and became an adviser and decision maker in his community.

Dulal (29) was also a member of the same community. He lived with his parents along with his two younger siblings. He was the eldest son of his parents. His father was a street trader and mother was a maid servant. Depending on their total earnings, their parents got all three children enrolled in a school, and Dulal completed his graduation, while others continued to pursue school education. After his graduation, he joined in private a company from where he earned a salary of ₹ 6000 per month. Their earnings from all sources were not enough to make ends meet. They even did not have any capacity to repair their living place. Dulal's situation did not influence his neighbours to pursue higher education. However, Kalu, due to his prosperity, became an important figure in their community, and his presence and advice was always sought.

Money/Wealth and Human Relations

In the era of globalization, human beings have become self-centered to meet their own consumerized desired goals. The belongingness and connectedness with each other have been shaped according to their monetary status. Historically, wealth was the cause of social barriers and social differences. It yielded division of labour and variation in human relations in our society. However, education and continuous social and economic reforms gradually bridged it. Educated, but not rich people also acted as decision makers, solved problems, and were respected in the society. But consumerism and changing lifestyles have made it important for individuals to make money. They lose their value and dignity if they do not have sufficient money. People want to amass more and more wealth because it is an indicator of prestige and status. So, corruption and violence, every day in new forms, emerge in our society.

Conclusion and Implications

Undoubtedly, the essence of globalization as well as urbanization is the prime influential factor for development and progress of every society. The mobility of people from one to another place (rural to urban) has made it paramount for them to acquaint and to adopt with everyday's changing world. It ensures the people's participation in development in a broader range. It has enlightened the society from darkness of taboos and differences.

However, on the other side, it has cultivated consumerism and marketism, where people are pushed to reshape their lifestyle, and how much wealth - and not knowledge - a person possesses has become a marker of success. These illusive traits make people self-centered, corrupt, and violent. Competition is the cause of instable relations among people in their community as well as society. In each and every society, healthy interpersonal human relations based only upon value and dignity (beyond money) have been failed to bring about sustainable social and economic development. The truncated and self-centered human relations, which are also wealth/money based will not be able to save humanity and society from degradation. Occupations based on education should be the actual basis of quality judgment of a status of an individual. Education, money, and human values are altogether healthy factors of human status and human relations. However, money has overshadowed morals and knowledge, and it is a demon that can destroy the future of human society.

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