

An Introspective Study on Social Groups and Changing Pattern of Economic Activity: A Case Study of Some Selected Villages under Rudranagar Gram Panchayet of Murarai-II Block, Birbhum District, West Bengal

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Abstract:

This Caste is an essential element of social structure in rural India. As an aspect on the way of analysis about caste as well as social group, has different views in respect of time and space. Therefore, social class is functional, endogamous, hereditary and hierarchical in respect of institutional rules and social relations. Regarding this issue, Rig-Veda is first literature which mentioned the four social groups in entire Hinduism, such as- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Various castes in Hindu society are originated on the bases of specific economic activity. The Brahmin were in worship, the Kshatriya defenders of territory, the Vaisya in cultivation, exchanging and manufacturing of goods and Sudras were worker and servant. The present investigation will be highlighted on the social groups and their changing scenario of the economic activities over the decades in the mid of the 20th and the 21st century. In this regard, the information or data has collected through field survey from research responder of some selected villages under Rudranagar Gram Panchayet of tip most C.D. Block Murarai-II of Birbhum District, West Bengal.

Index Terms - Caste, Social Structure, Social Group, Economic Activity

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

Caste is a basic attribute of the Indian social structure. For centuries it has served as a major reference point in social interaction. Traditionally, the Indian society has been governed by the institution of caste (Ahamad 2015, Pp-179-180). On the other hand, a livelihood can be defined as the activities, the assets and the access that jointly that determine the living gained by an individual or household.(Ellis, Pp-10) it also examined that assets may be defined as the stock or capital that can be use directly or indirectly to achieve well-being at different levels of survival.(Ellis F,Pp-31) There are many resource or capital like- Natural capital comprises the land, water and biological resource, Physical capital comprises capital that is created by economic production processes like buildings, irrigation canals roads etc., Human capital refers to the labour available to the household: its education, skill and health, Financial capital refers to stock of money which the household has access, Social capital attempt to capture community and wider claims.(Ellis F, Pp-32,33,34,36) Access means the translation of a set of assets into a livelihood strategy in respect of social and institutional rules. Activities in all categories represent potential contributions to the survival portfolio of rural households. In the sense of traditional occupation of different caste groups determine state of livelihood and as well as ranking in society. But now a day's people are adopting new occupation and leaving their traditional occupation which were caste specific (Ahamad 2015, Pp-179).

2.0 AREA UNDER STUDY:

Rudranagar Gram Panchayet of Muraroi – II C.D. Block of Birbhum District lies in between 24°20'37"N to 24°25'N and 86°50'32"E to 87°55'32"E. Before the analysis of changing pattern of economic activity, the scenario of natural environmental set up of the study area is the most effective part because it has controlled over resource bases, resource production, distribution and consumption of the resources. The area lies in transitional zone between erosional Chhotanagpur plateau in the west and depositional Gangetic plain in the east. The river Pagla flows from west to east in middle portion of Muraroi-II Block and in northern side of the study area. The eastern part of the area is covered with younger alluvial soils. The study area is under sub-tropical monsoon climate with hot summer and cold winter and is covered with moist deciduous vegetation.

3.0 OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of this study are –

- i) To find out whether these caste or social groups carry forward their hereditary economic activity or they engage in new activities.
- ii) To find out the pattern and trend of diversification of economic activity of different caste or social groups of the study area.

4.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The whole raw data structure for this study captured through the household survey of eleven village under the Rudranagar Grampanchaye of Murarai-II C. D. Block. The questionnaire has been made according to the objectives of the study and during the field survey some perspective especially qualitative aspects added according to essence of the study. Samples (household) chosen on the bases of caste, age, sex, and economic activity from eleven villages. The total sample size as well as research responder is 176 (household). Here 16 households of each village have been represented to real scenario of the trend of economic activity in respect of time of eight social groups of the area. The Simpson Index (S.I.) has been used for the diversification of economic activities among the social groups where assemble the main source of income and in connection with the numbers of subsidiary works of the households. Through S.I. analysis measures the degree of concentration on main source of income of the household and associate factors for stability of the household economy.

5.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

The household economy of any place depends on the various economic activity of that region. The natural set up has a direct or indirect role to the livelihood pattern. In this study area agriculture is the main economic activity of rural livelihood. Younger alluvial soil covered by the river Pagla and irrigation facilities help the people to choose agriculture as the main economic activity. But in the rainy season some lower parts of this region are affected by flood. Besides cultivation, many people of this region are engaged in dairy activity through the domestication of animals. Due to decrease of pasture land in alarming rate and lack of capital and infrastructure dairy farming faces many problems. Besides this, the 'biri' making is the major source of household economy of this region and it treated as the primary and secondary source of income. Apart from this, some peoples engage themselves in fishing and agricultural worker, stone crusher worker, construction worker, few households engage themselves in business and services. From the research literature it examined that livelihood diversification is defined as a process by which household members construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of living (Ellis 2000, Pp-15,232). On the other hand, livelihood diversification is the outcome of necessity of the people rather than choice. Necessity refers to involuntary and distress situation and choice by contrast refers to voluntary and proactive reason for diversification (Ellis 2000, Pp-55,56). According to Rig-Veda there are four caste groups in Indian social system and each caste is

associated with certain hereditary occupations which defined their rank in the society. But in present situation many caste groups are shifting completely from their hereditary activity or many households is accepting other economic activity side by side of their hereditary activity. The study area is not exception of this situation.

Index Name	Formula	Full Concentration	Full Diversification	Remarks
Simpson Index (S.I.)	$S.I. = 1 \sum_{i=1}^N P_i^2$	0	1	Used for measures of diversification

Note: Where, N= total no. of income sources and P_i = income proportion of the i- th income source.

Data foundation for Diversification indices of Social Groups in Rudranagar Gram Panchayet of Murarai-II C. D. Block

Caste/Sub-Caste/Social Group	Original works/connection with heredity activity (Household)	Concentration as main worker (Household)	Consideration
BRAHMIN	9	13	Connection with others works as subsidiary works
TILI AND SATGOPE	7	15	
RABIDAS	6	16	
NUNIYA	6	16	
MAL	6	16	
KONAI AND RAJBANSI	9	13	
GOALA	6	16	
BHUIMALI	5	17	
Total	52	124	

Result of Diversification

Caste/Sub-Caste/Social Group	S.I. Values	Remarks
Brahmin	0.61	S.I. Value-greater than 0.50 indicate the trend towards high-rate diversification.
Tili and Satgope	0.70	
Rabidas	0.74	
Nuniya	0.72	
Mal	0.72	
Konai and Rajbanshi	0.61	
Goala	0.74	
Bhuimali	0.79	

Simpson Index (S.I.)

It is clear from the result of this Simpson diversity index that all social groups are highly affected their traditional activities because the index value is greater than .050. the Brahmin comparatively less diversified according to their activity due to many reasons. Literature supported those traditional activities like worship, various jobs and their desirable works which were reflected as the master or controller in the social hierarchy. Traditionally, the education and its system were totally controlled by

this social group and was the prime as well as achieving factor for better livelihood. So, the education is the common cultural affairs with this social group from ancient to modern. History said that Brahmin enjoy more education facilities than other castes and for this their skill, knowledge, education ratio, consciousness of guardian and assets value are high. This traditional approach is change and they accept variety of economic activities in Govt. and private sector. Analysis reveals that other caste groups are more diversified as they accept various economic activity mainly various type of daily wage labours like agricultural, construction worker, biri making worker, stone crusher worker etc. by leaving their traditional activities. Basically, all these are by default alternative source of activity for changing their livelihood. Their education level, knowledge, work efficiency is not so high so that they can get any salaried job and also consciousness of guardian, assets value of this caste groups is low. Among them Konai and Rajbanshi sub-caste is less diversified irrespective of their low educational attainment, skill efficiency and consciousness of guardian. It became possible due to presence of their own agricultural land in which they engage themselves in agriculture and agriculture related activity. About 33.33% surveyed family of Brahmin are shifted from worship which is caste specific economic activity towards Govt. or private service in 1980s but rest of Brahmin household were in worship. Then after 2000s 50% surveyed family of Brahmin are shifted from worship towards service, business and agriculture because worship has no future prospect and only 16.67% surveyed family of Brahmin are in worship as main source of income. Agriculture was the hereditary activity of Tili and Satgope sub-caste but in present situation 10% household of this sub-caste are shifted toward service in 1990s and after 2000, 40% family of this caste are shifted toward small business, animal rearing and as a mason and after 2010, 30% family shifted toward laborer, small business, agriculture laborer but this 40% and 30% family also engage in agriculture as secondary or tertiary source of income.

Change of Economic Activity

Caste/Sub-Caste/Social Group	Previous Engagement in %	Present Engagement in %
BRAHMIN	16.67	83.33
TILI AND SATGOPE	20	80
RABIDAS	0	100
NUNIYA	25	75
MAL	0	100
KONAI AND RAJBANSHI	50	50
GOALA	30	70
BHUIMALI	27.77	72.23

(Previous: before 2011 and Present: after 2011)

At present only 20% family engage themselves in their traditional agricultural activities. Shoe making was the hereditary activity of Rabidas sub-caste but now they are completely shifted from their caste specific activity. 27.27% surveyed family of Rabidas are shifted toward agricultural laborer, stone crusher laborer, construction laborer, biri maker in 1970s, 54.55% family in 1980 and 18.18% family are shifted from their hereditary activity in 1990s. As they have no proper training, sufficient capital and raw materials, they are not able to compete with various shoes making company which forced them to shift their activity. Though fishing is hereditary activity of Nuniya, but they also change their practice now due to lack of sufficient capital to purchase modern instruments as 12.5% family in 1990s, 37.5% family in 2000s and 25% in 2010s have changed their activity and engage in service, business, construction labor, agriculture labor and caretaker in Kolkata. Only 25% families of Nuniya are now engaging in fishing as primary activity. Snake charming was the hereditary activity of Mal sub-caste but they are completely shifted from their caste specific activity as 11.11% family are shifted towards service sector in 1980s, then 66.67% in 1990s and 22.22% in 2000s are shifted toward

construction labor, agriculture labor, small business because snake charming is a life risk activity and according to wildlife act snake charming is prohibited. Animal rearing and milk collecting is the hereditary activity of Goala. But 20% of surveyed families in 1990s, 30% in 2000s and 20% in 2010s have chosen agriculture, constructional work as primary activity due to lack of infrastructure and decreasing pasture land, though they keep their traditional milk collecting activity as secondary and tertiary source of income. Palanquin bearer and agricultural labor Bhuimali also changed their occupation of palanquin bearing with change of mode of transport. In 1960s 16.67% families, then in 1990s 16.67%, 22.22% in 2000s and 16.67% in 2010s are shifted toward constructional work, biri making and small business whereas 27.77% still now engage as agricultural labor.

Caste/Sub-Caste/Social Group	Decadal Change of Economic Activity in % (from 1961)						
	1961-'70	1971-'80	1981-'90	1991-2000	2001-'10	AFTER 2011	SAME OCCUPATION
BRAHMIN	0	0	33.33	0	50		16.67
TILI AND SATGOPE	0	0	0	10	40	30	20
RABIDAS	0	27.27	54.55	18.18	0	0	0
NUNIYA				12.50	37.50	25	25
MAL	0	0	11.11	66.67	22.22	0	0
KONAI AND RAJBANSHI	0	0	0	0	16.67	33.33	50
GOALA	0	0	0	20%	30	20	30
BHUIMALI	16.67	0	0	16.67	22.22	16.67	27.77

6.0 CONCLUSION:

Through a mid-range conceptual model of community action can explain the actual position of various communities according to risk position. Many researchers consider risk to be the fundamental motive for livelihood diversification (Ellis 2000, Pp-60). Socio-economic and bio-physical vulnerability and community risk is an input material of interactional capacity all together leads to level of community action in response to risk or individually guided to the level of community risk also. When definite outcomes in relation to income streams are replaced by probabilities of occurrence, the social unit diversifies its portfolio of activities in order to anticipate and to ameliorate the threat to its welfare of failure in individual activities (Alderman and Paxson 1992/ Ellis F,Pp-60). Caste specific activities of the study area can be classified in three categories on the basis of their present situation. Most of the people of this area are now engage in agriculture, labor in agriculture, constructional activities, mason works, stone crashing laborer and milk collection. Whereas, purely worship has no future prospects in respect of their local set up because it doesn't support to the large number of families. Fishing activity is going to be in unstable condition due to lack of own fishing ground and capital investment. Snake charming, shoe making and palanquin bearing activities are completely extinct as snake charming is prohibited, palanquin is no more the mode of transport and cobbler of rural areas cannot compete with branded companies for lacking in their training, technology and capital. So, at present social caste system in terms of economic activities has lost its existence. In the past economic activities are guided by the social relation and social relation refers and social positioning but now a day's economic activities are guided by the institutional rules rather than social relations as institution give more emphasis on human interaction, human ability and knowledge. Influence of globalization, improvement of education, economic development and social and political reform especially after independence has significant role in reducing caste rigidity in economic activities and for getting job.

People can adopt any economic activity irrespective of their caste barrier if they have ability. But hereditary activities have some space behavior and it will be better for rural livelihood if some of these traditional hereditary activities can be regenerate as for example shoe making of Rabidas caste is now extinct but it can be regenerate by providing proper training, supplying raw material by the Govt. or various shoe making company.

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