

Persistence of caste inequality and changing village: A study of Jant and Pali village in Haryana

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ABSTRACT

As per census 2011, the major portion (68.84%) of the population in India living in rural areas. People belong to rural areas engaged in agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood and produce raw materials for the industry. But the dependence on agriculture sector declined from last two decades. Rural society is going through a transition in which non-farm opportunities emerged as a significant source of livelihood for rural economy. The present study is based on fieldwork carried out in two villages namely Jant and Pali. Both villages geographically located nearby Mohindergarh district of Haryana. There was setup of educational institute nearby to these selected village which has started its work after 2014. This educational institute brought significant change in the social, economic and cultural aspects of people living in these villages. This paper will try to examine how caste played a determining role for availing the various kinds of benefits which offers by this institution to its locals. This study is based on fieldwork conducted among the villages and rely on primary data collected through personal interviews and Focus group discussion (FGD).

RURAL SOCIETY: A BACKGROUND

Indian society is popularly known as the rural society. As per census report 2011, the major portion of population in India lived across rural areas which is about 68% portion of the total population. The rural economy depends on the agriculture and related production. But the rural economy experience changes from the last two decades with the emergence of India as a global country. The policy maker saw reflective change in the economy of country after adopting the model of LPG during the period of 1990s. In year 1990, Indian economy facing economic crisis and continues decrease in their GDP rate. It was estimated that share of agriculture in GDP of India decrease about 20% and decline in workforce in agriculture about 8-9% after adopting the global policy (Economic Survey 2000 and 2017).²To overcome such kind of crisis, India decided to expand their -production and exchange of their services at the global arena by adopting the policy of liberalization. Such kind change happens at the global also influencing the gross root of the society. Villages are located at the grass roots experiences changes in their social, cultural and economic aspect. There has been rapid growth of the non-farm economy in India, with the corresponding decline in the portion of the workforce employed in agriculture. A substantial part of the increase in non-farm employment is in the rural settlement. According to the National Sample Survey office (NSSO) data, 54% of non-farm enterprises were in rural areas. The rural society changes continuously with the nature of livelihood change.

Transformation of Rural Society:

The rural economic structure and consumption patterns, lifestyles and societal norms change with the passage of time (Dube,1968). The rural transformation understands through up-scaling of the lifestyle of the residents. Households are experiencing diversification in their diets and changes in non-food consumption patterns and adopting urban way of life. The layout of the village, construction of the house, and change in the cultural values can be seen after the transformation. occurred at rural setting. The picture of rural society change with the development project were established in these localities. Those villages that are actively connected to urban centers and are being changed very rapidly (Jodka,2014) .Development projects means establishing any kind of Industry/Service for the purpose of

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²Economic survey 2000-2001 retrieved from <https://www.india.gov.in/economic-survey-2000-01> and Economic Survey 2018-19 retrieved <https://www.prsindia.org/report-summaries/economic-survey-2018-19>

economic growth which leads to societal change. But the impact of development projects in rural areas impacts more as compared to Urban. There are following impacts of development projects in Rural society: -

1. These projects lead to shifts in occupation of the people from agriculture to manufacture and service sector.
2. The cropping pattern in the rural area changes.
3. More money comes from these development projects in rural area which leads to change in their social as well as economic life of the rural society. The Cultural change in rural area also reflects due to development projects.
4. New kind of occupation emerged in rural area because of development projects.

THE TWO VILLAGES: JANT AND PALI

It was around the 2009 that the Government of India decided to establish Central University near to Mahendergarh located in Haryana. Some of the village Pali, Jant and Dholi had lost a portion of their 'community land' for the establishment of Educational project. The two-village selected for the study represent a particular kind of rural setting. These two villages are actively connected with the education institute which was newly established in the locality of the two village. The Central University of Haryana (education institute) which started working during the year 2013 and located geographically close to the two villages, within around 2 to 3 kilometres. Both are multi-caste villages with agriculture as source of livelihood. There are very few other options of livelihood to support the economy of their household.

However, it did not directly affect the agrarian economy. The village whose community land was acquired were considered for jobs in the University. It also generated a lot of new kind of employment in the form of outsourcing such as Security Guard, Sweeper and Gardener. Majority of them earning most of their livelihood from non-agricultural activities and only occasionally make their living from agriculture activities. Over the years, the University has been expanding as more students are coming from different parts of India.

So various kind of employment in providing service like Hotel/Restaurants, Guest House, Shopkeeper, Milk seller, Barber, Transporter etc., also been emerging in the area. Landownership and cultivation continue to be a privileged among the dominant in these two villages (namely Pali and Jant). The surplus they generated from agriculture went into education, trade in their locality, construction of hotels and houses and other non-agriculture activities. There are major economic change reflects in the two nearby village (Pali and Jant) which leads to social change as well. Now these village people slowly moving towards service sector for providing the service to university community. In this way new kind of employment emerged in the rural areas which leads to various kind of change in the structure and processes of rural society, caste communities. The physical and demographic expansion of the village has been taking places continuously. Though most of the baras (localities) were still around the caste lines and most people lived in baras of their own caste (Jodha, 2014).

NATURE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

It is basically a quantitative as well as a qualitative study. For making a list of beneficiaries from these two village, purposive sampling (for Direct Beneficiary) as well as snow-ball sampling (for indirect beneficiary). Focus Group Discussions (FGD) was organized as part of the pilot study and making the objective of the study. For a collection of data for the study, a semi-structured Interview Schedule was designed for conducted study in selected villages. There were total 93 respondents³ in both two selected villages chosen from the universe. The selection of respondents from both villages was made through Random sampling as there was very less variation in terms of the socio-economic and demographic profile of respondents.

The Rajput caste group which is 48 respondents, for them university is beneficial compared to the other caste groups. There were various factors which alter the accessibility for the people to obtain the benefits from the university.

Benefits/Opportunities to the Villagers:

The establishment of University in their locality provides various kind of benefits people obtaining from the university from the selected villages:

³ Respondents were those people from selected villages (Pali and Jant) who are getting benefits from the University in terms of employment, education, selling their product/services

I. Employment:

The university required a large number of labours to its fulfilment for its various academic and non-academic activities. In Central University, people not only come from the local area but also migrate from the other parts of India. In this way, University formed a community. The university provide the employment like categories of Teaching, Non-Teaching Outsourcing, and Self-employed. In teaching, positions like Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor in the academic. In Non –teaching, people engaged in the employment like clerk, Peon, Assistant in different sections, Assistant registrar, Lab attendant, Library attendant etc. The outsourcing offered job as security Guard, sweeper, Gardner etc. People were engaged activities of selling goods and service to work as self-employed. Employment benefits both the villages.

II. Education

The university is an educational institution. There was regional imbalance before the establishment of the university in terms of educational institutions in Haryana. Most educational institutions are situated in the northern part of Haryana. Central university of Haryana was the first educational institutions in southern part of Haryana for higher education. People thought that it will difficult for a girl to go outside area for higher education. After the establishment of university, it solves the fulfill need of the higher education institution in this area and promoted the chance of the girls for enrollment in Higher education.

III. Emergence of Local Market

Before the establishment of the university, people engage in primary and secondary sectors of the economy. They work as agriculturalist, labors, government servant, and employee in the private company. They go outside to work in manufacture and service sector. But after the establishment of the university, they setup local market which provide the opportunities to them for selling their goods and services. Due to the emergence of the local market near the area of the university help to improve the livelihood by selling their product and service there. As people migrate for employment, education etc. required housing facilities. This opens opportunity to come up with 'renting of house'. So, the concept of Rent emerged in the village after the establishment of the university. Food items like milk, vegetables, Non -vegetarian (mutton, chicken) have also started which boost the income source. There were many shops outside the university campus where people from these village sells their product and services. Various shops like bakery shop, barber shop, photocopy shop, restaurants etc. People through this local market able to provide their production for selling/purchasing and that help the family sustenance. People make their livelihood through the self-employment from these two village. In this ways establishment of university open doors for new occupation in the villages. This also has a great shift from the occupation of agriculture sector to service sector and reduce the migration of the people who were before go for the employment in the urban areas.

Caste Inequality: Influence the Accessibility of Opportunities:

In India, caste is the social determining factor. Caste is ascribed status and cannot be alter during life cycle of individual. Caste is social identity through which society provide a specific position in social strata of the hierarchy. Srinivas (2000), Damont(1980), Betetille (1965) , Ghurye(1969), and Gupta (2000) mentioned the attributional characteristics of the caste system in India. The concept become so prominent in the rural context, where caste become a determining factor of 'who get and what get'(Srinivas,2000). Caste creates the variation to accessibility of the benefits produced by the development projects. Andre Betetille (1965) in his book Caste ,Class and Power mentioned how 'the resource of village controlled and channelized by the upper caste people i.e power linked with caste hierarchy'. The upper caste people had more power as compared to lower caste people. So, the upper caste of any locality tried to make the accessibility on the benefits produced by the development projects. The people belong the upper caste (Rajputs and Brahmins) able to get the maximum benefits from the establishment of the university. There were at most 51.61% beneficiaries from the both village belong to Rajput community, 11.83 % beneficiaries belong to Brahmins caste and Other caste groups like Valmiki (9.68%), Chamar(13.98%), Nai (3.23%), Kahti (3.23%), Ahir(2.15%), Parjapat (2.15%),and Jogi (2.15) who are benefited from the university. There are variations based on the caste group. Rajput and Brahmins were two major caste groups with more population having good economic –social status in their village. These two caste groups not only taken maximum benefits in terms of employment, but also taking benefits for selling their service and goods.

Caste Matter in Employment:

After the establishment of the development projects in the rural areas, people get the opportunities of employment and other mode of livelihood it offered to the people of the nearby village. Employment is biggest benefits which University offered for the people from these villages to work here at various position. Employment plays very important role for determining the socio-economic condition of the individual in the society. The purpose of employment to get the paid for their work. The money and other benefits like social prestige, opportunities to enhance the capability of individual etc. mainly attained by individual through the employment. University as institute required

a huge labor power for its proper functioning. There were a lot of opportunities for working in the university at various level like teaching, non-teaching, outsourcing etc.

There were 46.24 % respondents getting employment through selling their service and goods to the 'university community'. There were 36.56% respondents got the employment as outsourcing from the university. There were nearly 6.45% respondents got the employment at the in the non-teaching staff in the university from the two selected villages. There were 1.08 % respondents able to avail the employment in the teaching position. There were 9.68% people not able to get the any kind of the employment from the university from the selected village.

The people got the opportunity for selling their service and goods for the community living inside the university. There was growth of the market in terms of opening Restaurants, bakery shop, Barber shop, Photocopy and cybercafé shop etc. in these two village after the establishment of the university. People are providing the service like Rent their House, transportation facilities like auto rickshaw, cars etc. The people were doing the work which not related to the agriculture. There is continuous shift of people from the agriculture occupation to service sector. The people got the employment in the outsourcing such as Security Guard, Gardener, and Sweeper. There were 6 female security Guards belong to Pali Village. There was no women security Guard from the Jant village. Women also got the employment as in the form the Sweepers from the university. There were people who got employment in Non-teaching as in the form the clerk, library attendant, peon etc. Very few people from these two villages got the employment from the university at the teaching position.

William H. Wiser in his famous book 'The Hindu Jajmani System (1936)' mentioned about that various caste group played different services in the village. Certain caste group in the village provide the service to other caste group. Those caste group provide the services referred as Kamin. And the caste group people who avail the services from the Kamin referred as Jajman. But in the contemporary time, form of Jajmani system changes (Hypes, 1937). But the modernization of village, there is also change reflect into the caste relationship between the various community. In the present study, people from the different caste group commercialization their service after the establishment of the university. 73.12% respondents who refused the occupation in the university is not based on their caste from which they belonged. The kind of job they were doing not linked to the ascribed occupation of their caste. It means that people were doing the employment not related to the caste's occupation. In Indian context, all the caste groups had their kind of occupation. They continue the occupation from generation to generation. But in modern times, occupation not identified as attribute of caste hierarchy. Louis Dumont gave the concept of purity and pollution regarding the caste group (Dumont, 1980). People who belonged to the lower caste are mostly engaged with kind of employment which is termed as polluted like the occupation of rag picker, sweeper, etc. But 16.13% people who believed that the caste played a significant role in the occupation they got from the university. They were doing the kind of employment same as the job assigned to their caste group. There were 10.75% respondents who are not aware about the significance of the caste for the occupation in the university.

There were respondents from Valmiki caste group who agree about that they continue their caste occupation inside the university. They belong to Valmiki community whose occupation related to cleaning activities. Like engaged in sweeper and cleaner in the university. There were people from so called upper caste like Rajput, Brahmins reacted that there was no caste-based occupation they were attained from the university. People belong to so called lower caste group are prone to do caste-based occupation in the university. As they don't have any other alternative source of income, less education, political support (networking) etc.

The respondents ascribed caste play a significant role for occupation they were doing in the university. The Rajput caste group respondents got the maximum employment (51.6%) at the various job from the university. There is variation based on caste of respondents which alter the chances of getting employment in the University. The second most respondents (11.8%) who got the employment in the university belong to the Brahmins caste group. The people belong to caste group like Harijan, Chamar and Valmiki got the employment less than 10% of the total employment available by the university for the people from these village.

The chance of getting employment and the kind of occupation varies with which caste group people belonged from these villages. The chance of getting the employment most prone among the Rajput and Brahmin more due to their high socio-economic status and political networking is stronger than the other caste group. Many people got the employment in the work as security guard, sweeper, gardener, clerk, through the political recommendation of the leader of political parties. Caste is a significant factor for the employment in the university from these villages. People who were belonged to so called as lower caste (Valmiki, Jogi, Nai, Chamar) attained the low status job like sweeper, cook etc. from the university.

There are more respondents belong to APL category than the BPL who getting the benefits from the university in the form of employment at various position like Teaching, non-teaching, Outsourcing. So, caste status as well as the economic category of the inhabitants from these two villages complex intertwined with each other which impacts the probability of getting employment in the university.

CONCLUSION

After the establishment of university in locality of these two villages, all these characteristics indicate the positive trends in rural transformation. But there is dichotomy appear regarding rural transformation which occurred after the establishment of the university in the villages Jant and Pali. The definition of rural transformation comprising the economic improvement and social inclusion in the rural area. The present study shows that individual socio-economic status (SES) become a determining factor for seeking the benefits from the community-based projects. After the establishment of the university, providing opportunities in terms of employment, education, selling their product and service through the local market, which accessibility was determining through the socio-economic status of the individual. There is positive relationship establish between what kinds of benefits availing to the individual from the university with his/her socio-economic status. If there will be high socio -economic status (SES), there is more chance to get more benefits from the university. Socio-economic status of the individual not linked to the benefit accessibility, but it also linked to the nature of benefits offered by the university. In the study, majority of the higher caste people (Rajput and Brahmins) were able to be getting the maximum benefits from the university and were employing at higher position job strata. The individual social attributes such as caste, class, social category, economic category, gender etc. become a determining factor for availing the benefits from the university and makes change in their life. So, it can conclude that there is rural transformation occurred in the village Jant and Pali after the establishment of the university in their locality, although it make improving their economy but make them not socially inclusive. This dichotomy not providing a vivid picture of rural transformation which occurred after the establishment of the university in rural due to persistence of caste inequality among various caste.

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