

Agrarian Social Relations in A North Indian Village

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Abstract : India means rural India. The village is the unit of the rural society. It is the theatre where the quantum of rural life unfolds itself and functions. The present research is helpful to know the gaps of knowledge in changing patterns of agrarian society in the emerging scenario. It also helps to understand the changing patterns of agrarian social relations in the socio-economic and political spheres of rural society in a northern Indian village of Western Uttar Pradesh.

Keywords: Peasant, Rural Society, Agrarian Relation, Caste.

Introduction - India means rural India. The village is the unit of the rural society. It is the theatre where the quantum of rural life unfolds itself and functions. Like every social phenomenon, the village is a historical category. The emergence of the village at a certain stage in the evaluation of the life of a man (Sharma, 2014). Agrarian societies are those which combine horticulture and animal husbandry in system of farming. This paradigmatic shift opened up many new areas of research, for example regarding the peculiar nature of land as a factor of production, the role of differing patterns of land-ownership, and the study of rural power structures and social stratification (Marshall:574).

It was the census of 1901 that about 89.2 percent of Indians live in villages. Historically we all know India as an agricultural country. However the shift of rural population to urban areas was started since 1901. In the first census of 1951 the rural population sharp shifted towards urban life reducing with 82.7 percent of the population. According to 1991 census the three- fourth of Indian population 74.3 percent lives in villages (Doshi: 12). Land is the hope and glory of village India. A villager is tied to land for his sustenance. He survives on land and, therefore, he is emotionally attached to it (Joshi, 2014:114). In agrarian societies land is the pre-eminent form of wealth. Agriculture continues to be the principal economic activity in India even though the country has experienced significant industrial and urban development in recent years. In India, agriculture is not merely an occupation or a business; it is a way of life which for centuries has shaped the thoughts and outlook of the rural people. All these facts more than justify the continued interest of social scientists on Indian rural life in general and agrarian social structure in particular (Bernstein, 2010).

Agriculture still plays a key role in the economy of India. Nearly one - third of the gross domestic product is accounted by agricultural sector. About two – third of the work force is engaged in agriculture. Agricultural inputs account for an important part of the raw material base of Indian industries. Agricultural exports contribute significantly to the total exports of country (Vyas, 2003: 41). The nature of agrarian change in India has been a subject of much debate. In the 21st century agrarian change coupled with livelihood issues have stirred significant debates in India's rural economy, while there has been a transformation in the agrarian economy of the country. There has not been much change in terms of the nature of its relationships (Das, 2017:219-232).

Doshi, (2014) suggested that the subject matter of rural sociology during the colonial period in India remained confined to the study of hill and forest people—the tribal, the villages and a few of the traditional institutions such as family and caste which were pervasive in small places. It was unhistorical for India to prepare a constitutional agenda for the development of more than five lakh villages. We are the country of more than Five Lakh villages. These villages are not homogeneous. They are diverse in ethnicity, quality of land, hills and plains and even diversified by geography. Bailey (1957) studied of two villages in Orissa brings out the problem of caste and class formation. Bailey argues that at the local level economic formulations run across the caste ranking. Bailey employs structural-functional method and analyses the rural life in the context of changing agrarian structure.

S.C. Dube (1955) Indian village is a traditional account of Shamirpeth, which is located in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Author founds in his early studies that,

"Agriculture is the main stay of the rural economy of India, the crafts and occupation of the country side and generally integrated with it". Dube finally finds a brief analysis of different castes that would be giving us a clear idea of the village economy in the context of rural development. The nature of study is holistic.

Beteille (1974) holds a wide conception by recognizing the inter- relatedness of the structural elements in agriculture such as technology work in organization of production and agrarian hierarchy. Social relations overflow the boundary of the village easily and extensively. The economy of the village is primarily based upon agriculture, and hence the relations of production consist essentially of relations between categories of persons contributing in different ways to the process of agriculture. Agrarian social structure can be comprehended on the basis of ownership, control on land and use of labour in the process of production of agricultural produces. This is seen in their choice of categories: feudal, landlord, bourgeois landlord, rich peasants, ruined peasantry, agricultural proletariat.

Singh, (2006) finds that the agrarian relations are largely determined by land tenure means ownership, tenancy and labour relations while agrarian structure means by covering all the structural conditions for production in agriculture and for livelihood and social situation of rural population. Both these aspects are greatly inter-related. The agrarian relations existing at a point of time reflect the influence of historical, political, social and economic factors. Therefore, the discussion on agrarian relations in this work takes a broader view comprising important aspects of both agrarian structure and land tenure in rural areas. The agrarian relations existing at a point of time reflect the influence of historical, political, social and economic factors. The social relations that underpin the organisation of livelihoods are pivotal in the processes and outcomes of agrarian change

Doshi, (2014) Describes that Land is the hope and glory of village India. A villager is tied to land for sustenance. He survives on land and therefore, he is emotionally attached to it. Gandhi ji very rightly observed that if villages live who can perish India; and if villages perish, who can save India. As a matter of fact, the agrarian social structure is linked with the survival of the nation when the teachers and students are concerned with the development of villages; they are obliged to discuss the land problem of village India. Patel (1952) chiefly explained that the nature of agrarian crisis almost over India by the end of First World War. He quotes that, "With the end of the First World War, the beginning of an agrarian crisis was accompanied by the entry of peasants into the political arena, as exemplified during the Champaran and Keira campaigns led by Gandhi ji. As a result, the cultivator of the soil began to attract considerable attention from the students of Indian Society". Patnaik, (1986) the emerging capitalism is a major trend but still does not everywhere dominate the structure of

agrarian production. The transformation process has occurred at varying rates in different parts of the country. Regional disparities have increased in a way that makes one aspect that more is at stake than a mere difference in stages of the same growth pattern. Uneven development is very much a feature of the general trend toward capitalism.

Joshi (1974) chiefly studied agrarian social structure that is primarily the study of groups connected with land. The differentiation of right over land leads to the formation of different group. Thus, the property structure constitutes the chief basis of productive activity in rural society. The property structure is further related to productive activity through an application of labour and land. Thus, agrarian social structure is basically in terms of relationship existing between the owner of land and the actual producers.

Thorner (1956) chiefly considers the agrarian relations as the nature of relations among the various groups of persons who draw their livelihood from the soil. Thus, he concludes that agrarian structure is the sum total of agrarian relation in which each group operates in relations to other groups and finds that in agrarian societies, land is the primary production asset of economic status and hence political power. It forms the basis of a relation between network productions and brings socio – economic framework within which production is carried on.

Statement of the Problem: In this context, some specific issues related to changing patterns of agrarian social relations in terms of rural economy, caste, caste hierarchy are studied in depth. Thus, the present study focuses upon the following specific questions:

1. What is the socio-economic background of the respondents in a rural setting?
2. What is the nature of agrarian relations in a rural setting?

The first question takes note of the socio-economic background of respondents in a rural setting in terms of age, sex, religion, caste, education, occupation, size of land holdings and type of family, etc.

The second question elucidates of the nature of agrarian relations in a rural setting in terms of formal, informal and both.

Area of Study

Geographical Area : The area of the study was conducted in Bulandshahr district of western Uttar Pradesh. Bulandshahr district lies in western part of Uttar Pradesh, which is located between the Yamuna and Ganga Doab. This district extends between 77°-78° longitudes and 28°-28.4° latitude, which is 237.44 meters above sea level. It is administratively divided into 7 tehsils; 16 blocks and 1244 villages. The village Firojpur is situated in the Khurja Block, which is situated at 15 kms from the Block and 35 kms from district headquarter in the Northeast. The main source of income of the villagers is depending on agriculture and related work.

Methodology: The methods of structural- functional, structural, structural-historical and historical-materialist or constitute the logic of enquiry. The methodology of rural sociology studies the rural communities primarily from social anthropology and sociology. It also draws heavily from economics and political science so far the village economy and Panchayati Raj are concerned.

Respondents and Sample Design : The respondents were select by purposive sampling method, because agrarian society is stratified in various occupational groups of persons as farmer, peasant, tenants, sharecroppers and landless agricultural labourers etc. Number of respondents was depended on availability, sources, suggestion of supervisor and circumstances.

Technique of Data Collection : The study was based on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from the respondents with the help of structured interview schedule, observation, and group discussion through a field survey in the village. Secondary data was collected from Govt. census, statistical records, published and unpublished material etc. The information from the respondent was collected by using the schedule/interview guide in the quantitative phase of data collection. The schedule/interview guide contains both close-ended and open-ended questions. The intensive case study method was also be used for data collection in the qualitative phase of data collection. The observation technique was also used for collection of data.

Methods of Data Analysis : Data collected with the help of interview and schedule/interview guide technique form respondents was analyzed quantitatively by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science Data Analysis). Simple statistical techniques and also associations and co-relations were also looked into to indicate the degree of relationship between socio-economic profiles of the respondents. A qualitative analysis was also under taken of facts collected through observation and case studies.

Perspectives /Approaches : This village study was made through structural-functional methodology. This study was conducted by the method of positivism. On the one hand, researcher tries to understand the reality of society and researcher himself works as a variable. The present research has made use of comparative and weberian perspective to study the changing patterns of agrarian social relations in terms of rural economy, caste, caste hierarchy, power structure and emerging caste class nexus in order to understand the socio-economic and political spheres of rural society.

Findings

Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents:

1. **Age-** Large number 48% of the respondents are (41-50) years old while small number 11% of the respondents are (51 & above) years old by age.
2. **Gender-** Large majority 82% of the respondents are male, while small number 18% of the respondents are

female.

3. **Age and Gender-** The majority of the respondents in both male and female category are from (41-50) years age group, while the small number of the respondent in both male and female category belongs to the age group of (20-30) years.

4. **Caste-** Large number 63.5% of the respondents are from other backward class caste category and the small number 07% of the respondents are from general caste category.

5. **Gender and Caste-** The male of OBC caste category and the female of SC caste category are much more engaged in agricultural works.

6. **Religion-** All most all 93.5% of the respondents are Hindu, while a very few 06.5% of the respondents are Muslim by their religion.

7. **Education-** Large number 41.5% of the respondents were educated up to high school while small number 17% of the respondents were educated up to primary level.

8. **Education and Caste-** SC castes had low educational status, while OBC castes had high school education level because caste and land plays an important role in shaping educational opportunities.

9. **Occupation-** Large number 46% of the respondents were engage in daily wage labour/manual worker by occupation and a very few number 6.5% of the respondents were engage in non-working/ house wife as their occupation.

10. **Gender and Occupation-** 164 male respondents are dominating in occupational category in comparison to the female respondents. Male respondents are the main source of income in their family.

11. **Caste and Occupation-** OBC caste category respondents are much more dominant in occupation and income than other caste categories. So, the study reveals that caste plays an important role in selection of their occupation.

12. **Income/month-** Large majority 68.5% of the respondents belongs to the income group of upto (Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 20000/- and the small number 05.5% of the respondents exceed in the income group of Rs. 30,000/- and above. Thus mostly respondents belong to lower middle class families.

13. **Income and Caste-** OBC caste category respondents had higher income levels while sc caste category respondents had lower income levels. Thus, it can be said that there is a strong relation between caste and income.

14. **Religion and Income-** Religion plays an important role in income because it affects our source of income. The income of respondents of Hindu religion is slightly more than other religious groups.

15. **Residential Area-** All of the respondents lived in rural area.

16. **Types of Family-** Large majority 77.5% of the respondents lives in nuclear family and a very few number

02% of the respondents lives alone/ single types of family category.

17. Types of House- All 100% of the respondents live in pakka house and NIL of the respondents live in kachha house.

18. Marital Status- Large majority 77.5% of the respondents are married and a very few number 01% of the respondents are separated.

19. House Ownership- All 100% of the respondents have their own house.

Nature of Agrarian Relations in a Rural Setting :

1. Relations of labourer with their owner- Large number (55.44%) of the labourer have formal relations with their owner and the small number (5.43%) of the labourer has any other type of relations with their owner.

2. Types of works engagement- Large majority 81.53% of the respondents are engage in agricultural work as a labourer, while a very few 2.17% of the respondents are engage in any other type of agricultural work as a labourer.

3. Types of wages- Large majority 83.70% of the respondents are getting their wage in cash form, while a very small number 5.43% of the respondents are getting their wage in the form of goods.

4. Participation in Ceremonial Functions- Large majority 91.30% of the respondents are participating in ceremonial functions organized by their owner while small number 8.70% of the respondents are not participating in ceremonial functions organized by their owner.

5. Pattern of Participation in Ceremonial Functions- Large majority 79.76% of the respondents are participating without family in ceremonial functions organized by their owner while small number 20.24% of the respondents are participating with family in ceremonial functions organized by their owner.

6. Data information about the wages of female labourer in comparison with male labourer- All 100% of the respondents have responded that female labourer are not getting equal wage as male labourer.

7. Reason behind the difference of wages- Majority of the respondents have responded that female labourer is not able to do heavy work as male labourer, female labourer is not able to take risk as male labourer at work place and female labourer works at work place for very specific and limited time. However, the small number of the respondents does not support the fact that female labourer is not able to do heavy work as male labourer, female labourer is not able to take risk as male labourer at work place and female labourer works at work place for very specific and limited time.

8. Relations of cultivator/owner with their labourer- Large majority (63.88%) of the respondents have formal relations with their labourer and the small number (04.62%) of the respondents has any other type of relations with their labourer.

9. Types of works engagement- Large number (67.59%)

of the respondents are engage in agricultural work as a cultivator/owner, and the small number (12.04%) of the respondents are engage in any other type of work as a cultivator/owner.

10. Types of wages- Large majority 85.18% of the respondents are giving the wage to their labourers in cash form, while a very small number 6.48% of the respondents are giving the wage to their labourers in the form of goods.

11. Participation in Ceremonial Functions- Large majority 87.04% of the respondents are participating in ceremonial functions organized by their labourer, while small number 12.96% of the respondents are not participating in ceremonial functions organized by their labourer.

12. Pattern of Participation in Ceremonial Functions- Large majority 90.74% of the respondents are participating without family in ceremonial functions organized by their labourer, while small number 9.26% of the respondents are participating with family in ceremonial functions organized by their labourer.

13. Place of hired labourers- Majority 72.22% of the respondents hired labourers from own village, while small number 2.78% of the respondents hired labourers from the town/city.

14. Types of Employment- Majority 72.22% of the respondents hired the labourers as casual type employment, while small number very few 5.56% of the respondents hired the labourers as other type of employment.

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