

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND CHANGE

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### Introduction

Village study is an essential part of sociology and social anthropology in the academic forum. In India, a large chunk of population live in rural areas, hence village studies have multi-dimensional significance. Village studies started in 1930s and witnessed a boom among the Indian scholars upto 1960s however, there has been decline in the sociological studies having village as a focal point. However, sociologists and anthropologists all over globe have shown their academic interest in village studies in India. Rankhandi and three other villages viz., Jhabiran, Nagal and Jakhwala in Saharanpur district of Western Uttar Pradesh in India have sought attention of Anthropologists and Sociologists of Cornell University and other American universities since last 65 years. Many research studies have been conducted in these villages on different themes and sub-themes such as social structure, social system, caste and inter-caste relations, social network, communication and women status etc. Palanpur village in Western Uttar Pradesh has attracted Sociologists and Economists for depth studies since 1957-58. Village studies are important contributions in our understanding of the village agrarian economies, social structure and related social dimensions.

Village studies occupy an important place in the academic studies in India. Social Anthropologists and Sociologists paid great attention towards village studies in post-independence India. The changes in rural social life, social system, social structure, rural economy and village life were some of the core issues for depth study by the eminent scholars. Since independence, Indian society has transforms considerably. The factors for social transformation included adult franchise, community development programmes, panchayat raj institutions, green revolution, welfare and social security schemes, development in communication and socio-economic infrastructure, means of transport and communication etc. Thus, Indian society may not be viewed just as tradition-oriented, caste-dominated, jajmani-based division of labour etc. The village studies had significance

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as they had been carried-out at a time when post-independence India was trying to develop a new identity as a nation state. Village studies are extremely rich in the empirical details as they provide the details of social life in rural India during the early years of independence. These studies serve as useful source material for a history of contemporary Indian society. A distinction is often made between “village studies” and “agrarian studies”. While most of the village studies” were conducted during 1950s and 1960s, agrarian studies” gained popularity in India during the early 1970s. While social anthropologists studied a single village focusing primarily on the social and cultural life of rural people and the manner in which rural society reproduced its „moral order“, the agrarian studies invariably began with inquiring into the status of land economy in a broader framework of understanding change in the sphere of production relations, distribution, marketing of agricultural surplus, and the rural power structure.

Dependence on agriculture is gradually declining with the increase in the share of non-farm sector and services in village economy. Thus, there is occupational shifting and increase in surplus disposable income. This has resulted creation of household assets and substantial use of labour reducing devices. Migration and mobility have become a common part of village life (Sharma, 2014). The village study has become a focal point for many academic research in India. Gilbert is pioneer in village studies in India. Christopher Huller and Jonathan Spencer noted the demise of village studies which survived until 1970s in anthropology. Dipankar Gupta (2005) has focused on the declining significance of village as a social entity. Singh (2005) argued the importance of land as a factor of livelihood and dominance is decreasing and other factors of production are becoming more important in village affairs. Harrish (2012) is of the view that there has been gradual shifting of high cost dominance in village due to political-economic change.

The importance of rural sociology has gained importance in post independence in India. Though the agrarian context has occupied important place in the social science, however, study of agrarian relations did not get a central position in Indian sociology as studies on caste, kinship, village community, gender gained significance. The first systematic study of rural India was conducted by D.N Majumdar followed by N.K Bose, S.C Dubey and M.N Shrinivas. The publication of Andre Beteille’s studies in agrarian

social structure in 1974 gained importance in agrarian relations. . Peasant studies were conducted in India with focus on village studies. The collection of essays in Village India, edited by Marriot with its emphasis on little communities and great communities was brought out under the direct supervision of Robert Redfield. By defining little communities not in relation to land but through other social institutions such as kinship, religion and the social organization of caste there was a shift away from looking at the rural population in relation to agriculture and land.. Caste hierarchy was defined in terms of ritual or social interaction over institutions of commensality and marriage. The rural society is the basic foundation of human life, the keystone of the developmental process and the basic unit of social structure. Villages have been in existence since time immemorial. The rural sociology is of greater significance. According to S.C Dube, the village has been a basic and important unit in the organization of Indian social life. The unique nature of transformation of Indian society may be observed in a village where elements of traditional and modern cultures have been juxtaposed. Thus, in order to examine rural development and to find out solution of rural problems, according to A.R Desai, systematic study of rural organization of its structure; function and evolution becomes necessary. The growing influence of industrialization and urbanization on village life has been well documented. Scientific study of village community is a prerequisite for democratic decentralization.

Chanethu is a Village in Pratappur Block in Allahabad District of Uttar Pradesh State, India. It belongs to Allahabad Division. It is located 53 KM towards East from District head quarters Allahabad, 8 KM from Pratappur Khurd and 233 KM from State capital Lucknow . The total geographical area of village is 325.59 hectares. Chanethu has a total population of 3,932 peoples. There are about 535 houses in Chanethu village.. Chanethu Village, with population of 3932 is the 38th most populous village, located in Handia sub district of Allahabad district in the state of Uttar Pradesh . Total geographical area of Chanethu village is 3 km<sup>2</sup> and it is the 41st biggest village by area in the sub district. Population density of the village is 1206 persons per km<sup>2</sup>.

### Objectives and Methods

The present has following main objectives:

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- To study the social structure and social stratification in the selected village;
- To examine the village economy, occupational shifting and migration in selected village;

The paper is based on primary data . The paper is based on Ph. D dissertation. The study is confined to the state of Uttar Pradesh. Chanethu village of Allahabad district was selected for detailed study. . For the purpose of the study, simple random sampling procedure was adopted. The selected village- Chanethu has about 535 houses and 376 houses were selected for survey. In order to conduct field survey, house listing was carried out. From the listed houses, 376 households from Scheduled Castes, OBCs and General communities were randomly selected for field survey. Besides, 13 representatives of local governments were also surveyed. For purpose of field survey, interview schedules were developed, however, non-participant observations by the researcher were also made in order to get the insight on the topic of research. The interview schedules contained the relevant questions, research points, and scales of views related to social and economic infrastructure, socio-economic profile, living patterns, migration, changing occupations, village life, attitude and perceptions towards social, economic and political issues etc.

## Conclusion

Village studies received great attention by the American and Indian Scholars in post-independent era. Village being the focal point of rural life, a number of studies were conducted by Social Anthropologists and Sociologists. These studies focused on social structure, social relations, tradition, continuity and change, kinship, caste and religion etc. The studies were mainly conducted in the period of 1950 to 1980. However, in the later stage, rural economic life was focused by economists for carrying out socio-economic surveys pertaining to source of livelihood, cultural life of peasant class, agrarian relations, etc. The social studies conducted by Social Anthropologists and Sociologists in India devoted their attention towards continuity and change among tribes, marginalized and other weaker sections. The social and cultural life was chosen by the scholars for village studies. With the change in political system, economic order and technological revolution, focus of studies shifted towards social structure and changing composition of rural

population, division of labour based on jajmani system, political participation, communalism, casteism and other social problems.

Community development programmes, social reforms, land reforms, social welfare programmes, development in social and economic infrastructure, green revolution, etc. change the rural power structure and the development process and social transformation become the focal point for village studies. The new phase of globalization, economic liberalization, privatization during the early years of 1990s paved the way for new realities as the changes had implications for village society and its agrarian economy. The change in the means of communication, transportation, and consumerism and so on influence the social life in villages. The rural urban interface, industrialization and influence of western culture affected the socio-cultural life of villagers. The new changes created the employment opportunities in urban centre and thus, there has been increased migration of male population from rural areas to urban centres. The share of agriculture in economy also declined over the period while due to shrinking of land holdings and agricultural productivity, the level of male migration gradually increased. The migration has also affected the social and cultural life in the villages as joint families disintegrated while there is gradual shift of new value system which resulted in conflict among the family members on the issues of individual interest and traditional value system.

Village studies are rich source of information as these are based on comprehensive field work. The village studies also carried out in the theoretical framework. However, field work tradition is stronger in social anthropology and it is less focused in sociology. The lack of field work tradition in social sciences including social anthropology and sociology has had adverse result on their growth and developments. The divorce between field research and theory has had another great consequence for the development of social sciences. Intensive field work is now combined increasingly with the use of questionnaires and the collection of information and data in quantitative terms.

New Panchayati Raj System introduced by government during 1992 paved the way for decentralized rural governance. The reservation for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and Women provided the equal opportunities for weaker sections in decision making in grass root level political institutions and in implementation of rural development

programmes. Thus, political sociology as a new discipline emerged and a number of studies were carried out in rural areas in India. Education is one of the most significant determinants of status in the present day village community. Modern education, particularly higher education which was monopoly of higher caste earlier, extended to weaker sections due to provision of reservation in education and employment. The college and university education extended the new horizon of occupational possibilities by providing formal qualifications required for superior occupations. The Jajmani system also disintegrated with the introduction of land reforms and thus, power relations, caste and class stratification drastically changed over the period. There has been positive relationship between caste, class and power structure as decentralization of power through Panchayati Raj has provided a ground to share the fruits of democracy among the weaker sections. Modernization depending upon two basic characteristics of society viz., institutionalization of modern values and adoptability of society has long term impact on village society. Modernization also changed the mindset of rural people as democratic system beliefs in secular values which promote social harmony, national integration and co-existence. The traditional values, social organizations, social and cultural traditions, rituals, and practices were discouraged by modern forces of change.

Migration has major impact on village life. The decision to migrate is a decision in which family members including women are actively involved. Women of family play an active part in both motivating and facilitating male migration. Migration is mainly reported for economic reasons such as poverty, better employment opportunities, income opportunities, debt etc. However, migration also provided opportunities for exposure to other societies. Migration impact on the family is a dynamic process which keeps constantly changing with the length of migrant's stay. Women gradually take on increased responsibilities for running of households, health care and education of children and management of funds and properties. This also created increased mobility of female members and with the new contacts and network with institutions, new opportunities for social and economic empowerment for women emerged. The land reforms brought agrarian change in rural areas. With the shrinking of land holdings, agricultural productivity and disintegration of families, male members were forced to migrate urban centres for

sustenance of their families. The surplus land distribution among the weaker sections provided an opportunity for land based occupations however, the distributed land could not support the family for a long time as the size of land was too small to support the family. The fragmentation of land holdings affected the traditional land use and cropping pattern. The common property resources gradually reduced and small and marginal land holdings for a large population could not provide enough agricultural produce for sustenance of families.

Chanethu village is situated in Allahabad district of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The village has population of around 4000 with more than 500 households. The village economy is mainly based on agriculture; however, a large number of households are engaged in non-farm sector, self employment, business and services. The village has good socio-economic infrastructure. A significant proportion of population belongs to minority communities however, village is dominated by Hindus. With the accessibility of educational infrastructure in village and nearby areas, a large population has received education at the middle level and even college and university level.

Most of the surveyed families were nuclear families as there has been disintegration of families due to migration, modernization and other factors. Though, there has been gradual shift of rural stratification from caste to class and reserved class to economic class. The overwhelming majority of respondents were from middle class. The rural development, social security and social welfare programmes provided equal opportunities in rural areas and thus, about 2/5<sup>th</sup> families were found receiving ration from PDS shops. The living conditions have drastically improved as the scheme of Ujjawalla, Swachh Bharat Mission, Rural Drinking water, Rural Electrification, etc. were extended to rural areas and most of the families from weaker sections and even from general masses gained benefits. The educational programmes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan provided equal opportunities for educational development in the rural areas. There has been increase enrolment, retention, pass out and decrease in educational drop outs. The health schemes such as Jannani Suraksha Yojana provided opportunity for safe delivery of pregnant women, pre and post-natal care and child immunization. Most of the respondents reported that their main occupations of self employment in agriculture and non-agriculture

sector, petty business and regular salaried job. However, average annual family income was reported low. Perhaps villagers have not shared information on their actual income as agriculture income is based on estimation. There has been high ownership of television and two wheelers however, ownership of live stock resources was found low. There has been increased farm mechanization and high use of new technology in agriculture and even at household levels. Most of respondents revealed that their family members have migrated to urban centres mainly for employment and educational reasons. The MNGREGA scheme no doubt created employment opportunities in rural areas however, major beneficiaries were Scheduled Caste and other weaker sections.

The decentralized governance and New Panchayati Raj opened new avenues for political empowerment in rural areas. The constitution of village panchayat committees and sub-committees, provision for reservation in elected post and involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions in implementation of rural development programmes changed the social and political power structure and relations. The elected representatives received due respect and recognition from the public. They participated in development programmes and schemes. The public paid great attention towards them as elected representatives were the middlemen for interface with public and government functionaries as well as identification of beneficiaries for development programmes supported by government. The elected representatives also involved in implementation, monitoring and supervision of government programmes and schemes. There has been significant change in the determinants of voting behavior. The adult franchise, secular values, and modernization of traditional institutions created the demand for development issues in elections and thus, development become the important factor in casting of votes. There has been drastic decline in the malpractices and corruption in the election and people are freely casting their votes in the interest of nation. With the introduction of constitution and legal provisions for the protection of weaker section, there has been declined in violence, crime and exploitation of weaker sections by peasant class or land lords. Due to change in power structure and positive discrimination by government in terms of reservation in education and employment, there has been increased participation of weaker sections and others in rural development programmes. With the change in value system, modernization, globalization and economic liberalization, the

attitude towards social, economic and political issues has gradually shifted towards positive and development oriented.

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