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## LEVELS OF LIVING IN RURAL AREAS—A PERSPECTIVE OF FOUR CASE STUDIES

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Over the past decade, 1950-60, our economy had advanced at an average rate of 4 per cent per annum, the aggregate national income having increased by about 42 per cent and the per capita income by 16 per cent. In the sphere of general education and health, the number of students in the schools increased by 48 per cent and that of hospital beds by about 65 per cent. The production of food-grains increased by 46 per cent from 52.2 million tons in 1950-51 to about 76 million tons in 1960-61. In this context, it is important to study the impact of these changes and to elucidate the extent to which they have affected the levels of living of the rural people. No specific hypothesis is being examined hereunder, rather the task has been envisaged, at this stage of examination, as laying bare the changes in the levels of living and commenting on the direction of these changes.

One group of studies examining various aspects of the village economy is the series undertaken by the Agro-Economic Research Centres under the auspices of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture of the Government of India. Of these, four studies have been utilised for the purposes of this paper. The main consideration in the selection of the above villages has been that of presenting the data for two points of time. All the three villages of Sohalpur Gara, Kashipur and Vadamalaipuram so far resurveyed by the Agro-Economic Research Centres have been selected. Kanther Terang has been selected so as to include an example of a tribal village. These villages were subject to a particular force of change and have good communication facilities. "Sohalpur Gara" is situated in the south-eastern part of the district of Saharanpur in Roorkee Tehsil of U. P. and was first surveyed in 1954-55 and resurveyed in 1958-59 by the Delhi Agro-Economic Research Centre. The population of the village increased from 443 in 1954-55 to 499 at the time of resurvey. "Kashipur" is situated in the district of Bankura in the Vishnupur sub-division of West Bengal and was surveyed in 1955-56 and resurveyed in 1960-61 by the Visva-Bharati Agro-Economic Research Centre. The population of the village increased from 498 in 1956 to 550 at the time of the resurvey in 1960. "Vadamalaipuram" is situated in the Satur taluk of Ramnad district of Madras State and was first surveyed by Gilbert Slater in 1916 followed by resurveys by P. J. Thomas and the Agro-Economic Research Centre, University of Madras, in 1936 and 1958-59 respectively. "Kanther Terang", a tribal village of the north-eastern region is situated in the district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills in Assam and belongs to the Mikir Hills sub-division surveyed in 1960-61 by the Agro-Economic Research Centre at Assam Agricultural College, Jorhat. The village is exclusively inhabited by *Mikirs* and has a population of only 88, which is also the average size of a village in the district.

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\* The views presented in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not represent those of the Government of India by whom the authors are currently employed.

*Methodology*

The Village Survey Reports contain some data on the distribution of aggregate income, per capita income, consumption expenditure, literacy and birth and death rates, etc. However, the data in these reports are not given on a precisely similar basis and, therefore, strictly speaking, it presents some difficulties of comparison. Nevertheless the approach adopted for the purpose of this study has been to group the data under certain broad headings in order to facilitate general comparisons. For example, certain items of consumption had to be grouped in order to obtain a composite picture of the food and non-food items. Similarly, in the case of income, the cultivation category includes the data on incomes for cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and unowned; under "Production other than Cultivation" was included the data for livestock and poultry products, fishing and hunting, etc., and spinning and weaving and arts and crafts; and under "Trade and Commerce", the data for trade and transport have been combined. In view of the procedure adopted the aggregate figures should be read with some caution. In the case of health, the level has been assessed by means of a comparison of the average of the death rates for the villages selected with a mean average of the death rates for 21 villages, the rates being the average of the five years preceding the year of the survey which was 1955-56.

## INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND LITERACY—ALL INDIA

*Income*

A recent paper<sup>1</sup> assessing economic development in India has shown the distribution of total income from agriculture among the various States at two points of time.

From the data for the States where the selected villages are situated it is clear that the percentage increase in income from agriculture was the highest in Madras and lowest in Assam, the increases being approximately 45 per cent and 2 per cent respectively over the period 1949-50 and 1958-59. The income increased by 20 per cent in U.P. and 16 per cent in West Bengal as compared to an increase of 28 per cent at the all-India level. It will also be noted that the percentage share of income to the all-India total has declined in the case of Assam, U. P. and West Bengal, whereas in Madras there is a slight rise. In other words, the dependence of people on agriculture in the States of Assam, U. P. and West Bengal has declined and in Madras there is an increase in dependence on agriculture.

*Per Capita Consumer Expenditure*

Per capita consumption expenditure figures for rural areas at the all-India level have been compiled from the N. S. S. reports<sup>2</sup> which give consumer expenditure in rupees and percentage to total consumer expenditure for a period of 30 days by items of consumption in rural areas for the 4th, 5th, 7th and 10th N.S.S. Rounds.

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1. Raj, K. N., "Some Features of Economic Growth of the Last Decade in India," *Economic Weekly*, Vol. XIII, Nos. 4, 5 & 6, Feb. 1961, p. 253.

2. Government of India, Cabinet Secretariat : The N. S. S. : Second to Seventh Round, April 1951 to March 1954, Manager of Publications, Delhi, August 1959, pp. 11 and 14; and The N. S. S. : Tenth Round, December 1955 to May 1956, Delhi, 1961, pp. 21 and 35.

From this data, the importance of food items in our rural economy is apparent. Taking food and non-food items, the consumption of food items which was about 63 per cent of the consumption expenditure in the fourth and fifth rounds rose to about 67 per cent in the 7th and 10th rounds. In the case of non-food items, their consumption was about 37 per cent in the fourth and fifth rounds which came down to about 33 per cent in the 7th and 10th rounds. Though these figures do not indicate that the village population was under-fed yet they serve to demonstrate that there is a likely tendency to consume a larger proportion of food produced as an increase occurs in food production. However, focussing on such important items of consumption like milk and milk products, meat, egg and fish, clothing and light and fuel, the increase in their intake indicates an improvement in the consumption pattern, though the extent of increase is small. Comparing food and non-food items as a whole it is apparent that a shift in favour of the former has taken place.

### *Literacy*

The data from the Census of India<sup>3</sup> on total population, number of literate and educated persons and the percentage of literate and educated persons for the States and districts in which the villages selected are situated reveals that nineteen per cent of the people in rural areas in India are literate and educated. As compared to this, among the States in question, literacy is highest in the States of Assam and Madras, about 25 per cent of the people in rural areas there being literate, though among the districts Ramanathapuram leads with 27 per cent of the rural people as literate and educated. Literacy is lowest in the rural areas of U. P. and the district of Saharanpur where only 14 per cent of the people are literate as compared with about 22 per cent in the case of West Bengal and the district of Bankura.

## INCOME, CONSUMPTION, LITERACY AND HEALTH—VILLAGE LEVEL

### *Income*

Distribution<sup>4</sup> of income by sources at two points of time is available for Sohalpur Gara and Kashipur villages whereas for Kanther Terang the data are available for one year only.

During the point of resurvey in comparison to the first point survey, the gross income in Sohalpur Gara increased by 47 per cent and in Kashipur by about 41 per cent. In Sohalpur Gara income from all the sources between 1954-55 and 1958-59 had increased except from 'labour' in which case it declined by about 3 per cent. In Kashipur, there was a decline in the income of the agricultural rent receivers as also for that emanating from the service, profession and miscellaneous sector.

3. The Registrar General, India, Census of India : Report of Final Population Tables—Paper 1, Manager of Publications, Delhi, 1962, pp. 62-63, 66-67, 82-83, 98-99 and 106-107.

4. Agro-Economic Research Centres (University of Delhi, Visva-Bharati University and Assam Agricultural College) : Sohalpur Gara—Resurvey, Table 7.1 ; Report on Three Villages—Kashipur, p. 65 and Kashipur—Resurvey, p. 55; Kanther Terang, p. 83 (unpublished).

In both the villages, cultivation contributed the highest proportionate share of total income, being 55 per cent in Sohalpur Gara and more than 65 per cent in Kashipur. Next in importance was the sector of 'production other than cultivation' in Sohalpur Gara and 'labour' in Kashipur. In Kanther Terang income from cultivation contributed 66 per cent of the total income followed by income from services and professions, etc., and production other than cultivation, which contributed 19 per cent and 15 per cent of the total income respectively. In Vadamalaipuram, the net income from cultivation, livestock and agricultural labour contributed as much as 65 per cent of the total income of the village and services and transport adding 30 per cent.

In comparison to the importance of cultivation with respect of total income it is interesting to see that in terms of additional income accruing over the time period cultivation stands third in importance. In the case of Kashipur it follows labour and production other than cultivation, while in Sohalpur Gara after agricultural rent receivers and services, professional and miscellaneous. Though a precise inference of diversification is not possible on this basis it does indicate a tendency in that direction.

It may be noted that among the States and villages under consideration, in U. P. the total income from agriculture is highest so also is that of village Sohalpur Gara; second comes the State of West Bengal as also the village Kashipur situated in it and the last being Assam which is also the case for the village of Kanther Terang of this State. Compared to the States of U. P. and West Bengal, the villages of Sohalpur Gara and Kashipur have increased their dependence on agriculture.

#### *Consumption Expenditure*

Data on consumption expenditure as a per cent of the total consumer expenditure and per capita consumer expenditure<sup>5</sup> in the two villages of Sohalpur Gara and Kashipur broadly reveal similar trends as we have already seen at the all-India level. The consumption of food items has gone up and that of non-food items having declined. In Sohalpur Gara, however, an improvement in the level of living is apparent from the increase in the consumption of vegetables and fruits, poultry products, light and fuel and clothing. In Kashipur, on the other hand, although cereals and non-cereals claimed a marginally higher share of the total consumption expenditure, there have been some reverses in the case of light and fuel and clothing. Since the decrease in the latter case is rather slight it is not necessarily a deterioration in the level of living but merely indicative of a shift in expenditure between the food and non-food groupings. Expenditure on education claimed a slightly higher per cent of total expenditure, although the per cent of literates to total population has gone down, as we shall see in the next section. In Kanther Terang and Kashipur about 80 per cent of the total expenditure was on food items and the remaining 20 per cent on non-food items.

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5. Agro-Economic Research Centres (University of Delhi, Visva-Bharati University, University of Madras and Assam Agricultural College): Kashipur—Resurvey, p. 63; Vadamalaipuram—Then and Now, p. 31; Kanther Terang, p. 89 (unpublished); and Agro-Economic Research Centres (University of Delhi and Visva-Bharati University): Kashipur—Resurvey, p. 87 (unpublished).

Vadamalaipuram and Sohalpur Gara, on the other hand, have a slightly better position as only 66 per cent of the expenditure in the former and about 60 per cent in the latter village was on food and the rest on non-food items.

Data on the type and number of durable consumer goods in use in Kanther Terang during 1960<sup>6</sup> possibly indicate that the tribal village of Kanther Terang has been subject to an increasing penetration by urban forces in terms of commodities, the good communications facilitating this type of penetration of the village economy. Indirectly it may also point to an increase in monetisation, though this inference will need to be established by recourse to additional data which are not available at this time.

### *Literacy*

The striking feature of the data on literacy<sup>7</sup> is that literacy has gone down in the villages of Sohalpur Gara and Kashipur, the percentage of literates having gone down from 13 to 9 in the former village and from 31 to 29 in the latter village. Literacy was highest in the age-group of 25-34 in Sohalpur Gara, about 28 per cent of the people being literate in 1954-55, though this percentage came down to 15 in 1958-59. On the other hand, both in Kashipur and Vadamalaipuram during the first point survey, literacy was highest in the age group 15-24, 42 per cent of the people being literate in Kashipur and about 58 per cent in Vadamalaipuram. During the year of resurvey in Kashipur, however, the highest percentage of literates were found in the age-group 25-34 years. In the tribal village of Kanther Terang about 20 per cent of the people were literate in the age-group 5-14 as compared to 53 per cent in Vadamalaipuram.

Taking an overall view, literacy was highest in Vadamalaipuram where 34 per cent of the people were literate and lowest in the tribal village of Kanther Terang where only 3 per cent of the people were literate.

In comparison to the all-India level as also the States and districts in which the selected villages are situated, literacy is higher in Kashipur and Vadamalaipuram and lower in Sohalpur Gara and Kanther Terang. In the case of Kanther Terang, only 3.4 per cent of the people are literate as against 25 per cent in Assam and 17 per cent in the district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills. This wide divergence between the literacy of the village, State and the district may be due to the relative isolation of this village *vis-a-vis* the impact of educational schemes.

### *Health*

As pointed out earlier, the standard of health has been sought to be judged through a comparison of the average of the death rates for villages selected with

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6. Agro-Economic Research Centre (Assam Agricultural College): Kanther Terang, p. 91 (unpublished).

7. Agro-Economic Research Centres (University of Delhi, Visva-Bharati University, University of Madras and Assam Agricultural College): Kashipur—Resurvey, p. 26; Vadamalaipuram—Then and Now, p. 7; Kanther Terang, p. 39 (unpublished).

a mean average of death rates for 21 villages,<sup>8</sup> the death rate for these villages being the average of five years preceding the year of the survey which was 1955-56.

As compared to this information with the position in the villages of Sohalpur Gara, Kashipur and Kanther Terang<sup>9</sup> (similar data in the case of Vadamalaipuram not being available) the standard of health in Sohalpur Gara has improved considerably, the average death rate being 3.2 per 100 of population during 1950-54 as compared to the average of 1.9 during 1956-60. The death rate during the latter period is also practically the same as in the case of 21 villages. The estimate of death rates at the all-India level, according to the 1961 Census is the same as for the 21 villages, *i.e.*, 1.8 per 100 of population. Similarly, as compared to the mean average of death rates for 21 villages the death rate in the tribal village of Kanther Terang is quite high. The average death rate during 1956-60 being 2.7 in Kanther Terang as against an average of 1.8 for the 21 villages. The death rate for this village was as high as 5.1 per 100 of population in 1956 and 6.9 for Sohalpur Gara during 1954. Kashipur, on the other hand, has a fairly good standard of health, the death rate during the five-year period 1956-60 being only 1.2 as compared to 1.8 in the case of 21 villages.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Incomes at the village level have generally increased though larger increases are evident from occupations other than cultivation, service and rental income in the case of Sohalpur Gara, while production other than cultivation and labour in the case of Kashipur. A State-wise and village-wise comparison of the change in the dependence on agriculture reveals an inverse relationship. Thus both U.P. and West Bengal show some decline in their dependence on agriculture as measured by the relative position of agricultural income whereas both Sohalpur Gara and Kashipur have become more dependent on agriculture.

Consumption expenditure reveals a shift in favour of food items as compared to non-food items. This tends to support the hypothesis that an increase in food production is likely to be followed by a rise in food consumption under conditions of chronic under-nourishment. Looking at the compositional changes in consumption expenditure there is some improvement evident as more protective foods, cloth and fuel and lighting are being consumed.

8. The villages on which the average is based are as follows :

Village	District	Village	District
1. Ghiana	Saharanpur	2. Sanoli	Saharanpur
3. Shamaspur	-do-	4. Saran	Gurgaon
5. Aulant	Gurgaon	6. Naunera	-do-
7. Arwah	-do-	8. Kasbe Sukene	Nasik
9. Mouje Sukene	Nasik	10. Mouje Oney	-do-
11. Murud	Osmanabad	12. Wathwad	Osmanabad
13. Karkata	-do-	14. Dhad	Buldana
15. Dhalsaongi	Buldana	16. Kardi	-do-
17. Dudha	-do-	18. Shajapur	Birbhum
19. Palur	Chingleput	20. Maelila	Quilon
21. Sowdarin	Kurnool		

8. Agro-Economic Research Centres (University of Delhi, Assam Agricultural College and Visva-Bharati University): Sohalpur Gara Resurvey, Table 2.1; Kanther Terang, p. 30; Kashipur Resurvey, p. 19 (unpublished).



Literacy was highest in Vadamalaipuram and lowest in Kanther Terang. In the latter case, it is significant to note that at the State level Assam's position is high, thus indicating that this particular village has not benefited from the improvements in education. Both in Sohalpur Gara and Kashipur literacy has declined.

In all the villages except Kanther Terang the death rate is lower than that for India as a whole or for a group of villages chosen at random, thus indicating a relatively better level of health.

As the description of the villages chosen show that though they were all near a particular developmental project, the overall impact of these projects has been rather weak. The preceding examination of the data reveals that some positive changes in the level of living have occurred. However, the extent of the overall change is small at best and may very well indicate a position very close to relative stagnation in the level of living of the village population.

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## LEVELS OF LIVING OF BHIMPUR TRIBAL WELFARE BLOCK

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This paper presents the main findings of a pilot survey conducted in May, 1960, to study the levels of living of the tribal people in the Special Multi-purpose Tribal Block at Bhimpur in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. The Bhimpur Block had a population of 39,600 of which 86 per cent or 34,000 are tribals. *Gonds* and *Karku* are the two main tribal groups.

### *Occupation and Sources of Income*

Agriculture is the main occupation of the tribals. Most of them cultivate their own fields, those having no land of their own work in the fields as labourers. *Kodon*, *Kutki* and maize are the main *kharif* crops and gram is the main *rabi* crop of the block. In the absence of any irrigation facilities and poor quality of the soil *kharif* crops have assumed great importance.

Wheat is grown only where the soil is deep and black and paddy only in the tank beds that dry up during summer. Tribals are good cultivators and know the importance of using manures. Due to the paucity of manures the tribals confine manuring to the "*Bari*", i.e., a fenced enclosure about an acre or less in

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