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## Rural Economy and Power Structure in a North Indian Village

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### Abstract

The rural economy in North Indian villages is primarily agrarian, focusing on agriculture, livestock, and related industries. The power structure in these villages is complex, influenced by factors like land ownership, caste, and numerical strength. The traditional power structure has undergone significant changes, with the emergence of new leadership and the decline of the zamindari system. The distribution of power and authority are no longer correlates solely with landholding or caste. Instead, factors like individual merit, political connections, and economic status are becoming more important. Nowadays, the traditional social structure of the village is changing due to changes in the economic and political spheres. In agrarian societies, land is the pre-eminent form of wealth. The Jajmani system, a traditional division of labour, also plays a significant role in rural economies. It involves reciprocal relationships between different castes, with servicing castes providing goods and services to landowning castes in exchange for payment in kind or cash. However, this system is declining due to modernization, urbanization, and industrialization. The rural economy and power structure in North Indian villages are complex and influenced by various factors. Understanding these dynamics is essential for grasping the realities of rural life and the challenges faced by these communities in the modern era.

**Keywords:** Rural Economy, Power Structure, Caste Hierarchy, Agrarian Society

### Introduction

Agriculture still plays a key role in the economy of India. Nearly one-third of the gross domestic product is accounted for by the agricultural sector. Land is the hope and glory of village India. India means rural India. In the first census of 1951, the rural population sharply shifted towards urban life, reducing to 82.7 per cent of the population. According to the 1991 census, three-fourths of the Indian population, 74.3 per cent, live in villages (Doshi, 2014) <sup>[4]</sup>. A villager is tied to the land for his sustenance. He survives on land and, therefore, he is emotionally attached to it (Joshi, 2014:114) <sup>[6]</sup>. Agriculture was the cornerstone of ancient India's economy. Agriculture was all along the chief industry of the people (Samaddar, 1982:87). In agrarian societies, land is the pre-eminent form of wealth (Kar, 1990:1). Agriculture continues to be the principal economic activity in India even though the country has experienced significant industrial and urban development in recent years. (Bernstein, 2010). Agrarian structure means all mutual relations among the landlords, tenants, and agricultural labourers (Joshi: 1988). The term agrarian structure denotes a framework of social relationships in which all agricultural activities, such as production, marketing, and consumption, are carried out. (Sahay, 2002:2009).

Cohan (1978) explained that the land cultivators in agrarian society fall into two general groups: a small group of landlords and big farmers, and a large group of tenants, small farmers, and landless workers. Tsikata (2015) mainly focused on the social relations are defined here as the structured and systemic interactions of different social groups and individuals within those groups for production, exchange, consumption, and reproduction. Doshi (2014) <sup>[4]</sup> 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. Bailey (1957) argues that at the local level, economic formulations run across the caste ranking. Dube (1955) <sup>[5]</sup> finally finds a brief analysis of different

castes that would give us a clear idea of the village economy in the context of rural development. The nature of the study is holistic.

Beteille (1974) finds that social relations overflow the boundary of the village easily and extensively. Agrarian social structure can be comprehended based on ownership, control of land, and use of labour in the process of production of agricultural products. Marriott ed. in (1996), Srinivas finds in his study that the analysis of the structures of power and dominance in village India. Samaddar (1982) explores a tier structural composition of production relations already recognised are primarily institutional in character. Singh (2006) finds that the agrarian relations are largely determined by land tenure means ownership, tenancy, and labour relations, while agrarian structure means covering all the structural conditions for production in agriculture and for the livelihood and social situation of the rural population. George (1978) studied the problems of agrarian structure in underdeveloped countries and used the term agrarian structure to mean the institutional framework of agricultural production in some other countries. Agrarian structure refers to the manner in which man-land relationships are governed. Joshi (1974) chiefly studied agrarian social structure is basically in terms of the relationship existing between the owner of land and the actual producers.

Nowadays, the traditional social structure of the village is changing due to changes in the economic and political spheres. So, there is a need for sociological analysis of changing patterns of agrarian social relations in a rural setting in order to understand the social, economic, and political structure.

### 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, and power structure are studied in depth. Thus, the present study focuses on the following specific questions:

1. How does the rural economy articulate with caste and caste hierarchy?
2. How far rural economy interact with the power structure in a dynamic situation of an agrarian society?

The first question explains the relationship of the rural economy in terms of caste and caste hierarchy.

The second question examines the relationship between the rural economy and power structure in terms of pressure groups and rural leadership.

### Area of Study

#### About Village

Firojpur, a village in the western part of Uttar Pradesh, is located in the Bulandshahr district. According to the Census 2011 information, the location code or village code of Firojpur is 121574. Firojpur village is located in Khurja tehsil of Bulandshahr district in the western part of Uttar Pradesh, India. It is situated 16 km away from the sub-district headquarters Khurja and 35 km away from the district headquarters Bulandshahr. Khurja is the nearest town to Firozpur for all major economic activities, which is approximately 16 km away. Jahangirpur is also the nearest sub-town to Firozpur for most economic activities, which is approximately 5 km away. Pisawa is also the nearest sub-town to Firozpur for some economic activities, which is

approximately 7 km away.

### Respondents and Sample Design

The respondents were selected by a purposive sampling method, because an agrarian society is stratified into various occupational groups of persons as farmers, peasants, tenants, sharecroppers, and landless agricultural labourers etc. The number of respondents depended on the availability of sources, the suggestion of supervisor, and the 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 a 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 observation technique was also used for the collection of data.

### Methods of Data Analysis

Data collected with the help of interviews and a schedule/interview guide technique from respondents was analyzed quantitatively simple statistical techniques, and as associations and correlations, were also used to indicate the degree of relationship between socio-economic profiles of the respondents. A qualitative analysis was also undertaken of facts collected through observation.

### Findings

#### Rural Economy Articulate with Caste and Caste Hierarchy

1. **Role of Rural Economy in Respondents' Personal Life:**  
The Majority of the respondents have responded that rural economy provides economic support, rural economy provides employment, rural economy provides psychological support, and rural economy provides social support. However, the small number of respondents does not support the fact that the rural economy provides economic support, rural economy provides employment, rural economy provides psychological support, and rural economy provides social support.
2. **Effects of Rural Economy on Respondent's Family Life:**  
Majority of the respondents have responded that rural economy strengthens my/our family socially and economically, rural economy protects my/our family from debts, rural economy fulfills our daily needs and the majority (67%) of the respondents do not support the fact that rural economy helps my/our children to get good and quality education. However, the small number of respondents does not support the fact that the rural economy strengthens my/our family socially and economically, the rural economy protects my/our family from debts, the rural economy fulfills our daily needs and the small number (33%) of the respondents have responded rural economy helps my/our children to get good and quality education.
3. **Role of Rural Economy in Caste System:** Majority of the respondents do not support the fact that rural economy influences caste nowadays, rural economy determines caste relations, rural economy brings integration between different castes, and rural economy brings social assimilation between people of different castes. However, a small number of the respondents have responded that the rural economy influences caste

nowadays, the rural economy determines caste relations, the rural economy brings integration between different castes, and the rural economy brings social assimilation between people of different castes.

4. **Role of Rural Economy in Caste Hierarchy:** Majority of the respondents have responded that rural economy determines the social status, rural economy determines social prestige, rural economy determines the power structure, and rural economy indicates the ownership of assets. However, the small number of respondents does not support the fact that the rural economy determines social status, the rural economy determines social prestige, the rural economy determines the power structure, and the rural economy indicates the ownership of assets.

#### **Rural Economy interacts with Power Structure in a Dynamic Situation of Agrarian Society**

1. **Awareness about political participation-** Almost all of the respondents have awareness about political participation.
2. **Basis of awareness-** A Large majority (80.50%) of the respondents have awareness based on political party, and a small number 2.50% of the respondents have awareness based on the candidate's image.
3. **Information about the vote-** Almost all respondents gave a vote.
4. **Basis of voting-** A Large majority (82%) of the respondents give their vote based on political party, and a small number 2.50% of the respondents give their vote based on the candidate's image.
5. **Information about the jajmani system-** A Large majority (93%) of the respondents do not follow the jajmani system, and a small number (7%) of the respondents follow the jajmani system.
6. **Impact of rural economy on jajmani work-** A Large majority (95%) of the respondents have responded that the impact of rural economy on jajmani work is decreasing, and a small number (5%) of the respondents have responded that the impact of rural economy on jajmani work is increasing.
7. **Impact of rural economy on jajmani system-** A Large majority (97%) of the respondents have responded that the impact of rural economy on jajmani system is declining, and a small number (3%) of the respondents have responded that the impact of rural economy on jajmani system is strengthening.
8. **Type of changes occurring in crop pattern-** Large majority of the respondents have responded that the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the changes are occurring in cultivation pattern from traditional to modern, the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the use of high yielding variety seeds instead of traditional seeds, the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the changes occurring in the use of new agricultural equipment's instead of old and traditional equipment's, the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the decreasing the cultivation of long/full term crops like; sugarcane, wheat, paddy and pulses and the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to increasing the cultivation of short term cash crops like; potato, tomato, capsicum and green chili. However, the small number i.e. very few of the respondents does not support the fact that the changes are occurring in crop pattern due

to the changes are occurring in cultivation pattern from traditional to modern, the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the use of high yielding variety seeds instead of traditional seeds, the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the changes occurring in the use of new agricultural equipment's instead of old and traditional equipment's, the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to the decreasing the cultivation of long/full term crops like; sugarcane, wheat, paddy and pulses and the changes are occurring in crop pattern due to increasing the cultivation of short term cash crops like; potato, tomato, capsicum and green chili.

Thus, the present research found that rural economy plays an important role. Rural economy articulates with caste and caste hierarchy in many ways. Rural economy strengthens livelihood of villagers. Rural economy and power structure is inter-related to each other. Rural economy plays an important role in functioning of power structure in the village in a dynamic situation of agrarian society.

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