

Impact of Covid 19 on Social Structure of Bihar: A village level study

* Akshat Pushpam

(Research scholar)

Department Of Political Science

Central University of Haryana

Email-akshatpushpam@gmail.com

** Vaishnavi Joshi

(Research scholar)

Department of Sociology

Central University of Haryana

Email-Vaishu14joshi@gmail.com

Abstract

Social stratification is inseparable reality of India. Caste, Gender, Class, Religion, etc. plays an important role in determining parameter of inequalities. Talking about state like Bihar, which is second most poor state after Odisha and one among the most populous state with high intensity social and economic inequality in India with population density of 1,106 per sq km, these factors matter a lot. Outbreak of covid 19 was sudden and unexpected threat to whole human community, it has adversely affected the human life in multidimensional way. This paper is aimed to look upon the impact of covid-19 on the social structure and how different determining variables of inequality has responded in this pandemic situation. For that primary data has been collected from field study method and secondary data has been collected from various publications of pre covid and during covid era.

Key words: Social Stratification, Caste, Religion, Gender, inequality, poverty.

Introduction

“Poverty is when there is no wheat at home, when there is little food, when Mom and Dad have no jobs, when there are no utensils, good clothes, and sometimes – when there is no home. And even if there is, it has dirty walls, no carpets and blankets. Poverty is when a person is often hungry.”

Shahnoza, 10, Shahrstan¹

It is speculated that India will be leading in middle class population by 2050s and a chunk of population has shifted to middle class after economic reforms introduced by Delhi in 1990s², still poverty remained a bitter truth of social reality of India. And since Independence whether it is five-year plan or yearly one, they all have summoned poverty elimination as one of their premier subject matters. Besides this at different interval of time government also came up with various legislation in order to refine socio economic status of people residing below poverty line³ but unfortunately, they didn't succeed to a large extent.

In post-independence era government consistently remained concerned towards poverty, and making efforts to eliminate it. Like poverty hurdles also remained dynamic term to define. Although poverty is economic concept but in India this can not be studied in isolation. Social phenomenon like caste and gender plays an important role in determining very identity of individual, whether it is matter of distribution of work force or determining capabilities or anything else. Constitution of India provides fundamental right to equal opportunity to all Indians but still socially this phenomenon has to travel long path to get implemented and become ground reality.

Poverty always remained a dynamic concept which has various parameter to define. In India it is conventionally defined on income basis. At present the determining line for poor is Rs 47 for Urban and Rs.32 for rural as suggested by Rangrajan Committee report 2014.⁴ In pre independence period Dadabhai Naroji was the first person to define it based on diets prescribed for emigrant coolies and estimated range of poverty line is Rs 15 to 35 and same range was presented by National planning committee established in 1938. This definition changed in the

¹UNICEF: Children's voices. A qualitative study of poverty in Tajikistan [online] Available at <https://www.unicef.org/eca/> [Accessed on 10 January 2012]

²Roy, Abhijit. (2018) "The middle class in India: From 1947 to the present and beyond" Association of Asian studies, vol. 23:1 spring 2018

³ K.M Singh (2013), The Dimension of Poverty in Bihar, SSRN Electronic Journal DOI 10.2139/ssrn.2017506

⁴ (Gaur, Seema & Rao, N Srinivasa (2020) "Poverty measurement In India: A statue update", ministry of Rural Development, working Paper no.1/2020

post-independence era⁵ and now planning commission started calculating poverty in term of calorie intake. This notion continuously going through substantive change, sometime it done on the basis of earning, sometime on expenditure and sometime in term of calorie intake but these all remain inactive. However most feasible methodology which adopted till date is multidimensional poverty index (MDPI) which was first published in UN annual report 2010. Bihar is one among the poorest states of India after Odisha with poverty incidence of 42.2%⁶. A chunk of population here dependents upon Agriculture for their survival and besides this, this state is also one among production house of migrant labor to whole nation. Epidemics are very normal phenomenon for this state as when in 2019 when **Encephalitis Syndrome** broke in Bihar, some 150 Children were died till June 2019⁷. Some sought the reason behind the changing disease to epidemic is persisting poverty of state who concentration is relatively high in comparison of other. The outbreak of pandemic Covid-19 has adversely affected the whole world in various way but for state like Bihar which is densely populated with high intensity of poverty, it was challenging to deal with. In this study I have tried to find out the effect of Covid-19 on socio economic structure of Bihar in different dimension based on secondary source.

Literature Review

- I. **Gaur, Seema & Rao, N Shrinivasa (2020)**⁸ the paper explains the persisting variants of poverty and its historical evolution in India. However, it also cites the evaluation of different policy of poverty elevation program.

- II. **Govind Ballabh Pant social science Institute, Paryagraj (GBPSSI) in August 2020**⁹, this paper states castes barrier was demolished to a large extent during pandemic time as when people were travelling back to their home and residing at Quarantine Centre it was seen that majority of different caste ate and stayed together forgetting caste consciousness.

⁵ Satapathy, S Swastik. Jaiswal, Krishna K., (2018), A study on poverty Estimation and current state of poverty in India. Researchgate/326156921

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Retrieved from, <https://thesecondangle.com/amp/a-forever-neglected-bihar-a-state-dealing-with-poverty-and-pandemic/>

⁸ (Gaur, Seema & Rao, N Srinivasa (2020) "Poverty measurement In India: A statue update", ministry of Rural Development, working Paper no.1/2020

⁹ GBPSSI Paper. (2020). How corona diluted caste lines in UP, Bihar. The Hawk, Get it on

<http://www.thehawk.in/lifestyle/health-fitness/how-corona-diluted-caste-lines-in-up-bihar-166898>

- III. **Swastik S Satapathy & Krishna K Jaiswal (2018)**¹⁰. In his paper he focused on different methodologies used till date for defining and determining poverty from pre independence era. He analyses Important poverty elimination method from calory intake basis to presently ongoing MDPI. It further includes what is current line of the poverty where he referred various data collected from socio-economic caste census-2011.and at last concluded with various inclusion programmes.
- IV. **Singh,K M, et al (2013)**¹¹ This article states that in Bihar caste is not only determining the social status of an individual but also the intensity of Education, Nutrition intake, Migration level and even health too. Landlessness and per capita land are major cause of poverty which is also causing migration for the search of Bihar.
- V. **Wiman, Ronald (2012)**¹² This article explains classically poverty was distinguished in Absolute and Relative¹³ where absolute stands for extreme form of poverty in which one is not even able to fulfill his basic needs, whereas relative means for in comparison of. In other word relative Poverty represents economic inequality where one differs from another in term of income and all. The world summit on social Development in Copenhagen 1995 has coined the term Overall Poverty.¹⁴ But this all Estimation was made on the basis of class and economic structure of society which affects their social life.

¹⁰ Satapathy,S Swastik. Jaiswal,Krishna K., (2018), A study on poverty Estimation and currentstate of poverty in India. Researchgate/326156921

¹¹ Singh,K.M, "et al." 2013, "the dimension of poverty in Bihar" SSRN Electronic Journal DOI 10.2139/ssrn.2017506 available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234616137>

¹² Wiman, Ronald (2012) "Poverty and Deprivation of children as a challenge for Finland foreign policy" National institute for health welfare, commissioned by ministry of foreign affair Finland, chapter 3

¹³Retrieved from.

https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://thl.fi/documents/189940/263914/FFF3C_3.pdf&ved=2ahUKewjqvd-HpLLtAhUz4zgGHVTTAUgQFjAKegQIGRAJ&usg=AOvVaw3Z8wu TpnIOhczUn HXUZO

¹⁴ "**Overall Poverty** has various manifestations, including

- lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods;
- hunger and malnutrition;
- ill health;
- limited or lack of access to education and other basic services;
- increased morbidity and mortality from illness;
- homelessness and inadequate housing;
- unsafe environments;
- and social discrimination and exclusion;
- characterized by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and Cultural rights."

- VI. **Singh, K M, et al (2012)**¹⁵ this article is in specific context of Bihar elucidates Caste lies at the core and this determines the class of an individual to a large extent, still a large section of society believes in caste based manifestation of society which is one basic reason behind persisting socio economic inequality.
- VII. **N.R. Mohanty (2011)**¹⁶ in his work he mainly concerned on two variables poverty and conflict. And he argued that he believes poverty is both cause and consequences of conflict. Moving forward in his work he has focused to the regime-based framework of political parties in Bihar towards poverty elevation and poverty-based conflict resolution. In his work further added the caste class complex structure which overshadows each other relatively. In his work he related the poverty and its outcome in term of frustration aggression theory in special context of Bihar.

Statement of Problem

Bihar is one among the poorest state of India. Dense population of state is followed by high intensity of socio-economic inequality, low literacy rate etc. Agriculture is prominent source for livelihood. Most of the districts here lies in flood prone area or drought prone.

Lockdown imposed due to outbreak of Covid-19 has not limited the source of individual only but also for the state. Reverse Migration has also raised the burden over existing resources. Management at quarantine center was one of the challenging tasks for the government. Besides this management of health infrastructure was also one challenging task.

However, Government came up with lots of policies and action plan to cope up with persisting situation but persisting social inequality of state acted as major huddle to get it succeed.

Objective

- To find out how outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19, imposition of lockdown, and flood of reverse migration has affected socio economic structure of Bihar at local level.

¹⁵ Singh, K.M, "et al." 2012, "The dimension of Poverty in Bihar : A village level studies" MPRA Paper no 44815, posted 07 Mar, 2013. Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/44815/>

¹⁶ Mohanty, Ravi. (2011). Chronic Poverty and Social Conflict in Bihar. SSRN Electronic Journal. 10.2139/ssrn.1756788.
<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08c47e5274a31e00010f6/wp32Mohanty.pdf>

- To find out whether the nutritional accessibility of poor section of Bihar has reduced or remained constant during Pandemic period.
- Does existing social norms has played any role in Covid era?

Hypothesis

- Nutritional accessibility has been adversely affected in Pandemic period.
- Existing social norms has fueled the suffering.
- Lockdown has created a different kind of situational social equilibrium.

Research Design

This Research is basically descriptive and analytical in nature based qualitative and quantitative data collected from secondary and primary data sources. Where secondary data collected from various sources like Newspapers, Articles, Journals and various other publications published during pandemic periods and prior pandemic period. However primary data were also collected from one village of Bihar through unstructured Questionnaire method. Questionnaire includes the question regarding their experience in lockdown, their mode of employment, their Socio-Economic status, their perspective on government policy etc. unstructured questionnaire was adopted for interview because during field study initially it was observed that respondent was not able to defend formal questionnaire and seems like he is disinterested in responding.

As due to outbreak of pandemic, lockdown is imposed to nationwide it was neither possible or nor safe to visit and collect data from large population therefore sample method was adopted to get primary data and for collecting that random sampling method was adopted followed by snow-ball sampling method, to collect sample from village. Interviews were done, and on the basis of that interviews, research was stepped forwarded and finding were used for Theory building and Hypothesis test.

For collecting samples local area was adopted which is one village Bhismpur of Siwan District, as this was easily accessible.

This whole research divided into five sections.

Section 1 – Dimensions of Poverty in Bihar

Section 2 – Covid-19, Poverty and Lockdown

Section 3 – Field Study Report

Section 4 – Conclusion

1.0. DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

J J Rousseau (1755), talked about two types of inequality. One is Natural and another is Social, where by natural he meant for those inequality which are inherited by birth like body appearance, muscular and intellectual abilities etc. whereas by social he meant for honor, wealth, prestige etc.as cited by O.P Gauba.¹⁷

Whereas French revolution was fought for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, and liberty equality was taken together for human emancipation.¹⁸ Inequality is something which was acknowledged by most of the political philosopher. In nutshell we can conclude as Equality is the core deciding factor to ensure Justice. Even though we may also argue that inequality laid the foundation stone to the concept of Justice.

High intensity of socio-economic inequality divides society in two class i.e., Poor and Rich, Bourgeois and Proletariat as cited by Marx¹⁹ as well. Amartya Sen (1983) defined poverty in terms of capabilities²⁰ where he interrelated both Relative and Absolute poverty, according to him absolute poverty is relative in nature, as cited by Ronald Wiman.²¹

1.1. India and Poverty

India got independence in 1947 after a long history of social and economic exploitation by Britishers. With independence it got nothing to pride of, but we have lots of issues to come over and fight with. Out of them poverty was one prominent one. From first five-year plan to ongoing yearly plan poverty elimination remained core subject matter.

In India poverty is dynamic concept as it has many determining factors, dimensions, faces and variations. Undoubtedly poverty is something economic term but it has various social dimensions like caste, religion, class, gender and community.

¹⁷O.P.Gauba(2010) "An introduction to Political Theory" ISBN 10: 0230-63888-0 ISBN 13: 978-0230-63888-4 (5thedition) PP 372-376.

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹Ibid

²⁰Ronald wiman (2012) "Poverty and Deprivation of children as a challenge for Finland foreign policy" National Institute for Health Welfare, commissioned by ministry of foreign affair Finland, chapter 3, P.02.

²¹ Ibid

In India this term poverty is determined in terms of income and expenditure of an individual and well categorized under notion of people living below poverty line. A study done by Mumbai university estimated that those who spend below \$2 are poor and those earn more than \$2 are belonging of middle class in rural area. Whereas, this estimate is \$4 for Urban area.²²

The planning commission based on Tendulkar committee report in 2012 estimated that the number of poor in country was pegged is 269.8 million which is 21.9% of the population. (Gaur, Seema& Rao, N Srinivasa, 2020)

The World Bank defined poverty as deprivation in wellbeing comprising various dimensions.²³ In short it admits poverty as multidimensional phenomenon. In normal term poverty means state of deprivation or Scarcity in which one is not able to access to his basic needs even.

In India last time in 2011 based on Saxena committee²⁴ report, MHRD has launched a door-to-door campaign in order named Socio economic census (SECC) who's objective was to determine socio economic status of people followed by their educational classification, home assets data and etc.²⁵ the committee has set seven criteria to measure the level of derivation. Out of 17 committed sustainable development goal of India, poverty elimination in all form of hunger is in top priority list and India is also committed to reduce half of its total population of poor by 2030.²⁶ Census data of 1991 estimates that about 49% of total population residing in rural area belongs to poor, out of which about more that 45% of this group belongs to SCs and STs²⁷ this report estimates that the concentration of deprived section is relatively high in comparison of other section which is normally called and considered forward block of Indian society, however this same report stated that concentration of poor in rural area is relatively high in comparison of urban are. The reason behind this concentration gap of urban and rural is the intensity of knowledge, the scope of opportunity and even inter-caste marriage also acted as an important factor behind cementing the status of this caste-based backwardness in urban

²²Roy, Abhijit. (2018) "The middle class in India: From 1947 to the present and beyond" Association of Asian studies, vol. 23:1 spring 2018

²³ Dr. Seema Gaur & Dr. N Shrinivasa Rao. (sept 2020) "poverty management in India: A status Update" Ministry of Rural Development, Working Paper No 1/2020.

²⁴ A committee set by ministry of rural development in chairmanship of Dr. N.C Saxena to propose a new methodology for identifying BPL house.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ (Gaur, Seema & Rao, N Srinivasa (2020) "Poverty measurement In India: A statue update", ministry of Rural Development, working Paper no.1/2020

²⁷This paper can be downloaded from http://ssrm.com/abstract_id=358160

area, Apart from caste consensus. Here it is interesting fact that the landless is the reason of poverty in rural area only whereas for urban area dimension are slightly different in India.

India is a union of states, where states differ from each other in term of geography, demography, language, culture, and most importantly in term of socio-economic condition. Where ODISHA, BIHAR, JHARKHAND etc. are poor states due to their demography on the same Maharashtra, Gujrat are richer one due to their industry favoring environment, however states like Punjab, Haryana are having Agri-favored demography.²⁸

1.2. Poverty and Bihar

Bihar is third most populous state of India with population of 10.4 crore and ranked seventh in term of land with total 93.60 lakh hectare of geographic area out of which 6.22 lakh hectare is forest, 17.03 lakh hectare is used in non-agricultural activities and 4.31 lakh hectare land is barren and uncultivated. However, besides this 76.46 lakh hectare is gross cropped area out of which 53.95 lakh hectare is net sown land.²⁹ Out of this three fourth of the region of state lies in flood prone area which is normally caused by subsidiary rivers of Ganga like Koshi, Gandak, Bhagmati, Karamnasa etc. apart from this discharge of water from Nepal is another factor behind causing flood in Bihar.³⁰ This state is Agri-oriented and high concentration of landlessness which is another reason behind persisting poverty of state.

Bihar is ranked second after Odisha among most poor states of India,³¹ but as per the report submitted to the NITI AAYOG of India by the task force on elimination of poverty cited that the state has shown impressive growth rate >10% since 2005 and even as per NSS data the poverty % has decreased from 2005 to 2012 by 54.4% to 33.7%.³²

Limited opportunity of income, limited viability of resources, frequent occurrence flood and drought are the major reason behind the persisting poverty in Bihar.³³

Whereas, government has introduced various policies and programme in order to eliminate poverty in substantive level like MNREGA, JEEViKA, Public Distribution scheme, Integrated

²⁸ Singh,K.M, "et al." 2013, "the dimension of poverty in Bihar" SSRN Electronic Journal DOI 10.2139/ssrn.2017506 available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234616137>

²⁹ Data is taken from Report submitted by task force on Agriculture in light of letter of NITI Aayog, GOI DO No O-11013/O/2015-NI dated 17-03-2015.

³⁰ Report of task force formulated by NITI Aayog on Elimination of poverty.

³¹ Singh,K.M, "et al." 2013, "the dimension of poverty in Bihar" SSRN Electronic Journal DOI 10.2139/ssrn.2017506 available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234616137>

³² Ibid.

³³ Analysis of Annual Economic Survey report of Government of Bihar published in year2020.

child development scheme (ICDS) etc. and also trying their best to execute various construction and project through MSMEs in order to improve social status of people residing below poverty line and those are not able to access their basic needs by providing them various opportunity to emancipate from persisting one.³⁴

Poverty in Bihar is deeply rooted and it is not like that center and state both are apathic towards it. Although, they are making various efforts but overcoming requires support from other non-state actors like NGOs, INGOs which is not up to that level. Ongoing anti-poverty plans are suffering from various problems like corruption at society, community and institutional level while execution.³⁵ In spite of this Bihar is undoubtedly performing better after 2005 as per various reports published but challenges are still very much concentrated.

1.3. Profile of Siwan District.

“Siwan is one among thirty-eight district of Bihar situated western Bihar, which was originally a sub division of Saran district but now after December 1972 onward it gets notified and recognized as district itself. This district shares border with Deoria and Baliya district of Uttar Pradesh. District comprises population of 2.2 Crore with population density of 1,221 per sq. km. Industrial area is of 7.12 hectares out of which sugar factories are more in number, however major industries includes chemical, wooden, and agro processing. District comprises about 17624 hectares of cultivated barren land.”³⁶

As per the statics of 2011 census literacy rate of Siwan is 69.45% out of which 80.23% in males and 58.66% in females. The district comprises 11.61% of Schedule caste population and 2.61% of Schedule tribe population. In term of works 28.41% of population is of cultivators, 40.36% is of agricultural laborers, 3.35 is of household industry and 27.87% is engaged in other works.³⁷

The district has high rate of migration of labor to other state and abroad for the search of employment and to earn money. A part from this, a chunk of population is suffering from houselessness, landlessness and hunger. Poverty is deeply concentrated among them. And in

³⁴Kaushal K. Vidyarthi(2010) “Poverty in Bihar: Patterns, Dimensions and Eradication Strategies: A Report” Researchgate,257982777, section 1

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Data has been collected from District Profile of Siwan, uploaded on website of UDYOG MITRA: A department of Industries, Govt. of Bihar <http://www.udyogmitrabihar.com>

³⁷ As per the District Census Handbook Siwan 2011, Series 11 of Part XII-B.

such prevailing condition the outbreak is pandemic and imposition of nationwide lockdown has acted like *flour in poverty*³⁸.

2.0. COVID 19, POVERTY, AND LOCKDOWN

Turning disease to epidemic is nothing new for Bihar, recently in year 2019 in month of May and June more than 150 children died due to acute *encephalopathy*³⁹ out of which about 130 were died in Muzzafarpur itself. However other place like Sitamarhi, Motiharhi, Vaishali and including Siwan were also reported such death to a large extent. The report has major finding that all the children who died are malnourished and poor and belongs to extremely backward caste like Mallah, Sahni, Majhi, Chamaar and Passi Community including Muslim. (Rajalakshmi.T.K, 2019)

Apart from bad health infrastructure, the dense concentration of population in a limited area due inadequate availability of land followed by over burden on existing food leads to case malnutrition which influences the intensity of any diseases. And this very common in most of the districts of Bihar.

The outbreak of Covid 19 has given the rise to slogans and ideas to get prevented was to maintain social distancing but here it is ironical to dream feasibility of social distancing in densely populated area. Imposition of worldwide lockdown followed by nationwide lockdown has affected the source of income to chunk of population specially to migrant daily wages labor working in unorganized sector. Both center and state government has failed to cope up with them in this pandemic era, which has given rise to phenomenon of Reverse Migration. This reverse migration includes both from intrastate Urban to Rural and interstate as well.

For Siwan, about 38625 labors has registered to come back to their village from different states⁴⁰ however speculation was of more than 50,000. The population of migrant labor returning back to home was morally belonged to Backward and Extremely backward class including Muslim population as well, however it is not like those labors returning home are from backward class of society only but people of upper caste was also included, but their number is relatively less in comparison of them.

³⁸ A phrase means fuel to poverty.

³⁹ A broad term for any brain disease that alters brain function or structure. Causes include Infection, tumour and stroke.

⁴⁰Kumar, ujjawal, "et.al."2020, Return migration of labours in Bihar due to covid-19: status and strategies of deployment in Agriculture Sector.

Due to prevailing social impurities and socio-economic backwardness the state has witnessed less growth rate for a long period, however a report of NITI AAYOG in 2015 stated that Bihar has improved and is improving. State's developmental growth rate after 2005 under leadership of *Chief minister Nitish Kumar* is increasing day by day.

A report has identified that the migration level is relatively high in SCs, EBCs, STs, and Muslims of Bihar due to their social and economic backwardness in form of landlessness and scarcity of employment opportunity in state⁴¹. Because, they are also bounded to live in a collective manner in a limited area which often become one of the major causes of rapid expansion of different diseases among them.

FIELD STUDY REPORT

4.1. Village profile

Bhishmpur, popularly known as Bhikhmpur, is a village situated in Bhagwanpur hatt block of Siwan district in 224 hectares, having population of 3352 with household of 568 families or households, out of which about 400 people belongs to SCs however there is no tribal population.⁴² The village has literacy rate of 72.39% out of which 81.70 in male, 62.48% in female, approximately 350 people are main worker and about 450 are of marginal worker.⁴³

The village is densely populated with forward community which includes Bhumihar, Brahman, Rajput and Giris. However, other caste people such as Muslim, Baniya, Teli, Kurmi, Churihar, Dhobi, Muslim Dobi, Dom Chamar etc. are also residing here. landmass is more concentrated among Bhumihars, Brahmin and Rajput of the village. The major parameter to calculate land area here is *BIGHA*⁴⁴.

4.2. Major Findings and Suggestions

The village is densely populated with the community of Bhumihar, Rajput and Brahmin to a large extent, out of which Bhumihar is at Dominant position in term of population, and landmass. Approximately each family is having 5 Bigha land which is about 135 kattha of land that is 540 decimal land to one family. Whereas, total muslim population which comprises

⁴¹ Singh, K.M, "et al." 2013, "the dimension of poverty in Bihar" SSRN Electronic Journal DOI 10.2139/ssrn.2017506 available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234616137>

⁴² Census Data of 2011, collected from District Handbook of Siwan available at <http://www.census2011.co.in>

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ A unit used locally to define area of land, 1 hectare = 2.477712 acre or 4 bighas and here locally it is equivalent to 27 kattha where one kattha is meant for 4 decimal land.

approximately 250 people are living in approximately 3-4 Bigha. Total voter population of Bhumihar community is about 700. Similar condition prevails in two other dominant communities Brahmin and Rajput. The village has only one family of Dom Community, which is relatively at good position in term of wealth and social positioning, comparison of other backward community residing in village because one member of this family is working in Army and one is heigh school teacher.

The migration level is approximately same in each community for the search of employment but their aspects vary to one another. Where in backward caste there is situational/seasonal migration occurs for temporary work in unorganized sector on the same in upper caste, nature differs. People from upper caste usually indulge in occupation like Shopkeeper, Driver, Manager, Teacher etc., but many of lower caste emigrants works at farm, construction sector and other works on daily wages. However, both community morely prefers internal migration than external one.

During field study it was difficult to find out the actual number of returned migrants, but speculated data given by honorable ward member of village states, it is about 30 to 40 in number. Out of which were about 20 and more people are returned in community of Chamar, Gorh and Muslims and approximately 10 were returned in upper caste of the village.

During my study I came across various social realities prevailing at ground level to a large extent. Where suffering manly depends on the caste and class factor on the same gender is another variable which not only affect but also get affected by caste and class construct. Rousseau, was very right that social nurturing prevails in human soul throughout his life and same was getting reflected here. I have adopted random stratified sampling method followed by snow ball sampling method. Interview was earlier supposed to be conducted in close ended and open-ended questionnaire but conducted in unstructured manner, because initially respondent was not comfortable with structured questionnaire.

Bikhampur village is much farm-oriented village but from 2017 onwards, two brick kilns are functional and providing employment to about 200 peoples of nearby area, therefore I have decided to begin my study from there. At kiln I came to know that not only people are migrating from village but also migrating to village from nearby district of Uttar Pradesh i.e., Ballia. About 40 workers are of same village working in kiln. But the interesting fact which I have come across that those were working there, belongs to lower caste of the village such as Gorh,

Chamar, Dusad etc. none of any worker was belonging of community like Rajput, Brahmin, and Bhumihar.

While interview the respondent cited that because lockdown was imposed suddenly, they were unaware of the crisis they are going to face. In initial months of lockdown, they adversely suffered from cash crisis. however, they were getting ration such as rice and wheat through PDS but except that there are many other necessities which they had to buy it from market and pay for it. they had taken loan from the landlords of village mainly from upper caste people such as Bhumihar and Rajput. In month of June paddy season was there which healed them to some extent, and soon after relaxation in restriction they have started returning to their employment place again. Here for them the period of major suffering was from March to June.

When I went to visit the house of people belonging to the caste of Chamar, Gorh, Dusad and Gawala. As tradition peoples of Gawala community were mainly indulged in occupation of milk. they said that their condition was approximately stable throughout the lockdown because milk selling was continuing. They have further mentioned that they only sell their milk to their permanent customers out of which most of them belongs to upper caste community. Next, I went other communities of village like Muslims, Chamar etc., and found similar response as workers of kiln.

Now, I went to wealthy class of village, i.e., upper caste like Bhumihar and Rajput. Here, while talking they have addressed to me that during lockdown period when restrictions were imposed to everywhere, doors of income for them was closed as well. However, some who retired from government services are getting pension but most of them become unemployed. Upper caste community of the village was more indulged in private occupations like marketing, business, teaching and another farm related activity. Imposition of lockdown restricted them to depend on their pre covid savings and new sources were temporarily blocked. Whereas income was restricted but due to prevailing tradition and culture they were not only responsible for their own family but at the time of crisis they had to present themselves as the trustee to village as well. Because of traditionally embedded morality they could not work in their own field neither they refuse to help someone who came for financial help. Many of the upper community persons are indulged in teaching jobs and during covid 19 outbreak due to lack of resources they became totally unemployed and at the time when I was conducting field study i.e., month of December 2020, still they didn't able to back to normal life. They are facing issue of moral

hesitation in working anywhere else. Here, one thing which hit to me that social construct has also played an important role in determining the intensity of suffering in pandemic era too.

Talking about women issue, during my study when went to interact them again here I found morality and social construct prevailing over pandemic. Where in lower community women were frequently going to work outside on the same in upper caste restrictions were there. When I asked them about their daily food intake it was surprising for me that during covid 19, because source of income was blocked and food resources was limited. In such situation women frequently use to compromise with their own need. they had used the policy of “male first” followed by “children first” then after if food left then they use to eat. And this phenomenon was common in both lower caste as well as upper caste.

Major finding of study can be capsulated in –

- In lower caste people poverty remain as static phenomenon during covid 19 era to with little fluctuation in the intensity during the month of march to June 2020.
- However, poverty is an economic phenomenon but caste is now somewhere driving it to large extent.
- In village still caste of an individual defines the nature of work he performs and will be accepted by the village.
- Upper caste people acted as trustee to the lower caste and backward class of the village.
- Prevailing social morality has somewhere intensified the economic suffering in upper caste people.
- Gender has different variant of suffering which was also embedded in term of social norms.
- Pandemic has given rise to situational suffering to each class of society.

Suggestions:

- Concept of equal opportunity needs more effort to get implemented on ground level.
- Distribution mechanism needs to be reframed in accordance of pandemic challenges.
- Social education needs to promoted with proper refinement in order to ensure dignity of individual as human being.

CONCLUSION

Although, poverty has nothing to do with caste and all but its nature, concentration and intensity relatively depends upon it. Inequality is reality of society in both terms whether it is natural or social but in present context social inequality is interrelated to natural inequality in large extent. Individual's access to the resources and capabilities are still defined in the term of gender she/he has taken birth or in caste she/he has taken birth. Social Darwinism is all time reality of society even after provision of various affirmative action and target budgeting programmes.

The sudden outbreak of pandemic Covid-19 has undoubtedly disturbed the status quo of State as well as individual and adversely affected them in various socio-economic aspects. Bihar is one among the poorest state of India after Odisha,⁴⁵ and Covid-19 has not only enhanced the responsibility of state but also it was a challenging task for individual to stay patient and cope up with the emerging condition in order to stay safe.

After going through pre-pandemic literature, it was speculated that covid-19 will affect more to the backward section of society specially to backward community of the society but after field study it was observed that not only one community but more or less all suffered same. Suffering varies in term of their pre-pandemic social structure. Where women were managing home affairs, very generously but same place they were also compromising with their meals. The Brahmanical, construct which advocates tradition like "male first" and "family first" like concept were dominating today as well. Lower caste women, were also indulged in external economic activities and were enjoying more freedom in comparison of upper caste women but when it comes to household culture, they were practicing somewhere similar norms. During initial days of lockdown, it was tough period for social poor to survive in the pandemic. When lockdown was imposed and they migrated back to their village, they were not having any source of income neither they were getting adequate food from PDS shop. Expenditure was ongoing but income was totally blocked, therefore they have taken loans from Upper caste people. Suffering was prevailing they're in upper caste as well but here nature was different. In upper caste community, they were morally bound to help lower caste people. And here their pre-pandemic state facilitated them to perform all activities smoothly. However, in upper-caste situational suffering was prevailing. I am saying it situational suffering because their condition was expected more to get back on track in post covid situation in comparison of lower caste

⁴⁵Singh, K.M, "et al." 2013, "the dimension of poverty in Bihar" SSRN Electronic Journal DOI 10.2139/ssrn.2017506 available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234616137>

people. My field study experience concludes me to fact that pre pandemic status of individual played an important role to define suffering in covid 19 period.

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