

CONFLICTS AND CHALLENGES OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF TARAI REGIONS: A GEOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

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Abstract:

The comparison of socio economic development of Tarai and Nepal is the comparison of development of total Nepal with its southern part Tarai. Socio economically southern belt of Nepal, Tarai is leading whole Nepal in development. There are not any significant impacts of conflicts of Tarai in one and half decade, in socio economic development of rural development of Tarai. The comparative study has selected timeline of 2004, 2011 and 2019 to collect and analyze the socio economic indicators based on data of Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS Data). It is the study of literacy rate, access to electricity, GDP Growth rate and Per capita income of Nepal and Tarai region in different point of time of conflicts and resiliencies. The literacy rate was 55%, 65%, and 72% in Tarai and 49%, 60% and 69% in Nepal; access to electricity were 40%, 78% and 95% in Tarai and 37%, 65% and 96% in Nepal. Similarly, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth rate was 5%, 5% and 7.2% in Tarai and 4.7 %, 3.4%, and 7.1% in Nepal; Per capita income in USD was 300, 629 and 1100 in Tarai and 286, 610, and 1034 in Nepal from 2004, 2011, and 2019 respectively. Therefore, Tarai is leading Nepal in socio economic development.

Keywords: Comparison, Socio economic, Eco-velopment, Tarai, Nepal

Background

Tarai plains expand the length of the southern border and are home to half the total population, including many Madhesi and non-Madhesi (both indigenous ethnic groups and recent migrants from the hills). With comparatively good infrastructure, agriculture, industrial development and access to India across the open border, the Tarai is crucial to the economy. It is also an area of great political importance, both as a traditional base for the mainstream parties and as the only road link between otherwise inaccessible hill and mountain districts (ICG, 2007). Tarai is a lowland region in southern Nepal and northern India that lies south of the outer foothills of the Himalayas, the Siwalik Hills, and north of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. Terai stretches over 33,998.8 km² (13,127.0 sq mi), about 23.1% of Nepal's land area, and lies at an altitude of between 67 and 300 m (220 and 984 ft). The region comprises more than 50 wetlands. Discrimination spans the country, with several communities in the hills facing similar exclusion. However, Madhesi have grievances unique to them, and the Madhesi movement has unquestionably raised critical issues; whether and how they are addressed will have a profound impact on the peace process and the reshaping of national politics (Ibid).

North of the Terai rises the Bhabhar, a narrow but continuous belt of forest about 8–12 km (5.0– 7.5 mi) wide. Tarai is a Persian word that means “moist land” or “damp land”. The Urdu word means “lands lying at the foot of a watershed” or “on the banks of a river; low ground flooded with water, valley, basin, marshy ground, marsh, swamp; meadow”. In Nepali, the region is called 'Tarai' meaning “the low-lying land, plain” and especially “the low-lying land at the foot of the Himalayas”. Scholar John Whelpton describes it as “low, marshy

ground. Since the early 1950s, several political parties advocated for autonomy and independence of the Nepal Terai, such as the Nepal Terai Congress and Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha. Several armed groups were formed, which pursued this aim using violent means. In 2013, more than 24 Madheshi political parties were registered for the Constituent Assembly of Nepal election. Historically sparsely populated in part because of its once dense malarial jungles, the Tarai is now home to around half the country's population (NMF, 2011). They can be broadly divided into three categories: indigenous groups; communities which have cross-border cultural, linguistic and kinship links; and a large number of migrants from the hills, who moved into the area as it opened for development in the latter half of the twentieth century. Migration has also taken place from the southern plains (present-day India) into the Tarai in earlier periods as well as in the twentieth century, though to a lesser degree. According to the 2001 census, hill-origin groups make up roughly one third of Tarai residents. The Tarai is the mostly low-lying land along Nepal's border with India. It forms about a quarter of the country's total area, in an 885km strip stretching from the Mahakali River in the west to the Mechi River in the east, with a width varying from four to 52km. The Tarai also includes some low hills (the Siwalik range) and valleys to their north (the inner Tarai). It was incorporated into the territory of Nepal during its unification in the late eighteenth century and in the decades of expansion that lasted until the 1814 war with the British East India Company (ICG, 2007). Most of the political leaders and scholars claim that Tarai is socio economically backward. To analyse the socio economic development it is necessary to analyse the socio economic indicators of development. The basic indicators literacy rate, access to electricity, GDP Growth Rate and Per capita income are compared and analyzed. Problem statement The term "Madhes" is used as a near synonym of Tarai but it, and "Madhesi" (used for people), have distinct political connotations. Madhes generally denotes the plains of eastern and central Tarai, while Madhesis have been defined as non-pahadis with plains languages as their mother tongue, regardless of their place of birth or residence. The term encompasses both Hindus and Muslims and, in some definitions, the indigenous Tarai ethnic groups.

However, many ethnic groups, especially the Tharus in mid-western Tarai and Rajbanshis, claim an independent identity, saying they are the original inhabitants of the Tarai, and Madhesis came in much later as migrants. Most Tharus in the eastern belt, which has a Madhesi majority, are comfortable being identified as Madhesis (Sapkota, 2014). Even as they accept that some migration did take place, Madhesis take offence to being called outsiders and see themselves as people who have always lived in the region. Some argue that hill migrants settled in the Tarai should be labelled Madhesis as well but most of plain people do not see them, however long resident, as Madhesi. The term is often distorted as Madise and used pejoratively for any plainspeople not considered true Nepalis. Madhesis have only recently sought to reclaim the term. Social exclusion and discrimination against Dalits, Janajatis, Muslims and Madhesis is now out in the open. Discrimination against women which has been talked about for decades, but never taken seriously by politicians or bureaucrats is now given much more weight. One of the major demands of the Jana Andolan II was not just democracy, but more inclusive democracy and greater government attention to overcoming the persistent disparities between the dominant high caste Parbatiyas and the urban Newars (along with a few other Janajati groups and certain powerful Madhesi castes) – and the rest of the country. Systematic collection and analysis of data along caste/ethnic, gender and regional lines is increasingly recognized as critical to government accountability on the inclusion issue and hence, essential to the successful restructuring of the state (Bennett, Dahal, & Pav, 2008). To analyze the facts it is necessary to observe the socio economic development of the region. Are the people of Tarai or Madhes really suffering from socio economic aspects of development of Nepal? To analyze the question, it is necessary to compare the socio economic

development of Tarai with whole Nepal. The research problem is related to the comparison of social and economic development of Nepal and Tarai.

Objectives and Methodology

To find out the comparison of socio economic development of Tarai and Nepal in rural development, the study is being designed. It is simply a comparative study of GDP Growth Rate, Per Capita Income, Literacy Rate, and Access to Electricity of people of Nepal with People of Terai in the timeline of 2004, 2011 and 2019. The study is based on secondary information published in NLSS II, NLSS III and Economic Survey of Nepal Government 2018 published in 2019. Data is presented in table in discussion and Analysis part of the study.

Discussion and Analysis

The following table of comparative socio economic status of Nepal and Tarai region presents the socio economic data of Nepal and Tarai region from 2004, 2011 and 2019. This one and half decade was the prone time or climax period of Democratic Movement of Nepal. Thus purposively the timeline and data have been selected. To find the birds eye view on Tarai and Nepal in rural development or socio economic development, GDP Growth Rate, Per Capita Income, Literacy Rate, and Access to Electricity of people of Nepal with People of Terai in the timeline of 2004, 2011 and 2019 have been compared and analyzed.

Socio Economic Indicators	SN	Basic Indicators	In 2004		In 2011		In 2019	
			Nepal	Tarai	Nepal	Tarai	Nepal	Tarai
Social Indicators								
	1	Literacy Rate	49%	55%	60%	65%	69%	72%
	2	Access to Electricity	37%	40%	65%	78%	96%	95%
Economic Indicators								
	1	GDP Growth Rate	4.7%	5%	3.4%	5%	7.1%	7.2%
	2	Per Capita Income in USD	286	300	610	629	1,034	1100

Sources: (CBS, 2019); (CBS, 2004); (CBS, 2011)

The entire variables; Literacy Rate, Access to Electricity, GDP Growth Rate, and Per Capita Income show the leading position of Tarai in aggregation in comparison with Nepal. The literacy rate was 55%, 65%, and 72% in Tarai and 49%, 60% and 69% in Nepal; access to electricity were 40%, 78% and 95% in Tarai and 37%, 65% and 96% in Nepal. Similarly, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth rate was 5%, 5% and 7.2% in Tarai and 4.7 %, 3.4%, and 7.1% in Nepal; Per capita income in USD was 300, 629 and 1100 in Tarai and 286, 610, and 1034 in Nepal from 2004, 2011, and 2019 respectively.

Literacy Rate

Literacy Rate of Nepal in 2004 was 49% and in Tarai was 55%. Similarly, in 2011 was 60% in Nepal and in Tarai was 65%. In 2019 also Nepal has 69% where as in Tarai was 72%. The following graph also presents the leading literacy rate of people of Tarai region of Nepal. humans know how to cooperate far more effectively than chimpanzees, which is why humans

launch spaceships to the moon whereas chimpanzees throw stones at zoo visitors. Does it mean that humans are superior beings (Harari, 2017). Political parties in Nepal are less clever than Chimpanzees. Leaders of Tarai or Madhesh are still in confusion whether the constitution is acceptable or not. Although many political discriminations have been addressed and development activities are in initiation. Cultural education is necessary in Nepal (Badal, 2019) but lacking the system of local proper education there seems many conflicts in local areas. The Tarai is the most productive region in Nepal with the majority of the country's industries. Agriculture is the basis of the economy. Major crops include rice, wheat, maize, potato, peas, lentil, mustard, sugar cane, ginger, turmeric, cardamom, garlic and chili. Fruits comprise mango, lychee, guava, papaya, banana and jackfruit. Tarai is also known for beekeeping and honey production.

Occupying both the top and the bottom of this system were the hill Hindus or Parbatiya who migrated into Nepal from the western hills. They were from the Indo-European language group and spoke a Sanskrit-based language (Khas) from which the modern Nepali language emerged. They brought with them their traditional caste-based social structure which already allocated the highest rank to the Bahuns (Brahmans) and the Chhetris and Thakuris (Kshatriya). Both of these were classified as tagedhari, or 'wearers of the sacred thread' signifying their status as 'twice-born' or those initiated into the sacred Hindu texts (Bennett, Dahal, & Pav, 2008). The literacy rate was 55%, 65%, and 72% in Tarai and 49%, 60% and 69% in Nepal.

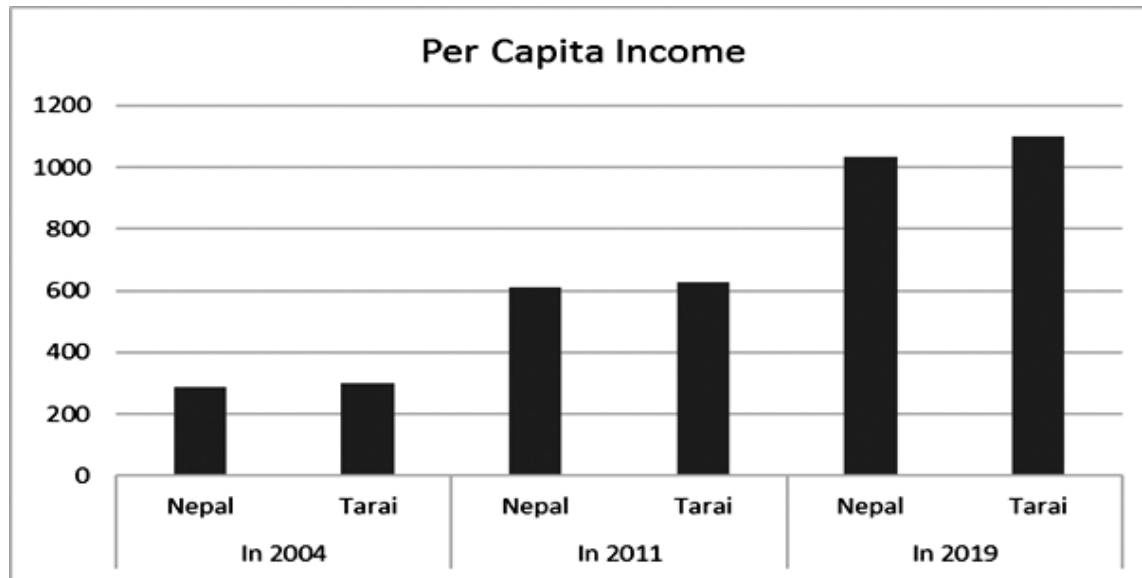
Nepalese ethnic movements are facing a crisis from a lack of a distinct political-economic ideology or philosophy to prop them. In making they are influenced by the perspectives of primordialism, instrumentalism, casteism, ethnicism, federalism, class-ideology, etc. But, still their propaganda posters, slogans, manifestos and statements do not give a systematic ideological explanation of their movements (Sapkota, 2014). Access to electricity were 40%, 78% and 95% in Tarai and 37%, 65% and 96% in Nepal. GDP Growth Rate GDP Growth Rate of Nepal was 4.7 % in 2004 and Tarai had 5%. It was 3.4% in Nepal and 5% in Tarai in 2011. It was increased in the same way in Nepal and Tarai region in 2019 were 7.1% and 7.2 % respectively. The following graph shows the leading data of Tarai Region. Development is a multidimensional process of action, organization and communication and involves economic, political, social and cultural factors. As underlined by some of the examples from different parts of the world, it plays a vital role in the development of the rural sections in many countries. Rural Development is the management of basic necessities of life, freedom, and self-respects (Singh, 2009). People have certain basic needs; without which it would be impossible (or very difficult) for them to survive.

Being committed to socialism based on democratic norms and values including the people's competitive multiparty democratic system of governance, civil liberties, fundamental rights, human rights, adult franchise, periodic elections, full freedom of the press, and independent, impartial and competent judiciary and concept of the rule of law, and build a prosperous nation (Constitution of Nepal, 2015), the constitution was promulgated. Thus Nepal is directed toward center to the left polity. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth rate was 5%, 5% and 7.2% in Tarai and 4.7 %, 3.4%, and 7.1% in Nepal.

Per capita Income

Per Capita Income of Nepal was USD 286 and Madhes was USD 300 in 2004. It was USD 610 in Nepal and Tarai region was USD 629. Similarly, in 2019 in Nepal it was USD 1,034 and in Madhes was USD 1100. The basic necessities include food, clothes, shelter, basic literacy, primary health care, and security of life and property. The core definition of development in the Human Development Reports of UNDP is 'the enlargement of people's

choices' (Pieterse, 2010). However, the past movements and unclear vision of political party rural development of Terai is in limbo.



The Terai in fact contains a mix of ethnic groups, castes and religions (NMF, 2011). Ethno political conflict was often treated as if it were a manifestation of something else: the persistence of traditionalism, the stresses of modernization, or class conflict masquerading in the guise of ethnic identity (Abdullah, 2010). Democracy is unthinkable without political parties and their cadres. However, it is possible to have political parties in a country that does not qualify as a democracy. Thus, while democracy requires the existence of political parties (Matlosa & Shale, 2008). Per capita income in USD was 300, 629 and 1100 in Tarai and 286, 610, and 1034 in Nepal from 2004, 2011, and 2019 respectively.

Conclusion

The literacy rate was 55%, 65%, and 72% in Tarai and 49%, 60% and 69% in Nepal; access to electricity were 40%, 78% and 95% in Tarai and 37%, 65% and 96% in Nepal. Similarly, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Growth rate was 5%, 5% and 7.2% in Tarai and 4.7 %, 3.4%, and 7.1% in Nepal; Per capita income in USD was 300, 629 and 1100 in Tarai and 286, 610, and 1034 in Nepal from 2004, 2011, and 2019 respectively. Literacy Rate of Nepal in 2004 was 49% and in Tarai was 55%. Similarly, in 2011 was 60% in Nepal and in Tarai was 65%. In 2019 also Nepal has 69% where as in Tarai was 72%. Access to Electricity in Nepal in 2004 was 37% whereas Tarai had 40 %. The status in 2011 of Nepal was 65% and Tarai was 78 %. The development was continuing and Nepal had 96% and Tarai had 95% access to electricity. GDP Growth Rate of Nepal was 4.7 % in 2004 and Tarai had 5%. It was 3.4% in Nepal and 5% in Tarai in 2011. It was increased in the same way in Nepal and Tarai region in 2019 were 7.1% and 7.2 % respectively. Per Capita Income of Nepal was USD 286 and Madhes was USD 300 in 2004. It was USD 610 in Nepal and Tarai region was USD 629. Similarly, in 2019 in Nepal it was USD 1,034 and in Madhes was USD 1100. Comparatively, Tarai is leading Nepal in socio economic development.

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