

POPULATION MOBILITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF SITAMARHI DISTRICT

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Abstract:

In Sitamarhi district all the segments of the society are participating in out-migration; it appears higher among those associated with agriculture, with small or marginal landholdings. The workforce data suggests that male out-migration from the Sitamarhi district of Bihar state is taking place from the household, while household is not leaving the other locally available income generation activities. Therefore, migration process is generating a diverse livelihood portfolio at the area of origin, particularly among the agricultural household. Again, the data shows that, the household, which are still maintaining a joint family setup are able to diversify their livelihood portfolio though taking up different activities together.

Keywords: Migration, Rurban, Transformation, composition, Marginal area.

INTRODUCTION

Population and Its Composition

Table 1.1: Demographic Structure of Population of Sitamarhi

Tahsil	Rural * %	SC %	ST %	Hindu population %	Muslim Population %	Minority population %
Bairgania	65.72	11.2	0.0	70.47	29.24	29.50
Suppi	100.00	16.1	0.1	88.75	11.11	11.18
Majorganj	100.00	18.1	0.4	88.34	11.58	11.62
Sonbarsa	100.00	13.3	0.0	80.26	19.72	19.73
Parihar	100.00	10.3	0.1	68.47	31.46	31.48
Sursand	100.00	9.6	0.0	78.70	21.24	21.25
Bathnaha	100.00	15.3	0.0	89.83	10.06	10.09
Riga	100.00	14.3	0.1	87.64	12.27	12.31
Parsauni	100.00	14.4	0.0	77.90	22.04	22.05
Belsand	82.48	13.2	0.1	82.98	16.99	17.00
Runisaidpur	100.00	12.8	0.0	87.61	12.32	12.35
Dumra	74.29	11.5	0.0	80.42	19.51	19.54
Bajpatti	100.00	8.6	0.0	68.10	31.83	31.85
Charaut	100.00	9.3	0.0	92.54	7.33	7.39
Pupri	90.55	9.2	0.0	63.32	36.61	36.64
Nanpur	100.00	8.3	0.6	61.14	38.81	38.84
Bokhara	100.00	9.8	0.0	70.82	29.09	29.16
Total	94.29	11.9	0.1	78.55	21.37	21.41
<i>Bihar</i>	<i>89.54</i>	<i>16.4</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>83.0</i>	<i>16.17</i>	<i>16.3</i>

Note: * Relates to rural areas only. Source: Population Census, 2001

Literacy Levels

As per the Census 2001 the literacy rate of rural Sitamarhi is below the state average. Female literacy is almost half of male literacy.

Table 1.2: Literacy ratio of Rural Sitamarhi District

NAME	Person	Male	Female
Bairgania	33.58	44.38	21.40
Suppi	40.68	52.31	27.69
Majorganj	33.82	43.77	22.73
Sonbarsa	36.82	50.61	21.13
Parihar	33.87	46.00	20.29
Sursand	39.42	50.50	26.88
Bathnaha	36.50	48.84	22.42
Riga	37.15	48.67	23.87
Parsauni	32.71	43.72	20.35
Belsand	35.28	44.86	24.38
Runisaidpur	37.29	46.69	26.59
Dumra	37.20	48.90	23.80
Bajpatti	38.29	49.08	26.39
Charaut	41.43	53.31	27.90
Pupri	37.46	46.96	27.10
Nanpur	36.66	46.12	26.22
Bokhara	33.78	42.19	24.32
Sitamarhi	36.71	47.73	24.28
BIHAR	43.92	57.09	29.64

Note: * Relates to rural areas only. Source: Pop Census,

METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted in rural areas and, hence, all the figures and variables used pertain to only rural areas and population. The Census 2001 and 2011 data have been used for sampling. Since the religion-wise population data are available only up to the Tehsil level the stratification has been confined to that level.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE RURAL SITAMARHI

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The average size of the Muslim households (6.1) is larger than the average size of Hindu households, i.e., 5.7. The dependency ratio in Muslims is 0.98, which is a little lower than that of the Hindus (1.03). The overall sex-ratio is 949, which is lower than the district, state and national level figures. The sex ratio is more biased towards males in the Hindu community (904) than the Muslims (1000) (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Demographic Features of the Households surveyed (%)

Community	Sample Size	Dependency Ratio	Sex Ratio	Average HH Size
Hindu	542	1.03	904	5.7
Muslim	358	0.98	1000	6.1
All	900	1.01	949	5.9

Source: Field Survey

The overall work participation rate is 31.37, which is a little higher among Hindus than Muslims. But the disturbing trend is that the work participation rate of the female population is almost one third of the males. The female population is generally less outgoing in the conservative rural society and its movement is further restricted due to lower levels of literacy, skill and employment opportunities.

The age wise distribution of population shows that the child population (in the age group 0-14) constitutes 45 per cent of population, whereas the working age population (age group 15-59) is around 50 per cent. The old age population (age 60 and above) is only 5 to 6 percent of the total population.

Table 3.2: Age Wise Distribution of Population

Age group	Hindu			Muslim			All		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-4	15.35	16.75	16.01	15.45	16.47	15.96	15.40	16.61	15.99
5-14	28.57	27.74	28.18	29.94	29.39	29.67	29.21	28.56	28.89
15-24	17.24	14.22	15.80	18.70	16.95	17.82	17.92	15.57	16.78
25-29	5.79	9.24	7.43	6.83	7.84	7.33	6.27	8.55	7.38
30-44	16.86	17.85	17.33	13.14	15.52	14.33	15.12	16.70	15.89
45-59	10.63	9.79	10.23	11.42	8.90	10.16	11.00	9.35	10.20
60+	5.56	4.41	5.01	4.53	4.93	4.73	5.08	4.67	4.88
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey

QUALITY OF HUMAN RESOURCE

Literacy Rate

Table 3.3 shows that this district lags behind in terms of literacy rate. The overall literacy rate is 58.32 per cent -- 58.09 per cent for Hindus and 58.55 per cent in Muslims. As usual, the male literacy rate is higher than female literacy rate but there is a substantial difference in the literacy rate of female Hindus and female Muslims

Table 3.3: Literacy Rate in % (7 years and above)

Sex	Hindu	Muslim	Total
Male	70.61	62.84	66.97
Female	43.77	54.16	48.92
Person	58.09	58.55	58.32

Source: Survey

Enrolment Status of Children

Current educational status of Children in the age group of 5-16 years indicates that cent percent enrolment still remains elusive. Out of the total children in the age group (5-16), 19.13 percent have never been enrolled in any formal or informal school; 1.51 percent have left school after enrolment; and 0.05 percent are enrolled but do not go to school. Moreover, about 73.18 percent of the children go to government schools and 5.44 percent go to the private schools. While 75 per cent Hindu students go to government schools, some 71 per cent of Muslim students go to government schools. Moreover non-enrolment is high for the girl child belonging to the Hindu community whereas the same is true for males in the Muslim community (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Current Educational Status of 5-16 years children (%)

	Hindu			Muslim			All		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Never Enrolled	16.45	24.82	20.21	21.77	14.38	18.06	18.98	19.29	19.13
Left after enrolment	2.31	0.51	1.50	1.04	2.00	1.52	1.71	1.30	1.51
Enrolled but does not go to school	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.09	0.09	0.00	0.05
Goes to informal institution	0.35	0.96	0.63	0.00	1.53	0.77	0.19	1.26	0.70
Enrolled in govt school and is regular	78.12	72.39	75.54	67.55	74.07	70.82	73.08	73.28	73.18
Goes to private school	2.77	1.32	2.12	9.45	8.02	8.73	5.95	4.87	5.44
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey

A substantial number of dropouts are due to poor motivation/awareness, and lack of understanding of the role of literacy and education among the parents and children. The second major reason for the dropout is compulsion to earn for the family. Poverty related factors are the major causes for the dropouts in a substantial number of cases. Interestingly a very small percentage of Hindu children drop out in order to earn. But more than one fourth of the children do so in the case of Muslim households. This is really a very strong conclusion from the field data and this demolishes the claims of all literacy programmes. Moreover, this may have to do with the overall situation including livelihood crisis of Muslims in this district.

Table 3.4: Reasons for Dropouts (%)

	Hindu	Muslim	All
Need to earn	4.69	25.76	15.63
Lack of facility in school	2.39	0.00	1.15
Fee or expenditure not afford	11.70	0.00	5.62
Others	81.23	74.24	77.60
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Educational Levels

Table 3.5 shows that a large percentage of population is illiterate. Not much differential was found on the literacy rate between the two religious communities, whereas between genders the difference is apparent. A substantial gap between male and female literacy rate exists for both the religious communities. For the Hindu community the gap in illiteracy between male and female is 22 percentage points whereas for the Muslim community

Table 3.5: Educational Status of Households members (per cent)

	Hindu			Muslim			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Illiterate	40.29	62.26	50.70	47.31	53.59	50.46	43.59	57.96	50.59
Below primary or informal education	22.92	19.47	21.28	27.17	22.45	24.81	24.91	20.95	22.98
Primary	12.74	7.98	10.48	12.12	13.00	12.56	12.45	10.47	11.49
Middle	13.34	4.82	9.30	6.84	7.59	7.22	10.29	6.19	8.29

Management or commercial school course (vocational)	0.71	0.30	0.52	1.12	0.93	1.02	0.90	0.61	0.70
Secondary	4.59	3.20	3.93	3.58	2.39	2.98	4.12	2.80	3.47
Higher Secondary	3.29	1.57	2.47	1.27	0.02	0.65	2.34	0.81	1.59
Technical diploma or certificate below degree	1.45	0.36	0.93	0.10	0.00	0.05	0.82	0.18	0.51
Technical or professional degree	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.22	0.00	0.11	0.10	0.01	0.06
Graduate degree	0.47	0.02	0.26	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.26	0.01	0.12
Post-graduate degree	0.21	0.00	0.11	0.22	0.00	0.11	0.21	0.00	0.11
Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field Survey

it is 6 percentage points. The percentage of population with education up to higher secondary and above is very low. The percentage of population having higher secondary and above qualification is 4 per cent for Hindus and for Muslims it is only 1 per cent.

Youth are the agent of change in any society. But in any society where a large percentage of youth is illiterate the prospects are bleak. In Sitamarhi 43 per cent of Hindu and 60 per cent of Muslim youths are illiterate. The percentage of youth having higher secondary and above qualification is only 6. If up to primary level of education is taken into account, almost 73 per cent Hindu and 85 per cent Muslim youths fall in this category. Those with education above higher secondary or any other technical or professional education is less than 1 per cent.

Livestock

The per-household mean volume of livestock amounts to Rs. 5070. This value is substantively low in the case of Muslim households (Rs. 2,442) as compared to other households (Rs. 7342).

Productive Assets

The overall average assets base of the households is Rs 17605, which is Rs 12661 in case of Muslim and Rs 21879 in case of Hindu households. The distribution of assets base of the two communities clearly indicates that the average assets base of the Muslim households is almost two third of the average assets base of the Hindu households. It is interesting to look at the mean asset level of Muslim households and compare this with Hindu households. All types of assets have lower average in former than in latter except consumer assets. Most alarming is very low level of livestock and agricultural assets in Muslims, especially in the context that these are rural households.

Sector of Employment

Industry-wise employment trend shows that 44 per cent are employed in the primary sector, about 32 per cent in manufacturing, 10.5 per cent in construction, and the rest in the service sector. In the service sector trade, hotel and restaurant, public administration, education, and health (mostly in the government sector) are the major employment provider. Once again Muslims are more concentrated in manufacturing than in agriculture but their share in public administration, education and health is lower.

Unemployment is a major problem faced by most of the households, both Hindus and Muslims. Hence, more than 90 per cent of the total households are in search of some kind of employment. Interestingly, the demand for employment is almost equal in proportion among Hindu and Muslim households.

About 21 per cent of the households (19 per cent Muslim and 23 per cent Hindu) prefer self-employment in agriculture, mainly cultivation, and 29 per cent would like self employment in fisheries. The preference for cultivation is highest, followed by preference for fishery, dairy, sheep/goat breeding and poultry.

Deprivation from housing and employment are top two deprivations felt by households, Hindu as well as Muslim. However, Hindus attach greater value to employment more than Muslims. It is interesting to note that in an agrarian society such as Sitamarhi, deprivation of land occupies third rank, followed by toilet facilities, education and drinking water (Table 4.6). These preferences appear to be at odds with the general understanding of rural society of Bihar. But a closer examination explains the apparent divergence; the sample is itself limited to minority concentration areas, minorities are not traditionally the land owning class in this area, and therefore their revealed preferences are different from those of the land owning classes and of late there has been a further shift in preferences.

Conclusion

- Sitamarhi is primarily a rural district; 94 per cent of the total population lives in the rural areas.
- Against the state average of 16.2 per cent, Muslims constitutes 21.4 per cent of the total rural population.
- The literacy rate is 36.7 percent, much below the state and national averages. The female literacy rate is even lower, i.e., 24.3 per cent. In other words, only one out of four women is literate. The adverse situation of the women is borne out by the abysmally low sex ratio of 892, which is less than the state and all India levels.
- The overall work participation rate is 32.19 percent, which is lower than the state average. Agriculture labour dominates the labour force (57.3 per cent of the total) and is almost double the national average.
- In general the proportion of villages having primary and middle schools is higher than the state average. But the population per secondary school is almost double the state average.
- Health facilities in this district are worse than the state average; the proportion of villages having PHC, MCW centre and allopathic hospitals within 5 kilometres is less than the state average. Similarly, allopathic hospitals per lakh population, tube wells per lakh population and hand pumps per lakh population are below the state average.

The results show that on average, a rural household is taking up migration activities while holding their foot in agriculture and in most cases they have combined both of these strategies. In the surveyed area around 43 per cent households are combining both the activities that emerged as a prominent feature of livelihood. In the study area where size of land holding is very small identical to the average in the state, income from agriculture is very meager and unequally distributed that requires to be supplemented by alternative sources of livelihood. The result from primary survey has again shown that, remittance as a prime source of income has greatly surpassed agriculture. This pattern of livelihood has emerged through a prominent feature of division of labour. In the study area, young adults are participating in outmigration, while agriculture is left mostly for the older adults. Results from multivariate analysis also suggest that more complex households (joint family) with more number of adult males show higher likelihood of diversifying its livelihood and out-migration. Thus, human agency is playing an important role in reorienting the livelihood of the area. The study indicates an emergence of new rurality with migration process. It provides evidences that the issue of poverty, social-mobility and class in the rural area at present cannot be understood leaving out migration from its framework.

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