
Transforming Rurality and Politics of Aspirations

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Abstract: *This article traces the transformation of Indian villages in light of pro-market policies. This study is an overview of the experiences of village life. Villages are transforming, reorganizing and restructuring in itself in the time of neo liberalism. Socio-cultural and political relations are changing. Economic reforms are breaking traditional caste interdependency and empowering lower and disadvantaged castes. Electoral democratic politics deepen in ruralities and shifting the power relation. Expansion of education generates desires among rural youth. They are moving from one place to another to find a proper job to fulfill their aspirations. Their aspirations are not being satisfied due to high unemployment. While, they are connecting with global world and imitating culture and life style of mega cities and also adopting American and European life style and culture. Such transformation is creating a very confusing situation that will be studied. This article tries to capture transforming village reality by using ethnographic method.*

Keywords: *Transformation, Village, Youth, Aspiration*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ambedkar had described villages as a world of ignorance and a symbol of Dalits oppression. He thought that democracy is not possible in villages where discrimination and exploitations deeply inherited. Whereas, Gandhi was described that villages are the soul of India. He wanted that village would be played an important role in the development of India. Jawaharlal Nehru headed the country's reign after independence. He was the supporter of modernity and seemed village as symbol of backwardness. He wanted that peasant and farmers should utilize modern technology to increase agricultural production. Many schemes and plans had been launched by government since independence to develop villages, to improve life styles and remove poverty. The scenario of the villages has been changed a lot, but village is remained village. It has lost its culture and ideals. It has not fully converted into cities and is not completely a village in its nature. It has become an agent to supply raw materials to cities and industries. Politicians and academician both believed that village would be withering away in future or it would be merge in cities (Gupta, 2005). Industries will be established and agriculture would be diminished and country will be developed.

Most of the third world countries e.g. Africa, Latin America, and Asia, have transformed, but villages are remain exists there. South Asia has faced lots of transformation. For example, industries have established, cities are increasing and poverty is reducing but villages are not vanished. The claims of academician are not true. Indian economy directly entered in service sector by adopting economic reforms and connected to global economy without experiencing any industrial revolution. Information and technology takes villages very far from its traditional roots and it is a shock for economists and sociologists. Indian villages have become a part of computer and mobile revolution co-operating with service sector economy. Government of India rapidly transformed its state controlled economy to pro-market economy under the pressure of world's economic institutions such World Bank and International Monetary Fund etc. Now, Indian state is ready for changes of its cover and name. Planning commission has become NITI Ayog and Indian society has reached from insurance to self help era. Indian state wants to work as an insurance company and wants to transfer its responsibility and resources to private sector. Villages are still present after structural storming. Some village is independent and some hides in the cities and some has become part of Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Village is not a village in its culture and is not transformed into cities. Then the question rises 'what is a village?' How is it? The structure and nature of the village has been completely changed from the imaginations of Ambedkar, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Villages are also fostering in the time of urbanization. Almost 60 percent populations are living in villages today, but we are known very less about the life style, food, habit and their occupations, particularly at present time, when agricultural production is decreasing, and share of agriculture has reduced to 14 percent. In such condition, what is the main source of employment of the people living in villages? These are very pertinent question that is not rising by academicians. A bundle of research

has been done over village life style, structure but they are before 1980s. The rural areas are transforming very fast after economic reforms and academicians are not focusing on these changes. They are shedding light on urban life style, culture and social structure. Very few studies are focusing on the contemporary villages. This research is an overview of the transforming rurality for last three decades and an analysis of developing or not developing of villages. It is also provide a picture of interference of urbanization, globalization and government in villages of Uttar Pradesh.

2. TRANSFORMING RURALITY IN UTTAR PRADESH

Agricultural pattern has been largely transformed within last three decades. Cultivators of small land holding are increases and the production of agriculture is reducing. Farms are being less productive. Farmers are using massive fertilizers, pesticides and hybrid seeds but the result is like water in desert. Consequently, people are less dependent on agriculture and engaged in non-farming economy. This change expands the non farming economic activities in ruralities because agricultural economy is substantive and it is not generating surplus. That's why in daily life activities, people, who was engage in manual and agricultural work, are interacting with urban centre for daily earnings (Kumar, 2016a). Their inter-dependency on city-market has changed the life style and food habit of the rural people. Villages are adopting urban life style. Consumption level is increasing and plastic wastes are dumping in rural areas.

Such vast changes influence the social and political relation of the villages that tell different story of democratic politics at local level. On the one hand, electoral democracy eliminating untouchability and discrimination between castes and bring ex-untouchables, and make a path for backward and lower caste to reach at the rung of power, political dynasty, communalism and mafiadom has been nurturing in the ground of electoral democratic politics on the other hand. Electoral democracy has become the integral part of village life. Panchayati Raj brought radical changes in power relations. Voters of villages are preparing themselves according to culture of electoral democratic politics. Consequently, elections are adopting language of rural politics while reaching in villages and intertwined in village life. It can say that, elections are being rural and villages are being democratic. Electoral democracy and urban interaction have broken the authoritative power of dominant castes and change this patron-client relation (Mendosohn, 1993; Hasan, 1989). Such socio-political changes have affected socio-cultural and political structure of villages. Its best example is the erosion of Jajmani system. Electoral politics has changed the equation of power in villages and provide power to deprived castes by participating them into democratic politics, but at one point it collapses the notion of liberal democracy (Kumar, 2016b, Singh, 2016). The advantage of this electoral democracy is gained by powerful caste groups and in this sense Yadav and Jat are the main beneficial castes in this electoral democratic politics (Michelutti, 2008). A large part of disadvantage population is remained excluding in this liberal electoral democratic politics (Hasan, 2016). This section is deprived from education and many small castes groups e.g. ironsmith, potters and nomad and religious minorities are excluding from the array of political power in liberal electoral democracy.

But it cannot directly ignore the achievements of this electoral democracy. It is producing caste identity for lower and backward castes and promoting them to the fight for respect, and dignity. For example, many youth are writing their caste history in gallantry way on social media. Such castes history, connect with national and lager politics. Like this, these weaker castes are being more dynamic in electoral politics. Apart from it, these weaker castes are not entering democratic political process and the result is coming in form of dynastic politics in the absence of these castes in internal democratic politics. The family way politics is confined democratic benefits to specific caste groups or families. Increasing caste competition is clearly visible in cultural and political arenas. By this, caste conflicts are increasing at local level and sometimes such caste conflicts turn into caste war. In Uttar Pradesh, this caste conflict seen among Jat and Jatav and Muslim in western UP, and Yadav and Kshatriya and Muslim in Eastern UP. Emerging political competition generated a new caste conflicts among dominant castes and lower castes and produce a new political equation in villages. Small castes conflicts sometimes erupts massive religious conflicts. We can find it in recent communal violence of Mujjafarnagar where small castes conflict was emerged with erosion of interdependency in everyday life between higher and lower castes that help in turning into communal (religious) violence. It cannot be separated religious violence from caste violence. Caste violence is an aspect of religious violence and Mujjafarnagar violence indicates on this side and youth were enthusiastically participated in this violence.

It would be difficult to farmers and footloose laborers to make end meets for their family in the time of liberalization. Laborer of villages, who were working earlier in the field and completely depended on agricultural work, have started seeking work in nearest cities or migrated to Delhi and Mumbai for the search of proper employment. This change creates a fragmentation seems in social relations of castes in everyday life. People, who were engaging in public life of villages routinely earlier, they are talking each other very rarely these days. A new pattern of laborer is seen in villages in form of 'mobile labor' that work in cities in day time and return to their villages at night. Their rest of time is passing in the train and buses. They use smart phones for watching videos or social media. Mutual interdependency has been eroded and mutual economic support has been eliminated between castes. A new economic competition has been taking the place of interdependency of rural life. Precisely, village culture has been destroyed to which village was known. Technology has shifted the labor into alternative works. Multinational companies are selling their seeds and pesticides and teaching farmers to how they cultivate their fields. People, who say that 'this is genuine product of village', are wrong. In reality, 'the agricultural output is a global product'. The goods of daily uses are coming from market and farmers are completely depended on market system for their livelihood.

Mobile and smart phones have entered in village life. It is not merely making village life very fast but it affects the life style of village people, their occupations, thinking and caste relations etc. These things are transforming 'public sphere' of villages and changing its structure and affecting the emotions of village people. Social media communication has given a new life to caste and religion and filling new color in social and religious relations of village (Kumar, 2016). Villages are being an integral part of globalized world and a place of religious fanaticism and caste bitterness. New religious events are entering in village life which was the part of urban life. Numbers of Kawadiyas are increasing in every years and new religious Gurus are getting birth daily. Desire of organizing religious events such as Mata Ka Jagaran has extensively changed the village religiosity. These gurus have made a space in everyday life of the people. It can say that this new religiosity is manifested with integrating religiosity of majorities and come in public sphere being a part of right wing politics. It is making a new community and producing a new consciousness of Hindutva ideology with emerging a new Hindutva middle class (Hansen, 1996a), and villages are being a part of this religious nationalist consciousness, where a poisonous hotchpotch is seeing between religiosity, individualism, consumerism and entertainment (Kumar, 2016b, Singh, 2016). Agriculture regarding rituals and festivals are declined in rural areas. In place of it personal, family, caste and religion related new festivals are rapidly taking place in village life. This new religiosity is coming out from personal and private sphere to roads and public spaces of village and acquiring an aggression in form of popular culture (Jeffrey et al, 2010; Kumar, 2016b).

These changes are eliminating old institutions of rural society. Consequently the erosion of old social institution produces fatal violence and created an environment of conflict. Dominant castes are loosening their dominance and have deprived their privileges that they enjoyed earlier. The authority of power is shifting from dominant castes to backward and lower castes. So, dominant castes are not hesitating to use Hindutva politics in this conflict. The desire of regaining dominance, dominant caste are joining the organizations like Gau Raksha, Hindu Raksha, Stree Raksha and engaged in making a barrier on the road of empowerment for lower and minority population. People of village are being less influenced by rural social norms and culture as before. They are inspired by the urban cultural. Interventions of state and market forces in villages are restructuring the villages and its everyday life. People of villages are assumed themselves not merely a voter. They come to vote from cities, they are getting education in cities, making home in urban areas and engaged in jobs. They send money and goods to villages from cities. In these processes, village life is completely reformed and reorganized. Village is not eliminating, but resurging in new form. It is getting new life with making a new village community. People of various castes are present at different new emerging religious Gurus's Ashrams. These Ashrams provide a place and help in making new sect/cult (Jodhka, 2017). This emerging trend is the result of declining agriculture work that produces a new sociality within the villages. Non agricultural occupation and activities are introducing us a very different and interesting world of village. Gurus, Deras and Ashrams are very useful for giving a big space and introducing a big world (Jodhka, 2016). Right wing organizations such as Hindu Yuva Vahini and RSS are politicizing this new emerging sociality by engaging it in their activities. The role of Dalit and backward castes is very important in this transforming village sociology and producing new sociality in the term of new emerging religiosity.

3. ASPIRATIONS OF RURAL YOUTH AND THEIR STRUGGLE

At the point of view of population, India is a country of young. Most of the populations are of those young who are under 35 years age. Most of the young populations are living in villages. Expansion of education, arrival of social media, and rapidly increasing urbanization has shown a great impact on the life style and aspirations of youth. Youth are struggling for getting employment jobs. Unemployed youth are finding themselves at the edge of market economy (Mains, 2007). On the one side government jobs are decreasing, private sector are unable to produce sufficient jobs to absorb unemployed young on the other hand. If few private jobs are generating, these jobs are acquiring by urban English convent educated middle class youth. Rural youth are engaging in part time job on low payment, thereby their aspirations are not satisfied (Jeffery et al, 2010). Long waiting for employment is forced rural youth to go urban centre where they are wasting their youthful time in finding desired jobs (Jeffrey, 2010). The question is will India utilize such demographic dividend? Or it would be turn into a demographic anarchy (Roychowdhury et al, 2006).

Expansion of education, arrival of social media and rapidly increasing urbanization is not only transforming the life style of village youth but give a wing to their thinking and dreams (Jeffrey et al, 2009; Jeffrey, 2010). Youngsters of villages are very restless at this time. They are wanted to enter in the world which is catered by media and politicians (Gujrat model of development). They want jobs from outside villages. Their first desire is a permanent job with good salary and then they prefer marriage (Mains, 2007). These young are giving priority to government jobs, but, due to lack of opportunity in government services, poor education quality and dearth of resources, force youngster of village to move around schools and colleges, coaching centers and also between permanent and part time jobs. The numbers are very less of such youth who are success to achieve their aspirations. Thousands of youth are trapped in planning of one examination to another; one diploma course to another and one private job to another (Jeffrey, 2009). Lakhs of youth are wasting their crucial years and waiting in the hope of a decent job (government services).

Villages of UP are influenced by neo economic reforms. Pro market policies were adopted by Indian state since 1991 that entered Indian economy into services sector without realizing industrial revolution. Jobs were started generating in service sector e.g. engineering, hotel, and software industries. Most importantly, service industry needs English fluency. To fulfill the needs of service industry, many engineering and management colleges had started opening in the cities. Villages were not untouched with this new phenomenon. Private schools were started opening in rural areas. Children of villages were going to government schools before liberalization. These mushrooming private schools are attracting children by self-proclaiming English medium schools and claim to make students to compete at global level (Lukose, 2010). The change in schooling pattern is taking off since 2005. It was on the runway before 2005. Parents are sending their children in these mushrooming English medium schools which are known for bad poor structure and quality education. These schools are preparing an army of educated English medium unemployed youth. Apart from it, many private engineering and management colleges are establishing in rural areas. They are not very good in availability of infrastructures and resources. They are unable to provide good jobs to their graduate students (Jeffrey et al, 2005). We can imagine and guess, what will be the future of young who are passing out from these colleges? What is the future of India with these young unemployed militias?

Most of the children are enrolled in private schools and colleges belong to backward/lower castes and poor families of higher castes who do not able to send their children in the schools of urban areas which are very competitive. Youth who are coming from villages to cities for schooling or in search of getting proper job realize that they are incompetent for the market oriented jobs due to not knowing fluent English. For this, they are joining English speaking classes and personality development institutes (e.g. British English Spoken Classes) that are running in two or three rooms in cities and expanding their base in rural areas (Lukose, 2005; 2010). But the result is nothing. Youth are remained unemployed. Most of youth are obtaining two or three degrees and having many diploma certificates of professional courses. These youth are forced to work on low paid jobs (3000-8000 rupees per month). These unsatisfied youth are coming back to their villages and engaged in politics by joining right wing organizations such as Gau Raksha, Hindu Yuva Vahini (Jeffrey et al, 2005). Many young are establishing committees of Gau Raksha Samiti, Kawand Yatra Samiti and organize it in very sophisticated form (Hansen, 1996b; 2001, Jeffrey

et al, 2005). They distribute specific roles of such committees among themselves for instance someone are chairman of Gwa Raksha Samiti, other is secretary and other one is media person. Many of them are engaged in working others works and playing the role of government (Jeffrey & Dyson, 2014). Apart from it, they are global with the help of social media and internet technology. In the world of 'facebook and What's App' youth are sending friend request to female and enjoy it. They share pictures of their life style, activities and see the life style of other people, other cities and other countries. Village youth are trying to imitate the life style of mega cities and influence with American or European life style (Lukose, 2005). It is different matter that, their social structure is not leaving them in their thinking and act. New emerging villages are very close to consumer culture. New generation of youth are transforming the villages in the term of westernization and reintroducing it. Now, village is ready to go away from old structure.

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis explicitly shows that village is not diminishing. Instead of withering away, village is reorganizing in its structure, culture and political competition. Village is not only a living area for subsistence farming, but it has become a periphery of liberal economy. Multinational companies are selling their products (Lays, Coca Cola, Aquafina to seeds and pesticides). Television, tractor and mobile phones make farmers scientist by connecting them to global market. Whole family is only not depended on agriculture and many member of a family are engaged in non farming economic activities. Electoral democratic politics changed the political culture of village and help in making lower and disadvantage castes stronger in authoritative power structure of villages. People in villages are passing their resting time in watching television, mobile phones or involve in Satsang (religious story) and Deras or Ashrams. A new social mutuality is emerging in these places while traditional social mutuality and inter-dependency are eliminating from the villages. This new social mutuality is not running from the ethical values, behavior and ideals of hundred year's old stagnant sociality. These naïve ethical values and ideals of new sociality have not developed yet completely. Contrary, in the process of making new sociality, a social void has been generated within village sociality. Due to this social void, there is a fear of any adventurous or negative (sod law) thing that can be occurred in anytime. It comes in form of caste and communal violence generally.

On the other side, rural youth are full of aspirations and connected with global system due to technical advancement. Their interaction is more with external world than their village. Due to changing taste of youth, religion is also taking a novice shape with the help of technique. Religious programs are transmitting on television. New religious TV channels are circulating new religious ideas of newly mobile religious gurus. Youth are joining right wing religious groups when they do not find desired jobs and engage in making Hindutvaisation of Hinduism in different way. This transforming religiosity has a very close and deep relation with agricultural crisis and decreasing income of rural population. This transformation would be helpful to understand the notion of emerging 'new sociality' in the villages of Uttar Pradesh. Because expansion of education which is generally useless in getting employment are preparing an army of unemployed young men that is providing a fertile ground for Hindutva forces in the atmosphere of caste and religious conflicts, increasing debt on farmers, decreasing agricultural output, and intense political competition. Communal riots are the reflection of these transformations.

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