

Chapter 2

The Selected Villages

Caste constitutes a pervasive element in the social and economic context of rural Bihar. Women's access to public and private resources, their mobility, work and income statuses vary across community and caste lines ¹ (Jeejeebhoy 1997, Batliwala et al 2000, Jeffery and Jeffery 1994). In rural Bihar, caste structures social, economic and political hierarchies and influences intra-household and intra-village relations. Recognising the significance of caste-class correlation, it is important to consider caste in addition to class factor for a greater understanding of gender and poverty dimensions.

**Table 2.1: Distribution of Households across Castes
(Current and Old Survey)**

Caste	1998-99		1981-83	
	No	Percent	No	Percent
Brahmin	157	19.15	77	13.53
Bhumihar	87	10.61	61	10.72
OBC I	140	17.07	102	17.93
Yadav	28	3.41	32	5.62
Koiri	51	6.22	29	5.10
Kurmi	26	3.17	26	4.57
OBC II	65	7.93	51	8.96
SC	180	21.95	125	21.97
Muslim	86	10.49	66	11.60
Total	820	100.00	569	100.00

The caste-wise distribution of the sample across districts does to an extent mirror the distribution of castes / religions in different districts (Table 2.1). For instance, the selected sample in the Northern Bihar districts of Madhubani and Purnea has a higher proportion of Muslims among the respondent –15 per cent approximately. A trend that is reflected in the Census 1991, wherein, these districts have a higher Muslim population in comparison to other districts.

The selected sample has a larger proportion of forward caste groups (Brahmin, Kayastha, Bumihar and Rajput) and a smaller proportion of middle caste groups (OBCs)

¹ The institutional role of caste as a factor in influencing and determining status has been well documented in the context of labour market functioning and societal struggles. For an in-depth understanding see Wilson 2000, Jha 2000, Rodgers, 2000.

than the distribution in the State and even compared to old survey. This is because the sampling was done using certain class-based criteria (details of which have been given in Appendix 1). Reiterating, the villages as well as districts were selected through a stratified purposive three staged sampling procedure in 1981 and as the study is a re-survey of the villages, the same caste distribution is seen in the 1998 survey too.

Table 2.2: District-wise Household by Caste - 1981-83 and 1998-99

	GAYA		GOPALGANJ		MADHUBANI		NALANDA		PURNIA		ROHTAS		TOTAL	
	1998-9	1981-3	1998-9	1981-3	1998-9	1981-3	1998-9	1981-3	1998-9	1981-3	1998-9	1981-3	1998-9	1981-3
Brah+Kayas	2.94	0	23.68	13.79	18.06	13.07	5.05	4.6	32.37	26.67	21.1	17.33	19.15	13.53
Bhum+Raj	31.37	30.26	11.84	12.07	17.18	18.95	2.02	0	0	0	4.59	2.67	10.61	10.72
OBC I	17.65	13.16	1.32	10.34	18.5	17.65	18.18	27.59	26.57	21.67	5.5	12	17.07	17.93
Kurmi	0	0	6.58	5.17	0	0	17.17	24.14	0.97	0.83	1.83	1.33	3.17	4.57
Yadav	9.8	3.95	11.84	3.45	0	11.11	1.01	1.15	0	3.33	7.34	6.67	3.41	5.62
Koeri	12.75	17.11	1.32	12.07	5.29	0.65	2.02	2.30	3.38	0	14.68	8.00	6.22	5.10
OBC II	4.9	15.79	13.16	1.72	6.17	2.61	7.07	8.05	12.08	14.17	3.67	13.33	7.93	8.96
SC	14.71	11.84	21.05	27.59	19.38	21.57	47.47	29.89	10.14	11.67	33.94	36	21.95	21.97
Muslims	5.88	7.89	9.21	13.79	15.42	14.38	0	2.3	14.49	21.67	7.34	2.67	10.49	11.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Caste-wise distribution across districts reveals that different communities seem to dominate in the selected villages. For instance, in Nalanda and Purnea districts a large concentration of OBC I households are found which includes castes like *Kevat* and *Nuniya*. Forward castes such as Brahmin, Bhumihar, Khayasth and Rajput seem to have a stronghold in most of the villages. However, there is a higher concentration in select villages of Gaya, Purnia and Gopalganj districts. In the villages that have a more diversified caste composition, this seems to be linked to the location specificity of the villages. For instance, Jitwarpur village of Purnea, Chandrakura village of Nalanda, Khangaun village of Madhubani are primarily large villages, close to block headquarters, with *pucca* roads enabling easy access to public amenities. While Scheduled Castes are concentrated in Nalanda and Rohtas, there have been variations over the period which seem to indicate some amount of ghettoisation.

Village profiles drawn from PRA data reflect a more realistic and a more qualitatively richer picture of the villages. This chapter presents a profile of all the twelve surveyed villages. Village profiles include location, geographical and infrastructural facilities, spatial distribution and habitation of households and their access

to public amenities. Broad issues emerging from these profiles have been identified to provide a better understanding of the gender dimensions of poverty.

Belabadan village, Banmankhi block, Purnea district

Belabadan is located at a distance of 14 km from Banmankhi, the block headquarters. It is connected to the Purnia-Saharsa main road by a *kutch*a road. The village comprising of 289 households is spread over 438 acres. The entire village is subdivided into 6 *tolas* along community lines. Belabadan is a multi-caste village consisting of sheikh, mallah, baniya, dushad, teli, neti, dhanuk, yadav, mushair, duniya, dobiya, chudihar and chamar.

The social mapping of the village revealed that public utilities like hand pump, school, masjid, are located in the Sheikh dominated *tolas* and best quality lands are also available with these households. Drinking water supply in the village is found to be adequate. Through out the year the village is accessible by road communication. The school in the village is found to be in a poor condition with very dilapidated building. There is no proper irrigation facility in the village and hence the agriculture output is quite low. This is in spite of the fact that the lands in the village are quite fertile. Passage of the canal cutting through the village is the biggest problem, as it creates water logging in the village. There is migration from this village to other parts of the state and to rest of the country.

Wealth ranking exercise in the village revealed the poverty perception of the communities, who are considered as very poor. In this village, sheikhs are the dominant community owning best lands of the village. Apart from Sheikhs, few families from Baniya, tatma, Yadav, and Teli communities are having some land. A sizable proportion of the households has between one to 1.5 acres of land, which would not be sufficient to feed a family through out the year.

Wealth ranking criteria followed in the village Belabadan

Rich	Landlord, good pucca house, pump set, thresher, borewell, tractor, employs servants and agriculture labour, lends money, has influence in the village, children study in good school, family members in good government job, inherited lands and etc
Middle	Has little land, semi pucca house, mostly kharpal house, some household luxuries, children go to school, permanent employment for some member of the family, active traders and etc
Poor	Have some land, leases in land in batai, children do not attend school, an equal number of mitti- kharpol houses
Very poor	Landless, agriculture labour, do not have sufficient to eat, children remain hungry, ragged clothes, children work in fields

Most of the village depends on agriculture, either as cultivators or as labourers. There is quite an amount of migration to far off places like Bihar. The largest proportion is from Dobiya and Bela Bishampur tolas. Agriculture in the village is dependent of monsoon. The main crops are wheat, paddy, potato and onion. The big landlords own tractors, threshers and pumpsets. They also own large tracts of lands. Large farmers use chemical pesticide and fertilisers. One of the major problems in the village is lack of irrigation facility. Flooding of low-lying fields during monsoon is a recurring problem in the village as the canal is in the upper regions. The situation is worsening with passing of each monsoon. According to the villagers, about 30% of the land were submerged due to floods and the poor have to suffer the brunt of nature's fury. Low productivity and yields have resulted in families migrating to other places

In terms of habitation, the inhabitants of Mushairi and Dobiya are the poorest lot, with high degree of impoverishment. Most of the households belong to agriculture labour or non-agriculture labour work. Their economic conditions have not seen any drastic change over the past ten-year period. Marginal farmers own 1- 1.5 acres of land and migration is maximum in this category of poor. Migration is seen in three distinct periods, where in labourers go to far off places like Punjab and Haryana. High wage rates of the order Rs. 50-60 per day per person are the major attraction for migration. People from Muslim communities go to far off places like Delhi etc, as mechanics, labourers, electricians, factory helpers, garage helpers etc. Most of the migrants are between the age group of 15-35 years.

The system of attached labour is no more exist in the village. But most of the caste based occupation groups get the annual payments from other castes and they do take wage in kind in terms of food grains. For casual labour, wages are paid both in cash

and in kind. Many children from poor households work as casual labour. In the village only people belonging to Mushaiar, Kevat, chamar persons work in the delivery. Most of the children from the lower caste households do not attend to schools.

Settlement pattern of the village show that there is caste based grouping. Sheikh muslims are the dominant community in caste hierarchy. SCs like chamars are at the bottom end of the caste hierarchy. Inter-caste dining is completely absent. Discrimination can be seen in other aspects like taking water from the well. There are 21 government hand pumps and 94 private hand pumps in the village. While most of the other caste households use all the water facilities, the Harijan families take water from a designated government hand pump located at Dobayi itola. Open defecation is common and only few sheikh families have latrines in their houses. The village has electricity connection laid out but it was never operationalised and hence none of the households are having any electricity facility.

Though the villagers knew about government programmes like JRY and IAY, not much benefit has accrued to the village during the past five years. Few programmes like old age pension etc are available for few individuals. Most of the facilities are in the near by village and the people have to travel considerable distances for accessing PDS or any government office. There is irregularity in the availability of food grains at the PDS shops. There is no anganwadi in the village though there are sufficient numbers of eligible children.

Alalpur village, Bishnupur Tikari Block, Gaya District

The village is located at about 6 Km from the block headquarters Tikari. It is situated one km away from main road connecting Tikari to Belagunj. The Morhar river flows on the three sides of the village and separates the village into two parts viz., Alalpur and Bishnupur. A narrow lane along the canal connects the two parts of the village Alalpur and Bishnupur. This approach road is tenuous and completely gets cut off during monsoon season. The village consists of 150 households spread into five tolas. Alalpur has two tolas Paschimi and Poorvi. Bishnupur has Mushair tola, Kumhar tola and Guljana tola. There are several caste groups live in the village. The main caste groups are kumhars, Rajput, Yadav, Mushar, nai, Chamar, koiri and mallah. There are several

private hand pumps and government hand pumps. Most of the households of the village are kutcha houses with mud walls and straw roof. Drinking water is inadequate in the village, especially during summers. The village is also completely inaccessible to rest of the world during the monsoon. At the same time it is revealed during social mapping that most of the public amenities are located in Rajput dominated areas, thereby reducing the access to other communities. Lack of irrigation facility and frequent flooding are main reasons for agriculture backwardness of the area and farmers are not able to get adequate production from their fields. Most of the cultivable lands are located in Alampur, which is in fact surrounded by water on all three sides. Large-scale crop loss is reported every year due to the flooding. More than 30 per cent of cultivable area is prone for water logging.

According to the villagers Rajputs are still the dominant caste with respect to social and economic status. At the same time a sizeable proportion (60%) of the households reported owning 1-2 bhis of land, which is not sufficient for the family to live on agriculture. Four Rajput families owned considerable land. The richest person in the village owns 8 bhis of land. Thus most of the households of the village are small cultivators. A vast majority of people worked as agriculture labour or non-agriculture labour. From all tolas, people migrate during the peak agriculture season. Since agriculture is rainfed and crop is uncertain most people augment their incomes by migrating out and earning wages. Wheat is the staple crop. Improving agriculture technology or use of modern methods is found to be difficult, as most of the households are small and marginal farmers. Out migration has been affected the Rajputs as well, who used to stay within the village for many years.

In terms of habitation, the inhabitants Bhuiya and Kumhar tola show highest degree of impoverishment though situation in other tolas also of similar conditions. Most of the households have reported no improvement in their living conditions over the years. Women are the worst off in the households as they are engaged in household work and also engage in agriculture work among the poor households. But women earn very low wages compared to men. The wage discrimination is widespread and visible. Most households believe a job outside the village by one of the members would provide security to the household. Both systems of attached labour and casual labour can be

seen in the village. Wages for casual labour are paid only in cash. All the women, except from Rajput community work as hired labour. Many households are engaged in caste based occupations. In this village children do not work as casual labour, though there is substantial child labour within the households. Most of the women are engaged in kind wage labour contracts.

Caste hierarchy is visible in the village. Rajputs are seen as upper caste followed by several intermediary communities. At the bottom end of the spectrum are SCs like Chamars, Mushairs etc. Inter dining is completely absent. There is differential access to several government facilities with most of the upper castes seizing such services. For instance Rajput tola has better hand pump and many other facilities like school are available there. Many in the tola also own private hand pumps. Almost all children from the upper castes attend school, but the same is not true in case of lower castes. Distances to be covered by children to reach primary and middle school, irregular attendance of teachers are main obstacles apart from poverty of the households in children attending schools. One household commented thus “ you people ask about schooling. The previous teacher used to sell ganja in the school. What improvement is possible with such an education?” Middle school is situated at about 3-4 KM from the village, which also makes it difficult to children to travel such distances. None of the girls are educated beyond the primary school, as they will have to go outside the village. According to a parent” we can not send our girls outside. The environment is not conducive for it. More over, we have to protect our girls, - it is the question of our honor and respect in the community”.

There is no improvement in health situation in the village, especially that of women health. Access to health facilities is very minimal and there are no services available within the village. For a substantial part of the year, the villagers have to swim across two rivers to reach to the block headquarters, Tikari, which itself has poorly run public hospital. Most households have never visited a PHC, they access private health services which are costly even for ordinary ailments. Women have reported that ANM has not visited the village for the past two years and local traditional dais work as midwives during the time of delivery. Women's health is most neglected as the facilities for pregnant women are not available. There are no check ups done for them

and no supplementary health services provided through anganwadi. None of the women have taken tetanus injections or iron folic during the pregnancy.

There are no government works taken up in the village for the past five years. Lack of cooperation across different communities is said to be the reason for under development of the village. People of the village are not aware of individual beneficiary programmes like IRDP or IAY. There is a PDS shop within the village but it is dysfunctional or erratic in its functions. There is no anganwadi in the village though it is eligible as per the guidelines to have an anganwadi.

Most of the poor depend on moneylenders who charge interest rate anywhere above 6 per cent per month. Bhumihars of the village are most powerful economically and politically. This caste people have occupied most of the government lands here. There are several disputes on the grazing lands of the village, on which the poor depend and have traditional rights. There are also disputes over the usage of canal water and rights over the waters, as the dominant peasant communities have usurped the rights.

Salempur Rupaspur Village, Tekari Block, Gaya District

It is also situated in Tekari block of Gaya district and is at a distance of about 14 km. from block headquarters at Tekari. It is an interior village with no proper communication. The nearest pucca road and bus stop continue to be a distance of 4 km. and still one has to cross a river to reach the village. Unlike in earlier survey, when it used to be inaccessible by jeep presently the village is inaccessible by jeep for 6-7 months. Facilities like high school, fair price shop and post office that were at a distance of 3 km. now are situated within the village. But for marketing and medical treatment they still have to travel 4-5 km. It still does not have any electricity connection. Public wells are still used for drinking water but number of private and public well has risen several times.

The village has 331 households coming from 18 caste/sub-castes. Scheduled castes constitute about one-fourth of the total number of households and the backward caste II a little less than two-fifth. Bhumihar, one-seventh of the total households, continue to be the dominant caste by virtue of land and other wealth as well as their social and economic position. The caste and class structure continues to coincide.

Bhumihars are still exclusively cultivators and scheduled castes are exclusively agricultural labourers. Some households of backward castes are owner cultivators but many are tenant cultivators or agricultural labourers. Bhumihars continue to be largely big peasants and landlords but some households of backward caste (Koiri) have emerged as big peasants or landlords as well.

The village still does not have any public irrigation and number of private pumpset/boring numbering 10 still is not adequate. Irrigation continues to be mostly used for Rabi crop but some of the paddy cultivation during kharif season is irrigated as well. Some changes in cropping pattern can be noticed as well. Sugarcane cultivation has almost become extinct and among oilseeds sunflower oil seeds is a new introduction. Unlike earlier survey, paddy is now somewhat irrigated. Use of fertiliser and HYV seeds in paddy is now almost universal. In wheat use of HYV seed is little over half. Now even some farmers are using pesticides.

The village still has shortage of labour during peak season but from neighbouring village the incidence of labourers coming to this village during peak season no more exists. However, during mazdoor agitation in 1996 some outside village people came for work. Wages have increased compared to last survey. It used to be 1 kg. rice plus two meals. Now it is 2.5 kg. of rice plus two meals. During harvesting season share of workers also have gone up from 1/16th of harvested crop to 1/10th of harvested crop.

The attached labourers are generally given 5 kathas of land as against 7 kathas given earlier. But daily wages of attached labour has almost trebled to 3 kg. per day. In earlier survey seed and fertiliser costs were shared equally by landowner and tenant but now only fertiliser cost is shared. In case of credit, the loans taken from money-lender has been reduced considerably. Cultivators and non-agricultural households now largely depend on government and financial institutions for productive purposes and on relatives for non-productive expenditure. But labouring class merely depends on employers and relatives. As a whole, the use of institutional credit has substantially increased. Earlier survey reported no conflict on the question of wages but some tension due to land dispute between Bhumihar and Yadavs. This survey reports agricultural workers' agitation in the year 1996. This agitation had the support of militant peasant organisations operating in several parts of Central Bihar. Even now tension prevails in the village and

group of large cultivators --mainly Bhumihars---and labourers are having frequent disputes.

Paharpur Dayal Village, Kuchyakot Block, Gopalgunj District

The village of 67 households in Gopalganj district continues to be the smallest village in our census survey. The village is inhabited by Rajput and backward castes. But apart from numerically largest backward caste Koiri, this village now has 10 households from other backward castes like Kumhar, Bania and Yadav. The village still does not have any scheduled caste population. The earlier survey had not reported any shortage of labour. But now shortage of labour has arisen because hardly one-fourth of backward caste households is available as agricultural labour. Two-third of the households is peasant ranging from poor to big.

It is situated 2 km. away from block headquarters of Kuchaikote and is connected by pucca road. Electricity came after last survey in the year 1985. Four-fifth of all households has domestic electricity connection. They do not face any drinking water problem – mostly handpump is used. Septic tank latrines are there only in 9 households – belonging to Koiri and Rajput castes. The primary school that existed in the village still remains. Middle school and high school, market, health and other facilities are still available in block headquarters or within a distance of 2/3 km. Village co-operative society existed earlier is no more there.

The total land under irrigation has marginally increased from about 55 to about 65 per cent of total cultivated land. Apart from canal, the land continues to be irrigated by tubewells and pumpsets. The main crops continue to be kharif paddy. The other crops remain almost the same – khesari, gram, masoor, onion and potato. There is hardly any change in the cropping pattern except for some increase in area under wheat. Almost three-fourth of the cultivators uses HYV seeds and fertilisers – no rise since last survey. There are seven tubewells and one tractor in the village used by three-fourth of all households. Almost all households use threshers.

Percentage of households leasing in land has reduced from one-fourth to one-fifth. The system of tenancy is crop sharing only where all input costs are borne by the tenants only. The village faces some shortage of labour at the harvesting time of paddy

when 8-10 workers from neighbouring village are employed. The requirement of agricultural workers is met by within village backward agricultural labourer households. The prevailing wage rate almost remained the same – 3-5 kg. of grain and breakfast. However, harvesting wage that used to be 1/20th of harvesting crop has now changed to 7 kg. of paddy or 5 kg. of wheat. The few attached labourers that were noticed in earlier survey now have completely vanished.

Except for some large landowners managing loans from institutional sources for agricultural operations and rest of the households still depends largely on moneylenders. Now only five persons are getting old age pensions compared to 10 persons reported in last survey. However, in other government schemes there is report of some beneficiaries like three in IRDP and five in 'Indira Awas Yojana' belonging to backward castes.

Diwan Parsa Village, Uckgaon Block, Gopalganj District

The village of the northwestern district of Gopalganj is situated at a distance of 2-3 km. from the block headquarters Phulbaria and is linked with semi-pucca road and is accessible by jeep throughout the year. The earlier survey reported few forward caste households having domestic connections but it has not spread at all. The village still does not have any drinking water problem. The number of private and public handpumps has doubled. The number of septic tank latrine has only gone up from 1 to 4. The primary school existed in the last survey. But now a middle school has been established within the village itself. The facilities of high school, health centre and bus stand, post office and market are at a distance of 2/3 km. The agricultural co-operative credit society existed even in last survey which is still fairly active.

The number of households has gone up from 163 in 1981 to 226 in 1998. Caste structure has hardly changed. The forward castes are still numerically largest group in the village. The caste and class structure also broadly coincides. Brahmin and Bhumihars continue to be all cultivators – almost all are either big peasants or landlords. Scheduled castes remain mostly agricultural labourers. Other backward caste households also undertake agricultural wage labour both casual and attached. Only four households of scheduled castes are involved in completely non-agricultural activities.

The cultivation area under irrigation has gone up from 50 per cent to about 90 per cent in present survey which are irrigated through various sources like tubewell, well, tank, canal etc. Due to availability of canal water number of tubewell has remained the same – 15 in number. Mechanisation that was fairly high in previous survey has gone up even further. Proportion of farmers using tractor or power tiller has gone up from one-fourth to about half and proportion of households using threshers have almost doubled. The main crops continue to be paddy, wheat, maize, sugarcane and pulses. There is some change in cropping pattern. Area under maize has come down whereas that of wheat and sugarcane has gone up. Proportion of households using HYV seeds has marginally gone up to about 80 per cent but the use of fertiliser is almost universal respectively.

The daily wage of casual labourers used to be 2.5 kg. of grain along with breakfast or Rs.4 daily along with breakfast. It has now gone up to Rs. 30-40, paid only in monetary terms. However, harvesting wage is still paid in kind. Harvesting wage used to be 1/16th of crop share that now has gone up to 1/10th to 1/20th of harvested crop. The wages of attached labour has hardly increased. It is 4 kg. of wheat. Further Rs. 5,000 to 10,000 is given as loan in place of 10 kathas of land given earlier. The village still has about 15 men as 'Halwaha' and 7 children as 'Charwaha'. The village that had surplus labour now faces shortage and hire in labourer from outside the village as well. This is largely because of outmigration of labourers to distance places which has increased.

The proportion of households leasing-in land has marginally gone up but system of leasing remains the same as 'sharing of crop'. The cultivator still mainly depends on moneylender for agricultural loans let alone for consumption loans. The institutional loans that made some inroad in earlier survey have not made much progress.

The village reports several beneficiaries in different government schemes. The number of beneficiaries under IRDP, TRYSEM and DWCRA are 30, 12 and 50 respectively, mostly from scheduled castes. Even there are 36 beneficiaries under 'Indira Awas Yojana' and 37 old age pensioners in last 5 years. These are quite substantial increase from 10 persons received old age pensions and 7 households benefited from IRDP programmes in the last survey.

Mahisam Village, Madhepur Block, Madhubani District

This second largest village in our census survey is situated in Madhubani district. It has 988 households at the time of this survey compared to 521 households that existed in earlier survey. Caste composition of households has almost remained the same. Muslims, the numerically largest group, constitutes one-third of total households. They are followed by Mushars who constitutes a little over one-fourth of total number of households. Brahmins, constituting one-eighth of total households, is dominant caste in the village by virtue of their control over land and other political connections. The village is still dominated by big peasants and landlords mostly belonging to Brahmin caste along with few Muslim households. The group of agricultural labourers, mostly drawn from scheduled caste and Muslims, are numerous in the village.

The village had electricity in last survey. But in last two decades the number of domestic connection has hardly gone up. It remains limited to a few households among Muslims and Brahmins. There are two primary schools in the village For high school education, post office and medical facilities, people go to block head quarters at Madhepur situated at a distance of 2.5 km. People generally use wells and public and private handpumps for drinking water. The number of public and private handpumps has gone up substantially. The scheduled castes that used to face some problem of drinking water do not face any more. There was no septic tank latrine in earlier survey. Now around 20 households of Brahmin and Muslim communities report using septic tank latrine. Apart from agriculture, some households have one or more family members working in government or private business.

One major change is the proportion of irrigated land that rose from near about 20 per cent to about 75 per cent now. Dependence on monsoon for crop cultivation has been reduced substantially. Consequently, coverage of HYV seeds (paddy and wheat) and fertiliser use has spread quite substantially. Main crop remains to be paddy – both bhadaï and aghani, Main rabi crops are wheat, mustard, masur and vegetables. The area under wheat has increased substantially mainly at the cost of maize. The productivity per acre shows some improvement.

The village continues to be self-sufficient in labour usage within the village. But some shortage of labour is reported in the month of July and August (during plantation

of paddy) since large number of agricultural labourer at that time remains in Punjab. But it does not lead to employing agricultural labour from outside village. The practice of employing attached labour has vanished. The widespread practice of using children as 'Charwaha' has completely vanished.

Earlier survey reported that labourers were mostly paid in kind. Now they are mostly paid in monetary wage. In harvesting season they are paid 1/12th share of harvested crop in place of 1/15th of harvested crop in earlier survey. Even in earlier survey, due to excess labour supply it reported some temporary migration to Punjab. Now this phenomenon has increased so much that some cultivators are complaining about shortage of labour during paddy transplantation. A significant number of youth from upper castes have also migrated to distant areas for employment. They are engaged even in manual works also there. In the village because of social labours they can not do manual work.

Earlier survey reported that 75 persons benefited from old age pension but no other government programmes were prominent. The present survey reports beneficiaries only under one government programme i.e. IRDP – 20 in number, but it reports construction of 59 houses under India Awas Yojana during last 5 years. However, institutional credit from government and financial institutions is still very little and far between. Private moneylenders continue to be the main source of supply of credit.

Khangaon Village, Pandaul Block, Madhubani District

Situated at a distance of 10 km. from district headquarters of Madhubani, this village had reported reduced number of people living in it during 1971-81 in the census data. However, census figure of 1991 shows some increase in population thus reversing the declining trend in population observed in the decade 1971-1981.

There is some distinct change in the caste composition of households. Numerically scheduled caste household is largest constituting two-fifth of total number of households whereas in earlier survey, Rajput constituted 45 per cent of total number of households and now they constitute about 30 per cent of total number of households. Still Rajput is dominant caste, mostly belonging to big peasants and landlord households

whereas the numerous agricultural labourers still come from scheduled caste and backward castes.

The village continues to be separated by a small river at a distance of about 1 km. The west part of the village is linked to a pucca road. The riverbed remains dry most of the months except in rainy season. Crossing river during rainy season causes lots of problem for the eastern part of the villagers. Still no bridge is constructed to link them. Domestic electricity connection is still limited to a few Rajput households in west tola. There is no noticeable drinking water problem. Even Harijan tolas now have several handpumps compared to only two reported in the last survey. Spread of septic tank latrine has been very limited. Six Rajput families have reported to have septic tank in comparison to only two in the last survey. However, more than two-third of Rajput households and few Yadavs families now report use of soakage pit/Sulabh, an indigenous type of latrine. The village still has only one primary school and one middle school as reported in the last survey. Other facilities like post office, high school, bus stand, medical and marketing facilities, fair price shop are still available at a distance of 2 km. One co-operative credit society that was somewhat active has become completely inactive.

The village has state tube-well but it is not functioning due to power crisis. The village has a large number of pump-sets and some wells used for irrigation. The proportion of cultivated area irrigated through these sources have increased from about one-third to more than two-third. The use of HYV paddy, HYV wheat and fertilisers has gone up by some margin. Paddy, wheat, sugarcane remains to be the main crops. Some change in cropping can be observed compared to last survey. Area under wheat has continued to increase and that of under paddy and gram have fallen. Potato also has emerged as an important crop. Area under wheat has increased because of availability of HYV seeds and due to its assured dependency on irrigation in winter.

The village does not seem to have any shortage of labour. There is no report of workers coming from outside to work. The out-migration, reported in last survey, now has increased substantially, but not to the extent of leading to labour shortage as reported in other villages. The usual wage has changed from earlier survey of 2.5 kg. of grain to mixed wage of 1.5 kg. of rice and Rs. 15 in cash with one meal. The harvest wage has

gone up from 1/16th of the total harvested crop to 1/12th of harvested crop. Although the incidence of attached labour system has decreased, still such system prevails in the village.

This village, though agriculturally backward was reportedly more prosperous than other village – Mahisan and agricultural productivity was also relatively higher. Now the situation seems to have reversed. Unlike earlier survey, There is hardly any report of institutional credit availed by cultivators. Possibly the defunct functioning of co-operative credit society is responsible for it.

Chandkura Village, Karaia Block, Nalanda District

Situated from 0.5 km. from pucca road, this village of Nalanda district is only 37 km. from Patna and 5 km. from the block and sub-divisional headquarter of Hilsa. The village had about 220 households and 17 castes residing in it in the year 1981. The number of household in the present survey is about 293. The caste structure has hardly changed over the period. There are only five households belonging to forward castes. The village continues to be dominated by backward castes II in which Kurmis being the largest caste still constitutes one-fourth of total households in the village. However, scheduled castes numbering 135 is the numerically largest group who still are the main supplier of labour in the village. The Kurmis, mostly cultivators belonging to middle and big peasant category, who also hire in labour mostly from scheduled castes. The few forward castes households are either big peasants or landlords.

The village was electrified way back in 1969. But for the last several years the electricity supply has been discontinued because of non-payment of bills. The village has a large number of private well and public and private hand-pumps and they do not face any drinking water problem. The number of septic tanks has gone up to 11 and around 30. Sulabh latrines have also been introduced since the last survey. Primary school is situated within the village. But for middle and secondary school and primary health centres communities still travel 2 km. and for other facilities like hospital, regular market they still go to Hilsa.

The level of agricultural development remained fairly good. The proportion of irrigated land to total cultivated land has gone up from about half to nine-tenth since the last survey. The source of irrigation is mainly tube-well and pump-set. Coverage of HYV seed in paddy and wheat and use of fertiliser is almost universal. The thresher is almost universally used. Almost three-fourth of the cultivators uses either tractor or power-tiller. But for agricultural operations no institutional loan is available. Paddy and wheat are the two main crops Area under wheat has gone up substantially. Sugarcane that was introduced in 1980 is not cultivated at all. Rather onion has become one of the major crops. Some cultivation of masoor and khesari is still undertaken along with summer vegetables.

The casual wage rate has gone up from 1 kg. plus meal and breakfast to 2.5 kg. to 4 kg. with breakfast being provided by the employer. The harvest wage rate also has gone up from 1/16th of harvested crop to 1/14th of harvested crop. The attached labourer still gets the same wage as casual labour but they get some land and are not provided with loans in cash, as it used to be the practice earlier. But the prevalence of attached labour has reduced substantially and now there are just six attached labourers. The village faces no shortage of agricultural labour and a large number of persons go to distant states for work.

The government sponsored development programmes have made some inroads in the village. 10 persons were engaged in employment schemes. There are eight beneficiaries in IRDP, 105 people have been assisted under 'Indira Awas Yojana' and there are 17 beneficiaries in old age pension scheme as well.

Mohiuddinpur Village, Rauhi Block, Nalanda District

Situated in Nalanda district it is among the smallest villages in our census villages. The village is dominated by scheduled caste people and only a few households from forward caste stay in the village. However, Muslims and forward castes are mostly landlords leasing out their land and scheduled caste households are either agricultural labourer or tenant cultivators. Still no pucca road exists to link the village. It still does not have any electricity connection. The village has one primary school but other facilities like post

office, high school, market, hospitals etc. are available in block headquarters which is about 3 km. from the village,

The percentage of land irrigated has remained the same at about 50 per cent of total cultivated land. Sources of irrigation remain diverse – tubewell, well tank etc. Last survey reported that almost all farmers use HYV seeds in wheat and paddy and two-third apply fertilisers but only 60 per cent of households use thresher and power-tiller. Tractors were not used. Now there is an increase in mechanisation – almost all farmers are using thresher and one-third of the farmers are using tractor or power-tiller.

The main crop of the village continues to be the same – kharif paddy and rabi wheat and maize. Paddy also continues to be grown in summer season. Earlier survey reported an increase in cultivated area under wheat, maize and gram and consequent fall in cultivated area under pulses and other inferior rabi crops. This survey reports a fall in the area under sugarcane and a rise in the area under sunflower. Agricultural productivity is little lower than that of villages in the Rohtas but fairly high. Livestock still is not very important source of wealth in the village.

Since the village is dominated by scheduled castes, a large proportion of population continues to work as wage labourer. However, wages have risen from 1 kg. of rice and a meal to 2.5 kg. of rice and one meal. Harvest wage is 8 kg. of wheat or 10 kg. of paddy. The attached labourers are paid more or less the same as before – 10 kathas of land for their own cultivation and some loan. The village has a surplus of labour and there is no report of any shortage of labour in any month of the year. More than half of the cultivators are leasing in land and tenancy system is still on crop-sharing basis.

The cultivators mostly rely on institutional credit for productive expenditures. This is an improvement from limited availability in earlier survey. One important benefit from government scheme was employment scheme in which 42 persons got employment. Few persons continue to benefit from old age pensions. Further, 4 persons got diesel pump through IRDP scheme including 3 scheduled castes.

It is interesting to observe that poor perceive an improvement in their conditions and a deterioration in the condition of richer poor in the village. The reasons are an improvement in wage rate and outside job opportunity.

Jitwarpur Village, Araria Block, Purne District

This village of Purne district having 918 household is the biggest village in the survey. Caste composition of households has substantially changed. Brahmin, though remained numerically largest caste, constitute much smaller proportion of households. Backward caste I, now is the largest group if taken together constituting 40 per cent of total households.

There is some change in the class-caste structure observed in the village. The Brahmin who constituted 60 per cent of households now constitute one-third of households and backward caste I which constituted one-fourth of total households earlier, now constitute half of the total households. The village has a larger number of big peasants and landlords – a substantial section belong to Brahmin caste. But backward castes now have quite a few households belonging to big peasants households. The number of poor-middle and middle peasant households still is quite small. The scheduled caste, a large number of backward caste and Muslim households are agricultural labourers.

The spread of electricity connection-- both domestic and agricultural – have risen several times. Domestic connection has gone up from 8 to nearly 100 and that of agricultural connection from nil to 14, mostly to households of Brahmins. There are many private and public handpumps for the purpose of drinking water. Most of the private handpumps that are located in Brahmin households are now well spread out across castes. Spread of septic tank latrines is still very low – less than 10 households have it.

The occupational diversification has hardly taken place. Brahmins remain mostly cultivators. Although some of them are in government services as well. Backward and scheduled castes are generally agricultural labourers and some of them continue to be tenant cultivators.

The village continues to have a primary schools but for middle school and high school students continue to go to neighbouring village. For health facilities, post office, veterinary centre etc., although not far – are still non-existent in such a large village. The village, in addition to a co-operative society has now an agricultural society as well.

The area under irrigation under has gone up from one-tenth to two-fifth of cultivated land since last survey. Paddy and jute continue to be the main crop. Wheat, potato and maize cultivation is also undertaken. There is some cropping pattern change in last several years. Area under wheat has gone up and that of jute has come down. Coverage of crops under HYV seeds and use of fertilisers have also gone up due to spread of irrigation. Agricultural mechanisation has substantially increased from almost nothing. Half of total cultivators are now using tractor/power tillers and thresher is universally used for post-harvesting operations. Number of pumpsets also has doubled. The leasing-in land under fixed rent system has somewhat gone up and landowners and tenants now even share input costs. Due to all these reasons agricultural productivity has somewhat gone up.

The nominal wage rate has gone up from Rs. 1.50 along with meal and breakfast to Rs. 15 along with meal and breakfast but for harvesting $1/8^{\text{th}}$ of harvested crop is still given as harvest wage. The payments to the attached labour have also remained the same at annual provision of 10 mounds of paddy in addition to food and clothing. The use of attached labour has come down but still 28 men are employed as 'Halwaha' and 12 children as employed as 'Charwaha'. The village did not have any shortage of labour but now a good number of migrant wage labourers are employed in agriculture during four months of shortage. This is due to much higher level of temporary migrations (numbering around 350) for agricultural and construction activities in distant places like Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. Livestock that used to be an important source of income for backward caste and scheduled castes and Muslims have lost its importance. The use of institutional loans for financing of agricultural machinery and pumpsets has gone up but for other requirements villagers still depend on moneylenders.

There are a large number of beneficiaries from different government schemes. number of persons benefiting from old age pension has remained the same as around 80. But other government schemes have picked up--36 beneficiaries as widow pensioners, 11 scheduled caste families from housing schemes, 200 beneficiaries from IRDP schemes for buying milch animal and 50 persons have benefited from employment schemes for some days.

Samhutibuzurg Village, Dinara Block, Rohtas District

The village Samhutibuzurg of Rohtas district is situated at 3 km. away from block headquarters of Dinara. The village is still not linked by pucca road. However, now it is accessible by jeep except for the rainy season. During heavy rainy season it remains inaccessible by jeep.

The caste structure has hardly changed. The number of households has gone up from about 183 households to 270 but forward castes still constitutes one-fifth of total households and scheduled caste constitutes about 40 per cent. Brahmin continues to remain the dominant caste owning most of the land and having other social and political connections.

The village still does not have any electricity. It still has the primary school but for facilities of higher schooling, post office, health, marketing bus stand etc. Villagers still have to go to block headquarters at Dinara. The village co-operative society that was inactive in last survey does not exist at all. The village does not have drinking water problem. Apart from 8 private wells, there are some public and a large number of private handpumps in the village.

Almost the entire land of village continues to be irrigated by canal but now some problems have emerged for water to reach the 'Tand' land. Paddy and wheat remains to be the two major crops. Khesari, gram, potato, masur and vegetables are grown now but sugarcane cultivation has almost stopped in comparison to last survey. HYV seeds in both paddy and wheat are still extensively used and the average yield of both these crops are double of that of the villages of North Bihar covered under this study. Unlike expansion of area under paddy and sugarcane seen in last survey, this survey does not observe any noticeable cropping pattern changes.

In last survey, wage rate in this village was higher than most of the census villages in other districts. It is no more so. Harvest wage, which was 1/12th of harvested crop, continues to be 1/12th. Daily wage in kind has also hardly increased. The phenomenon of attached labour has been reduced but still there exist around 10 attached labour. It is because of usage of modern agricultural techniques like tractors and cultivators do no want to give land for labour services. Labour shortage in the village has

gone up substantially compared to last survey and for six months starting from October a large number of labourers come from Palamau district.

Nearly half of the cultivators are leasing in land – up by 10 per cent from last survey. But area leased in is not large. The prevalent system is mostly fixed rent. Hardly five per cent of leased in land is on crop-sharing basis. Institutional loan particularly long-term credit was practically absent earlier. But now institutional loan has become quite prevalent. In last few years 4 persons got IRDP loan for buying agricultural machinery which did not exist earlier. The number of old age pensioners has gone up from 10 to 20.

The village is economically better off than other villages in the survey. General perception remains that agriculture has continued to improve but physical infrastructure like road and electricity is still absent.

Amarhi Village, Nasriganj Block, Rohtas District

The village Amarhi of Nasriganj block in Rohtas district is situated on pucca road and is about 9 km. away from block headquarters. The number of households has gone up from 119 in 1981 to 153 at present. There is hardly any change in caste structure since last survey. Brahmins numbering 30 households are the only upper caste household living in the village, Scheduled caste constitutes 30 per cent of the total households and rest is backwards with numerically largest group of Yadavs and Koeris. Brahmin, Yadav and Kurmi still have their separate sphere of influence -- all of them are involved in cultivation.

The electricity first came to the village during 1990-91. Around 10 households took domestic connection but due to the theft of electric wire after a year it stopped. Now even electric poles are also stolen away. The primary school within the village still remains. But for middle school, high school, market, health facilities etc. villagers still have to travel 4 km. from the village. There is no problem of drinking water. The number of public and private handpumps has also gone up substantially. In place of nine service latrines, now there are six septic tanks and ten service latrines in the village.

The entire village continues to be irrigated by canal and main crops continue to be paddy and wheat. Masoor and vegetables are also grown on some plot of land. There

is no noticeable change in cropping pattern. Unlike Samhutibuzurg, the wages for casual labour are mostly given in cash along with breakfast. Harvesting wage rate is similar to Samhutibuzurg, being 1/12th of crops. Attached labourers are also given one bigha of land along with Rs. 400 per month and cloth. But attached labour is limited only to 'Charwaha'. Report of shortage of labour during paddy transplantation still persists but now it does not lead to employment of outside village labour. Around 25-30 households, mainly Yadavs, are involved in selling milk. Some of the households also leases out land mostly on fixed rent basis.

Institutional credit was not very prevalent in last survey. But now institutional sources meet most of the productive credit requirement of the cultivators. Loans from moneylenders have almost vanished which was widely prevalent.

Agricultural productivity is at similar level like Samhutibuzurg and it is also a relatively prosperous village. In last survey only government scheme worthwhile mentioning was old age pension – 30 people benefited, But now only 3 beneficiaries are left. But there are 7 scheduled caste households in IRDP beneficiary list and 10 households from backward castes and scheduled castes are provided with housing under Indira Awas Yojana during last five years.

Comparison among Villages

The description above shows considerable differences among villages apart from their similarities. The most visible similarity that remains is that villages are still strictly tied by the caste system, though there is difference among dominant castes across villages. The service castes engaged in caste occupation known as Jajmani system, widely prevailing in earlier survey, is on its way out. Non-agricultural source of employment is still extremely limited but out-migration to other states has opened up new sources of employment for labouring classes, particularly in the northern part of the state.

The label of development of various villages to a certain extent confirms our characterisation of the development from which villages are selected. The gap of development between backward district and advanced districts seems to have diminished. The most important reason being spread of irrigation, albeit tubewell irrigation. However, villages in advanced district of Gopalganj, and Rohtas have more

assured source of irrigation -- canal. It does make a difference in agricultural productivity.

The difference in the dominance of different castes coupled with distribution of landholding had an impact on the class structure in the villages. Villages where middle or backward early were present in large number and forward castes were very small in number were dominated by middle peasants whereas villages with large population of forward castes were dominated more by big peasants and landlords. In the present survey irrespective of caste structure of the villages, big peasants or landlords dominate all census villages. The reason being backward castes have turned into big peasants or landlords.

The differences in the level of development, caste and class structure were also revealed in the labour market prevailing in different villages. Villages dominated by middle and backward castes had hardly any shortage of labour with a very small section of wage labour. The shortage of labour, in peak season, arose only in relatively advanced villages that were dominated by forward castes.

The present survey, reports of shortage of labour in some villages which arises on two counts. Firstly, very few or no presence of scheduled caste households and lastly, out-migration of labour in distant states. No shortage is reported in Amarhi village of Rohtas although it is one of the most prosperous villages. The attached labour existed in all villages in earlier survey. But, now particularly in less developed villages attached labour has ceased to exist, the reason being heavy out-migration to distant lands. The wages of casual labourers are still lower in backward villages but the gap between advanced and backward villages has somewhat got reduced. Amount of land given to attached labour in Rohtas district continues to be highest.

The level of infrastructure and communication are still very important dimension for these villages. Level of irrigation has also gone up in backward villages but assured irrigation through canal does have an impact on prosperity of villages. Similarly, availability of good communication in some villages give many advantages compared to villages in the same district with lesser development of communication and thus leading to their greater prosperity. Unfortunately, there is very small improvement in the

development of infrastructure—both social and physical—in the surveyed villages during the last two decades.

Issues emerging from the Profiles

PRA exercises in all the villages have brought forward important qualitative issues that are common in all villages. It can be seen that all the villages are multi-caste villages with clear caste hierarchy and discrimination being practised when we see the habitation pattern or access to facilities like drinking water, schools or roads.

One important feature that needs to be highlighted here is that most of the sample villages have constant threat of floods and submergence of fields, which reflects poor agriculture development. It is to be mentioned that several areas of north and central Bihar are prone to floods during monsoon and in such conditions agriculture in these areas becomes a very vulnerable option for many poor who have marginal lands. This can be further testified from the fact that most of the sample villages have seen constant seasonal migration to distant places like Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. Migration is an important option in rural areas of Bihar as the study brings out, for many intermediary castes and SCs.

Most of the villages reflect poor infrastructure development, as far as education and health is concerned. Backwardness in these fronts can be seen both from the point of view of investments by the government and lack of awareness among the poorer sections. Facilities like drinking water, irrigation are also not available on an appreciable scale. Most of the sample village households know about government programmes and obligations of the government in terms of provision of basic needs but not many have availed any programme nor any specific development schemes are implemented in the villages. Absence of or dysfunctional Anganwadi, irregular to no visits by ANM, awfully inadequate government health facilities (PHC) reflect the poor state of public health and child welfare programmes in the sample villages. It has to be mentioned here that health related costs are one of the major reasons for households getting into debt trap. Village profiles testify, it takes 8-9 kms of walking for some villages to reach to the nearest point from where one can take a public or private transport.

Economic opportunities for women are very low, due to low participation of them in wage earning activities. Only women from SC and other backward classes engage in wage work. Even here, wage differential is observed and women are not provided with cash wages. At the same time one can see the role of women in household economy as most of the women are engaged in animal husbandry and in agriculture activities and hence we see a very low participation of women in wage work. These are therefore, not accounted in the work participation rates. The number of female-headed households (over 20 per cent) is a testimony for the participation of women in the economic sphere.

On the social front, as mentioned earlier caste discrimination and discrimination against girl child exist. Very few girls end up in schools with vast majority of unlettered women and girls, the sample villages exemplify the neglect and discrimination. Lack of facilities for girl children and also awareness from parents' side are the two important reasons for this situation.

In terms of other basic infrastructure, electricity is not available for a vast majority of households. Very few villages are connected with all weather road. What is most striking is the class-caste difference in access to even the most basic resources. Although, as mentioned above, public resources are few and of very poor quality, there seems to be a clear gradation in terms of their use. For example, while the conditions of roads are very poor for all villagers, they are non-existent in the lower caste *tolas*. Similarly, lower caste groups have no access to fields for defecation purposes; unable to access any health facility as public health facility is abysmal and they have no capacity to pay. Under these circumstances, the women belonging to these communities are particularly vulnerable.