

Village Complex - A Means of Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas of West Bengal: A Comprehensive Study on Uttar Dinajpur District

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Abstract:

After Independence different poverty alleviation programme has been launched by State and Centre in West Bengal (WB) to provide concrete soil under the feet of rural poor. Political parties on Govt. seat preach their successful tale of achievement regarding the fact through development reports and statistics. But the ground reality can tell the fact itself. For once the most preferable place of colonialism, West Bengal does not progress so much and the story can be told by its unfit infrastructure of industry, overwhelming dependency on agriculture, mass illiteracy and poverty in rural areas, female participation in noneconomic activities etc. Although the rate of agricultural production may be substantially flourished but WB is still suffering from illness induced by poverty. The villages work as hubs to generate bulk of agricultural products but still poverty is haunting around there. Therefore the issue is the lack of proper direction of development. The central premise of this paper would analyse the effects of poverty alleviation programmes in rural WB and also provide a model plan, through the concept of 'Village Complex'. The district of Uttar Dinajpur (North Dinajpur) has been chosen as sample because of two reasons- i) it is one of the very backward district in WB, ii) the number of people dwelling rural areas is substantially high in this district.

Keywords:

Poverty and Poverty Alleviation, West Bengal (WB), Uttar Dinajpur (UD), Rural Development, Village Complex.

Introduction:

At the current phase while urbanisation is very fast all over India, WB is very slow in this race. And the growth is viewed only around big cities and mega cities where the crowd is continuously increasing in an alarming rate to fulfil their basic demands. Most of that mass belong to nearby and distant villages. Centralization of industries as well as employment opportunities and availability of other basic amenities are the major causes of 'bulging' of city population. Such inequal development gives rise to various problems of which unsustainable use of resources and increases in poverty are very serious. 'Poverty' conveys a state that forces people neither to have certain material comfort nor to meet certain basic needs. Sometimes it is defined by lack of good income. But people require different incomes to conduct their livelihood. Rich people require lots of income to have standard life whereas it remains lot enough to poor people to get standard life. So Income Gap and Headcount Index are the popular way of measuring poverty. But it is found that measurement of poverty through headcount index does not always lead to the right corner. The consumption related expenditures once are considered to be the most appropriate and relevant than income for the purpose of directional idea to grab the level of poverty. The Indian Planning Commission delineated

the limit 2400 calories per person per day for rural areas while 2100 calories per person per day for urban areas in 1979. This estimate confirmed above 50 per cent rural poverty in India during 1980s. But Amartya Sen argued 'Poverty' as 'basic capability failure' and that poverty is absolute in the space of capabilities but relative in the space of commodities. It is not directly related to regular cash income flow. Rather it is measured by actual consumption of individual or household. The World Bank prefers to use Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) based measurement wherein poverty line is estimated as \$1.25 per day income up to 2013. Current scholars focus on the factors which can shape individual or family life in better way. Researchers choose Human Well Being or Quality of Life which touches all sphere of a good life through nutritional consumption, better education, facilities of drinking water and sanitation etc as a right to have better life. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) determines poverty by placing 33 per cent weight on education and number of years spent in school and 6.25 per cent weight on financial condition of a person. In the year 2014 Indian Official poverty line was Rs. 972.00 per month in rural areas and Rs 1407.00 per month in cities. All aforesaid methods award different estimates which create confusions. But the motto of the research paper is not to delineate poverty line. Rather it fits with Official Estimates and will offer most effective solution with 'Village Complex'. Therefore for more scientific analysis this paper is divided into four parts. The first part shows the picture of rural West Bengal since independence and its political ups and downs. Because influence of politics is predominantly found over rural areas as most of the populations are rural in character. The second part discusses the causes of poverty and a comparative analysis. The third part comprises of a discussion of the role of central or state funded poverty alleviation programmes. And at the last section a number of solutions are catered which are obtained during interviewing 50 intellectuals and villagers. And similarly the author has provided how the model of Village Complex could make an effort to eliminate poverty in rural areas with the help of primary data obtained from 300 rural families of three villages in UD.

Picture Behind:

Poverty is the most phenomenal hindrance in the development of India and West Bengal. Since independence it has been staying behind the political agendas of different political parties. The word 'Garibi' was brought into play many time to satisfy political vote bank. Some of the popular slogan like 'Garibi Hatao' remains vibrant in our memory. A long 200 years of struggle for freedom, riots and subsequently partition of the country had given liberty from British Rule but not from crop failure, hunger and prevailing poverty and also from 'Jamindar Raj'. A very few manufacturing industries were set up during Dr. Bidhan Chandra Ray's rule but WB experienced severe food crisis and near famine condition. It became very difficult for the State Govt to tackle such uncontrollable condition. The condition became worse due to consecutive effects of Naxalbari Movement and large influx of Bangladeshi people into border districts of Cooch Bihar, West Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia and 24 Parganas. The sharecroppers (Bargadars) along with CPI (M) leaders started armed 'Naxal Movement' against landlords for their rights and ultimately it was transformed against state government. Hundreds of poor farmers, landless agricultural labours females and even innocent children were killed during conflicts. After the general election of 1977 there was dramatic change in WB's political atmosphere when the Left Front Govt, headed by Communist Party of India (Marxist), won 243 seats thereby getting complete majority. Most of the workers of this political party belonged to ground level farmers, peasants and marginal working classes. Therefore, the Political Agenda of CPI (M) was predominated by uprising of distressed classes. Operation Barga, a pioneering effort was launched by the State as a land reform movement. It is probably the step that

the CPI (M) is known for. The CPI (M) under Chief Ministership of Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee realized for the first time that at present context without industry a state can't prosper. Therefore opposite to communistic ideology the Govt tried to establish a Nano car project of Tata Motors at Singur in Hoogly district in 2006 and a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Nandigram in East Midnapur district that was to be given over Salim Group in 2007. These projects were to be built over highly fertile multi-cropping land in both districts. But the Govt had to face strong protests from farmers and peasants, people from whom the CPI (M) evolved. Taking the advantages of incidents of Nandigram and Singur movement the Trinamul Congress (TMC) led by Smt Mamata Banerjee was able to earn the trust of Bengalee people and founded her Government after glorious victory in Assembly Election, 2011. But still today farmers are found to commit suicide in silent corners of the states and only found their place in news paper column or news scrolls. The picture of rural west Bengal is necessary to trace the real situations which are creating barriers toward development. Because West Bengal is lagging behind in terms of per capita income and growth rate after Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. It is the last but not least, states like Bihar which is moving with increasing per capita income and Assam which has performed well in declining poverty level. In 1980-81 West Bengal ranked 5th after Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra and Punjab in per capita income. From 1971 to 2002 there is a decrease in shear of employment from 16 per cent to 7 per cent. Due to over emphasis on communism, large scale industries and machines has been restricted to enter into the state. Therefore WB lagged behind while states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka were of similar importance, but developed faster on industrial ground.

Methodology:

The sources of data are both primary and secondary. The source of secondary data are Census of India, Panchayat and Rural development Department, District Economic and Statistic Department, Gram Panchayat office and various other books, journals, reports and internet sources as well. This study has been an outcome of another research on out migration of labours previously done by the author. While analysing that topic new pictures have arrived. Based on those pictures and new field survey has explored current views. Several methodological preparations and a pilot survey are made to provide systematic framework. A structured questionnaire is made to get data from 300 households comprising of 1662 persons dwelling in rural area. Alternative suggestions are also taken from intellectuals (50 persons working or living in villages) in written form. Households are selected with probability random sampling and suggestions are taken through judgement method where most of intellectuals are Teachers and Professionals.

Study Area:

As already said the study is Uttar Dinajpur, one of the most backward districts in west Bengal. It lies between latitude 25^o11'N to 26^o49'N and longitude 87^o49'E to 90^o00'E covering an area of 3142 km². Presently it is a home of over thirty lakh people who live with a density of 960 persons per km². According to 2011 census, 87.93 per cent people are still living in UD. It confirms even in 21st century urbanization is very slow. That is why it is the most ideal place to trace the original face of poverty, its extent, and also analyse their measures.

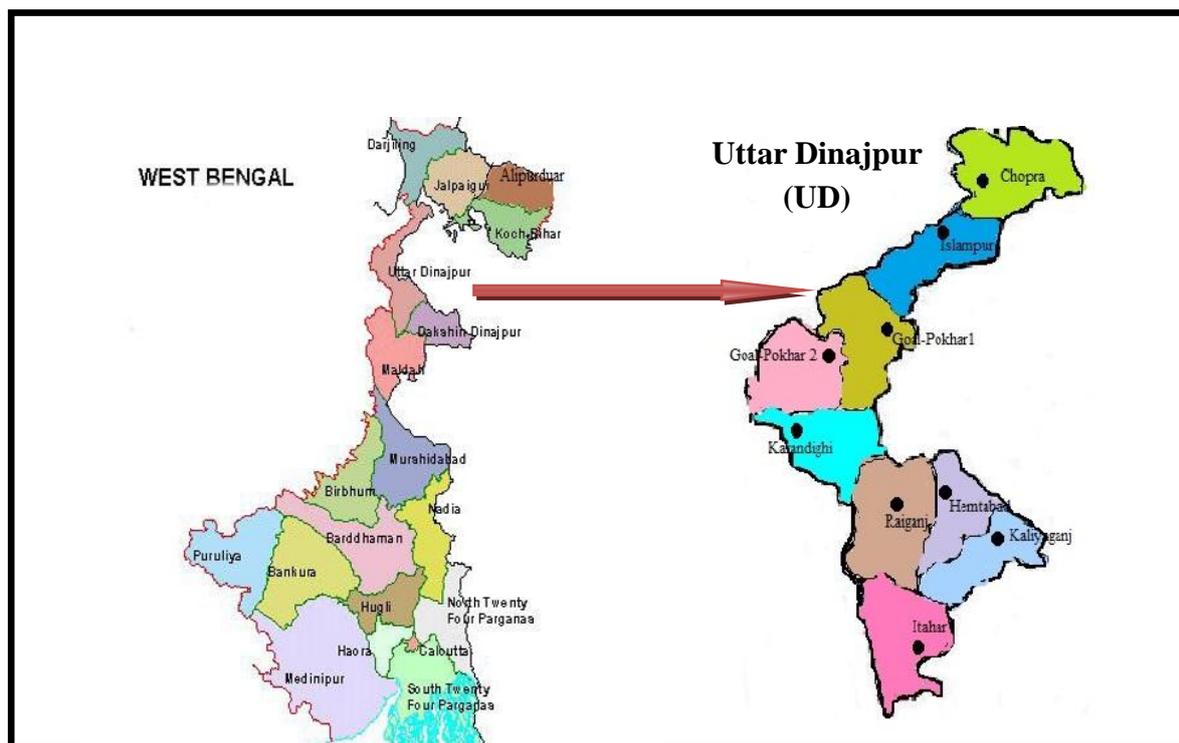


Figure 1: The Study Area.

Incidence of poverty:

A close look on population structure of UD reveals that over 87 per cent of total population is 'Gramin' (rural) in nature and undoubtedly huge numbers are depended on agriculture directly (65 per cent). There are more than 12 per cent population living in urban areas. The demographic transition depicts that an urban life is characterised by predominance of non-agricultural work, hub of employments, high level of life expectancy and low mortality rate due to better medical facility, easy and fast communication network etc. In contrast rural life incorporates with common practice of agriculture, fishing, and mining and other primary level works, high birth and death rate, seasonal unemployment and underemployment, poor quality of transport and communication. However the case is not the same in present context in West Bengal. The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sarak Yojana (PMGSY) and easy access of mobile phones have enabled the rural areas to be connected slightly/partially with nearby or distant towns and cities. People who regularly commute to cities or temporarily living in distant metropolitans generates updated news (like consumption and cultural habits that are noticeable in cities) to villages. This situation induces them to think why development stops at thresholds of villages. During the field research, few dark corners of poverty come to the light. And alternative suggestions are obtained in written format from 50 intellectuals about the reason for which poverty happens.

1. Inequal distribution of Resources:

The author made a comprehensive study in different blocks of UD. It is found that most people are small farmers, agricultural or marginal labour or sharecroppers. Most households have lands below five bigha (62.5 per cent of total). But the lion portions of lands belong to rich farmers still now. Intensive subsistence is exercised to fulfil family requirements. Hence little opportunity is left to make family income better. Hoping for better life in future villagers increase their population by giving birth to male children as many as possible. Beyond capacity extra children only creates burden and the evils of malnutrition and under-nourishment are arrived. So demographers' claim of high growth of population cause poverty is wrong. Because rather than a reason, increase in fertility rate is only a symptom of poverty. Jotes which have come hereditably to next generations become smaller again and scope of development will be narrower.

2. Overemphasis on Politics and lack of opportunities:

Probably all people who know the political scenario of WB accept that politics entered into vain of rural body. Therefore every sphere of life becomes infected by power chasing politicalisation. It is observed that rich farmers in villages are very much interested in politics for getting power and to show strength of their position and authority over the people of that area. At the very first all privileges are served to powerful people and their followers. So, little chance exists for common men until they become the loyal follower of ruling party. To get ordinary services persons need to go political leaders and without their praise and recommendation they are unable to get it. It is very unfortunate that no statistical records can be provided to prove this comment. But it is a concrete reality that state or centre funded schemes after reaching to local govt body, choices are made not for those who need it more rather for those who are supporters of ruling party. In this way common rural people had only the right to cast vote but not for opportunities.

3. Inequality of Income:

As stated previously, most of villagers belong to grass root level and are depended on small production and small wages. Although the Jamindari and Jotedari period have gone but still income-inequality prevails. A survey conducted by the author himself reveals that almost 90 per cent households have lands below 10 bigha and more than 5 per cent have lands between 15-30 bigha. The fact has near similar result in census 2011 where 23.9 per cent is cultivators and 41.1 per cent is agriculture labour in UD. That's why income inequality is predominantly found in the district. On the other side due to discrepancy in tax laws economically strong farmers do not pay income tax which compounds the problem. In search of good income now a trend is very popular in villages' e.g 'Dilli Cholo' (Lets Go to Delhi). It is not similar of Netaji's slogan. It means to go for Delhi to earn money. Many people from young and juvenile age group leave villages for Delhi, Bangalore, Punjab, Mumbai and other cities every day. Those who are left behind home, operate cultivation for procuring food for family consumption. It may change the financial condition of family some extent. But a person who comes back home after a year, again, turns into an unemployed youth.

4. Lack of Employment:

In UD about 88 per cent (Census 2011) population are rural residents. Of the total population more than 65 per cent are directly depended on agriculture, working as cultivators and agricultural labour. Other than agriculture there is no scope of employment. During lean agriculture season rural youth are roaming around within the village doing nothing. So, total youth energy is wasted in card playing,

drug addiction etc. Those who have male members at home for operating agriculture, left for other states for income.

5. High Dependency on earning population:

There is a tradition in rural areas that men will earn for family and females will cook and rear children at home. In some society females are strictly prohibited to do work with males and even in some case they can't go outside alone. Therefore income for family is male's social liability and all non working population including children, females and elders are depended on single earning person. It is found in research that an average of 5.5 members is depended on a single earning man.

6. Lack of Quality Education

The most important cause of poverty that the author has detected throughout the study is lack of quality education. Education not only gives the vision how to discriminate the right from the wrong but also supplies inner power to sustain in future life. It can't be ignored that Govt of India pays a lot for generating good education. The enrolment is larger in primary and upper primary section than previous two decades. But the outcome is not good. The number of school dropouts after class IX or X is also amplifying in rural sectors. During study it becomes clear that the enrolment of pupil in primary and upper primary are quite good but guardians who are mostly farmers or labours do not take care of their children's education. Even they can't manage to spend time with children. They are used to say that schools are there to take the total responsibility of making their children educated. On the other hand teacher student ratio is not quite good in schools. Therefore the overall effect hampers the goal of children's right to have quality education.

To lighter the burden of family, girls are given marriage at early ages when they should go to school and young male members either help elders in crop fields along with study or go out for income leaving their education at mid-way. In all cases teenagers are deprived of pleasures of childhood. Now whom would we blame for all these? I think if economic condition is made better, these problems we may overcome easily. The *State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development* has organized a survey to illustrate the level of poverty in different districts of WB (In Table 1 & Figure 1). The survey consists of two major indicators- 1) Over 60 per cent of the population belonging to the working age group are either with no work or marginal workers. 2) Over 70 per cent of the females are illiterate. It depicted that the UD has 54.05 per cent population are living in backward villages. The conclusion can be reached that neither scope of employment nor women education are in good situation. The UD is the place where little development has taken place. Out of total 1508 villages 760 are backward which has registered over 50 per cent of the total. It is very hard to imagine how 70 per cent female of a region remain untaught even in 21st century. But it is a concrete reality.

Table 1: District wise Distribution of Backward Villages and Distribution of Population in Those Villages in WB.

Sl. No.	District	Total No. of Villages as per Census 2001	No. of villages identified as Backward by P & RD DEPTT.	% of Backward villages	Total Population in Rural area	Population of Backward Villages	% of population in Backward Villages
1	Bankura	3830	569	14.86	2957447	280692	9.49
2	Burdwan	2529	55	2.17	4348466	28160	0.65
3	Birbhum	2478	218	8.8	2757002	165990	6.02
4	Dakshin Dinajpur	1638	184	11.23	1306324	93874	7.19
5	Darjeeling	708	85	12.01	1088740	90214	8.29
6	Haora	734	4	0.54	2121109	4560	0.21
7	Hugli	1915	21	1.1	3354227	8136	0.24
8	Jalpaiguri	756	79	10.45	2794291	230939	8.26
9	Cooch Bihar	1204	26	2.16	2253537	18861	0.84
10	Malda	1799	602	33.46	3049528	782132	25.65
11	Purba Medinipur	3038	9	0.3	4053924	1735	0.04
12	Paschim Medinipur	8702	637	7.32	4573595	210407	4.60
13	Murshidabad	2210	242	10.95	5133835	459873	8.96
14	Nadia	1346	59	4.38	3625308	98672	2.72
15	North 24 Parganas	1584	2	0.13	4083339	964	0.02
16	Puruliya	2683	994	37.05	2281090	852062	37.35

17	South 24 Parganas	2140	66	3.08	5820469	78355	1.35
18	Uttar Dinajpur	1508	760	50.53	2147351	1160647	54.05
	TOTAL	40802	4612	11.30	57749582	4566273	7.91

Source: State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development.

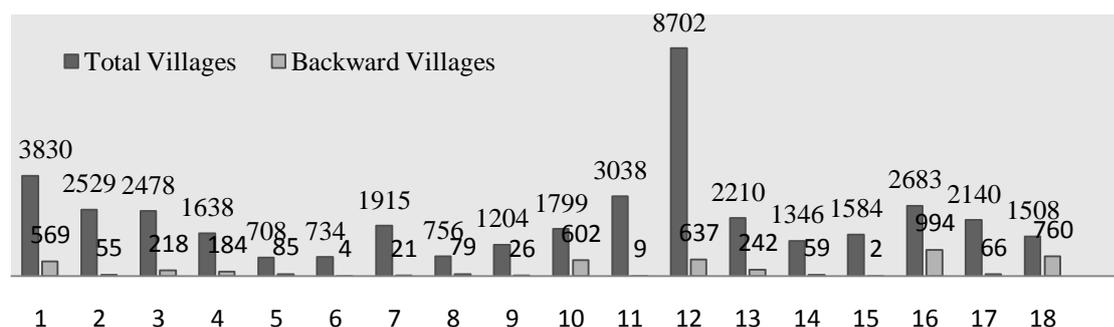


Figure 2: As Table 1.

Role of Government in Poverty alleviation Programme:

The Central and State Government has quite significant role in taking forward several schemes to alleviate poverty in rural sectors. The most popular and massive step was found in form of land reform, known as 'Operation Barga'. It was the programme to "ensure the right of share croppers" that was put forward for first time and necessary amendments were made by Siddhartha Shankar Roy led Congress Government. But the Left Front Government after assuming power implemented the act. The major emphasis was on ceiling of large land holdings, sequestering of surplus land and redistributing it as Pattas among landless agricultural labours and marginal farmers. A good number of Bargadars (Share Croppers) were benefitted by the programme as in Table 2. The consequence was the greater increase in production of Rice, Oilseeds, Jute and Potato but slight decline in wheat and Pulse production (Table 3 & Figure 3). It was not the end. A number of Central- State sponsored schemes were

Table 2: Redistribution of Vested Land

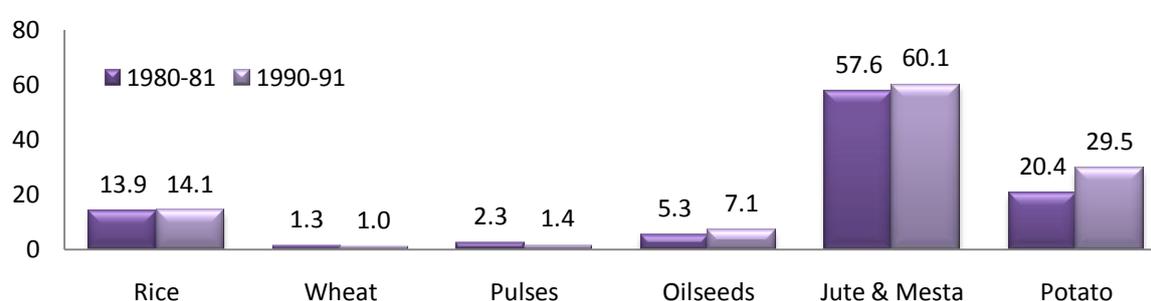
	Up to 1977	1977-83	1983-1991	Up to 1991	Up to 2000
No. Of Beneficiaries (Household)	984032	472443	537141	1993616	-----
Cropped area Redistributed (acre)	628284	140417	146688	913389	1038000

Source: <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.se.in>

Table 3: Share of West Bengal to All- India (In Percentage) in Output of Major Crops

Serial No.	Crops	1980-81	1990-91
1	Rice	13.9	14.1
2	Wheat	1.3	1.0
3	Pulses	2.3	1.4
4	Oilseeds	5.3	7.1
5	Jute and Mesta	57.6	60.1
6	Potato	20.4	29.5

Source: Department of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal.

**Figure 3:** As in Table 3

implemented. The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozar Yojana (SGSY) was seeking to provide job opportunities to people below poverty line in each block with a provision of Bank Credit and Government subsidy. The cost was divided between centre and state as 75:25 ratios. Similarly Pradhan Mantri Gramodya Yojana (PMGY) and Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) for housing facility for people lying below poverty line and Sampoorna Grammen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY), Self Employment Scheme for Registered Unemployed (SESRU), Swarna Jayanthi Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SRSRY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) for employment generation were taken up for the benefit of rural people. On the other side there are National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) assisting poor as Social Security Schemes.

But several scholars are of opinion that crop production between 1980- 1990, rose up not because of Barga Movement. It was intensified by effects of Green Revolution which revolutionised the crop productivity by using chemical fertilizer, High Yielding Variety seeds and change in traditional equipment structure as well. Sometime researcher argued that politically influenced rich farmers treated as they wish with the Bargadars (Sharecroppers), somewhat showing thumbs to Barga Law. Therefore, in most cases Bargadar who were party cadres got those benefits only. The incompetent Barga Law also enabled the land owners to get their land back by evicting the tenants. Those who couldn't regularly exploited the tenants, either charging them small share of crops or offer loans on high rate of interests. This continuous process forced the workers either to be slave in their terms or to leave for urban areas to join non-agricultural jobs. A study made by *State Institute of Panchayat*

and Rural Development in 2001, found 22.35 per cent of pattadars who lost their lands and 31.49 per cent of Bargadars who were evicted by owners (As Table 4). The NREGA has not made so much change in WB (As Table 5). Table-5 clearly shows the minimum job creation in all over India. On the other hand the different employment and social assistant programmes has short time and limited effect on poverty reduction. Because limited income cannot provide better life and wellbeing for family. The large scale out-migration of young labour force has justified the fact. Above all these schemes also failed to find out permanent solution.

Table 4: Condition of Pattadars and Bargadars in West Bengal after Barga Act.

Serial No.	Districts	Per cent of Pattadars, lost possession of land	Per cent of Bargadars who have been evicted
1	Darjeeling	14.71	16
2	Jalpaiguri	16.72	31.6
3	Cooch Bihar	12.33	30.9
4	Uttar Dinajpur(UD)	<u>22.35</u>	<u>31.49</u>
5	Dakshin Dinajpur	19.17	30.73
6	Malda	10.41	5.66
7	Murshidabad	15.87	19.06
8	Birbhum	16.62	9.83
9	Bardhaman	11.93	14.5
10	Nadia	11.27	9.74
11	North 24 Pargana	16.99	16.65
12	Hugli	14.63	10.48
13	Bankura	15.45	11.09
14	Purulia	16.11	6.7
15	Medinipur	5.62	15.9
16	Haora	9.34	15.9
17	South 24 Pargana	22.07	10.31
	West Bengal	13.23	14.37

Source: Chakraborti et al, 2003, pages 53 and 57

Table 5: Working Days guaranteed by NREGA in different States of India.

States	Average Persons Days per Household 2007-08
Andhra Pradesh	42
Assam	39
Bihar	23
Chhattisgarh	57
Gujarat	35
Haryana	49
Himachal Pradesh	36
Jammu & Kashmir	-
Jharkhand	46
Karnataka	36
Kerala	33
Madhya Pradesh	63
Maharashtra	39
Orissa	37
Punjab	39
Rajasthan	76
Tamil Nadu	51
Uttarakhand	42
Uttar Pradesh	34
West Bengal	25
India	42

Source: Chakraborty and Mukherjee

How to Eliminate Poverty:

The reasons and nature of poverty has been analysed till the study. But the aim of this study is not only to show faults or criticise role of society and Govt. A comprehensive research was conducted to search the solution also. But it was more likely to find out a needle in a lump of sand. A variety of reasons come out while organising survey. Rural people helped to point out several acute causes of poverty. Along with thorough research, expert's advice is also taken. Those reasons which come many time in discussion are compartmentalised into following points.

1. Generate Quality Education: Education generates awareness among citizen. Since most people dwelling in villages are illiterate in India they are not aware and conscious of the world outside. It has been observed in villages the most educated family gets respect and lives more pleasant life. While examining it comes forward that those who are well educated have two or three children and all of them are taking good education. These parents are very conscious of their education, nutrition and future. On the other hand where parents are illiterate has little interest in family planning and almost left their children's future on fate. They speak frequently if better education and better future is in fate of their kids, then he would get it, otherwise what parents can do. Sometime religious faiths and taboos motivate illiterate people to have more children. The Right to Education

(RTE) has provided scopes for free and compulsory education. But due to poor economic condition of rural people, early age marriage, increasing dropouts, and migrations of youths are occurring recurrently and all schemes are turned into unsuccessful expedition.

2. Enacting More Competent Law: It is known to all that the world's largest democracy, India has immense inequality of income. To minimize the inequality Income Tax Laws are devised. But our laws regarding income tax are not flexible enough. While interviewing a renowned tax consultant, it has been informed that only the govt employees can't save themselves much from paying proper income taxes. But the businessmen have thousands way to fraud their taxes. Even in rural sectors rich farmers even do not bother about paying income tax. When asked they used to say that only Govt workers are eligible to pay income tax. Therefore along with enacting more competent law, an effort should be made for mass circulation of income tax related laws up to grass root level and more and more people should be taken under tax law, so that no one can escape from paying this.

3. Encouraging Small Scale Cottage Industries: Unemployment is a serious issue in our current rural India. During lean agriculture season rural adults mostly become unemployed. In the backward districts like UD the problem is more traceable. MGNREGA somehow tried to solve the problem. But lack of work is the major drawback of this scheme. Therefore formation of job is the most important responsibility of Govt. Few people suggest that small scale cottage industries should be encouraged by the govt in rural areas. I think it is very much logical. Because, such industries generate jobs not only for rural men, but also for female population who have little scope of earnings. Credit of little interest and skill based training also need to facilitate to the rural youth, so that they can self employ them. One think must be remembered that the products of these industries should compete with modern machine based and cheap products. So, only encouragement is not required but if Govt could make a business out of it and could get lot of revenue then the process will last for long.

4. Population Control: A maximum number of well educated people did not hesitate to say that countries like India which was once the destination of colonialism is poor because of high growth of population. It is true that govt neither can feed nor supply privileges to such high population. But increase in population is not always a reason of poverty. Because, growth rate is actually boosted up to get rid of poverty in districts like UD. The urge for male child that he can bring family income high, has intensified the growth. That is why UD has registered the highest decennial growth rate (22.90 Percent) among all districts of West Bengal according to census 2011.

5. Enhancing Professional Skill: As the decennial growth is very high in UD it is quite evident that in near future the section of youth population would be very high. Consequently demand of jobs will be higher as well. Agriculture alone can't provide jobs for lots of coming generation. On the other side the Govt's aim is to educate a large portion of coming young generation. The matter to think about that along with educating them proper initiations should be taken to skill them also. Because once they have skills they can upgrade their earning potentiality. It is Govt responsibility to establish professional training institutions in rural places so that more youth to be skilled. Otherwise lack of employment could make the situation worse in near future.

6. Strengthening Panchayat Raj Institution: The Panchayat is one of the most important pillars of democratic structure in India. Thus it plays a crucial role in governing rural function. The Panchayat makes a feel of hierarchical system of democracy in rural sectors. But limitation of power is always a matter of objection to villagers. While interviewing them they accused the system that except few cases they have to run for block for having most of services. Therefore more power related to emergency fund supply, decision making, planning execution, job creation etc are required to handover to Panchayat so that dependency over the block is reduced.

Critical Analysis of Solutions:

The above six points came out repeatedly during interviewing intellectuals and Villagers. These are true enough but also very difficult to deal with. Because there are laws; there are schemes for enhancing job skill of rural youth; there are small scale community programmes and cottage industries financed by Nationalised Banks and NGOs. Instead of a great effort, development moves at a snail's pace. Sometime people accused the democratic environment where people on the opposition never want the people on rule to do better work for the common mass. So a political selfishness always comes before everything. It is very unfortunate and may be the most adverse effect of democracy. Hence the problem remains on the same place.

On the field it was felt that good financial condition makes rural lives better. But it never comes with social or economically assisted programmes. For achieving this mission a permanent solution is required.

Solution through Village Complex

Concept of Village Complex:

Geographers often present their views that no regions in this world are similar in natural or functional characteristics. Because each region has its own distinguished identity and a well delineated boundary can be placed between two adjacent regions. But it is also true that natural characteristics do not vary abruptly. It allows that the variation persists either in increasing or decreasing manner. For example when plain area is lost, a hilly or mountain area starts to spread. But there is no abrupt or sudden disappearance of plain or appearance of mountain. Between two distinguished landforms there is a transition zone which holds the characteristics of both landforms. So instead of a line, a zone of transition may be established between regions which are different in natural characteristics. The 'Tarai' or 'Duars' region exists at the transition zone between northern mountain and southern plain region of North Bengal. Therefore three climatic region come into appearance e.g. 1) Hilly or Mountain climate 2) Tarai or Duars climate, and 3) Plain climate. In this way the plain again may be subdivided on the basis of micro region climate. The climate has direct imprint on soil and vegetative cover. And similarly when soil varies, the type of crop production also varies. Hence Pineapple is a fruit of Tarai region, orange is of Duars, Tea is of northern mountains and jute is the dominant crop of plain. And it is geographers' duty to find out the different spatial characteristics on the basis of certain parameters and demarcate regions for planning. This research reflects certain geographical viewpoints through the proposed model of 'Village Complex'.

A Village Complex is a set of numbers of villages which are functionally equal in terms of production (Thakur, P. 223-224). Here functions do not mean that all villages in a complex would have same type of task e.g. forestry, mining, fishing, agriculture, administration, service, market etc. Instead, the function is judged on the basis of type of crop they produce within a single production season. For example in Uttar Dinajpur district most village produce Rice and Jute in monsoon. Farmers do plough rice in some part of their total arable land and jute in others. Generally rice is cultivated for family consumption and jute for cash. Those who have very little land prefer to produce rice multiple times in a year that they do not want to buy from the market. For other family requirement they engage as labour in towns or in cultivation of other farmer's land. There is always a risk in agriculture not only from Nature but from Market also in Uttar Dinajpur. As limited informational assistance (about the crops, soil fertility testing, and use of fertilizers) and assurances are generated from

State or district administration, they have to rely on their traditional knowledge of cultivation. To get maximum benefit the farmers are forced to maximize their production. Therefore productions completely depend on cultivator's speculation and traditional knowledge. If we think deeply, another truth comes out. If production of a crop is very good in any season and most farmers have done the same crop, they would not get maximum benefit. Even Govt denies buying all surplus crops. For perishable products like vegetables the danger is more. Recently, suicide news of potato farmers has justified the fact. Either due to crop failure or less production of crop, the risk of black marketing arises. In all cases rural man feels agriculture is no longer a profitable job. So that how development could spread feet in backward regions like UD. Lack of industries and industrial infrastructure agriculture is the only livelihood in rural areas. Therefore a trend of labour out-migration is found in this district (Thakur P. 218-219). Giving importance to the knowledge and experience related to agriculture that traditionally transformed into generations make 'Brain Drain' in source region. If we suppose that Uttar Dinajpur does not fit for large-scaled heavy industries because of lacking of minerals, but it is very true that agriculture based food processing and jute based industries on large-scale could be established. Therefore village complex could have important role in fulfilling the job.

Identifying a Village Complex:

As already stated, a village complex consists of number of villages which produce same crop in a single season. It executes a planning which ensures to have the total production of any crop in a single village complex and that will be channelized according to requirement. A model of village complex (As Figure 4) ensures the following prerequisites:

- 1) That there would be minimum six villages in a single village complex. The number would be increased according to practical knowledge of planner. Because of limited number of villages the obtained data could be calculated easily.
- 2) That those villages would be quite nearer to one another to form a village Complex.
- 3) That the more emphasis would be given on the same crop produced in all villages in a Complex.
- 4) That all surplus production after keeping for family consumption would be sent to Government Collection Centre (GCC) for selling and there would be complete disappearance of middlemen.
- 5) That the GCC would send some part of the crop to FCI (Food Corporation of India) for future savings, some part to the processing industries and also some part to the open markets.

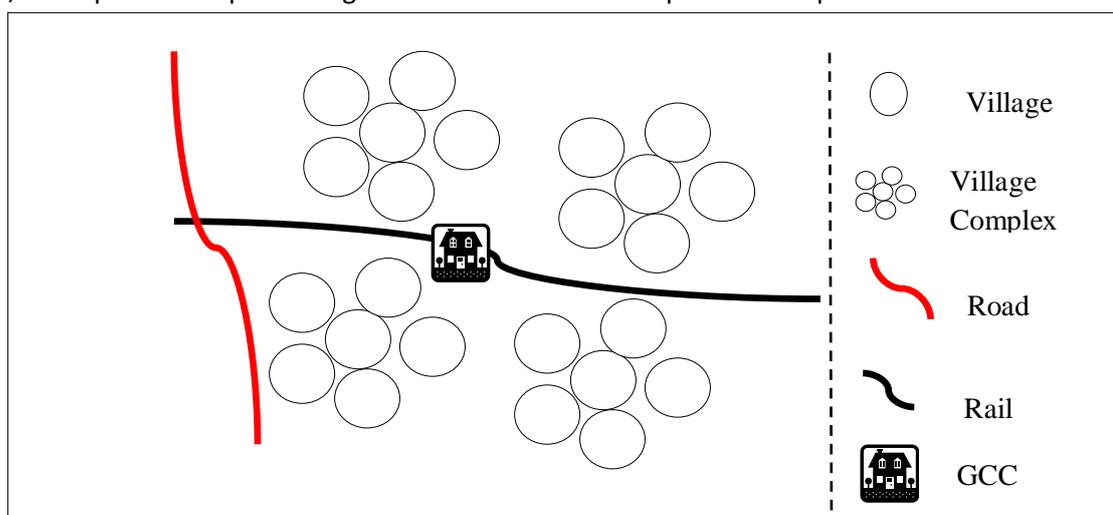


Figure 4: A Model of Village Complex

After delineating the boundary of each village complex it is required to have proper and authentic data regarding following issues:

- 1) The total land area of the Village Complex;
- 2) All those agricultural lands are being cultivated in a single season;
- 3) All those agricultural land which are not producing any crop or remain unproductive in a single season;
- 4) All those lands which could be changed into agriculture land;
- 5) The total quantity of a crop produced during a single season;
- 6) The net amount which are available as surplus for market after being stored for family consumption;
- 7) The total amount comes to GCC (Government Collection Centre) for direct selling;

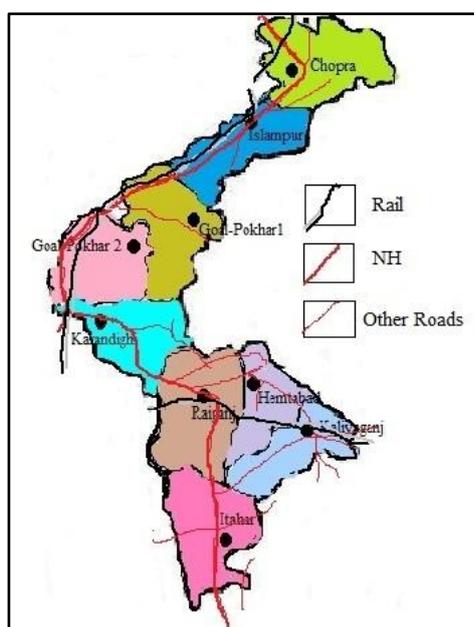


Figure 5: Uttar Dinajpur (UD) with Transport Facility

Application of Village Complex:

For exemplifying the fact a household survey has been conducted in three villages accounting 300 households which have 1662 persons (Table 6). It has been observed that rural economy entirely rely on agriculture. But in frequent cases people have small shops like groceries, cycle repairing or tea stall at their home places for getting more income during lean working season. The issue which comes to the fore is the insufficiency of good income source. On crop fields villagers have to work hard during plantation and cutting periods. In the meanwhile little labour and time is required for maintenance. In this period few people work as mason, daily labour in construction sites, pulling rickshaw etc. Another horrifying fact is that the high dependency on each earning male member. There are 692 persons e.g. more than 41 per cent living below the age group of 15 and 82 persons e.g. almost 5 per cent are over the age 60. The female population between age group 15-60 sharing 45 per cent in this group but do not generate any financial support directly in the family. Their duty is only cooking and rearing children and sometimes doing manual labour in agriculture field. They also may be included in dependency class. Therefore the total number of depended people are

$(692+405+82) = 1179$ persons over 483 male population e.g. two and half persons on each male excluding themselves as in Figure 7. But there is also a challenge for creating employment opportunities to the generations to come, because decennial growth rate is recorded highest (22.90 per cent, Census 2011) in Uttar Dinajpur district.

Table 6: Population in Different Age Group

Population Surveyed	Below Age 15		Between Age 15-60		Over Age 60	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	357	335	483	405	40	42
TOTAL = 1662	692		888		82	

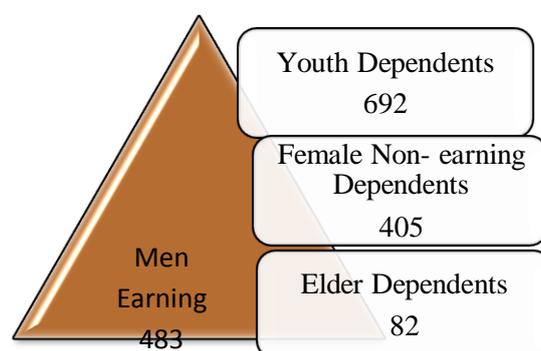


Figure 6: Dependents over Earning Male Population

The Table 7 clearly shows that out of total 300 households surveyed, 237 households produce crops in their own lands. But the reality is that more than 62 per cent have lands below five bigha (As in Figure 7). On other hand 67 households do not have their own land for cultivation. They include 26.5 per cent of total households living either over physical and non-skilled labour in other's crop field or in construction sectors. Here one thing must be cleared that most farmers have lands in dispersed manner. As a result the Ryats or Jotes are quite small in size. If all these Ryats or Jotes are used to work together the result would be very effective. For this reason in this study total arable land has been calculated as 1190 bigha (84.6 Per Cent of Total) out of total 1406 bigha. Leaving arable lands the other 216 bigha (15.4 Per Cent of total) are either residential or unused lands. Generally in above said villages farmers cultivate Aman (A type of Paddy) and Jute during Monsoon season. As rice is the dominant crop farmers prefer to plant paddy in most of their lands. Those who comparatively have large quantity of land they plant Aman in most parts and Jute in some parts. If we suppose that farmers have planted Aman in 75 per cent and 25 per cent Jute of total arable land surveyed then let's see the result (As in Figure 8). So the total land (1190 Bigha) used for paddy cultivation is 892.5 bigha and for jute will be 297.5 bigha. Normally a good productive land can yield 7 to 10 Quintals of paddy and 3 to 4 Quintals of jute per Bigha. Therefore the total production of paddy will be $\{8.5 \text{ (average)} \times 892.5\} = 7586.3$ quintal and for jute will be $\{3.5 \text{ (average)} \times 297.5\} = 1041.3$ quintal (As in Figure 8). But the total paddy does not generate equal quantity of rice. It actually goes through 10:7 ratios. Thus total rice will be 5310.4 quintal in use. Since the members of 300 households are 1662 persons then there will be 5.5 members in each family. So each family consumes 3.5 kg of rice for double meal per day for 360 days (Twelve month) till the production of Boro (Another Variety of

Paddy) then total consumption of Aman rice will be $(3.5 \times 300 \times 360) = 378000$ kg (3780 quintal). Hence the surplus after keeping for consumption will be $(5310.4 - 3780) = 1530.4$ quintal. The net production will be taken to the GCC for selling. Since jotes are comparatively small all production could be assembled only at the GCC.

A strong control of Govt over production in Uttar Dinajpur District would enable complete disappearance of middleman. Farmers would get maximum benefits and the more production, the more benefit would not be a concept any more. An industry finds primarily several

Table 7: Distribution of Arable Land among Households

Arable Land (In Bigha)	Number of Household	Percentage of total
0-5	148	62.4
5-10	64	27
10-15	13	5.5
15-20	8	3.4
20-25	1	0.4
25-30	3	1.3
Total	237	100

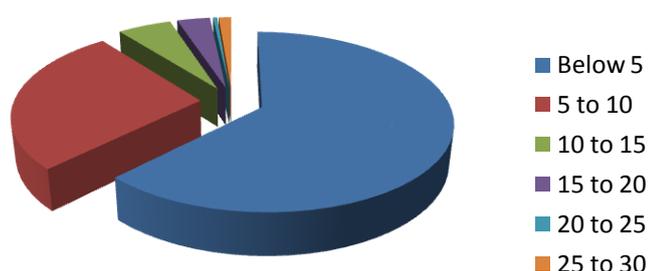


Figure 7: As Table 7

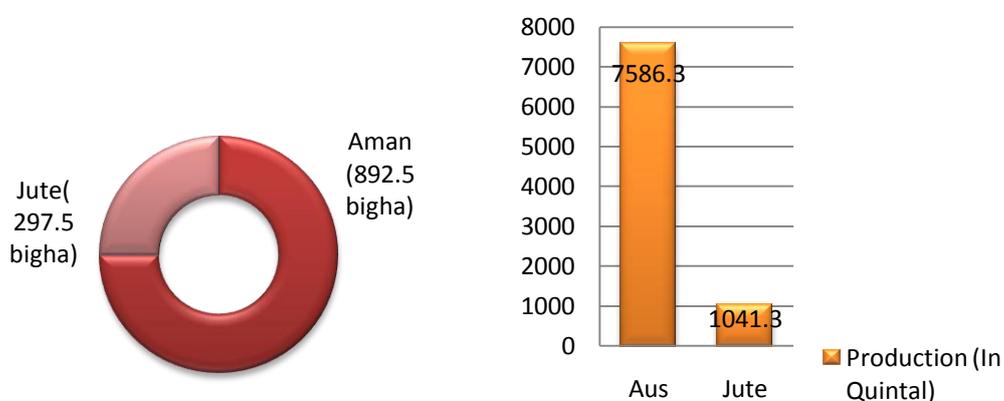


Figure 8: Comparison of Jute and Aman Production and Areas undertaken.

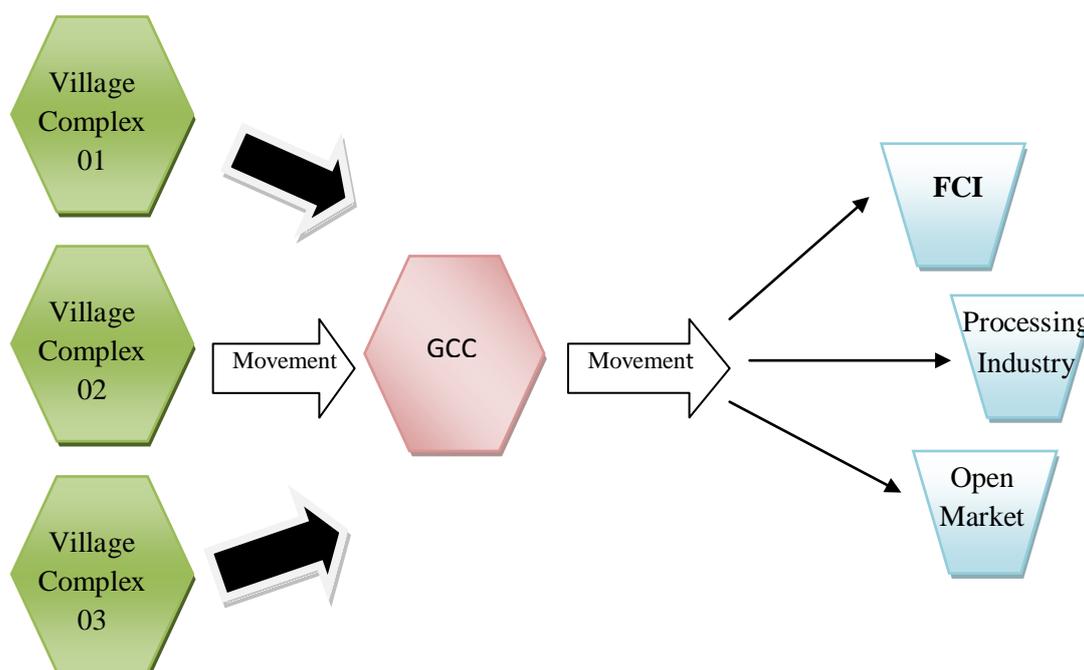


Figure 9: Channel Movement of Surplus Crop from Village Complex through GCC toward different Channels.

essential requirements in form of availability of raw material, market, transport and communication facility and huge funds to get established. In the district primary products like paddy, jute, wheat, sweet corn, sugarcane, fruits especially mango, lichi, guava, jackfruit, pineapple, different kinds of vegetable chiefly potato, brinjal, cabbage, cauliflower etc are available in good quantity. The dense population of district itself along with nearby states like Bihar, Jharkhand generates huge market for both primary and secondary goods. It is not the last but the least our neighbour countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal altogether can be served by the district. The NH-31, NH-34, SH-10A and dense network of Pukka village roads provides all-round communication facility (As Figure 5). Instead of, all we have the major problem is the fund. Govt cannot afford huge funds for large scale industries for backward district like UD. So where is the source of funds? If village complex model is properly established then all surplus production will go through GCC. It is called channel movement of crops (As in Figure 9). Therefore Govt would be able to get income like an economic man (a person who always desires to profit) on one hand and the farmers would get maximum profit on the other hand. Price of products will be fixed by the Govt itself. Following the way black marketing and artificial crisis in the market could be stopped completely. The income in this way could generate funds for small scale food processing industries and also jobs for local adults (both male and female). The most splendid effect would be seen in creating job opportunities. Labour migration from the district could be restricted and female workforce, who had no role in earnings previously, would be able to join hands in increasing family income. This process in long term would cause economic prosperity of rural household and the purchasing power of the family would be intensified and that would ultimately reach the goal of social well-being. We have instances of many countries that they have intensified the production of crops which have comparatively high price in world market. It is

done only to get more and more foreign currency. I think the same policy can be obtained if we can make the life better in rural areas. Farmers will go according to instruction of Govt that which crop is to be produced next year. If Govt has sufficient quantity of food crop to fight serious situations like flood, drought, crop failure etc it would instruct few village complex to plough food crops and most village complex would go with crops for export business. Huge inflow of foreign currency will be invited into country. The share of agriculture in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) will be rising and consequently small scale to large scale industries will be flourished.

Conclusion:

At the culmination it can be said that there are many ways that are suggested by different scholars to get rid of poverty. Most of them are results of poor examples of cause and effect relationship. But it is true that a picture which symbolises people as victims of a drought cannot be portrayed by humans having healthy and bulging body, because lack of food can be shown through bodies with visible skeletons. In this way poverty starts with shortage of income but its effects are primarily found over consumption, health and nutrition, education and size of the family. Therefore there are many sides to cover to get out of poverty. But this study has given more emphasis over the income of a rural family. Therefore the model of village complex ensures good source of income. When farmers get maximum benefits and agriculture labours get high wages, rural family income will be flourished and poverty will disappear. The educated youth of villages will find jobs in food processing industries and he would not go for other states. Better income will afford standard consumption, higher education. In the same way higher education will drive out superstitions, old aged mentality and village women will stand with respect and honour.

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