



ANALYZING THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN VILLAGES OF COOCH BEHAR WEST BENGAL REGARDING FAMILY STRUCTURE AND EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The various approaches to the term social structure make it abundantly clear that there is no fundamental paradigmatic consensus. In sociology, social structure is the distinct, stable arrangement of institutions through which human beings in a society interact and live together. The concept of social structure is frequently discussed in conjunction with the concept of social change, which deals with the forces that change the social structure and the organization of society. To demonstrate these important distinctions, we will examine two distinct visions of social structure—the institutional and relational visions—that, without exhausting the inventory of existing approaches, point to the two main currents in structural sociological thought and, more broadly, in sociological theory. The main aim of this study is to discuss the Social Structure in Villages of Cooch Behar West Bengal regarding family structure and education. To critically investigate the social structure of the sample villages and to comprehend the process of socio-economic transformation in them, substantive variables based on demographic and social factors were considered. An attempt has been made to investigate the family structure of the homes in the sample villages.

Keywords – Social Structure, Cooch Behar, Family Structure, Education, Caste etc.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Rural India has been changing its structure since independence. In our country, there are almost half a million communities, each with its own way of life. The majority of the issues they face are dealt with on a local level, with a well-defined social structure. The deep entrenched separation of people based on caste has created a strata-based culture that prevents communities from progressing beyond a certain point. Every state in India has a different rural society, owing to the distinct geographical and cultural backgrounds.



Rural India, as we say, is the true face of our country. The people who lived there were happier with their way of life. Villagers' attitudes have shifted throughout time as a result of the urban lifestyle craze and the desire to make more money in cities. In modern India, the migration of people from rural to urban areas in quest of a better and more viable source of living has skewed the village structure. As a result of this mass movement, agriculture, which is the main source of our economic growth, is being overlooked. We need to figure out what is causing people in villages to change their thoughts. It can't just be a desire to live a metropolitan lifestyle that's driving the movement. The issue is deeply embedded in the villages' existing challenges.

1.2 Social Structure

In this scenario, social structure is defined as a pattern of interconnected statuses and roles that form a relatively stable set of social ties in a community. It is a system of interaction's organised pattern of interconnected rights and obligations of individuals and groups.

Studies of social structure try to explain things like integration and inequality tendencies. Sociologists investigate these phenomena by examining organisations, social categories (such as age groups), or rates (such as of crime or birth). Individual behaviour or interpersonal interaction are not directly addressed in this approach, which is frequently referred to as formal sociology. As a result, the study of social structure is not considered a behavioural science; the analysis is too abstract at this level. Even though the phenomena investigated in social structure are the consequence of humans responding to each other and their circumstances, it is a step away from specific human behaviour. Those who study social structure, on the other hand, employ an empirical (observational) research, methodology, and epistemological approach.

The study of social structure, according to Ginsberg, is concerned with the primary form of social organisation, which is forms of organisations, associations, and institutions, as well as the complex of these that make up societies.

1.2.1 Types of Social Structure

- Social Networks:
- Groups and Organizations:
- Social Institutions:
- Societies:



- Universalistic -achievement pattern
- Universalistic ascriptions pattern
- Particularistic-Achievement Pattern
- Particularistic-ascriptive pattern

1.3 Changing Village Structure

The appearance of an Indian hamlet has evolved over time. Mud houses with thatch roofs have been replaced by cement houses. Narrow alleys have been replaced with wide, well-lit roadways. Taps and continuous water supply have replaced hand pumps and wells. Bullock carts have been replaced with two-wheelers and four-wheelers. In the village villages, there are general stores and even beauty salons. Men's and women's attire now has a western influence.

Zamindars, upper castes, and panchayats used to rule the society. They're all gone now, and the centralised regulations have been established. After the upper caste system was abolished, the upper classes had very little power remaining. They no longer saw the benefit of living in the rural and desired to experience the urban lifestyle. The development of modern modes of transportation and communication increasingly connected distant societies to the larger world, changing their thinking and mindset in the process. People began to become more aware of the world's possibilities and desired to learn more. With increased exposure to the outside world, the level of contentment was falling. The transformation began shortly after Britain took control of the country.

Aside from agriculture, artisans such as carpenters, weavers, potters, goldsmiths, and ironsmiths have made up a significant portion of the workforce. People are now attempting a variety of sources of income as a result of the growing impact of the urban sector. Furthermore, many artisans from the rural sector are also flocking to the metropolis in search of greater pay. Furthermore, the demand for handcrafted items has decreased as a result of the foreign-made products. As a result, in the modern era, the face of rural livelihood is changing.

1.3.1 Changes of the structure are

- ✓ Infrastructure and lifestyle
- ✓ Power
- ✓ Livelihood
- ✓ Economy
- ✓ Demographics
- ✓ Geography



1.4 FamilyStructure

During the last few decades, studies on family structure from various sections of the country have revealed a definite tendency toward nuclearization. However, there are regional differences, which are impacted by factors such as class and caste. However, there is a scarcity of district-level field data on family structure changes over time. However, in the early 1960s, some academics undertook studies on the family structure of some West Bengal areas. In 1953-54, Jyotirmoyee Sharma performed a survey in four West Bengal villages. Sharma discovered that caste rank, occupation, and family structure all have some link. Thus, 65 percent of high caste owner-cultivators had joint families, whereas only 35 percent had nuclear families. The low caste farm labourers, on the other hand, had the opposite experience. Thus, nuclear families account for up to 75% of them, whereas joint families account for only 25%. Between these two classes were the Share croppers and non-cultivating land-owning families. Lalit Kumar Sen discovered a link between family type and caste, education, income, outside contacts, and ownership of productive assets in West Bengal villages using the same data from four villages. T. K. Basu had investigated a village called Kanchhanpur in the West Bengal district (which had previously been studied by Rev. LalBehariDey in 1874) and discovered that over 30% of the families were joint. However, when compared to low caste persons, this ratio is substantially higher among the high and middle castes.

A few micro studies, including those on the villages of neighboring districts, have been conducted in the district of West Bengal in recent years. For example, a micro study¹³ of 200 urban informal sector employees in West Bengal town in 2014 found that just 24% of them live in joint families, and the majority of the workers, with the exception of a few, live in nuclear families. In this perspective, it's worth noting that the average household size in West Bengal's district is 4.47 people, according to the 2011 Census. This size was 5.04 in 2001, and it was 5.43 in 1981. As a result, the size of West Bengal households has been steadily decreasing over time. This clearly indicates that the nuclearization process has accelerated in this developed neighbourhood. However, it would be premature to declare that joint families are extinct.

1.5 EducationalPerformancebyCommunity:

It's fascinating to see how religious minorities and people from other economically disadvantaged groups in the district have benefited from the government's various development programmes. Following the revelation of the poor condition of Muslims and Other Backward Classes in Bengal in the Justice Sachar Committee Report (SCR) and the subsequent recommendations of the RanganathMisra Commission, the West Bengal government has taken several initiatives for their socioeconomic upliftment. However, it is acknowledged that neither



the Muslims nor the SCs and STs of West Bengal are homogeneous groupings, and that different sectors or classes of the population have experienced varying degrees of social mobility.

Table 1: Rate of Literacy by Major Social Category, Religious Community and Sex in West Bengal, 2011

Community/Category	WestBengal		
	Total	Male	Female
AllTotal	76.26	81.70	70.54
SC	69.43	77.22	61.23
ST	57.93	68.17	47.71
Hindu	79.14	85.06	72.89
Muslim	68.75	72.52	64.77

Source:Census2011

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Içek, Coşkun (2021) all aspects of our lives are affected by social change. During the modernisation process, societies experience significant societal changes. In both rural and urban settings, these shifts have an impact on social structures and daily life. This research looks at how a village's social structure has changed throughout time. Klavuzlar hamlet which was once a central village in the province of Karabük has seen fast social change as a result of the city's growing population and the establishment of Karabük University near the village.

Biswajit Ghosh (2021) the term 'social structure' refers to the distinct, stable arrangement of institutions through which human beings interact and live together in a community. Simply put, it refers to the structured social ties that define the outlines of social living - those regular and recurring characteristics of interactions - between members of a certain social entity. The term of "social structure" is traditionally limited to an observable network of social ties between individuals of a community.

Arghya, Saha (2018) the spatial distribution of social groups in cities is integrated in urban social structure. The social fabric of cities has long been a focus of research in urban studies from a variety of angles. The organisation of cities is determined by a number of processes and



influences. These processes have negative social differentiation repercussions, resulting in social polarisation. Within a city, social areas distinguish the social fabric.

Syfujjaman, Tarafder (2016)The main goal of this study is to look at the level of rural development in the two districts of Burdwan and Murshidabad. The bulk of the population of these two districts lives in rural areas, which is one of the reasons for choosing them. The term "rural development" refers to a broad concept. It encompasses both economic and human development for rural people, as well as the development of productive sectors and jobs related with rural infrastructural development.

Yuh-Yuh, Li (2011) the goal of this research is to look into the relationship between social structure and crime in rural American areas. Social structures are seen to be linked to informal crime control, and structural changes in rural areas are thought to impact changes in the level of informal crime control, and therefore crime. For this study, social disorganisation theory provides a relevant macro-level study frame. The study unit is the county.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research's major goal is to examine the social structure. Second, the villages of Cooch Behar are notable for their population variability. The villages were chosen after taking into account the community structure. As a result, I chose 4 villages from the Tufanganj subdivision that represent the typical characteristics of rural Cooch Behar based on two key criteria: cropping pattern and community organization.

3.1 Data Base

Secondary sources, such as census of India publications and other research, were mostly employed in this study to identify villages to get a sense of the overall domain in which these villages are located. Thorough primary survey was done through the canvassing of semi-structured questions to obtain information on the variables listed earlier.

3.2 Data Collection

Since female members were unable to provide information on agriculture and land, an exhaustive census enumeration schedule was devised for collecting data from each household by interviewing the male head or, in his absence, any male who could provide the information. All of the households in the two sample villages were surveyed. There was not a single family that was overlooked. We collected data on the various aspects from each household in accordance with the census enumeration schedule.



✓ **Primary data**

The primary data have been collected through the questionnaire and interview methods

✓ **Secondary data**

The Secondary data have been collected through the research papers, thesis, dissertation, internet, websites etc. Elderly residents from the 4 villages were also consulted about Koch Behar's land tenure system during the Koch Kingdom's reign. The information gathered was then processed, analyzed, and compared to existing literature.

3.3 Sampling Design

The study has been based on random sampling design

3. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Family Structure and Caste

In recent years, numerous social scientists have developed theoretical frameworks associating various family types with distinct castes. If we look at Kolenda's findings, she found that while upper and landowning castes have a higher percentage of nuclear families, the lower castes have a higher percentage of joint households, based on 26 studies.

Sachchidananda conducted another study in Bihar on 720 families from 30 villages and discovered that, contrary to popular belief, nuclear families were more widespread in the higher castes than in the middle castes and scheduled castes. Using education as a primary element, he has stated that the number of families that are close has increased as a result of education.

The caste system has been separated into three primary divisions in order to analyze the distribution of family structures among the various castes of households in the sample villages. Second, there are the intermediate castes, which include the O.B.C.s, or other backward castes, which include the traditional artisans. The Scheduled Castes of India, which include the Julahas, Chamars, Jatavs, Balmikis, Dhobis, Kolis, and Mallahs, are a subset of the low castes, as defined by the Indian Constitution. Khasbash, a village with a high concentration of Muslim residents, as well as other urban settlements, has been given its own category.

As seen in Table 2, nuclear and joint families predominate among the various castes represented in the villages studied.



Table 2: Family Structure and Caste in Sample Villages (%)

Name of Village and family type	High caste	Mid caste	Low caste	Others	Total
Balaghat					
Nuclear	63.9	58.3	58.3	100	65.1
Joint	36.1	41.7	41.7	0	34.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Khasbash					
Nuclear	43.3	0	16.7	58.9	51.1
Joint	57.7	0	83.3	41.1	48.9
Total	100	0	100	100	100
Guriarpar					
Nuclear	71.4	44.4	49.2	0	55.9
Joint	28.6	55.6	50.8	0	44.1
Total	100	100	100	0	100
Shikarpur					
Nuclear	68.3	45.4	50	80	61.4
Joint	36.7	54.6	50	20	38.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100
All Sample Villages					
Nuclear	62.3	50	48.3	64.7	58.6
Joint	37.7	50	51.7	35.3	41.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

More than 60% of the high caste homes in the sampled villages, as shown in Table 2, are nuclear, with the exception of Khasbash, where nuclearity in the high caste households is 42%, compared to Guriarpar, where it is more than 70%. There are large percentages of joint families among the lower castes in Khasbash, 50% in Guriarpar and Shikarpur and 13% in Balaghat, as



seen in the table below. Except for those in the middle castes, that is. In Balaghat, roughly 55% of the population is made up of married couples. There are no middle-caste households in Khasbash, where Muslims make up the majority of the houses polled. The latter, as previously said, is primarily composed of traditional craftspeople. Even within the Muslim community there are caste-based occupational groups that have existed for years, such as Jula has and Darzis (as well as many other groups). In Khasbash, there are no known Hindu artisan castes, which may be due to the persistence of these service castes among Muslims.

This discovery is at odds with ideas based on family structure and caste correlations, particularly in the context of urban social structure, that have been advanced in the past. Many low-caste workers are still employed in the lower manual categories of the occupational system, as previously noted. Since there is a direct correlation between education and occupation, this shows the low educational levels that are still prominent within the low caste group. This will be proven in the next section. The low caste's low occupational levels and low incomes have played a significant part in this jointness for economic support and sustenance. High caste families have been able to gain more independence from the traditional joint family arrangement because of the conventional ease of access to educational levels and, as a result, better employment prospects with higher wages. The middle castes, like the lower castes, tend to band together, but the distribution of the two is roughly equal throughout all villages.

It has been shown that Khasbash has a different distribution pattern, with 58 percent of the high castes and 83 percent of the low castes showing jointness. However, as can be seen in the 'others' group, there is a higher level of nuclearity in Muslim homes. Only a quarter of high-caste households are working as upper non-manual employees, while the rest are employed in lower non-manual and higher manual jobs. At the same time, 45 percent of Muslim households are in the higher non-manual category. Economic factors may have contributed to the upper caste's aversion to jointness, just as they did to the low caste's preference for jointness.

4.2 Family Structure and Change

Following Shah's simplified version of the developmental cycle as an indicator of social change within the Indian family system, it can be assumed that, of the households surveyed in the four sample villages, nuclearity would be more visible among the younger heads of households, whereas the joint family system would be more visible among the older generation. To investigate this aspect of social change, households were divided into "younger" and "older" generations based on two important criteria: first, the age of the respective head of the household, and second, the seniority of the head of the household in terms of the number of married children in the household, whether son or daughter. It has been observed that many



heads of households have at least one married son/daughter in the family, most likely due to early marriage, even by the age of 45. As a result, persons between the ages of 45 and 45 have been designated as the 'younger' generation, while those over 45 have been designated as the 'older' generation. To determine whether the process of family structure development existed in the sample villages, Table 3 depicts the distribution of households based on kinship composition throughout the younger and older generations.

Table 3 demonstrates that among the younger generation, there is an overwhelming preference for nuclear family households..., with all of the sample villages, save Khasbash, having more than 80% nuclear families. However, among the elder generation, joint families are preferred, however their share is not as high as that of nuclear families among the younger generation, ranging between 55 and 60 percent.

Table 3: Households by Generation and Kinship Composition in Sample Villages (%)

Name of Village and family type	Nuclear			Joint		Others
	Single	Nuclear	Brok.Nuc.	Supp.Nuc.	Joint	Single
Balaghat						
Y	0	81.7	1.7	8.3	8.3	0
O	0	34.9	2.3	0	58.2	4.6
Khasbash						
Y	0	75	0	16.7	5.5	2.8
O	0	34.6	0	7.7	57.7	0
Guriarpar						
Y	0	79	3.5	7	10.5	0
O	0	25.9	1.8	3.8	57.4	11.1
Shikarpur						
Y	1.8	77.6	3.4	13.8	3.4	0
O	0	32.6	0	11.6	51.2	4.6
All Sample Villages						
Y	0.5	78.7	2.4	10.9	7	0.5
O	-	31.8	1.0	5.7	56.3	5.2



Breaking these two basic family types into six subgroups reveals that the 'supplemented nuclear' represents a third key family form "as has been stated earlier" in addition to substantial presence among both nuclear and joint families. This family type accounts for more than 10% of all those included in the table in Khasbash and Shikarpur. 5 to 10% of homes in the villages of Narayna and Guriarpar belong to this type of family.

This sort of family may explain the kinship solidarity that exists for those kin members who need a support system while adapting to the new metropolitan environment, for example. Although these rural-to-urban enclaves provide a safety net for incoming rural migrants, a personal connection to one's own ancestors is a more secure foundation. Widows in the kinship can also find a place to stay among these families. For example, a large number of those surveyed in the four villages studied have recently joined the nuclear family to pursue higher education or employment opportunities, including a widowed sister or grandparent of the household head, as well as an unmarried brother or sister, an uncle or aunt. The progression of the developmental process may serve as a stepping stone for the family to go from a nuclear to a shared structure between generations, so contributing to the social cycle of change and constancy.

4.3 Education and the Process of Social Change

The social structure of the sample villages was examined in this chapter. Both younger and older heads of households have had their views on societal change examined in relation to differences in family structures, perceptions and attitudes about education, employment, and marriage between generations.

4.3.1 Literacy and Caste

As previously noted, caste played a significant impact in determining a child's educational success. While formal education was required for the upper castes, such as the Brahmans, it was not deemed significant for the lower castes. In a preliminary assessment of the educational level of the population of the sample villages, it was discovered that the illiterate population accounts for nearly 10% of the sample villages on average.

Table 4 shows the literacy rates of the sample village population by caste group.

Table 4 demonstrates that caste continues to play a significant impact in affecting educational levels among the people. Literacy rates among the upper castes are higher than 85% in all of



the sample villages, with Balaghat having the highest rate at more than 93%. Concurrently, among

Table 4: Literacy rates of Population of Sample Villages by Religion/Caste Groups (Excluding 0-7 Age Group)(%)

Name of Village	High Caste		Middle Caste		low Caste		Others		*Total Population	
	Illit	Lit	Illit	Lit	Illit	Lit	Illit	Lit	Illit	Lit
Balaghat	6.7	93.3	21.7	78.3	13.4	86	0	100	8.9	91.1
Khasbash	8.2	91.8	0	0	42.1	57.9	14.50	85.5	14.6	85.4
Guriarpar	13.1	86.9	37.5	62.5	21.1	78.9	0	0	19.9	80.1
Shikarpur	11.7	88.3	19.1	80.9	20	80	17.7	82.3	13.1	86.9

Khasbash's literacy percentage for the lower castes is only 58%, but Balaghat's is over 86%. In Khasbash, Guriarpar, and Shikarpur, there is a significant prevalence of illiteracy among the lower castes. Mixed results can be seen in the caste group representing the other backward castes, or OBCs. Nobody in Khasbash's homes belonged to this group, according to the poll results. Guriarpar had the lowest literacy rates among the other three villages (62.5%), whereas Shikarpur had the highest OBC literacy rates (80.9 per cent). Muslims were the largest religious group represented in Khasbash, Balaghat, and Shikarpur, as well as in other parts of the country. In Balaghat, the whole Muslim population was literate, whereas in Khasbash, the literate population of other religions formed more than 85% of the overall population.

While 75.2 percent of West Bengal overall population is literate, the literacy rates of all caste groups in the sample villages are higher, indicating that urbanization is having a greater impact.

Table 5 shows the male-female difference rates in literacy for each caste group, which helps us better comprehend the literacy levels of caste groupings.



Table 5: Male-Female Disparity in Literacy among Caste Groups in Sample Villages(%)

Name of Village	High Caste			Middle Caste			low Caste			Others		
	M	F	Ds	M	F	Ds	M	F	Ds	M	F	Ds
Balaghat	99.5	86.5	.11	91.4	60.0	.19	97.1	75.8	.19	100	100	0
Khasbash	98.7	85.2	.11	0	0	0	65	50	.15	94.2	76.7	.15
Guriarpar	97.7	75.6	.19	81	42.1	.40	90.1	67.4	.20	0	0	0
Shikarpur	95.0	80.4	.12	95.5	65	.27	92.3	66.8	.23	90	71.4	.18

According to data in Table 5, which compares the literacy rates of men and women in each case, in villages like Guriarpar and Shikarpur, the gap between the middle and upper castes is significantly more than the one between the two.

Assimilation and compartmentalization may be a factor in the low disparity in male-female literacy between high and low castes in India, where the former is more likely to have access to education, and the latter are more likely to have incentives and other progressive governmental measures in place to encourage them. Those in the middle caste are caught between the villages, one representing tradition and continuity and the other signifying modernity or change.

4. CONCLUSION

The current study looked at Cooch Behar's agrarian relations & social structure. Village studies were started after the First World War to investigate rural social structure. Village studies were deemed necessary in order to investigate rural institutions and to bring attention to the people's economic condition. Indian national leaders structure the Indian peasantry on the issue of land reforms on the eve of independence. During that time, several aspects of caste were also investigated. Village studies were believed to be essential for rural development almost immediately after independence. Since a large number of village studies had been published, the year 1955 was designated as a year of village research. Those village studies were first descriptive in character, discussing village life. However, as time went on, the village studies became more focused on issues of specialized analysis.

It was discovered that caste structure, which has traditionally been the predictor of occupational structure, retains its hold in the sample villages' local economies. Despite the fact that employees in general have migrated into a variety of professions, there has been a notable rate



of continuity in traditional caste occupation, albeit in a changed form. A study of the many characteristics of the social structure and developments in the sample villages yielded some significant results. This suggests that a single cause cannot have a dominant influence on a social system in order to bring about change. Traditional features such as caste maintain a strong identity and may function as a barrier to change.

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