

OBJECT OF STUDY AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The most obvious problems in a rural society arise out of land, labour, credit and production relations in the agrarian sector of the economy. The study of these problems necessitates both theoretical and empirical study. In the present study, we have tried to build up models on the basis of micro-issues of development with special emphasis on the study of development economics in a backward and agrarian region of West Dinajpur in the state of West Bengal. The rationale of the formation of the institutions, particularly in the factor markets of the agrarian economy, constitutes the central point of the present study. These institutions emerge from land and labour markets in various forms. The emergence of the agrarian institutions leads us to the study of the concept and measurement of rural poverty with reference to some rural areas of the district of West Dinajpur. The study of rural poverty, however, necessitates a study of anti-poverty rural development programmes.

In the first place, our main object is to identify the various factors by which the various agrarian institutions are determined and shaped. The agrarian institutions emerge in the forms of supply of farm labour, demand for farm labour, new technology in agriculture, tenancy, agrarian classes, credit-labour linkage and the like.

It is our main object to identify the process of the formation of these various institutions and to study the impact of various economic, demographic, social and technological variables upon the shaping of these institutions. The rationale of the formation of these institutions is crucial from the point of view of micro-development economic literature.

In the second place, another object of the present study is to have a look into the "feudal"-like relationships between the employers and labourers arising out of the formation of certain institutions like share-cropping tenancy, credit-labour linkage, etc. Tenancy, money-lending, attached labour, etc. are expressions of "feudalistic relations" of production which ultimately lead to poverty.

Thirdly, the main object of the study is to measure the extent of rural poverty among the poorer sections of population of some rural areas of West Dinajpur district. For this purpose, expenditures on various food, items and non-food items of the households have been taken into account. From the data presented in this regard, it has been observed that the class of landless agricultural labourers is the poorest class.

Fourthly, the study of the distributional effects of new agricultural technology is another main object. In some areas of the district, such new technology has been adopted and this adoption has led to concentration of land-holdings on the one hand and greater inequality in the distribution of assets and income on the other. With the advent of new technology, concentration of cultivable land in the hands of a few big landowners has caused higher

productivity and profitability on the one hand and growing landlessness and poverty on the other.

Fifthly, another main object of this study is to identify the main indicators of economic backwardness of the district of West Dinajpur. Intensive demographic pressures, lack of sufficient infrastructural facilities, excessive dependence on agriculture etc. have stunted the economic development of the district. As a result, the district faces the problems of the vicious circle of poverty, unemployment and underemployment.

Sixthly, one main object of this study is to show that the phenomena of the demand for and the supply of hired farm labour are functions of a number of social, economic, technological and demographic variables other than the wage rate.

Seventhly, the study of the formation of agrarian classes is another crucial object. As a result of new technology, a new "class" or category of capitalist farmers is emerging. The totally unorganised nature of the destitute labour force combined with a vast underemployed reserve army ensures that wages are barely enough for subsistence. On the basis of the possession of the means of production and poverty of labour, agrarian "classes" have been defined and classified. Due to acute poverty, "debt-bondage" emerges. An agricultural labourer is indebted to his landlord who extorts surplus labour from him on the basis of a relationship which is fundamentally one of economic dependence. Lack of freedom in the labour market appears to us to be the examples of economic coercion.

Finally, an evaluation of anti-poverty rural development programmes is the another main object . The successes and failures of the various schemes including IRDP have been studied and some measures have been pointed out for the maximisation of the successes and minimisation of the failures.