

CHAPTER IX

AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP AMONG SOCIAL GROUPS

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9.1 Introduction

The present chapter makes an attempt to examine the hypothesis that "Leadership in agriculture is higher in the scheduled castes group than the 'rest' or the non-scheduled castes group in Mainaguri Block in Jalpaiguri district, North Bengal during 1973-75."

For the present study, only two groups have been identified :

- (i) The First Group/Group I — the non-scheduled castes group or the "rest" group including the scheduled tribes and the Muslims ; and
- (ii) The Second Group/Group II — the scheduled castes group.

9.2 Agricultural Leadership

The farm-families who have been identified to respond favourably to modern techniques of farm-production

(identification is made through select 'indicators') are said to have provided leadership in the sample area for this present section.

9.3 Origin of the Hypothesis

How have the groups/social groups been distinguished ? What is the basis of this division ? How does it originate ? These and similar other questions may be raised in this connection.

During field investigations in the initial stages of the project, it appeared to the present investigator that certain farm-families of a particular caste were responding more favourably to the modern techniques of farm-production than the "rest". Secondly, the present investigator was further interested to know whether the same observation was really true or not or it was just a snapshot. To this, a reference was made to Bhattacharya, S.N.'s thesis where also similar observations were noted. Bhattacharya observed that the scheduled caste cultivators were more enterprising and superior cultivators than their counterparts of other castes.¹ Lahiri, Chandidas also in his thesis observed that 'agricultural enterprise' rests more on the scheduled

¹ Bhattacharya, S. N., "Rural Conditions in Agricultural North Bengal", P.33.

castes than their counterparts of other castes.¹ Thirdly, the present investigator was interested to test the initial observation as well as the hypothesis through select 'indicators' already listed in chapter III. Agricultural Leadership here, is linked with the favourable response of the farm-families to modern techniques of farm-production tested through the aforesaid 'indicators'.

9.4 An Apologia for Social Classification

One has to decide, however, whether it is logical to classify the sample farm-families into two distinct social groups. From the sociological point of view, social groups refer to "..... a collection of individuals interacting on each other under a recognizable structure."² On the basis of this definition, it appears that our sample farm-families may not be distinctly distinguished into two social groups. It may be inferred that these farm-families possibly do not have any distinctly recognizable structure.

During field investigations, however, a latent sense of group feeling³ of oneness among the scheduled castes occasionally manifested, had been observed.

¹ Lahiri, Chandidas, Agricultural Enterprise in North Bengal -- A study in Farm Economy in Jalpaiguri District (1973-75), P.84.

² Gisbert Pascual, "Fundamentals of Sociology", P. 25.

³ Lahiri Chandidas, Op cit, P. 84.

Lahiri, Chandidas, observed that "But in case of the 'rest' or the non-scheduled castes group though, no such affinity or distinct group feeling among them can be discerned yet, sometimes there seems to prevail a sense of indignation (may not be strong) against the scheduled castes group."¹

Thus, at the very outset, one likes to point out that the term social group has been used here somewhat in an ordinary sense to distinguish the scheduled castes group from the 'rest' and such a distinction has been used as a tool to divide the sample farm-families broadly into two categories, ultimately to test the hypothesis referred to already.

One has to decide, however, whether one will use the term 'social groups'. If one prefers not to use the above term, the term 'groups' may be substituted for the same in that case. The essence of the study due to such an use will, however, be least affected.

9.5 Composition of the Groups/Social Groups

The following table presents the composition of the two groups/social groups :

¹ Ibid, P. 105.

Table 9.1

Composition of castes of the Groups/Social Groups

First Group — The Non-Scheduled Castes

N = 80

Sl. No.	Name of the caste (Religion/Scheduled Tribes)	No. of families	Percentage to the Group	Percentage to the Total
1.	Brahmin	5	6.25	3.45
2.	Baidya	6	7.50	4.14
3.	Barui	7	8.75	3.83
4.	Gandhabanik	8	10.00	5.52
5.	Goala	5	6.25	3.45
6.	Karmakar	6	7.50	4.14
7.	Kumar	5	6.25	3.45
8.	Muslims	10	12.50	6.90
9.	Sutradhar	5	6.25	3.45
10.	Sadgop	6	7.50	4.14
11.	Saontal	3	3.75	2.07
12.	Tanti	3	3.75	2.07
13.	Teli	2	2.50	1.38
14.	Kayastha	6	7.50	4.14
15.	Napit	3	3.75	2.07

Second Group — The Scheduled Castes

N = 65

1.	Namasudra	33	58.46	26.21
2.	Rajbansi	22	33.85	15.17
3.	Muchi	5	7.69	3.45

From the above table, it may be observed that the First Group has a wide variety of Hindu Castes. It also contains a scheduled tribe of whom three are Christians. Besides, the Muslims are also included in this group. One may infer from the above information that the First Group is heterogeneous. The Second Group or the Scheduled Castes Group is less heterogeneous in the sense that Namasudras cover 26.21 per cent of the total sample of the second group (i.e., 33 out of 65) and the rest 13.62 per cent is covered mainly by the Rajbansis including the Muchis who are only 3.45 per cent of the total sample. The Namasudras and the Rajbansis are mainly migrants from Bangladesh. They are hereditarily agriculturists by their occupation.

Lahiri observed that "At Jalpaiguri, things were not easy for them for at least, two probable reasons : (i) most of them could bring very little assets with them ; and (ii) arable land in the district was not easily obtainable. Obviously, either they had to reclaim lands or had to fight hard (they were accustomed to this in their home) for a secured footing."¹

9.6 Testing of the Hypothesis

9.6.1 Paddy as Percentage of all Crops

The respective findings for the First Group and the Second Group were 93.75 and 60.23 respectively.

¹ Lahiri, Chandidas, Op cit, P. 87.

The entry of other crops like wheat, jute, etc. was higher in case of the Second Group than the First Group.

The above information may be used to interpret that the Second Group resorted to diversified cropping pattern to a greater extent than the First Group.

9.6.2 Irrigated Area as Percentage of Operated Area

The respective findings for the First Group and the Second Group were 20.19 and 53.28 respectively.

The above information indicate that the Second Group had greater access to irrigation than the First Group.

9.6.3 Land-Use Intensity Ratio

The respective averages for the First Group and the Second Group were 17.24 and 106.88.

The above findings indicate that the Second Group used their land more intensively than the First Group.

9.6.4 Per Acre Yield of Paddy in Quintals

The respective averages for the First Group and the Second Group were 8.39 and 16.29.

The above findings indicate that the Second Group produced more paddy per acre than the First Group.

9.6.5 Per Acre Use of Chemical Fertilisers For Paddy in Rupees

The average performances in regard to per acre use

of chemical fertilisers for paddy for the First Group and the Second Group were 12.21 and 47.59 respectively.

The above information indicate that the Second Group used more chemical fertilisers for paddy than the First Group.

9.6.6 Per Acre Use of Chemical Fertilisers and Manures For All Crops in Rupees

The findings with regard to the above for the First Group and the Second Group were 35.62 and 63.21 respectively.

With regard to the use of chemical fertilisers and manures then, the Second Group scored better than the First Group.

9.6.7 Wheat as Percentage of Total Cropped Area

It was found that on average, the findings for the First Group and the Second Group were 0.65 and 3.21 respectively.

Wheat is relatively a new entry in Jalpaiguri. It may be interesting to note the relative positions of the two Groups with regard to the percentage of gross cropped area under wheat.

9.6.8 Per Acre Yield of Wheat in Maunds

Respective findings for the First Group and the Second Group were 11.72 and 25.73.

The above findings indicate that with regard to per acre yield of wheat, the second group scored better than the First Group.

9.6.9 Per Acre Value of Output in Rupees

The value of output was measured in terms of harvest price of different crops. One may like to point out at the very outset that, a comparison in value of output in terms of harvest price for the products becomes a little complicated process because it may conceal the additional price secured through the ability to sell the crops when prices are high.

The per acre value of output would be determined by per acre yields of different crops and the degree of intensive use of land measured in terms of common price.

The following was the finding :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
221.35	536.27

9.6.10 Per Acre Investment on Land in Rupees

Investment on land was mainly associated with such efforts as reclamation and improvement of land. The findings were as follows :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
6.20	27.25

The above findings indicate that the Second Group had invested more per acre on land than the First Group.

9.6.11 Per Acre Investment on Irrigation in Rupees

Investment on irrigation mainly constitutes such efforts as sinking of tubewells, digging or clearing tanks, reclamation of ponds, purchase of pump-sets, construction of drains and channelising water into the field, etc.

The following was the finding :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
2.92	11.17

The Second Group invested more on irrigation per acre than the First Group.

9.6.12 Per Acre Investment on Improved Implements in Rupees

Improved implements for agriculture ranged from an improved iron-plough to tractor. These also included pump-sets for irrigation or spraying machines for killing pests and insects.

The findings were the following :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
0.63	4.36

With regard to the above, it is found that the Second Group scored better than the First Group.

9.6.13 High-Yielding Area as Percentage of Total Area

Respective findings for the two Groups were the following :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
0.12	2.33

With regard to the above, it is found that the Second Group performed better than the First Group.

9.6.14 Per Acre Yield of Jute in Maunds

Performance of the two Groups with respect to per acre yield of Jute is given below :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
3.98	13.67

Results indicate that the performance of the Second Group was better than the First Group in this regard.

9.6.15 Sales as Percentage of Total Receipts

The findings were the followings :

<u>First Group</u>	<u>Second Group</u>
10.62	27.92

The above findings when compared indicate clearly that the Second Group scored better results than the First Group.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

The hypothesis has been tested and it has been found that leadership in agriculture did rest more on the Scheduled Castes Group than the Non-Scheduled Castes Group in Mainaguri Block in Jalpaiguri district during 1973-75 (With regard to all the 'indicators' used to test the aforesaid hypothesis, it has been found that results as were obtained out of the use of our 'indicators' in the case of both the Groups, clearly indicated that the Second Group scored better results than the First Group in all the 'indicators' used. It may also be noted that the list is not exhaustive and no such list, perhaps can claim to be so).