
Level Of Income Of Dalit Communities In Bangladesh With Focus In India

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ABSTRACT

In this article income and other issues leading to quality of life of Dalits in south West of Bangladesh based on study carried out among Hindu and Muslim Dalits are presented. To get an idea about the income and other factors of Dalit in India analysis has been made based on Secondary sources. So the study is based on both field study carried out among Dalits of South-West Bangladesh and Dalits of India (secondary sources). The study reveals income level of both Hindu and Muslim Dalits in Bangladesh and in India are not substantially higher than other castes.

Key words: Bangladesh, Dalits, Income and India

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Introduction:

Based on nine Dalit communities (both Hindu and Muslim) inhabited in the Southwestern region of Bangladesh, a study was carried out to get an idea about their social and economic condition. These Dalits are Rishi, *Nanoshudra*, *Jele*, *Paundra-kashtria*, *Kaiputra*, *Behara*, *Bajandar*, *Nikari* and *Hazam*. These communities are categorized into two viz., Hindu and Muslim Dalits. The first five or Hindu Dalit communities are identified as the lower caste of Hindu religion and their social position or even their working activity is fixed by birth. To get an idea about their economic condition such as income, assets etc., and the study was conducted in 2014 findings of which are presented below. Further, income and related issues pertaining to India have been incorporated here.

Methodology:

The study was conducted by designing schedule and thus primary data were collected from the sample of 215 households of nine Dalit communities of South-west Bangladesh. Two-stage sampling selection procedures were used in this survey. At the initial stage of the study randomly 22 villages of 15 Unions were selected and in the second stage, altogether 215 households covering 1074

persons were contacted randomly among the selected villages and all were Dalits. As mentioned already study was carried out in 2014.

The study revealed educationally all of them were at low level as around 40 percent were illiterate and around 75 percent were in the category of illiterate and primary pass.

Since agricultural lands are inelastic so rural industry is the alternative source of livelihood for the rural households. Time immemorial, rural industries significantly have been contributing to the development of rural economy by providing some employment to the rural people. These industries were not only providing employment to the landless laborers and rural artisans but also generating part-time employment and additional income to the small and marginal farmers for meeting their household needs fully and also make sufficient investment in agriculture and also contributing an important segment to the Indian economy. The rural industries are classified into eight sectors, which are as follows – a) Khadi; b) Handlooms; c) Sericulture; d) Handicrafts; e) Coir; f) Village Industries; g) Small-scale industries and h) Power-looms (Sury.MM-2003). The traditional occupations of Dalit people are depicted in table-1.

Table 1: Traditional occupation of Dalit people

Occupation	Hindu						Muslim					
	Rishi	Namoshudra	Jele	Paundra	Kaiputra	Total	Behara	Bajandar	Nikari	Hazam	Total	Grand
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Handicraft	52.00	40.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	45.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	84.00	58.60
Take skin off	22.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	14.67	10.23
Catching fish	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	10.71	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	46.67	23.26
Agriculture	0.00	60.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	13.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	25.33	17.67
Bearer	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	26.67	9.30
Hog fostering	8.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.00	16.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	30.67	21.40
Lime selling	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	6.98
Castrate occupation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	70.00	18.67	6.51
Handloom	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	30.00	8.00	2.79
Shine shoe	18.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.43	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	12.00	8.37
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2014

From the above table, it is observed that out of 215 households, 58.60 percent ekes out their livelihood on handicraft especially cane/bamboo work and mat making, 21.40 percent depends on hog fostering and 70 percent of *Hazam* families were involved in castration although is a very important aspect of Muslim people but this profession is not considered as good occupation. De-skinning is another work which is not considered a good one from the perspective of larger society. The other indigenous families involved in the activities were of catching fish (23.26%), agriculture (17.67%), bearer (9.30%), lime selling (6.98%), handloom (2.79%) and shoe shining (8.37%). It is clear that most of the occupation is very

much important for larger society, but in reality many persons do not feel at their level in the society.

With regard to sources of income, table-2 presents a detail picture.

Table 2: Source of Income during 2013

Source	Hindu						Muslim					
	Rishi	Namoshudra	Jele	Paundra	Kaiputra	Total	Behara	Bajandar	Nikari	Hazam	Total	Grand
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Service	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	0.71	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.67	1.40
Agriculture	0.00	33.33	0.00	8.00	0.00	8.57	5.00	80.00	0.00	0.00	33.33	17.21
Argo. Labour	44.00	26.67	80.00	28.00	10.00	36.43	25.00	0.00	0.00	70.00	93.33	56.28
Non Ag. Labour	28.00	6.67	0.00	4.00	30.00	16.43	35.00	0.00	0.00	15.00	44.00	26.05
Business (Ag)	0.00	33.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.14	10.00	13.33	0.00	0.00	18.67	11.16
Begging	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.33	0.93
Business (Non Ag.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	28.00	10.23
Household activity	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	1.33	0.47
Agriculture fish	0.00	0.00	20.00	56.00	0.00	12.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.67	15.81
Carpenter	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	20.00	6.67	0.00	10.00	10.67	4.19
Handicraft	12.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.00	5.58
Traditional	14.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	12.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	22.67	15.81
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2014

Although the points are clear in table-2, however it is found that main source of earning for majority of the people is earning as agricultural wage labourer (56.28%) and 26.05 percent ekes out their livelihood on non-agricultural labourer, indicating little more than 70 percent households' income was working as labourer. The other households lead their life by agriculture (17.21%), agro-business (11.16%), non-agricultural business (10.23%), begging (0.93%). only 15.81 percent household depends on traditional activity to run their family affair.

Table 3: Monthly households' income

Taka	Hindu						Muslim					
	Rishi	Namoshudra	Jele	Paundra	Kaiputra	Total	Behara	Bajandar	Nikari	Hazam	Total	Grand
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
< 1000	24.00	50.00	13.33	48.00	10.00	30.71	40.00	0.00	90.00	35.00	44.00	35.35
1001 to 2000	60.00	33.33	53.33	40.00	60.00	50.00	60.00	80.00	5.00	45.00	45.33	48.37
2001 to 3000	12.00	10.00	33.33	12.00	10.00	13.57	0.00	20.00	0.00	10.00	6.67	11.16
3001 to 4000	4.00	6.67	0.00	0.00	5.00	3.57	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	1.33	2.79
4001 to 5000	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	1.43	0.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	2.67	1.86
5000 & above	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.47
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2014

As most of their activity was earning as day labourer so monthly household income was very low as may be seen from the table-3. From the table, it evinces that 35.36 percent household's income was below Taka 1000, 48.37 percent households' monthly earning was in between 1001 to 2001 Taka and the rest household's incomes were 2001 Taka and above. In Bangladesh such income is considered as low income. Table-4 gives an idea about the household assets.

Table 4: Household Asset

Name of Goods	Hindu						Muslim					
	Rishi	Namoshudra	Jele	Paundra	Kaiputra	Total	Behara	Bajandar	Nikari	Hazam	Total	Grand
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Cow	27.13	46.02	26.04	58.82	1.51	14.27	26.92	22.50	18.68	30.77	101.80	27.76
Goat	20.1	12.39	30.2	14.12	1.13	7.38	28.85	22.50	41.7	12.82	70.7	17.1

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Pig	7.75	1.77	0.00	0.00	92.96	61.69	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	338.74	104.37
Van	7.75	1.77	1.04	0.00	1.26	1.89	26.92	0.00	0.00	5.13	17.57	4.30
Cycle	13.18	10.62	8.33	7.06	1.26	4.35	9.62	10.00	12.09	12.82	35.14	9.09
Sallow machine	0.00	2.65	2.08	8.24	0.13	1.07	0.00	5.00	1.10	0.00	7.21	2.01
Net	0.00	8.85	16.67	0.00	0.00	2.13	0.00	7.50	8.79	0.00	16.67	4.37
Boat	0.00	0.00	11.46	2.35	0.00	1.07	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.86	1.80
TV	6.20	3.54	0.00	3.53	0.63	1.64	1.92	2.50	3.30	10.26	13.06	3.40
Radio	9.30	7.96	4.17	5.88	0.88	3.04	5.77	2.50	14.29	15.38	27.03	6.73
Mike Set	3.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.80	0.56
Others	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.56	0.45	0.07
Not Applicable	5.43	4.42	0.00	0.00	0.25	1.15	0.00	27.50	0.00	10.26	13.06	2.98
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Field survey, 2014

From the above table, it is evident that all the households had some assets such as cow, goat, pig, van, cycle, saw machine, net, boat, TV, radio, mike-set etc.

Issues related to Dalits in India:

At outset Dalit meaning should be clear in the context of India. To get an idea about Dalit in India, a published report under the title of “Strategies Towards Combating Dalit Marginalisation” published by the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad (2014) may be quoted. This published report is the proceedings of a National Symposium held in 11-12 July 2014.

“The word "Dalit" is used to identify roughly about 250 million people in India who are found at the bottom of the social structure called the "Caste System", under which they were treated as "untouchables". The word "Dalit" is a recent coinage and came into existence from 1970s onwards when the "Dalit Panthers", a revolutionary group invented this word to identify themselves with dignity as opposed to derogative word which were traditionally used to identify them such as untouchables, outcastes, unapproachable and unseeables, etc.”

Dalits are predominately engaged in agriculture, mostly as labourers and are also increasingly into construction and other unskilled jobs. Traditionally they were made to perform what are known as demeaning work and jobs such as cleaning of drains and gutters, disposal of dead carcass, cremation o dead bodies, cleaning of toilets and sweeping the streets.

Large majority of the Dalit families do not possess land, even the land that some families possess are tiny plots and often the State assigned land in their possession is of marginal quality (NIRD&PR, 2014)

By referring the Times of India, it may be mentioned that “A comparison of average monthly expenditure of households belonging to Dalit communities with upper caste households showed that in rural areas there was a gap of about 38% in 1999-2000 which changed only marginally to 37% in 2011-12. In urban areas, upper caste households reported incomes that were 65% more than Dalit households in 1999-2000. This gap reduced to a still shocking 60% in 2011-12”. So it is evident that income of Dalits in India was less than the income of upper caste.

Conclusion

It is evident from the discussion that in Bangladesh both Hindu and Muslim Dalits were earning very low income but all had some sort of assets. So the Government of Bangladesh should focus on them to improve their economic condition. It is suggested that self-help groups among the women of Dalits may be promoted. Like India, MGNREGS work may be initiated for Dalit communities in Bangladesh which will not only create employment for the poor households but also generate sustainable assets as around 70 percent Dalit households in Bangladesh were eking out their livelihoods as labourer either agricultural or non-agricultural. Further their assets were also at low level. If level of income cannot be scaled up quality of life of poor households will not improve.

References

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