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**Agrarian Change in Bihar:  
A Study of Two Villages**

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# AGRARIAN CHANGE IN BIHAR: A STUDY OF TWO VILLAGES<sup>1</sup>

Prashant Kumar Choudhary<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

*This paper deals with a profile of two villages studied at micro level comprising social, political, and agrarian characteristics. It also outlines the village level agrarian changes. The paper starts with the demography of the villages like education attainment, type of house, occupation and household income based on field study. It focuses on the district level agrarian change which took place in the last thirty years. This change is presented in terms of change in landholdings for the landowning class. The main aim of the paper is to describe the agrarian structure among different castes, agrarian change in relation to practice and conditions of sharecropping, availability of attached labour, tenancy and wage labour. It also describes the physical conditions of economic production which show that different factors such as mechanisation in agriculture, irrigation facility and availability of market for agricultural produce affect the existing agrarian system in the village economy.*

## **Agrarian Relations in Bihar**

Bihar under permanent settlement (according to the act, 'peasants had to pay a higher amount of rent without proper receipt. Without receipt it was difficult on the part of peasant families to prove their occupancy rights over their land' (Barik, 2006) ) contained the *Zamindari* system during the colonial period and the agrarian class was divided into 'the *Zamindar*, the tenure holder, the occupancy *ryot*, the non-occupancy *ryot*, the under *ryot* and *Mazdoor*' (Jannuzi, 1974). The last class was the most exploited one and formed the majority in numbers. Extraction of taxes through the system set up by the British was meant to maximise it at the expense of squeezing the agricultural produce and labour of tillers and *Mazdoors*. This system continued till Independence.

The hope to do away with the *Zamindari* system was first tested after the election of 1946 when the Congress formed the government in Bihar and pledged to quash it. The efforts took almost nine years to finally pass the land reform bill to enact and implement it which provided enough time and loopholes for *Zamindars* to find ways to evade the applicability of laws to them. The time lapsed in between was due to the highly contentious nature of the bill and disagreement between the Congress high command (both at the state and central level) and local *Zamindars* including local princelings and their proponents at the Centre. Das (1992) confirms, 'It (land reform bill) was opposed in the political forum by no less a person than Dr Rajendra Prasad, in the mass media, and in the courts by the 'Maharajadhiraj of Darbhanga,.....through a variety of extra-parliamentary actions by the likes of the 'Rajas of Ramgarh, Kursela and other large and petty *Zamindars*'. The outcome of the land reform act was lamentable as observed by the Working Group on Land Reforms of the National Commission on Agriculture: "By their abysmal failure to implement the laws, the authorities in Bihar have reduced the whole package of land reform measures to a sour joke.... In Bihar the land-owners do not care a-two-pence for the administration" (Bandhopadhyay, 1973).

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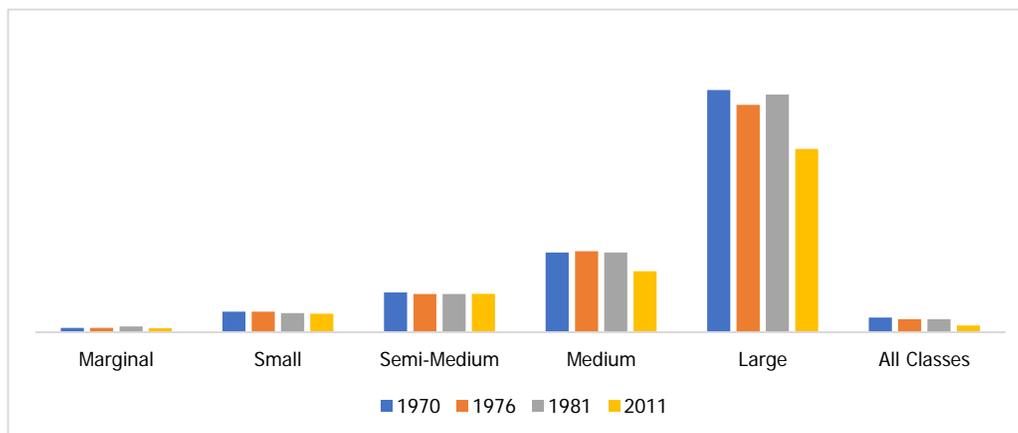
Later, the land ceiling bill that was tabled in the state assembly in 1957 with the intention of supporting the land reform acts but passed in 1962 also witnessed the same fate. Landed elites manoeuvred the rules of the land ceiling act, specially the one which allowed a specific amount of land to an individual which was later amended to make it applicable to the entire family though not before 1972, in their favour before it could change anything on the ground in real or take on the rigid agrarian structure uncharacteristically benefitting them. Sharma (2005) takes note of the land reforms fiasco, 'the agrarian structure in Bihar, in spite of all the laws enacted, continued to be exploitative and detrimental to growth....All the upper caste tenure-holders, majority of the upper caste non-occupancy raiyats of the former zamindars and a significant section from the upper middle castes became big peasants having complete sway over the villages who exploited the peasantry through sharecropping and money lending'. Eventually, as far as the fate of land distribution policy of the state is concerned, 'Bihar remains a classic case of failure. The way the bill got enacted, it was never meant for implementation' (Barik, 2006). Enough time was given to upper caste landowners to find flaws in the acts, both land reform and land ceiling which did wonders for them. Sharma (2005) notices that the 'agrarian structure coupled with caste dynamics in the state of Bihar did not change much at least so far as the overhauling of the system is concerned after the failure of the implementation of land reforms and 'the sources of power of the landlords and rich peasants lying in money/wealth remained intact'.

The next section discusses the change in landholding for different agrarian classes in both the study districts.

## **Agrarian Relation/Change in the Villages of Gaya and East Champanan**

Data shows that there are changes among landowners of different size groups in both the study districts of Bihar. In Gaya district, between 1970-2011, there is not much variation of average size of land holding for marginal class, small class and semi-medium class. However, there is some decrease in landholding for the large landowning class during the last 30 years in their average size of land holding.

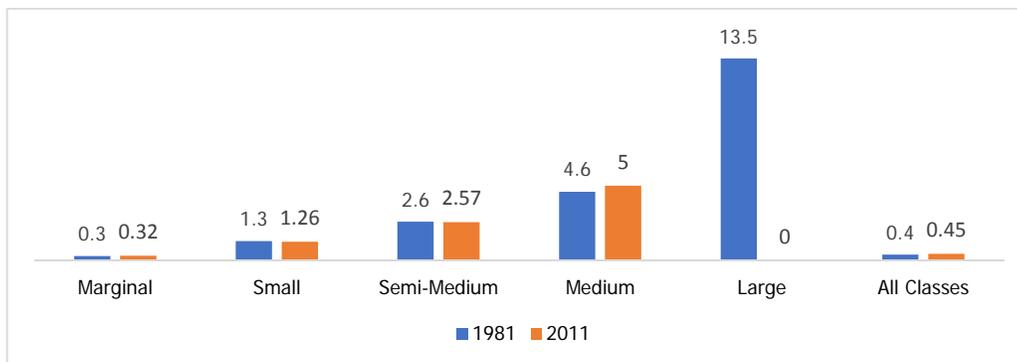
**Graph 1: Average Size of Holding by Size Group (in ha.) in Gaya, from 1970-2011**



Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Govt of Bihar.

Graph 2 shows change in average area per holding for the scheduled caste in Gaya from 1981-2011.

**Graph 2: Average Area per Holding (in ha.) for SC in Gaya, 1981 & 2011**

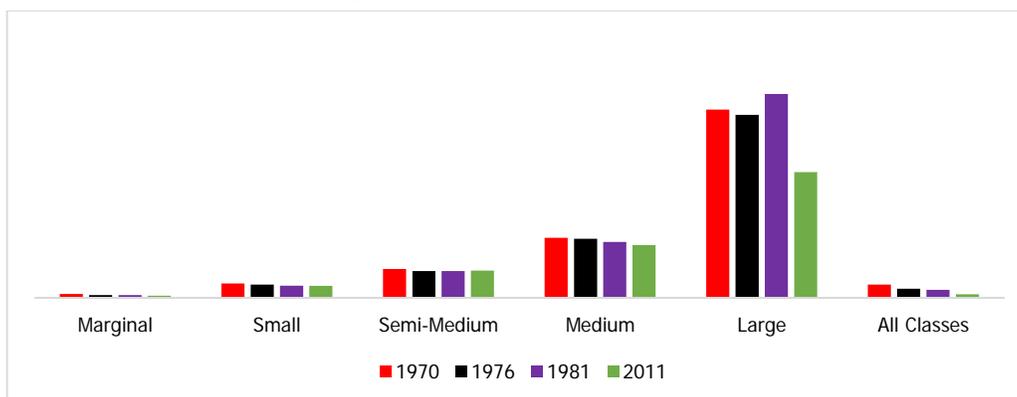


Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Govt of Bihar.

There is not much change during the period in overall average area per holding (0.4 in 1970 to 0.45 in 2011). However, there is drastic change in average area per holding for the large landholding class from 13.5 in 1970 to zero in 2011.

Similarly, in East Champaran, there is not much change in average size of land holding for marginal, small, semi-medium and medium class as graph 3 depicts. There is substantive change in average size of holding for the class belonging to the large landowning group.

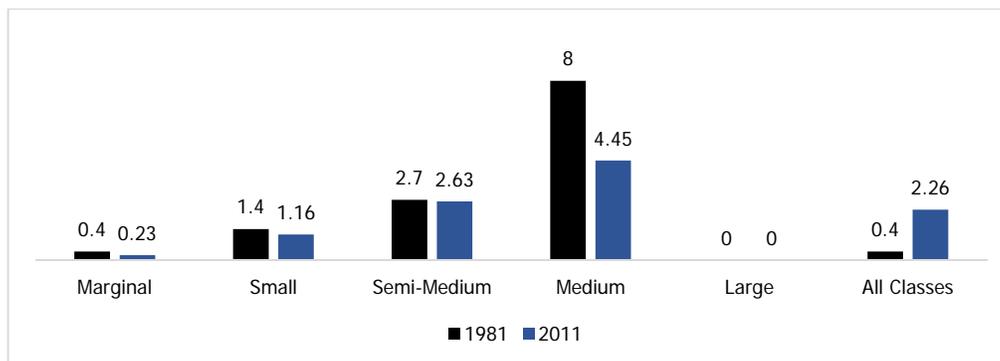
**Graph 3: Average Size of Holding by Size Group (in ha.) in East Champaran, from 1970-2011**



Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Govt of Bihar.

Graph 4 shows the average area per holding for the scheduled caste in East Champaran for the period of 1981-2011. It depicts a reduction in average area per holding for SCs for all size classes. But there is an overall increment in average per holding for SCs in the duration of 30 years (0.4 in 1981 to 2.26 in 2011).

**Graph 4: Average Area per Holding (in ha.) for SC in East Champaran, 1981 & 2011**



Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Govt of Bihar.

In the next section, based on the field study in two villages of Bihar, we try to understand the changes in the structural distribution of land holdings vis-à-vis caste. i.e. landholding of all castes and over the year changes in it of different castes. Landlessness as well as 'inequality' in terms of ownership is presented in relation to caste. As stated above, different castes have a dissimilar percentage of people having their primary source of income from agriculture reflecting the vigorous class standpoint to it.

To analyse landholding among castes, land occupancy is divided among five groups. First, small farmers are those who have some land but and are not involved in sharecropping or leased in/out their land to others. They work on their field only, though it is not applicable to all castes. Some of the castes which are small farmers in the sense of landholding also work in others' fields. Those who are grouped under 'leased out land' include households which have given their land to others for sharecropping or on *hunda*. A person from a 'landless' household might or might not work as an agricultural labourer.

**Table 1: Agrarian Structure in the Villages**

Land Ownership	<i>Rajua Bakhri</i>	<i>Navadih</i>
Landless	47	55
Marginal 1 (less than 1 acre )	50	53
Marginal 2 (1 to 2.49 acres)	-	6
Small (2.5 to 4.99 acres)	-	4
Medium (5 to 9.99 acres)	-	-
Large (10 and above)	-	-
	<b>97</b>	<b>118</b>

Source: Primary Field Survey

Table 1 presents the landholding of sample of household in both the villages. It reflects the agrarian structure in both villages which is influenced by their caste dynamics. Number of small farmers in *Navadih* is higher than in *Rajua Bakhri*. The prime reason for this is the concentration of a large part of lands in the hands of *Bhumihars* in *Rajua Bakhri* which is opposite to *Navadih* where there is

complete absence of upper caste landlords. In *Navadih*, most of the lands are occupied by a large number of *Nais* and *Yadavs*.

A large number of small farmers does not necessarily imply a smaller number of landless households as *Navadih* projects. It has a greater number of small farmers and landless households at the same time with respect to *Rajua Bakhri*. It is due to the fact that other than *Nais* and *Yadavs*, a large number of scheduled castes, primarily *Mushars* and *Ravidas* are landless and they either work as agricultural wage labourers or brick-kiln workers in the village. In the case of *Mushars* of *Navadih* and *Tatwas* of *Rajua Bakhri*, even homestead lands are not theirs and they belonged to erstwhile *Zamindars* (*Bhumihars* and *Rajputs* for *Rajua Bakhri* and *Navadih* respectively) who allowed them to settle in the villages to work as their bonded/attached labourers. Landless *Mushars* of *Navadih* are a relieved lot as their *Zamindars* left the village after selling their land of *kachhari* (*royat*) to the villagers and finally completing the process in the early 2000s, but this is not the case with *Tatwas* of *Rajua Bakhri* where *Bhumihars* did not leave the village completely and rather settled in cities and they remained under the obligation of serving them as and when needed. They were asked to work for them in their houses, in any function or in the field at wages below that given by others for the same kind of task in the village. One responds that '*Kabhi kabhi to Rs 50-100 kam bhi dete hai kaam ka, bolte hai baad mai le lena* (sometimes they pay us less wage up to Rs 50-100 for work done and tell us to come and get it later) but 'later' never comes. Compulsion to not ask or argue for proper wage comes from the fact that their homestead is not theirs.

Landlessness might be high in *Navadih*, but landless sharecroppers are larger in number in *Rajua Bakhri*. In comparison to *Navadih*, *Rajua Bakhri* still has a presence of a large landowning caste (*Bhumihars*) who have given their land for sharecropping to other castes as many of them are not directly involved with agriculture, which is not the case with *Navadih* where there is no *Zamindar* or landowning caste but small peasants (*Yadavs* and *Nais*) who mostly till land on their own. Landlessness though, over the years, has increased in total (Rawal, 2013) and the SCs turned out to be the biggest sufferers as findings from the field suggest (the presence of a large number of landless SC households).

Class in agrarian structure is one of the important features of Indian villages and the studied villages are no exception. Table 2 shows different agrarian classes in the village economy centering around agriculture. There are definitely non-agriculture class households which are in no way related to agriculture and their income either comes from self-employment or non-agricultural wage employment and generally from work outside village.

**Table 2: Agrarian Class in the Villages**

Class	<i>Rajua Bakhri</i>	<i>Navadih</i>
A11/A1IA= Agricultural labour, cultivating, attached	2	-
A12/A1IF= Agricultural labour, cultivating, not attached	26	15
A13/A1INA= Agricultural labour, not cultivating, attached	1	2
A14/A1INF= Agricultural labour, not cultivating, not attached	9	31
P1/POORmIDP= Cultivators neither hiring labour in, nor out	1	-
P2/mIDP= Cultivators hiring labour in, both male and female family members work in agriculture	28	3
P3/BIGP= Cultivators hiring labour in, only male family members work in agriculture	5	41
P4/IANDID= Only supervision of agriculture or leasing out of land	6	13
NONAG*= Non-Agriculture	19	13

\*NONAG=Non-agricultural self-employment and Non-agricultural wage employment.

Source: Primary Field Survey

Another observation is the existence of attached labour in both the villages. In the case of *Rajua Bakhri*, all three are females, work as maid and attached labour of *Bhumihars*. Their homestead land too belongs to *Bhumihars* and their husbands and children also work at their houses when required (though not in the agricultural field as *Bhumihars* are not into agriculture). On the other hand, in *Navadih*, both the attached labourers work in the field for *Yadavs*. Due to the presence of a large number of sharecroppers of non-*Bhumihar* caste, the number of cultivating-agricultural labour is higher in *Rajua Bakhri* than *Navadih*.

### **Agrarian Structure and its Caste Dimension**

A village level inquiry is deemed imperative to analyse the findings of the IHDS survey where it presents the disparity in terms of a specific caste involved in cultivation or as agricultural wage labourers and their population percentage in the state. For example, Brahmins' population in Bihar is 4.3 per cent, but more than 12.5 per cent of them get their primary income from cultivation (which indirectly implies their high landholding percentage) whereas just 3 per cent of SCs with 21 per cent population, state that their primary activity status is 'cultivation'<sup>3</sup>. The gap between landholding percentage and population of a caste can be termed 'class with caste characteristics' where one caste enforces the presence and maintenance of the agrarian structure, coercing other castes to sell the labour and this is what the disproportionate percentage of SCs as wage labourers manifests.

The study explores the above-mentioned proposition and along with it, caste and agrarian class. For each village, the land occupancy of a household is given separately in the form of a specific household belonging to a particular landholding class as shown in table 3. Agricultural labour is grouped into four distinctive categories based on land cultivation and attached labour. Similarly, cultivators too are classified into four depending on hiring in labour or male/female working in agriculture. Table 3 shows that almost all the castes work as agriculture labourers but the group which has the highest number under it is 'agricultural labour, cultivating and not attached'.

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<sup>3</sup> Population of each caste is presented based on IHDS-II survey, 2011-12

*Baniyas* are the second most populous caste in *Rajua Bakhri* after *Teli*. They belong to all kinds of categorisation based on landholding pattern in the village ranging from small farmers to landless sharecroppers. Landholding among them is low (a maximum up to 10 *Kathas*) as none of the households' primary occupation is agriculture.

**Table 3: Caste and Agrarian Class in *Rajua Bakhri***

Caste	Class								
	AL1	AL2	AL3	AL4	P1	P2	P3	P4	NONAG
<i>Baniya</i>	-	4	-	-	-	2	-	2	3
<i>Kahar</i>	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	1
<i>Koiri</i>	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1
<i>Kumhar</i>	-	4	-	-	-	5	1	-	1
<i>Kurmi</i>	1	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Lohar</i>	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
<i>Mali</i>	-	2	-	1	-	3	-	2	3
<i>Ravidas</i>	-	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
<i>Tatwa</i>	1	3	1	4	-	1	-	-	-
<i>Teli</i>	-	4	-	1	-	14	3	2	6
<i>Yadav</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Total	2	26	1	9	1	28	5	6	19

Source: Primary Field Survey

All households have at least one member employed in non-agricultural work in and outside village/state. Those who cannot afford to invest in agriculture and stay outside village have leased out their land on a share basis to other castes and it's not because of abundance of land at all in this case. Similarly, households which are interested in agriculture but have non-agricultural source of income and find their land insufficient are sharecroppers of *Bhumihars*.

Erstwhile palanquin bearers, known as *Kahars* in Bihar, are a backward caste (EBC). Only one household's members work as agricultural labourers and generally they prefer to move out of the village and work as wage labourers as there is paucity of land and work. The household which has the highest land (40 *Kathas*) among them also has a banker and bought land in the past from *Teli*. Their caste-based occupation is a bygone story.

All the three households of *Koiris* are landless, still two are sharecroppers of *Bhumihars*. Some of them work as agricultural labourers but in general they go out of state in search of jobs and are employed in construction, welding etc.

Landlessness among *Kumhars* is low in comparison to *Koiris* and *Kahars* and have more numbers of households which are sharecroppers of *Yadavs*, *Bhumihars* and *Kayasthas*. Landholding is low as usual like in other castes and varies from 2 *Kathas* to 40 *Kathas*. Among sharecroppers, both kinds of landowners are there: those who have a small piece of land and those who are better off comparatively. Some are still involved with their hereditary occupation of pottery.

*Kurmis* are equivalent to *Koiris* when it comes to landholding and both castes show extreme level of landlessness in *Rajua Bakhri*. *Katha* is landholding of the household which has piece of land and

others are landless. Those who are employed in agriculture also work as agriculture labourers and landless ones are either wage labourers or have moved out of the state, primarily getting opportunity in the construction sector.

All *Lohars* are landless and only one household is involved in agriculture as labourers. The caste practices its hereditary occupation of blacksmithy/carpentry either in the village market or outside the state. In all the households, at least one member is a carpenter or a furniture factory worker. The reason for the continuation of caste-based occupation is the demand for carpentry work and better wage for it in the cities or even in the village (or village market) in comparison to other caste-based works like pottery.

*Malis* or *Malakars* are the florists of the village, though definitely there is a decline in the number of people involved in the occupation. Even if some families (four landless households) still supply flowers to other castes, this is not their only occupation; rather, they work in a tyre factory or as cycle repairers outside the state. Some are sharecroppers of *Bhumihars* or *Telis*, though land is less. Landholding among them varies too from 4 *Kathas* to 20 *Kathas*. One family finds it beneficial to give land on *hunda* (fixed amount of grain to be given to landowner yearly irrespective of produce for both wheat and paddy) than on share basis and go out of village in search of work.

Along with *Tatwa* and *Kurmi*, *Ravidas* is the caste which provide the agriculture labour to the village or wage labour as and when required. All households are associated with agriculture in some form or the other as it is observed that they are also sharecroppers of *Bhumihars* and *Telis*. Female members of the household also work in the field in activities like sowing and cutting of paddy/wheat. Unlike other castes, where moving out of village gives them opportunity in different kinds work, *Ravidas* mainly work as wage labourers.

Mostly landless, some sharecroppers, *Tatwas* or *Tantis* are the main agricultural labourers of the village. Their homestead land belongs to *Bhumihars* too. *Bhumihars* allowed them to settle in their land so as to work for them over the generations, mostly as sharecroppers. The landless among them also work as wage labourers in the village. For part of the year, they also go outside the state in search of jobs to work as either wage labourers or as construction workers. None of the households are remotely related to their caste-based occupation either in the village or outside, which was to weave loom.

*Telis* are the most populous caste of *Rajua Bakhri* with all kinds of landholding status starting from landless to small farmers and all in between them. Landholding like other castes is low, ranging from a minimum 2 *Kathas* to maximum 15 *Kathas*. Six households among the thirty are landless and have nothing to do with agriculture at all and mostly work outside the state for a living. Mostly, they are sharecroppers of *Bhumihars* as they have got most of the lands of the village as was the case with other castes too. Both males and females work on their fields. Many of the households have at least one person working outside the village.

Table 4 presents the agrarian class of different castes of *Navadih*. Each caste is discussed separately.

**Table 4: Agrarian Class and Caste in *Navadih***

Caste	Class								
	AL1	AL2	AL3	AL4	P1	P2	P3	P4	NONAG
<i>Dusadh</i>	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
<i>Kumhar</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
<i>Lohar</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Mushar</i>	-	12	2	30	-	-	-	-	3
<i>Nai</i>	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	1
<i>Pasi</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
<i>Ravidas</i>	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
<i>Sonar</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<i>Yadav</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	9	1
Total	-	15	2	31	-	3	41	13	13

Source: Primary Field Survey

All *Dusadhs* are small farmers in the sense that none of them have land more than 10 *Kathas*. Of all the six households, only members of one work as agricultural labourers and brick-kiln workers seasonally (in *Sherghati*). The remaining households are employed in non-agricultural work like in stores, sweet shops, and wage labour outside the village. The categorisation of *Dusadhs* as 'small farmers' is misleading in the sense that their landholding is very small, as low as 2 *Kathas* in comparison to other castes e.g. *Yadav* and *Nai*.

*Kumhars* are one of the few castes which are still involved in their hereditary occupation, pottery, in the village, though it is not their only source of income. None of the them are landless and all own some amount of land, from as low as 10 *Kathas* to a maximum of 80 *Kathas*. There are others who have got land and are also sharecroppers of Muslims (of neighbouring village, *Tandwa*; there are no Muslims in *Navadih*) and *Yadavs*. They can invest in agriculture as two out of five government employees are from this caste (railway and police) as sharecropping requires initial investment which has to be borne by the cultivator. Lastly, no agricultural labourers being from this caste does reflect their economic development over time.

Another caste which is still involved with their caste-based occupation (welding and carpentry) is *Lohar* though not in the village, but at the nearby town of *Imamganj*. They have got some land too, 10 *Kathas*. None of the family members work in the village as agricultural or wage labourers; rather, they prefer to go outside the state for jobs.

The caste which provides the largest number of agricultural workers, wage labourers and brick-kiln workers to the village is *Mushar*. Out of the total households, just one has got land (5 *Kathas*), and the remaining are landless. Even the homestead land was not theirs until the *Zamindar* (*Rajput*) left the village twenty years back. The *Zamindar* gave them this land to work on his field as bonded labourers. Older persons of the caste revisit the memory lane of horrible instances of exploitation leading up to abuse and beating. '*Babusaheb* (as the erstwhile *Zamindar* is called) *bahut gussa karte the, kaam nahi hone pe ya late hone gaali dete the* (*Zamindar* used to get angry at us if work was not

done or delayed)' as one respondent recounts. After the abolition of *Zamindari* in the real sense (not just on paper) there is a definite decrease in the exploitation of *Mushars* of *Navadih* as they posit. On the contrary, landlessness among them remains prevalent. Among the landless though, twelve households are cultivators and agricultural labourers as sharecroppers of *Dusadh*, *Muslim*, *Yadav*, and *Nai* too. Three households don't have any connection with agriculture and work in non-agricultural fields. Two households work as attached labourers to *Yadavs*.

*Nai* is one of the castes which has lands along with *Yadavs* in the village (as low as 5 *Kathas* to a maximum 220 *Kathas*). When the *Zamindar* started selling land, *Yadav* and *Nai* were the only castes which bought lands from him. This is registered in the fact that none of the *Thakurs* (as they call themselves) are landless or involved in sharecropping; rather, they have given their lands to others on a share basis as cited above or work as agricultural labourers. Like *Lohars* and *Kumhars*, they also have not given up their hereditary occupation and one person of a family is a barber.

*Pasis* are mainly known for toddy business in the village. They are landless but sharecroppers of *Thakurs*. Some of the other households of *Pasi* sell toddy though it is banned in the state and they resent this decision of the government as their income went down. It's not that toddy is not available now in the village, but it is costlier than during the pre-ban period (before April 2016) because now they need to bribe the local police to avoid arrest for selling toddy in the village. It is also true that production of toddy decreased due to the fear of arrest and the prices went up. *Pasis* complain that the ban is to harass people and an opportunity for police to make illegal money through bribes. A report from the state second the sentiments of villagers (Rai, 2018).

*Ravidas* is the second most deprived caste in the village after *Mushar*. They are mostly landless and even among those who have land, the extent is extremely low (3 and 6 *Kathas*) and most work on others' fields or go outside the state. Those who stay in the village either work as agricultural labourers or work as *Raj mistris*.

*Sonar* is also a landless caste. Three members of the household surveyed are involved in caste-based hereditary occupation, welding, one in the village and two outside and none of the household members work as agricultural or wage labourers in the village. Demand for the kind of occupations which are caste-based still generate some jobs. For example, *Nai* (barbery), *Lohar* (blacksmithy/carpentry), *Sonar* (welding/goldsmith) do get jobs or set up their small shops in the market or in the village depending on their income level, willingness to move out of the village and several other unstated factors (e.g. caste atrocities, family problems etc.). This is not to say that people from these castes only get employment in their hereditary occupation. Certainly the caste-based skillsets which they have acquired over generations is more beneficial in terms of monetary value than simply working as wage or agricultural labourers (which cannot be true for all the castes and for all kinds of jobs). This observation should not be misunderstood as romanticising the caste-based occupations or in any way being against the idea of social mobility by changing the occupation.

The most populous, *Yadavs* (mostly known for rearing cattle like cow, buffalo, ox etc. as most of them have these cattle and sell milk in the market too) are also the caste which has the largest number of small farmers in the village of *Navadih*. Landlessness among them in comparison to other castes is low, with only three such including those who have no land but are sharecroppers.

Landholding among *Yadavs* varies from 5 *Kathas* to 160 *Kathas* (when *Zamindars* left the village, they were the ones who bought a large chunk of land from them along with *Na*). An important point to mention is that those who are sharecroppers in spite of having lands are in no way the ones who have less land than the small farmers. As in many cases, sharecroppers with some land have more land than small farmers. Landless sharecroppers are low in number. Many of them are sharecroppers of Muslims, *Dusadhs*, *Nais* or other *Yadavs*. None of the *Yadavs*, even if they are sharecroppers (with some land) work as agricultural labourers at others' fields though they work in theirs (only males work in the field). This is not the case with landless *Mushar* sharecroppers as they have to work for others. It is not just about landholding/landlessness which is reflected in the case of landless *Yadavs* who are not agricultural or wage labourers in the village; rather, they work as *Raj Mistris* in or around villages. Obviously, there are only a few families which are solely dependent on agriculture; rather, they have non-agricultural income sources of work outside the state like hotels, factories, construction, rice mills etc.

## Physical Condition of Economic Production

### Type of land

East Champaran belongs to middle Gangetic plain (Zone IV) and a majority of its lands are alluvial plain in nature (more than 85 per cent<sup>4</sup>) and so is the case with *Rajua Bakhri*. Land is useful for both kinds of seasonal crops like wheat and paddy and other crops such as mustard, maize, green gram etc. In *Rajua Bakhri*, 95 per cent of the total land is used as net sown area which reflects the fact that most of its land is arable.

Gaya, on the contrary, has a different type of soil quality and one of them is high level marginal alluvial terrace (*Dobhi-Gaya* terrace) of which *Navadih* is a part. Not all the land of the village is useful for agriculture, as approximately only 65 per cent land of the village is covered under net sown area. Quality of land near the mountain is rocky, locally called *tadiya* and agriculture produce is either low or none. *Dusadhs* of *Navadih* complain about the kind of lands they have (in this case *tadiya*) '*tandiya zameen hai hamare pas, usme kuch hota nahin ahi hai* (we have got rocky land, nothing is produced there) which also shows the caste dynamics in quality of land possessed by SC.

### Irrigation facility

There is no canal or dam connection to both the villages, but *Navadih* has a dry river bed passing through one of its exit points which is only full during the monsoon. Conserved water is used for agricultural purpose too, but for a limited period of time. These two villages are completely dissimilar when it comes to irrigated land percentage of net sown area. In the case of *Navadih*, there is hundred per cent irrigation facility available to the agricultural fields and in *Rajua Bakhri*, only three per cent of net sown area has irrigation facility which is also reflected in the higher number of tube-wells being available in the former. It implies agriculture in *Rajua Bakhri* is highly dependent on the monsoon and

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<sup>4</sup> [https://slusi.dacnet.nic.in/srmabstracts/SRM\\_74\\_Pubra\\_champaran.pdf](https://slusi.dacnet.nic.in/srmabstracts/SRM_74_Pubra_champaran.pdf)

the area is more likely to be draught-prone when there is scarcity of rain or no rain. Dependency on rain makes agriculture of the village highly vulnerable to nature.

### **Mechanisation of agriculture**

*Rajua Bakhri* is better equipped when it comes to mechanisation of agriculture e.g. availability of tractors, threshers etc. is more in *Rajua Bakhri* than *Navadih*. It is also evidenced from the fact that in *Navadih*, there are 22 households which own at least one ox, used primarily for tilling the land or for other agricultural purposes, whereas in *Rajua Bakhri*, there are only four households which have one ox each. An explanation can be located in the unequal land occupancy among different castes and especially the contrast between upper caste *Bhumihars* and other castes in *Rajua Bakhri*. Since many of them do not own much land, there is no reason to own oxen and hence the lower number of households which have them. On the contrary in *Navadih*, there is no high landholding in the hands of one caste; rather some castes (*Yadavs, Nais*) own some lands better than the others. This gives rise to a situation where a larger number of households in the village possess some amount of lands, though it is not to deny the existing landholding inequality among those who keep some land and those who don't. In complete contrast to possessing a number of oxen, *Rajua Bakhri* has a higher number of tractors (though not captured in the household surveyed), the reason being other castes own it for the purpose of business. In *Rajua Bakhri*, there are at least 5 tractors, three owned by *Telis* and two by *Yadavs*. They use it for ploughing others' land or threshing wheat.

Use of tractor for ploughing, threshing etc. and tube-wells for irrigation is prominent in these villages though in different degrees (tube-wells are more in *Navadih* whereas use of tractors is high in *Rajua Bakhri* at least for ploughing, while for threshing purpose use of oxen is low). Though there is a larger presence of oxen (used for ploughing) in *Navadih*, tractors are used too. Charge for ploughing of dry land through tractor is Rs 50/*Katha* whereas for wet land (for paddy cultivation) it is Rs 60/*Katha*. In *Rajua Bakhri*, Rs 80 is charged for ploughing dry land and Rs 90-100 for paddy cultivation per *Katha*. i.e. in *Rajua Bakhri*, ploughing charge per *Katha* is higher than in *Navadih*.

Farmers do not generally go for threshing of paddy. It is due to the fact that in thresher stubble/straw becomes chaff/shuck (in Hindi it is called *Bhusha*) which is not easy to store and moreover wheat's chaff is already there to be given to livestock as fodder. Paddy's stubble generally (in Hindi it is called *Puaar/Paral*) is used to feed livestock (buffalos and oxen) and is convenient to store for future purposes. It has its market value too. One thousand bunches (locally called *Newari or Aati*) of paddy stubble is sold at Rs 800 In *Rajua Bakhri*, Rs 600 per hour is charged for threshing wheat. In general, in an hour, wheat of 1.5 *Bigha* of land can be threshed. For threshing wheat in *Navadih*, it is charged both in kind or cash. In the form of kind, for every 40 Kg. of wheat threshed, the tractor owner takes 5 Kg. wheat or Rs 75 cash.

The availability of irrigation facility (tube-wells) other than monsoon or rain-fed river is another sign of mechanisation in agriculture. In *Navadih*, if electricity is available, Rs 20 is charged for irrigation of 1 *Katha*. Without electricity, the same amount is charged plus half a litre diesel is to be given to the owner. It is evident that availability of electricity is such a relief for the farmers of *Navadih* when it

comes to irrigation of agricultural land. Whereas in *Rajua Bakhri* for irrigation it is charged Rs 150/hour. In general, it takes one hour for irrigating 2-3 *Katha* of land.

### **Availability of market**

The government system of buying grains from producers is not in place in both the villages; rather, they sell them to middle men who come to the villages or they take them to his place. For farmers of *Rajua Bakhri*, market price to sell wheat and rice is Rs 1400 and Rs 750-850 per quintal respectively.

### **Government supports**

There is a government shop (locally called PACS or Primary Agricultural Credit Society) of fertilisers, seeds, pesticides etc. near the highway of *Rajua Bakhri* at a distance of 2 Kms. from it. These are the rates of some of the items available to the villagers (as per the respondents):

- a. Paddy seeds Rs 270-290 (market price for it is Rs 200-210; the government provides subsidy of Rs 100 on it later, but credit takes more than 6 months and this is the reason people don't buy this from PACS). In the case of *Navadih*, the government gives subsidy of Rs 100/Kg for a maximum of 6 Kg to the farmers though not in time. In many cases, it takes more than three months to get the subsidy credited to farmers' accounts. Subsidy on 6 Kg of paddy seeds per farmer is stipulated on the fact that the amount is generally used for 1 *bigha* of land. According to farmers, produce of the seeds given on subsidy is not more than 50 Kg/*Katha* which is way lower than the two types of paddy seeds available in the market, pioneer (Rs 250/Kg) and hybrid (Rs 300/Kg) for which produce is 80-100 Kg/*katha*.
- b. Urea for Rs 305-310. per 50 Kg (in the case of *Navadih* it is Rs 350).  
Dye Rs 1250 per 50 Kg.  
Potash Rs 15-17 per Kg.  
Mixture Rs 900 per 50 Kg (for *Navadih* too).  
In the case of *Navadih*, there is no availability of potash and phosphate at the PACS centre.
- c. Under *Beej Gram Yojana*, the government of Bihar promises to provide wheat seeds to farmers at fifty per cent subsidy i.e. seeds which are available in the market at the price of Rs 1200 per 40 Kg are given to farmers at the price of Rs 1200 with a promise of Rs 600 cashback. The same brand of wheat seeds which government claims to supply to the farmers are available in the market at the price of Rs 900 per 40 Kg. i.e. instead of charging farmers Rs 450 (which is 50 per cent of the market price of wheat seeds) the government exacts Rs 150 more than the promised amount. The claim of providing fifty per cent subsidy on wheat seeds seems more of a hype than reality. In addition, farmers complain about the time taken in getting the subsidy amount credited to their account.  
Under PACS in *Navadih*, the government buys paddy at the rate of Rs 1500 per quintal though they are supposed to get Rs 1570. The government does not buy wheat from farmers in *Navadih*.
- d. Availability of electricity for agriculture  
In *Navadih*, electricity facility is provided to farmers with a minimal charge of Rs 400-500 per annum which is not the case with *Rajua Bakhri* where they use diesel/petrol for agricultural

purpose (mostly for irrigation). In *Rajua Bakhri*, several households don't have electricity connection.

### **Agricultural wages**

Broadly, there are two types of work available to a person in these villages: agricultural and non-agricultural. Works are largely seasonal for both the types. Wages paid to the workers differ in nature in these villages. In *Rajua Bakhri*, wages for both types of work are paid in cash and in *Navadih*, wages for agricultural work are generally paid in kind and for non-agricultural in cash. For males, Rs 250-300 is the wage for sowing and cutting paddy or wheat in *Rajua Bakhri* and Rs 150-200 for females for the same work. A clear gender discrimination between males and females is seen. When inquired about the wage difference, in many cases the answer was '*aurat log se etna kaam nahi ho pata hai*' (women cannot do much work). Farmers of both the villages don't use thresher for paddy. Generally in *Rajua Bakhri*, paddy is separated from its stubble by men at a wage of Rs 300 per day (women don't get this work due to the perceived lesser working capacity). This work is done from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. including one hour lunch time.

In the case of *Navadih*, for most of the agricultural work, wages are paid in kind, 4-5 Kg rice for men and 3-4 Kg rice for women. For paddy separation from its stubble, wage is 3 Kg/100 *Newari* (bunch of paddy stubble) and for cutting wheat from the field of 2 *Katha* (4 A.M. to 10 A.M.) , 1 *bojha* (bunch of wheat) is given which approximately weighs 5-7 Kg. For non-agricultural work (construction worker as *Raj mistri* helper), wage is paid in cash and which is Rs 200 without food or Rs 140 with breakfast and lunch (8 A.M. to 1 P.M. and 2 P.M. to 5 P.M.). If one helps in threshing wheat, he gets 1 Kg wheat as his wage per 40 Kg of wheat.

### **The Villages**

#### ***Rajua Bakhri***

*Rajua Bakhri* comes under East Champaran district and is situated at the border of its neighbouring district Muzaffarpur. It comprises mainly three wards - 5, 6 and 7 though some households are also in ward number 13 which is situated near the end of the village where it touches the boundary of the next village under Muzaffarpur district. It has 5 *tolas* (or hamlets) namely *Raitola* (*Yadavs, Kumhars*), *Giritola* (*Brahmins*), *Chamtoli* (*Ravidas*), *Bheriyatola* (*Yadavs* who were shepherders) and *Rajua* (*Baniya, Teli, Bhumihar, Tatwas, Koeris, Kurmis, Lohars, Malakars* etc.). *Rajua* is the biggest of them all in size and population. *Bhumihars* of the village are the landlords and erstwhile zamindars and a majority of the land is owned by them followed by *Yadavs* and *Brahmins*.

At present, the village has three pre-primary schools (ICDS Centres), one each in all the three wards. There is one girls' primary school (from 1 to 5<sup>th</sup>) and one middle school (from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>). There is no high school in the village and to avail post-middle schooling, one has to go to *Mehsi* which is also true for post-matriculation education. For any technical or vocational training, one has to shift to the district (East Champaran) which is at a distance of more than 45 Kms from the village.

### **Navadih**

This village is under *Tandwa* panchayat of Gaya district in Bihar. There are 5 villages in this panchayat namely *Navadih*, *Dongila*, *Singhpur*, *Tandwa*, *Jondhi* and *Duari*. These villages are divided into fifteen wards. *Navadih* consists of ward number 1 and 2 and is divided into four *tolas* (hamlets): *Bhuitoli* (*Bhuiyas*), *Barwadih* (*Bhuiyas and Yadavs*), *Purnadih* (*Bhuiyas, Chamars, Pasis*), *Manichak* (*Chamars, Nai, Pasi*) and *Navadih* (*Yadavs, Nais, Yadavs, Kumhars, Lohars, Telis, Dusadhs*). *Navadih* is the biggest of them all in size and population. *Yadavs* and *Nais* (*Thakurs*) are the middle and small peasants of the village. The remaining are mostly landless or occupy small pieces of land.

*Navadih* has two pre-primary schools (ICDS centres), one in each ward and one middle school up to the eighth standard. For post-middle schooling, one has to go to *Banke Bazar* which is approximately 2 Kms away from the village. Post-intermediate education is available in Gaya district which is more than 45 Kms away.

## **General Characteristics of the Villages**

In this section, the studied villages are presented and compared based on the data from field visit. Several factors like education, occupation, type of house, caste, income etc. are discussed below including both demographic and socio-economic dimensions of these villages.

Education attainment is one of the important parameters to assess the development of a society. It is analysed for both the villages in terms of number of years of schooling which was later categorised in six groups for the purpose of better understanding based on the generally accepted convention used to study educational status in India.

**Table 5: Educational Status of the Household Members**

<b>Educational Status</b>	<b><i>Rajua Bakhri</i></b>	<b><i>Navadih</i></b>
Illiterate	220	381
Primary (1-5 <sup>th</sup> )	166	201
Below Matriculation (6-9 <sup>th</sup> )	174	112
Matriculation	51	56
Intermediate (11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> )	35	31
Graduation	21	38
Post-Graduation	1	0
Total	668	819

Source: Primary Field Survey

Table 5 cited above presents the educational level of household members of *Rajua Bakhri* and *Navadih*. In this table, under 'illiterates' those who are in the age group of 0-6 years are also included. After removing this age group of persons in *Rajua Bakhri*, the number of illiterates comes down to 159. 37 per cent of the literate who have availed education up to primary level. Those who are in the category of 'below matriculation' form around 39 per cent of the literate. This group also comprises those who could not pass matriculation (their number is 14 in the village). It is noticeable that as educational attainment increases, the number of people in the category decreases.

The occupation of household members is tabulated below. It covers all the members of households studied of both the villages. The categorisation of occupation is done in three groups. However, there are some occupations other than these three which are included under 'others'. Under primary sectors, they are agricultural labour (those who work in others' fields for wages or payment in-kind and those who do not own any piece of land or are involved in sharecropping), cultivators (those who own some lands and work on them or might employ someone for agricultural work, since land occupation is not high among the respondents so any grading of cultivators in different groups like small, medium and big peasants is not deemed necessary), and sharecroppers who own little or no land and work and are involved in agriculture in others' land by giving half/one-third produce of the land to the owners depending on the circumstances and demand of the land for the same.

Under secondary sector, occupations related to construction and manufacturing are included. People working under the construction sector are mostly *Raj mistri* or helper to them, tiles industry etc. Under 'manufacture' there are a whole range of divisions which are at work e.g. clothing factory, furniture industry, paper mill, tire factory, textile industry, thread factory, steel plant, brick-kiln, jeans industry, wire factory, rice mill, plyboard industry, sports factory, jewelry shops, pottery etc.

People who work in government, finance, transport, communication and storage, domestic work, wholesale and retail trade, hotel and restaurant are part of the tertiary sector. Government jobs include police, railway employees, ICDS workers, bank employees and elected representatives of the local government like *Panch* or ward members. LIC agents, sales managers, microfinance network members etc. are considered to be part of the 'financial intermediation' category. Cab drivers, truck drivers, tempo drivers etc. are grouped in the category of 'transport, storage and communications'. 'Wholesale and retail trade' consists of vegetable seller, sweetshop keeper, shopkeeper, grocery storekeeper, tea-seller, barber, fruit seller, torch seller, petrol pump employee, ice seller, betel shopkeeper, etc. Domestic work mostly includes housewives who are primarily involved in household chores but some of them also work in the fields of others as agriculture labourer as and when required or sell wood in the market and they are generally SCs or OBCs.

Students, NA/NAW/unemployed, and wage labourers are in other sector. Wage labourers of the villages are considered those who are generally involved in non-agricultural work e.g. wood/tree cutting, house painting, roofing etc. In the category of 'Others', priests, florists, welders, vendors, security guards etc. NA/NAW/unemployed constitutes those who are below working age (children under 14 years of age) not able to perform any work or are physically challenged.

**Table 6: Occupation of the Household Members**

Occupation	<i>Rajua Bakhri</i>	<i>Navadih</i>
Primary Sector	39	113
Secondary Sector	86	138
Tertiary Sector	193	186
Others	350	382
	<b>668</b>	<b>819</b>

Source: Primary Field Survey

Table 6 throws some light on the employment conditions of the villages. People involved in primary sector in *Navadih* are three times more than that of *Rajua Bakhri*. This is due to the higher number of people who work as agricultural wage labourers in *Navadih*, a majority of whom are scheduled castes.

Similarly, there are a higher number of people involved in the secondary sector in *Navadih* compared to *Rajua Bakhri*. It is primarily due to the large involvement of people of the former village in brick-kiln work. In the tertiary sector, there is not so much of a difference between the two villages when it comes to employment.

### Socio-Economic Status of Households

This section will discuss some of the household characteristics of the villages like caste, religion, income, livestock, durable goods and availability of some of the welfare schemes like ration card, BPL card or amenities e.g. type of house and toilet. These parameters are indicative of the economic status of the households and if interpreted in terms of caste, can very well capture the social positioning in the overall village set-up. In a way, accessibility of better housing, toilets, higher income and a greater number of livestock reflect how well a household of a particular caste performs. Separately, each of these entities are tabulated below and then discussed in detail with respect to caste of the household head.

Table 7 presents the type of house owned by residents of the studied villages. Classification of houses is done in four categories. i.e. Pucca, Semi-Pucca and Kutcha house. 'Others' type of houses are a combination of the three. i.e. houses which have some parts of them pucca or semi-pucca with kutcha are classified under 'others'. As shown below, their number is low in comparison to the remaining types of houses.

**Table 7: Household's Type of House**

Type of House	<i>Rajua Bakhri</i>	<i>Navadih</i>
Roof ( <i>Pucca</i> )	28	52
Wall ( <i>Semi-Pucca</i> )	20	2
Floor ( <i>Kutcha</i> )	47	57
Others	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>118</b>

*Source:* Primary Field Survey

It is evident from table 7 that in both the villages, approximately fifty per cent of houses (48.5 per cent for *Rajua Bakhri* and 48.3 per cent for *Navadih*) are *kutcha*. This itself speaks for the condition of housing in both the villages and eventually their overall developmental aspects. The percentage of roofed-house (*pucca*) is lower in *Rajua Bakhri* than *Navadih* (29 and 44 per cent respectively). The main reason for this is the higher number of *Yadavs* in *Navadih* which has a better economic condition in comparison to other castes and so better housing facility. It is also reflective of the fact that the presence of a larger population of *Mushars* contributes to the higher number of *kutcha* houses as most

of them don't have any regular jobs and work mainly as agricultural labourers or brick-kiln workers of low wage in the village.

Caste is the most significant social factor which defines the society of Bihar which no other parameters come close to. It still drives rural lives in Bihar to the extent of providing social identity to its population.

**Table 8: Household's Caste**

Caste	<i>Rajua Bakhri</i>	<i>Navadih</i>
Backward Caste-1	66 (444)	13 (101)
Backward Caste-2	22 (158)	44 (334)
Scheduled Caste	5 (38)	60 (377)
Scheduled Tribe	4 (28)	1 (7)
	97 (668)	118 (819)

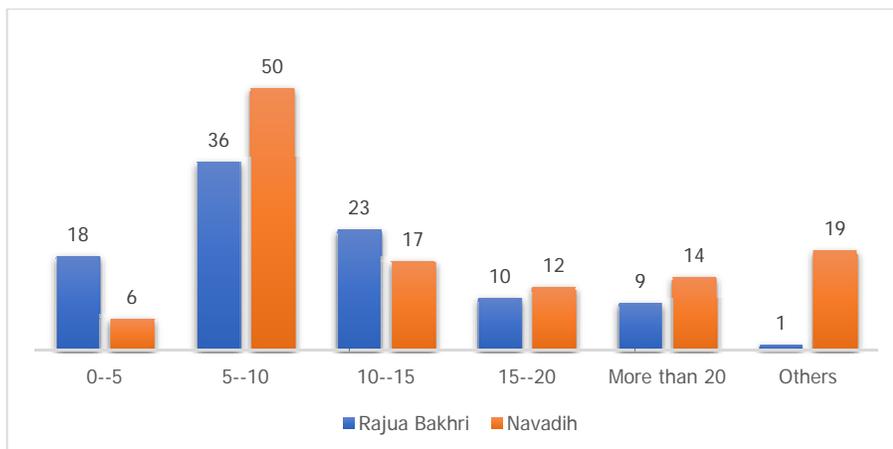
Source: Primary Field Survey

In these two villages too, caste plays the determining role in the existence of a specific community and social relations between any two. In *Rajua Bakhri*, there are eleven castes which are reported in table 4. Similarly, in *Navadih*, there are nine different castes which respondents belong to. Castes are presented in the table as per their classification in the state e.g. *Koiris* are considered in the list of backward castes-2 (commonly known as backward castes only). Those castes which are in the list of BC-1 are also known as EBC (extremely backward castes) in the state. In 2015, *Lohars* are included in the category of scheduled tribe<sup>5</sup>. For both the villages, caste groups are presented in the table with the number of households surveyed. The number of people of a particular caste is also mentioned in the bracket. *Teli, Baniya, Mali, Kumhar* are the most populated castes in *Rajua Bakhri* and likewise in *Navadih, Yadav, Mushar and Nai* are in large number. *Yadavs* constitute the highest population of *Navadih* which is 40 per cent followed by *Mushars* at 37.5 per cent.

The total income of the household is one of the best and most direct measures of development and the household's economic status. To note, this is not consumption expenditure which is used as a proxy to analyse the income of the household, though, at the same time, under-reporting of income cannot be ruled out in many cases in both these villages. Graph 5 presents the income of households including all the members' income which has been grouped into five categories. Income group 'Others' represents households for which income is not regular or not applicable.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.prabhatkhabar.com/news/patna/story/841980.html>

**Graph 5: Income of the Household (in Thousand/s<sup>6</sup>)**



Source: Primary Field Survey

Graph 5 depicts that in both villages, the highest number of households are in the income group of 5-10 thousand. *Rajua Bakhri* exhibits a declining tendency of number of households as the level of income increases. In contrast to it, *Navadih* does not show any pattern. In 'Others' category, it has the second highest number of households. Fifteen out of nineteen in this category are *Yadavs*. The prime reason for this is the non-regular income from rearing livestock (mainly cows, buffalos, oxen etc.) and absence of any outside source of income other than agriculture to many households of *Yadavs* provides a leeway to project themselves to be in the group of 'Others'. It is observable that the income for them is understood in terms of regular, salaried wages from non-agricultural sources. As stated above, some of *Yadavs* in the village have got some land to produce enough grains to sell in the market and make money; still for them, this income is not counted as 'income'. Except *Yadavs*, two *Mushars* and two *Nais* do not have any regular source of income too. In contrast to *Navadih*, there is a single household of *Kurmi* caste in *Rajua Bakhri* which does not have regular income. It indicates two things about the household income of *Rajua Bakhri*: first, a larger number of households have a regular income source outside agriculture and second, exclusive dependency on agriculture is low. The second point implies that even though households are involved in some form of agriculture, other members are employed outside of it, mostly having migrated to other states.

*Rajua Bakhri* has fewer households in the income group of 5-10 thousand than *Navadih* but has a higher number in the group of 10-15 thousand. As observed in table 2, where the occupation of household members is given, the number of people employed in government sector is higher for *Rajua Bakhri* than *Navadih* where they earn more than 10 thousand. The number of households in the income group of 5-10 thousand in *Navadih* is high due to following two reasons:

1. Higher number of people are employed in brick-kilns where they get Rs 200-300/day (though work is not available throughout the year) which makes their monthly income fall under the income group of 5-10 thousand. This is manifested in the caste wise analysis of occupation where it is

<sup>6</sup> In the income groups cited above, upper limit does not include that number which means any group is comprised of lower limit and numbers below the upper limit.

observed that 34 males (and one male *Dusadh*) and 24 females of *Mushar* caste work as brick-kiln workers. This is seasonal work as brick making works from May to June (during summer and before monsoon) and in October and November (depending on the weather).

2. In *Navadih*, the number of people who work as *Raj Mistri* (or his helper) in and around the village is also high. Out of a total eleven persons (five more persons work as *Raj Mistri* outside the state) who work in this job, seven are *Mushars* who get a wage of Rs 250-350/day which makes their monthly income approximately ten thousand.

## Conclusion

The agrarian economy in the villages does not reflect a strict categorisation of capitalist system (other than providing labour to capitalist or informal economy in the cities as migrants). It is a semi-feudal caste-based agrarian relation. Semi-feudal with no big landlord (in one village at least) shows fragmented landholding even among upper castes and backward castes. This relation is not modern and capitalist in the sense of forces of production. Rather, there are many relations of patronage and exploitation (including the presence of attached labour or agricultural labour among SCs ) which is directly related to caste relations. It indicates that caste holds back the capitalistic drive in the agrarian economy of Bihar i.e. social relations of production is restraining capitalism's progress in the village economy.

Investment in productive forces of agriculture is low although landlords are there. In *Navadih*, though they invest in motor-run tube wells, mechanisation is not complete yet (use of oxen for ploughing is still there). Landlords of *Rajua Bakhri* don't invest in agriculture simply because they moved out of the village and employed themselves in non-agriculture sector and have given their lands to sharecroppers. It has led to a situation where agriculture has remained a subsistence-providing sector for most of the villagers and not much is produced more than their need (though a few of them in both the villages sell grains in the market). There is backward-stagnant agriculture in terms of crops grown. In both the villages, only subsistence crops are grown (not cash crops). There is over-dependence of villagers on agriculture owing to limited options of employment. Those who are looking for alternative sources of employment are leaving the village. Therefore, what is remaining is pre-capitalist agriculture whose social relations largely take a caste-related form. When there is incentive to modernise the agriculture, they will throw away the old forms of social relations. It is productive forces which revolutionise and modernise the agriculture. At this point, social relations became the fetters of productive forces which result in their continued stagnation. In this case, the breakthrough in productive forces can come when social relations are further democratised and land reform is pursued by the state.

The continued stagnant agrarian structure is also contingent upon the perfunctory role of the state and its eventual withdrawal from any intervention in radical reforms of the system. The dismal performance of the state regarding implementing land reform manifests its hesitation in intervening and altering the status quo of upper caste dominated agrarian relations of the villages. Though, there is no denying that green revolution with the support of the state provided the landed peasantry seeds (of wheat, paddy, pulses etc.) of higher productivity besides pesticides and fertilisers. Thus what is required

is more rigorous and honest state involvement with the intention of commercialisation of agriculture along with politics from below, in the sense of demand for transformation of existing social relations encompassing the agrarian structure which will lead to a real change where a majority of landless lower caste villagers will have land without being subjected to caste oppression.

## Notes

1. Category of occupation of household members based of national industrialisation classification 2004 is done primarily for three reasons:
  - a. The village economy is now diversified and not only based on the agrarian structure where each caste has some dependency on agriculture or served others with caste-based hereditary occupation. Many go out of the village in search of employment and get jobs in non-agrarian sectors e.g. manufacture, transport, construction etc. Their occupations cannot be incorporated under the agrarian economy now and hence a need of different set of categorisations.
  - b. Even in the village economy, there are many whose primary source of income is not from agriculture. i.e. they have some kind of jobs (like medical representative, brick-kiln work, construction etc.) in nearby villages or district outside a village's agrarian system. Again, these occupations are certainly outside the classical agriculture-based classification.
  - c. NIC classification expresses employment or jobs taken up by migrants outside villages in detail which seems unlikely to be captured if agriculture is considered the primary occupation of all the village residents.
2. 1 Acre= 2.5 *Bigha*; and 20 *Kathas*=1 *Bigha* i.e. 1 *Katha* = 0.02 Acre.

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