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Development and Empowerment of Women: A Study of Rural Society of Bihar

Rabindra Kumar*

In the post liberalization era, there are noticeable developments in women's conditions. Since 1991, women had broken through the traditional taboos on their occupations. They were now to be found working in the public places. Women are also able to use their visible numbers in the public domain to get important concessions from their employers, the state and their social system. There has been a widespread trend towards a higher share of women worker in the labour force in the various countries at different stages of development. Women are replacing men in the jobs and participation in decision making through panchayati raj institution that were previously held by latter. Feminization could be the result of a development in which the additional jobs go to women. Feminization has little to reduce women's subordination. Male members are migrating from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs. In absence of male members, women have taken over public space as well as private space. The wage work increases the bargaining power and participation in decision making of women in the household and the economy and is, therefore, empowering.

Various governmental programmes, schemes and intervention have been launched for rural women in rural areas. The government claimed that they have empowered women through the government policy like Swachhta Mission Abhiyan- '*ijjat ghar*', *Ujjala Yojna*, *Har ghar nalka*

*Professor of Sociology, SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

Jal, right to education and various schemes for girl child. Recently education has taken as one of the component of indicators of the development. It is an important social source and a means of reducing inequality in the society. It helps the individual to raise his/her social status in various ways. Knowledge, skills, values and attitudes acquired through education helps one to lead a desired quality of life. Due to the development process and the government interventions a varieties of non-agricultural occupations have been created in the rural areas. This led to the empowerment of women in rural areas. Indicators such as participation in decision making, reservation, as a voter and elected members and wage earners, salaried jobs in non firm jobs are taken to gauge the empowerment of rural women in rural society of Bihar.

This paper tries to analyse the government interventions, policies paradigm shift which promotes feminization and empowerment of rural women in Bihar.

Changes in Rural India

In post liberalization era, a process of change in Rural India on a precedent scale and pace. It marked a shift from the planned slow growth to market driven rapid growth which was facilitated by new technology of farm production, substantive changes in government's development policy and transformation of rural relations and space. The traditional pre-capitalist agrarian formations were transformed first by the colonialism and later by the planned development that significantly altered both scale and relations of production within and across states. In turn it paved the way for transition to both agrarian and urban-industrial capitalism.

In the post liberalization era, the changes in rural India are bringing about a process of rapid social transformation. It is leading to a breakdown in the segmentary mode of social changes, rise of new middle classes to power, massive absorption of sciences and technology in agriculture and substantial changes in value and beliefs. The green revolution signifies not merely growth in agricultural production but also the use of new technology and social relationships in production processes. These developments make the new phase of changes in rural economy and society a distinct process. A new interaction among technology, social relationship and culture is now taking place in the rural society. This has resulted into social mobility, emergence of new power structure and mode of exploitation of the deprived classes. It has generated new contradictions in the rural society.

Non Farm

The policy of liberalization since the last 1980s in India has had a very significant impact on agriculture and rural society. Over the years, the rural character of Indian society is changing. Rural India itself is transforming and becoming proto urban. In every census less and less proportion of Indian population is found depending on agriculture as cultivators, sharecropper or agricultural labourers. Yes, in 1999-2000, 72 percent of population and 76 percent of workforce in India were rural. In 2011, 69 percent of population and 48.9 percent of workforce are rural. The proportion of the total workforce employed in the non farm sectoral increasing from 19.2 percent in 1983 to 37.6 percents in 2011-12. A substantial part of the increase in non farm employment is located in rural areas. According to the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data, 54 percents of unincorporated non farm enterprises were located in rural areas. The growth of census towns, rural location reclassified as urban and growth and construction of National Highway, connection of rural road to National Highway, electricity etc are also phenomenon pointing to increased non farm activities in rural areas. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of census towns increased by more than 200 percents from 1271 to 3894, accounting for unto 29 percents of total population growth has to be involved in non farm occupations for a settlement to qualifying as one.

Land Holding

Roughly 80 per cent of land holdings in India today are below three acres and about 66 per cent below five acres. Most farms then are family farms with very little scope, for hiring labour, except during the peak harvesting season. Large and medium farms are finding it hard to hang in, consequently the ranks of small farmers keep growing (Ministry of agriculture 2003). The increase in the number of marginal farm holdings (less than 1 hectare) has also gone up from 51 per cent in 2005-2006. The average landholding was 2.63 hectares in 1959-60 and it has 2005-06 come down to about 1.06 hectares. It indicates that those who were medium farmers and above are being pushed down to lower ranks on account of sub-division of holdings or perhaps on account of distress sales. It also indicates that the total number of large farms has fallen significantly.

Migration

Village has changed and contributed to the movement away from

agriculture. The proportion of men engaged in agriculture has declined in post liberalization era. Therefore, the people are so willing to migrate from the village. The upper castes and upwardly mobile upper backward castes or Bullock capitalists, Kulak class's sons and daughter, who often study in urban schools, no longer wish to stay in the village and plough the land. Only the older generations are staying in the villages. Another trend is that men are leaving their farms in the care of their wives and old parents and migrating in large numbers in search of jobs anywhere. This is why the number of female cultivators has gone up. It is also true that rural migrants do not only leave the village for an urban workplace. They may go to another village and find a job in a household's industrial unit. There 45.5 per cent of rural Net Domestic Product in India is non-agricultural (chaddha 2003). This is because there are so many workshops and household industries all over rural India (Five Year plan 2002-2007). It indicates that people are staying in the village but not necessarily working on the land at least, not for a lot of their time. There are many who are staying in villages and engaged in non-farm activity in the villages. This rise in commerce in rural India is a symptom of how urban areas in the vicinity of the village are also changing. Rural labour market has increased in scale. Spatial mobility has expanded considerably. This has been facilitated by improvements in the rural infrastructure. Road-building and the growth of motorized traffic have made long distance travel easier and cheaper. Public works have also been a major source of employment.

Importance of Education

The rate of literacy is increasing faster in rural India than in Urban India. The census figures of 2001 show that the rate of literacy in rural India has gone by 14.7 per cent compared to the 7.2 per cent increase in urban India. It indicates how motivated the villagers are about getting educated and leaving the village for urban job. It also motivated them to start nonfarm job like petty business, tuitions, Sikchha Mitra (Para teachers), ASHA workers, Anganwari workers, Petty Contractors etc. Illiteracy decreases among the rural labour force. There is a big jump in the number of those in the rural labour force with graduate qualifications and above from 1 percent in 1977-78 to 10.1 percent in 2005-2006 (Manpower Profile India 2009).

Village has become a part of political, social, and economic organizations. Panchayati raj institutions, political parties, access to urban market and expansion of the marriage circle have made the village an integral entity of the wider world. Rural-urban polarity or

differences have shrunk to a great extent due to coming of the 'urban pattern of living' in the village. Villagers hardly think of 'sanskritization' or of the upper castes as 'reference groups'. Non- farm income, presence of the middle (agrarian) castes and visibility of some lower caste influential do imply a rethinking of the idea of Indian village (Sharma; 2014). Thus agriculture is no longer the mainstay of the economy of the village allowing for extensive non farm activity in the villages.

Today, Indian village is quite different from the village of the 1950s, 1960s, and even 1970s. Since caste is still matter in an everyday life phenomenon. Social justice, empowerment, and employment are the main concerns, leaving behind the questions of land reforms, green revolution, mode of production, etc. Construction of roads, opening of senior schools and colleges, education of girls, fair prices of agricultural produces, healthcare, facilities, and employment have attracted the attention of the rural people.

Context, Data and Method

The post liberalization rural transformation cannot be focused only the economic dimension of transformation. It can be focused on nature of social structure, power hierarchy, gender relations and status differentiation and the ways in which they interact. It also provides an insight into the behavior of individuals and the groups to which they belong. The transformation cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon but as it related to the wider context. The lives of rural people were/ are interwoven each other.

Since researcher is from village background and lived the life of village. Therefore, it is easy to him gauge the transformations. The situation of those living in the village area appeared to have improved. It attributed this to the expansion of the labour market, non farm activities, consumption pattern, access to the urban areas, and education, government intervention through panchayati raj have been made possible by the opening up of the village areas. New road has been built and the public transport system extended. In additional, the bicycle, motor cycle, auto has become popular and allowed the rural people to connect themselves at distances from the villages and urban areas which had previously not possible or been too far on foot. The villagers were easier to reach and leave than before and this resulted in an increase in labour migration. Further, more the rural economy was diversifying, which led to the emergence of small scale industry in the main sub-district towns and more employment in the building, transport and service sectors.

This great involvement is outside world. The village also generated a new pattern of consumption. Many more goods and services, for which there had previously been little or no demand, became available. Landed poor and landless households also benefited from the introduction of government schemes specifically aimed at poverty reduction. It is observed that as consequences of the facilities made available by public agencies, access to housing, health care and education has increased, leading to a improvement in the situation of the rural people. More importantly, a minimums wage has been set for agricultural labour. Although in some area farmer refused to pay it, there was at least hope that, backed up by some form of a enforcement, they might gradually be forced to comply with the law. The same applied to the first social benefits intended to provide a safety net for the most vulnerable such as elderly and widow.

For this study, 500 respondents have been selected from the villages like Tisiautta, Ranipur, Mathurapur, Pachrukhi and Majos. These villages are multicastrs villages. The 100 respondents have been selected from each village in proportionate to their castes households. Total 500 respondents have been selected. 100 households from each village panchayat in proportion to their households were taken for the study.

We conducted the field work in three phases. First we conducted pilot survey, focus discussion identification of villages, and field investigation from the nearby villages of the districts of Bihar. During the focus discussion it was asked how many castes are residing in this village. They replied, "*Hamar Gaon mein Barah Jati ke log hai*". It means all castes, which are required to maintain the jajmani system of village, are available in the villages. Therefore, multicastrs village are taken for the study.

The data collection follows the following methods: 1- documentary sources 2- direct interview method and 3- field notes based on direct observation and focus discussion. All available literatures reflecting the changes or transformation were examined. Respondents were contacted and interviewed at their homes to get personal household data.

The interview schedule was the main tool used for collecting primary data, supplemented by field notes based on observation and focus discussion. However, we received 464 interview scheduled out of 500 hundreds and 36 interview scheduled was rejected due to incomplete

information and repeatedly same answers. Therefore, we used only 464 household data.

Analysis: Justification for Development and Empowerment

Around 89 percent of the population of Bihar lives in rural areas and their principal livelihood are agriculture. The base of Bihar's agriculture is its fertile soil and abundant water resources, particularly, ground water. Therefore, Bihar produces a variety of crops, vegetables and fruits. These days the state is producing flower on a large scale for its domestic and outside market. The state government is stressing for higher agricultural growth with a variety of interventions for technological changes.

Land Utilization

The proportion of total land put to agriculture use is high in Bihar, compared to other states of India. As per the economic survey of 2016-17, the area, under forests has remained unchanged at 6.6 percent and so has the area under permanent pastures at 0.2 percent. In 2009-10, net area sown was 57.0 percent and it has increased marginally to 57.7 percent in 2012-13. In 2013-2014, it has again decreased to 56.1 percent. During this period, there has been an increase in gross sown area between 2009-10 (7295.81 thousand hectares) and 2013-14 (7580.14 thousand hectares). The cropping intensity has increased marginally from 1.37 in 2009-10 to 1.44 in 2013-14.

Table1: Distribution of landholding (percentage) of major social groups in Bihar (2011-12)

Social Categories	All	SCs	OBCs	Others
Size of level cultivated				
Landless	45.1	67.3	42.1	30.1
0.001-0.400 hectare	33.1	18.6	36.4	34.4
0.0410-1.000 hectare	9.3	6.3	8.9	13.9
1.010-2.00 hectare	8.7	2.8	9.0	14.3
Above 2.00 hectare	3.8	5.0	3.6	7.3

Source: NSSO, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, government of India.

The table 1 indicates the distribution of landholders in Bihar. It shows that overall 45.1 percent populations are landless, 33.1 percent have .001-0.400 hectare, 9.3 Percent 0.410-1.00 hectare, and 8.7 percent have 1.010-2.00 hectare and 3.8 percent have above 2.00 hectare land. It also indicates that 67.3 percent Scheduled castes are landless, 18.6 percent have 0.001-0.400 hectare land 5 percent Scheduled Castes have above 2 hectare lands. It indicates the impact of protective discrimination policy and spread of democratic value where they are free to invest in land as a property. It also indicate that 42.1 percent Other Backward Castes are landless and 36.4 percent have 0.001-0.400 hectare land and 30.1 percent others are landless and 34.4 percent others have 0.001-0.400 hectare land. It is due to population explosion and most of family members are educated and do not engaged in cultivation because for them touching the plough was/is taboo. Therefore, they sold the land and invested in non agricultural activity.

The state has started *saptnischay* programme to provide *nal ka jal* (piped and taped water), *puccigali* (concrete streets), drainage and ODF (open defecation free) etc. The central government also launched *Swachta Mission Abhiyan* for sanitation. This movement has created awareness and behavioral changes among the rural people. The following slogan found on the wall of rural areas:

Beti Denge Us Ghar me

Shauchalay ho jis Ghar me

(Daughter will be married in that house which houses have toilets)

Ghar-Ghar Me shauchalaya banaiye

Bahu-Betio ka shan badaye.

(Make toilet in every house and raise the dignity and honour of daughter and daughter in law)

Sources of Light

Earlier the sources of lighting in the villages were *laltain*; *Dibri* and *petromax* during the socio religious function. Kerocene oil were used for the source of lighting. Now it has changed. The table 4.2 depicts the source lighting in the villages and the households. It indicates that 70 percents rspondents are using electricicty as a main source of lihting, 17.9 percent using electricity and kerocene, 1.3 percent electricity, kerosene and biogas , and still 9.1 percent are using only in in the households, It also indicates that 92.6 percents of Forward

classes, 73 percents of Backward classes, 63.9 percent of the Scheduled Castes, 80 percents of Muslims and 64.4 percents Extreme Backward Castes are using the electricity as the source of light in the households. It also indicates maximum number of the Scheduled Castes, Extreme Backward Castes, and Muslims are still using the kerosene as the main source of lighting in the households.

Earlier most of the villagers were using the wood, cow dung cakes, straw and grass, trees leafs, kerosene as a fuel to cook the food. Now the situation has changed. In 1990s, these changes started taking

Table-2.Source of light across social group

Source	Forward	Backward	SC	Muslim	EBC	Total
Electricity	61(92.6)	84(73)	78(63.9)	12(80.1)	94(64.4)	329(70.9)
Electricity + Kerosene	4(6)	26(22.7)	20(16.5)	1(6.7)	32(21.8)	83(17.9)
Electricity+Kerosene+Biogas	0	2(1.7)	0	0	4(2.7)	6(1.3)
Electricity+Biogas	0	1(0.8)	1(0.8)	0	0	2(0.4)
Electricity+other	0	0	0	0	1(0.6)	1(0.2)
Kerosene	1(1.4)	2(1.8)	23(18.8)	2(13.2)	14(9.9)	42(9.1)
Biogas	0	0	0	0	1(0.6)	1(0.2)
Total	66(100)	115(100)	122(100)	15(100)	146(100)	464(100)

Source: Field work

Sources of Cooking Fuel

Table 3. Sources of cooking fuel across social group

Source	Forward	Backward	SC	Muslim	EBC	Total
LPG	57(86.3)	51(44.3)	41(33.6)	8(53.3)	69(47.3)	226(48.8)
LPG +Electricity	2(3.1)	0	0	0	0	2(0.5)
LPG+kerosene+fossils fuel	3(4.4)	13(11.4)	7(5.7)	0	25(17.1)	48(10.3)
LPG+ fossils fuel	2(3.1)	10(8.7)	4(3.3)	0	8(5.5)	24(5.1)
LPG+others	0	4(3.4)	1(0.8)	0	2(1.3)	7(1.6)
Kerosene	0	1(0.8)	0	0	4(2.8)	5(1.1)
Fossil fuels	2(3.1)	34(29.7)	62(50.8)	7(46.7)	29(19.8)	134(28.8)
Others	0	2(1.7)	7(5.8)	0	9(6.2)	18(3.8)
Total	66(100)	115(100)	122(100)	15(100)	146(100)	464(100)

Source: Field work

place but after 2001 there are shaped visible changes in the cooking fuel. Table 3 depicts the sources of cooking fuel across the social group in the villages. It indicates that 48.8 percent of total respondents are using the LPG for the cooking food in the rural areas. These changes happens to because the provision of the distribution of the LPG cylinder to the poor under the **Ujjwala yojna** by the central government schemes. The persons who returned from the urban areas, government employees whose family members are staying in the villages, persons who got the job in the rural areas like Para teachers, contractual appointment in the schools, ANM, ASHA workers, petty contractors, emergences of middle men between publics and beaurocrates, politician, have got the purchasing powers due to the regular sources of income, are able to use the LPG for cooking. However not all the poor persons got the benefits of the Ujjavalla Yojna. The upper castes that have caste and social capital and also to some extents economically well off are able to get the benefits of this scheme. One of the Scheduled Castes respondent (Bhuiya) was asked about the connection of the Ujjawala yojna, he blauntly replied the researcher before the upper castes “*sara gas ta enhi logan ke milal hai*” (all the free gas connection have taken by the upper castes). Upper Caste man immediately replied “**Tohani ke na milal hau**” (You people have not got gas connection?). He replied “**khali du ghar ke**”. (Only two households got this). This upper caste man belongs to the Bhumihaar *tola* and the Scheduled castes respondent belongs to the Bhuiya *tola*. The peoples from Bhuinya *tola* are poor people and still dependent on the Bhumihaar *tola* for their livelihoods. All Bhumihaar have the sufficient land and have good production from the fields. They are using land as a insurance and also stored the crops for use till next crops and also selling the surplus production. Besides this, most of members are going to the urban areas for the jobs in the private sectors and the government jobs. The Scheduled Caste respondent from Bhuinya *tola* is graduate and working as *Vikas Mitra* in Bihar government. However, 28 percents respondents using fossil fuels like cow dung cake, paddy straw, dry grass, wood, dry leaves of the trees, and 10 percents are using LPG, Kerocene and fossils. It also indicates that 86 percents forward castes, 44 percents backward castes, 53 percents muslims, 47 percents extreme backward castes and only 33.6 percents Scheduled castes are using the LPG for cooking the food.

Occupational Diversification

The pattern of change in agriculture occurs in tandem with wider

changes in Bihar's economy. It is found that there has been a great deal of occupation diversification in the village. Now under employed persons in agriculture are migrated from villages or engaged in non-agricultural activities. Due to government interventions a verities of non agricultural occupations have been created in the rural areas i.e. Mukhiya, Sarpanch, ward members, panchayat members, zila parishad member, Para-Teacher, school teaches, Anganbadi workers, Asha didi, etc. Some of the youths are engaged as drivers, open grocery shops, cloths shop, tea shops, medicine shop, ferry wala, mobile repairing shops, pan gumti (pan shop), beauty parler, cosmetic shops, vegetable shop and fruit shops, coaching centres, private schools etc in the village markets. Most of the educated Forward Castes and landed government employee are staying in the urban areas and often visited to rural areas at the time of agriculture season. Government employees from rural areas have two accommodation one in urban areas and another at native place or rural areas. They have made multi-storey buildings in rural areas which are kept locked. They are visiting their villages during the crop season, holi and chhat festivals and on the occasions of marriage of their daughter and son. It is also found that most of female workers are from Scheduled Castes, Extreme backward classes and upper backward classes are still reported agriculture to be their primary occupation.

It is found that men aged 15 to 59, have migrated from the villages. The occupational profiles of migrants are totally different from those of non migrant. These are government jobs, private jobs, security guards, labourers, agricultural labourers in different states and districts, petty Business class, petty contractors, Business etc. Since manual work is being considers as lower status. Therefore, Forward castes and land owning classes from rural areas have migrated from villages for their livelihood and quality of life. When they (Forward Castes) migrated from village to urban areas, they are engaged as security guard, supervisor, contractor, business man, petty business and driver etc. They are not totally dethatched from villages. They are often visiting village and some old person from their family member supervising the agricultural activities by keeping the charwaha or servants. Since anonymity is the characteristics of urban areas therefore, they have migrated from village to urban areas so that their higher status and izzat (dignity) should be maintained. The most backward castes and the scheduled castes person are engaged in manual job in urban area also.

These occupational changes have displaced agriculture not only as the primary source of household income. The members of family now are adding their income by their nonfarm jobs. Today, the key factor lie in the possibilities for migration and the ability to access work outside the village, especially regular jobs, rather than in agrarian relations. The low level of income from wage labour in agriculture is another indication of diversification towards other occupations, outside the village which provide more regular work and higher wages.

A notable aspect of the pattern of change is a rise in wages, which have been multiplied by two or three terms in real terms. This cannot be explained by the increase in agricultural productivity which has to be considered against a substantive increase in population nor by programmes such as under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment guarantee Act that started only relatively recently and whose impact in rural Bihar is rather small. The most plausible explanation is that the growth of alternative opportunities outside agriculture is responsible most of them accessed through migration to others parts of India.

Migration Outside the Village

People generally migrate from their place of living in search of better livelihood, education system and better quality of life. In 1906 O' Malley had observed that there was a large volume of emigration from Gaya and the numbers of its emigrants for exceeded that of the immigrants. The migration was at that time generally of a temporary character. He observed," Every year large numbers leave the district in search of work on the roads, railways and fields returning at the end of the hot weather to take part in the agricultural operations which commence with bursting of the monsoon". The trend of migration was more intense and there was a craze for the adult males to leave their villages and come to the towns in the districts of Bihar or to other states. Regarding emigration, they had gone to the tea districts in Assam and the collieries, mines and other plantations in the other states of India do continue to attract adult labour from Bihar.

A combination of circumstances, both natural and societal, has created a situation in the state where sending a family member out to earn was the only way of staying alive (Deshingkar et al.2006). Rural to Urban migration is a response to diverse economic opportunities across space (Mitra and Murayama 2008). As de Haan (1997) writes, "the continuous circular form of this migration should be explained as

consequences of rural families strategy. Already established kinship relations or marriage opportunities in the future act as a centripetal force, drawing the labour migrants back to their communities and again". It stresses the importance of families in structuring of the migration process, in determining who migrates, to where and whether the migrants return. The role of the family is particularly crucial because of the 'circular' character of migration-migrants continue to maintain close link with their villages of origin, often several cities away, and continue to move to and fro. Labour migrants have remained 'unsettled settler'.

Socio-cultural and economic status of a household, and individual factors such as age, gender, education and health play significant roles while taking the decision to out migration. Poor migrants from rural areas never progress enough to afford to take their families with them. Thus they become part of a pool of single, male migrants following a seasonal or circular form of migration, and travel back often to meet the family members left behind. One of the most visible forms of migration in rural areas is that of the adult male to seek economic, educational, social opportunities. They also seek atrocious and exploitation on caste basis free environment in better off regions. This set of people often makes its own decisions to move without family. Migration allows them to exercise their own life choices, improve economic opportunities and investments in land assets and education of their younger generation. Their experiences are diverse, as young migrants are positively or negatively affected by economic circumstances, the existence of extended family networks, established gender roles and the expectations of their parents. Lack of economic and social opportunities in rural areas may lead to chronic poverty as a result, migration become inevitable. All young migrants are not victims of economic deprivation and social discrimination. Many times, they are migrating for the search of quality education, taboo of doing cultivation by educated youths, maintained their caste pride and *izzat* in the villages, in search of exploitation free and atrocious environment, not acceptance of love marriage becomes the main factors of going out. Intrinsic motivation also ranks on their agenda for moving in search of a better life that is different and in many ways better than the one they have been born into. Few of them run away from home, often for specific reasons, and do not even consider asking their parents. It is observed that now male members are moving with their wife and children in the urban areas and also some of them settling there.

Table-4: Distribution of Migrants from each household

No. of migrants	No. of households	Percentage
Zero/NA	209	45
1	106	22.8
2	79	17
3	28	6
4	29	6.3
5	7	1.5
6	3	0.6
11	1	0.2
15	2	0.4
Total	464	100

Table 4 depicts the distribution of migrants from each household. It indicates that 45 percent households have no migrants from their families. It does not mean that a single member has not migrated from the villages. These are those people who are dependent on the urban centre nearby villages and returned to the own villages in the evening. It also shows 22.8 percents households have one member from their family, 17 percents have 2 members, 6 percents 3 members, 6.3 percents 4 members from their families have migrated from outside the villages. Some of the households have almost all members migrated. The destinations of migrants for daily wages employment are Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Chennai, Kerala and almost all the metropolitan and big cities of the country.

Out migration seems to have grown initially as response to lack of opportunity in local labour markets. But it also has important effects on the dynamics of the rural production system. Today there is a tendency towards labour shortage and rising local wages. In some places this is associated with a lack of innovation in agriculture elsewhere it may be encouraging cultivators to invest in labour saving cultivation techniques. In either case the result is a slow growth of local employment opportunities. At the same time agricultural labour

markets are becoming feminised as women occupy the space left by migrating men but with worse terms and conditions. The segmentation of Bihar's rural labour market is therefore increasing reflecting a lack of palled in Bihar's rural development. Overall it is found that Bihar is one of rising real incomes and increasing agricultural productivity. There has been local diversification, whether in terms of cropping patterns or of occupations within the village. Agricultural growth has been modest and has not been the main driving force that comes from non-agricultural occupations, outsider comes from non agricultural occupations outside the village, and many of them are migrated to other parts of India. Migration was earlier mainly from North Bihar due to the flood affected region but now a substantial proportion of the migrants are from the south Bihar due to naxalism and conflict between upper castes and lower castes. In fact, the most important factor behind the transformation of the rural labour market as well as decline in poverty system seems to be migration from the state. There has been some change in wealth distribution, but the pattern is complex and overall inequality has probably not greatly changed during the post liberalization period. But there are groups that have distinctly improved their positions and others who have done relatively poor, depending to a large extent on whether they have been able to take advantage of opportunities outside the village and transport facilities have reduced the distances of places to a considerable extent and people are no longer as home sick as they used t be before. There had/has been a perceptible increase on population and also in the standard of living and people no longer hesitate to go outside the district in search of employment and money in order to supplement their income.

Gender Relation of Power

The attempt has been made by the state to mainstreaming women i.e. one of the excluded categories into politics. The decision to reserve 50 percent of the seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions impacted body politics, substantively. Because of this women are becoming the part of local governance either as members or as adhyakhas (President). Women, who are entering into the local self governances, confront, negotiate and/or succumb to power structure 'at' different levels and spheres-self, family, community, society, gram panchayat and state. Some have confronted the systematic variables and entered the public political domain openly. They have faced its consequences, the usual one being the moralistic gaze. Others have sought the support of the male family members, giving rise to the notion

of 'proxy governance. A few have shunned the public-political domain altogether and have retreated into the private domains of their domestic space.

Women were/are being segregating and locating in the confined and prescribed domains of public and private. It itself constitutes one of the contributing reasons for exclusion in almost all walk of the life. This binary division of life into public and private started with Aristotle's political scheme where the 'polis' is an exclusionary domain for men, thereby excluding women from politics. Moreover, describing the household as a non-public sphere implied that it was on a lower rung compared to the 'polis'. Thus, in his conceptualization of citizenship, men who participate in the functioning of the 'polis' are the integral part of the state, while others, including women, are merely its 'necessary conditions'. This bifurcation from the political public to the apolitical private, in a way, initiated an epistemological framework that by its very concept excluded women and considered them second citizens.

We could decipher from field and focus group discussions in Bihar that these Aristotelian typologies continue to predominate the rural social fabric of Bihar. This invariably led to two sets of values as seen in our data where men, especially EMRs (Elected Male Representatives), came to be accorded with two statuses that are incommensurable—that of public person and a private individual. The Elected Women Representative is accorded with one identity of being immersed in the non-public and non-political realm. Our focus group discussion were constantly resonating with this value frame work, imbibed and expressed by women and men alike, who felt that it should be preserved for having a dignified life. This dignified life with *ijjat* (dignity) implies that women behave like women, dressed like women as designed by patriarchal norms. They are never expected to cross '*lakshman rekha*' (limit of freedom) and to cross the '*dehree*' (border of household) without permission of the head of the family. These drawn to ensure the prestige and the honor of the family and the society are kept intact. Therefore, it was quite normative that the elected women representatives especially from the upper class (upper castes, upper backward castes and economically well off from extreme backward castes and scheduled castes). They expressed that 'what is more important is to live and die as good *bahus* (wives) and the position of the Elected women representative is least important to us if it means to challenge the husband or in laws'. It is understood that women can only be inefficient

elected representatives as they were not well versed in public affairs and that their understanding about governance issues was minimum due to lack of education. However, now situation has changed to some extent after the post liberation period.

Table 5 depicts educational qualification of elected members on the post of Mukhiya. It indicates 58% literates, 9% middle and 33% intermediate having educational qualification among general category of elected women category; 70% literates, 20% middle and 10% illiterate

Table 5: Distribution of educational qualification of the elected members on the post of Mukhiya

Educational Qualification	Social Categories							
	General		Backward Castes		Extreme Backward Castes		Scheduled Castes	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Literate	1 (6)	7 (58)	1 (14)	7 (70)	5 (36)	11 (73)	-	5 (45)
Primary	-	-	-	-	-	-	D	1 (9)
Middle	-	1 (9)	-	02 (20)	1 (7)	1 (6.7)	2 (20)	3 (28)
Higher	1 (41)	-	3 (43)	-	1 (7)	1 (6.7)		-
Intermediate	4 (23.5)	4 (33)	3 (43)	-	5 (36)	1 (6.7)	4 (40)	1 (9)
Graduate	4 (23.5)	-	-	-	2 (14)	1 (6.7)	4 (40)	1 (9)
Post Graduate	1 (6)	-	-	-	-	-		-
Illiterate	-	-	-	01 (10)	-	-		-
Total	17	12	07	10	14	15	10	11

Source: ibid

among the backward castes; 73% literates, 6.7% middle, 6.7% higher, 6.7% intermediate and 6.7% post graduate elected women Mukhiya among extreme backward castes and 45% illiterate 9% primary, 28% middle and 9% intermediate and 9% graduate among the scheduled castes elected women Mukhiya among the scheduled castes. This table indicates now educated women are being elected as the representatives of Mukhiya. It is does not mean they are selecting this occupation on their own choices. They may be opted this on the advice or choice of their husbands. But their husbands are acting as Mukhiya. They were only putting their signatures on the papers. Their husbands (MukhiyaN Pati) were attending the training programmes, chairing the meeting, contacting to the official etc. Now, they have started taking participation in public sphere to some extent. However, their husbands are more active than her and also known as '*Mukhiyan Pati*'.

Why their husbands are behind their wives. It is because of the entry of women in politics is a fear factor. This fear factor operates at many levels. One is the fear factor of losing one's power and position at the governance institution and local politics. Second it is the fear that women may go out of their patriarchal control once they transcend the boundaries drawn for them. Third is the fear coming from the patriarchal ego that makes it almost impossible in the society like Bihar for men to take orders from and work under women once they become Mukhiyas.

In the context of the power relation in private sphere it is also important to understand the multiple thresholds that operate within the families, which prevent access to women to different places within the home. '*Dalan*' or '*Varanda*' (antechamber in the front yard of the house where usually guests/ villagers assemble for socialization) is one such place, occupied only by men especially in the upper class family. Small place (*Dura*) is also marked for male guests and visitors at the front yard of the house by the poor villagers. A Bourdieuan approach to analyse *Dalan*; *Varandah* and *Dura* as a habitus will help illustrate the spaces marked by the absence of women even within their homes. While Foucault sees power as 'ubiquitous' and beyond agency or structure, Bourdieu sees power as culturally and symbolically created and constantly delegitimized through an interplay of agency and structure. This happens mainly through what he calls, 'habitus' or socialized norms or tendencies that guide behaviors and thinking. Habitus is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting disposition, or trained capacities and structured properties

to think, feel and act in determinant ways which then guide them. (Wacquant 2005). Habitus is neither a result of free will nor determined by structures. But it is created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures; and that shape current practices and structures, and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these (Bourdieu 1984). It means habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, 'without any deliberate pursuit of coherence—without any conscious connection' (ibid).

It could be observed that family, as a normative and natural site of hierarchy and unequal gender relations. It is an important factor that leads to discrimination against women which society seldom recognizes and accepts. *Dalan*, *Varanda* and '*Durah*' are physical spaces earmarked solely for men in the rural areas families of Bihar. In practice, it denies access to women in those spaces within the home and, in effect, replicates and reinforces the patriarchal structures that design the thresholds for women even within the families. These structures, through customary practices and traditions, thus became a habitus of power and traditions, thus became a habitus of power and hierarchy. Hence, it is interesting to observe that the home, which was located as the domain of women, itself, has spaces in it where they were denied access.

The traditional male occupied *Dalan*, *Varanda* and '*Dura*' or the male zone, is the habitus of power and decision making. The female zone is confined to specific parts of home i.e. *angan* (courtyard) and *rasoi* or *chulah chauka* (kitchen). It is sealed by redid through invisible boundaries. Women in rural Bihar are confined within this social universe of home with multiple, invisible inner thresholds regulating their mobility even within the home. Traditionally, women were confined themselves within '*angana*' and '*rasoi*'. They were not dared to cross the '*dehree*' i.e. invisible boundary of the home. Upper class used to say "*Bade ghar ki aurat, bahu-beti/kania-putaria ghar se bahar nahi nikalti hai*". It means women, daughter/daughter-in-law are confined themselves within the home. Even lady used to say with proud, "*Na hum na hamar ghar ke bahu-beti/kania-putaria bahar mela-thela, khet khaliahan ja hai*." (Neither herself (woman) nor daughter, daughter-in-law visit outside home, fair and farm). These are the narratives of upper class (Forward Caste, Upper Backward and economically well of Scheduled Castes and Extreme Backward Castes) women of rural areas of Bihar. They have internalized these norms and kept themselves

within the boundaries of home. It could be also observed in 1980s assertive movements led by the backward castes and raised slogan '*Agle sawan-bhado mein Gore ke Hath kado mein*'. The delicate hands of the upper caste women will be forced to till farmland in the next monsoon in months of *sawan and bhado*). This was the slogan of *soshit Samaj Dal* Leader, Jagdeo Prasad who was killed in Kurth block of jahanabad district in Mid 1970S allegedly by upper caste henchmen. It indicates that forward castes women were not going to farm. This was also followed by economically sound female members among the upper backward castes, Extreme Backward Castes and the scheduled castes. The women among the farming communities, extremes backward castes and the scheduled castes are going outside home as a family field worker and agricultural worker in the rural areas. Normally women were keeping '*ghunghat*', *achra*, *aachal* on their heads in front of elder person and unknown person in the villages. The unmarried girls/young girls (*Jawan ladki*) are keeping '*odni*' (scarf) on her head and were bearing *salwar-suit/sari*. Researcher interacted one 58 yrs. Old elected upper castes lady mukhia during the field work. She interacted with researcher behind curtain of door. She could not come before outsider and sit on chair. She was waiting for her husband i.e. *Mukhiainpati*. Because important information and documents were with him and only her husband would provide all the information to you.

In the post liberalization era, government started intervention in the rural areas through panchayati raj institution by providing 50 percent reservation to women and providing opportunities such as Anganwadi worker (Anganwadi didi), anganwadi Sahaika, Asha Didi, Mukhiyain, masterain (Sikchamitra lady teachers), etc to participate in public spheres. Now they are coming out of home to attend meetings, training at panchayats, blocks, Districts and state level. Although, there is a conflict between the older generation and younger generation. Younger generation male members are supporting their wives, daughter to participate in public spheres. But older generation are opposing such kind of activities. One of female respondent told researcher about her father-in-law. He was against his daughter-in law to go to school and to attend the meeting and training at the district level. He says to son "*Gadi per aina lekar Gumaiya*". His son used to take outside home to his beautiful wife on his motorbike. Now women are going to attend the training, schools, door to door to collect data, polio-drop. Because of these new opportunities, there is a returned migration in rural areas. To get job in rural areas young candidate returned to the rural areas

from the urban areas. Now they are feeling empowered and taking decision for their children education and also buying clothes and other things for their children and husband from the market at the time of visiting outside the home. Some of the upper caste women and economically well of women staying at urban areas for better quality of life like education for children health facilities etc. and attending their office in rural areas from the urban areas. Some of women's husband are in government job and posted in the urban areas. Because of this, they have to be stayed in the urban areas. It is observed that these urban women are attending offices from the urban areas, thus, the rural areas have become site of new job opportunities for women. Earlier woman had the opportunities only for the land based job.

Due to the implementation of Right to education, the enrolment of girl child has increased. The dropout rates and non attending of girl child are high in the rural area's school. However, this act has brought consciousness, awareness among the women in the rural areas. Now the primary, middle schools secondary and higher secondary are available in the approachable areas in the rural areas. One could observe a group of cycling girls in the morning and returning in the evening. They are not only attending the tuitions and schools but they are also visiting market to buy their clothes cosmetics and visiting beauty parlor. Earlier girls were getting education for '*achche ghar*' (good home) and *achche var* (good husband). Now their horizon has expanded. We interacted with 10th and 12th class girls at coaching centres in the rural areas. It is asked to students what do you want to become in your career? They replied to become doctor, teacher, professor, nurse, police, IPS. One girl has an icon or role model like Kiran Bedi (Kiran Bedi is first women IPS in India). She is keeping hair like Kiran Bedi. A girl from extreme backward caste's girl is riding motor bike and also helping her mother in day to day life like household chores, agricultural works and going to market to purchase the items. Not only this, she is also taking mother and family members outside home to market and visiting to relative's house. Now rural girls are staying alone in a rented house in urban areas for their studying. The girls are staying outside the home and they have started interacting with the opposite sex. Because of this, the love marriage has started and marriage by elopement has increased. "Aab Maa-Baap kuch din me halke ho jayange" (Now parents will be freed from the burden of the marriage of their son and daughter). This statement was passed by one of the member from the rural areas, although, caste panchayats are putting restriction on their own caste members for the love marriage

and marriage by elopement. Caste Panchayat excluded the family from the 'Jati'. They put restriction on them like bahat katna (out caste or put restriction on her family not to interact with own caste community). Nobody would invite in the 'Biradari' functions or in any social and religious functions like Puja, marriage and death rituals. Sometimes they excluded the whole Tola. They fixed punishments in terms of cash and to give 'bhat' (Feast of kacha food) to their own caste for remedy.

The stereotypical image of an Indian farmer is a mustachioed man, clad in a dhoti with plough on his shoulder. The reality is the Indian agricultural landscape is being feminized after post liberalization. The forward caste women and dominant caste were not engaged in agricultural activities. The physical work and the touching the plough were taboo among the Forward caste and dominant castes in Bihar. Now, the educated persons do not want to engage themselves in the agriculture activities in the villages/rural areas. Therefore, most of educated male member migrated to the urban areas. Now most of the rural workforce is female. Despite, their hard labour in the field, women are not officially counted as farmers, and either labeled "agricultural laborers" or "cultivators". This is because the government does not recognize as farmers those who do not have a claim to land under their name in official records. Women were/are considering as a *Paraya dhan* (other property). Therefore, they are not entitled to get share in parental property like land. Patriarchy is deep rooted in the rural society.

Now few women are getting ownership of land. Most of their husbands are in government jobs and they do not want to give share to their own brothers and sisters or fear of disproportionate assets; they are giving ownership of land to their wives. Some of the male are doing business in the urban areas and their families are still staying in the rural areas. Most of youth, educated youth and upper caste youth due to maintain their dignity and ritual superiority of the caste, have migrated to urban areas for their good quality life. Their wives are taking care their children, old parents not only that they are maintaining all social duties and responsibilities e.g. '*nevtā purna*' (attending the invitation from the relatives and villages), taking the decision about their children, fixing the marriage of their daughters and sons etc. It could be observed that one woman, whose husband is petty contractor in Nepal; is managing her household with two young daughters. She is doing cultivation and carrying the portable pumping set to the field to irrigate the fields. Her husband sending the money to her and she has

purchased the land, car and motorbike. She has settled their daughter's marriage. For one of her daughter, she has seen a boy, who is school teacher, as prospective groom for marriage to her daughter. The boy refused the proposal of marriage to her daughter because she is unable to pay high amount of dowry to him. Then girl's mother hired the gonada (Lumpen) to kidnap the school teacher to marry her daughter and her daughter got marriage to him. Not only that, she has allowed her daughters to stay in town in rented house to get the higher education. Her daughter visiting to the town and helping her mother by motorbike outside the village and town for domestic purposes and buy the agriculture's items.

Agricultural women laborers are mostly from the extreme backward castes and the scheduled castes. Now they are not restricted to their own villages. They are going to other villages to work in a group. They have an understanding with *autowala* (Owner of auto-rickshaw). In the morning autowala dropped them into field in the other village and they worked in the field till 4 o'clock and then returned to their own village by evening by the same auto. Earlier landowner used to sexually harass and victimized them but now no body dare to do this. Same day, they also received their wages from the landowner. They have also choice and select the landowner to whom to work and demand or expect the good behavior from the landowner. Now they have every right to say no. They also felt liberated and no pressure and domination of any landlord or landowner.

Women use their income for the needs of their households. It could be observed that women emerged as tenant farmers. In absence of their husbands women are taking land as a bataidari, nagadi from landowner for cultivation. Male members or their husbands are also taking land on lease/bataiya from land owner. Their husbands are visiting the villages on the occasion of 'Holi' and chaat puja and they did farming for example sowing the seeds of wheat, transplanting the paddy etc. They went back to urban areas for work. Then all the agricultural work is looked after by their wives. It is also observed that land-owning women's off spring receive better nourishment and have better health indicators. Land owning mothers also tends to invest in their children education.

Conclusion

We may conclude that in the post liberalisation era, there are noticeable changes in women's conditions. The women had broken

through the traditional taboos on their occupations. They were now to be found working in the public places. Women are also able to use their visible numbers in the public domain to get important concessions from their employers, the state and their social systems. The power relations in rural area are being transformed. Now backward castes, extreme backward castes and the scheduled castes have become *mukhiya* and also emerging as a new elite groups who are more democratic and kind and also responsible to developed the villages. Women have crossed the *laxchman rekha* and participating in the public spheres.

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