

Gender perception through participatory methods

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■ **ABSTRACT** : Gender aspect of rural life can be illustrated through learning from field experiences. It focuses of rural women and brings out different aspects of their life. The methodology applied is that of P.R.A. (Participatory Rural Appraisal) related to gender analysis and reflect various aspects such as expertise and role in selected activities, nature of work and daily routine, their deprivation through food discrimination and basic amenities.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Gender perception, PRA, Participatory methods

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Gender perception is an important variable which determines the social status of women in the area. Sociologically the word gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of men and women, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign their social roles (Mukherji, 1995). Participatory method of learning reflects various gender related aspects in a society (Chambers, 1997). The purpose of PRA is to enable development practitioners, researchers, government officials and local people to work together to plan context appropriate programme (Mathialagan, 2000). The gender aspect of rural life.

An exploratory study was conducted in Arawantand village of Nangarh block of Chandauli district (U.P.). Present paper seeks to illustrate the gender aspect of rural life. This paper focuses on two main objectives :

-To study about the socio-economic profile of women in the area and to study the gender perception of women in the study area.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

The study was conducted in Aurwantand village of Naugarh block. About 50 per cent of its population belonged to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes communities like Kharwar, Chero, Musahar etc. who live enclose vicinity of the forest area.

As it was an exploratory, interactive and participatory

research, all women were targeted as respondents where every individual was interviewed and motivated to participate in different PRA sessions in order to establish the effective community dialogue. It was done in an open and relaxed manner through informal sittings with women group. Questionnaire as well as well as various PRA tools like social and resource mapping, focus group discussion, direct observation, daily routine chart, livelihood analysis were applied to discover the socio-economic condition and gender perception or discrimination of women in the study area.

Rapport building in practice:

In a participatory from work it was essential for a researcher to establish channels of communication with local rural women, frequent visits to the study area with the objective of building communication links which done for the purpose of rapport building.

Tape recorder proved to be an unplanned successful tool to gather different- date regarding their perceptions about their intimate life as women were very much fond of listening their own voices in the tape recorder. These local folk songs, sung by women reflected their feelings about their loneliness, poor economic condition, illiteracy, gender discrimination through which they undergo.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study area suffers from social and economic backwardness because of the fact that the area is basically a hilly region which is nearly two third covered by forest (Fig. 1).

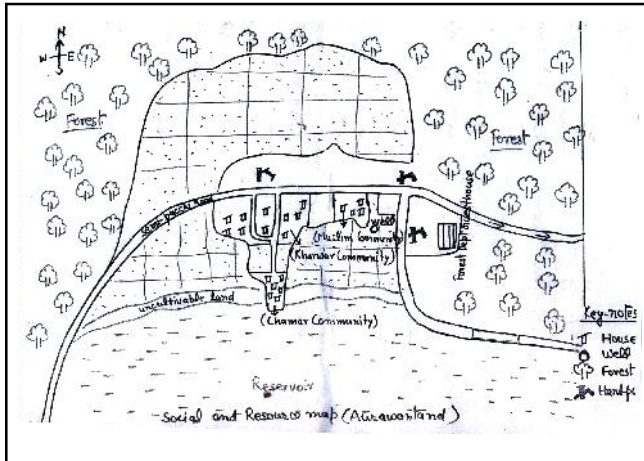


Fig. 1: Social and resource map Aurawatand

Village, Aurwatand consisted of 26 families. Caste wise distribution was Kharwar 18 (69.1%) Chamar 4 (15.3%) Yadav 1 (3.8%) and Muslims 3 (11.5%).

Caste wise separate living hamlets was observed that Chamar and Muslim community reside away from the Kharwar community. Kharanja road interlinked the village to Naugarh market. Only 30 per cent men and a lone woman were found literate up to the 8th standard. There is only one primary school run by a NGO, children have to go Naugarh far further studies which was far away from village. Nuclear family system prevails in the area with average size of the family (4-7 members). However, Muslims family consisted of 8-10 members.

Average land holding of the village was found to be 2-4 bighas per family. According to women perception, there were 3 hand pumps and a well in the village, 3 families were having diesel pumps and only two families possessed thresher. Their crops were always in danger of damage due to intrusion of forest animals.

It could be observed that low lands near to reservoir could easily be irrigated through the reservoir, but the upland area was found to be unirrigated due to non-provision of irrigation channels. Due to this they were dependent on rain water for cultivation of their fields. Inhibits of village are economically down trodden and are forced to depend on forest produce for food. Many a time the forest produce does not suffice for their hunger, and hence they have to undergo the torture starvation.

Livelihood analysis:

Women of the all villages were having same socio-economic status. Livelihood source analysis as perceived

by these women was analyzed through a pie diagram; which shows that major source of income to sustain their livelihood was supported by agriculture and forest followed by animal husbandry and labour work elsewhere or in forest and irrigation departments.

During crisis, such as on the occasion of marriage, death, agricultural problems and sickness, they lend loans from local Mahajans in form of mortgage of land, utensils or ornaments at 50-60 per cent of interest rates.

It was found that on the occasion of marriage, they borrow utensils, cloths and ornaments from the shopkeepers and bear loan burden of 10,000-50,000 and virtually live in debt trap throughout their lives. During the season of forest food (Mahua, Chironji) production, villagers were seen to exchange it for rice, vegetables.

It was also observed that when in the area do not save money for crisis period, reason behind the same was their marginal income which barely met their day to day expenses. Usually male members migrate to nearby cities for labour work in month of Feb- April where they earn a short wage (Fig. 2).

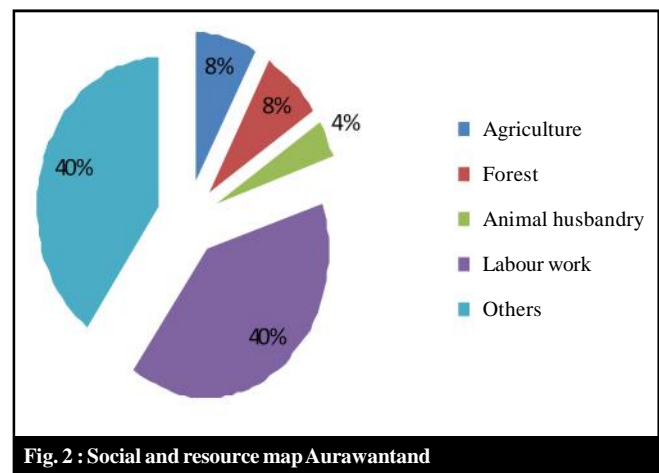


Fig. 2 : Social and resource map Aurawatand

Crisis:

- Marriage
- Death
- Agriculture
- Sickness.

Cope with:

- Mortgage of land utensils and ornaments
 - Loan from local Mahajans at high interest.
- No concept of saving in the area.

Daily routine work of rural women:

5.30 am.	Wake up
6.00-7.00am	Cleaning animals, collecting compost.
7.00-9.00am	Cleaning homes and water collection.

9.00 -10.30am	Kitchen arrangements, Chulha making preparation, Serving and eating meals.	भईया के खिलावे खातिर खोआ मलाई दिहला हमरे को दल भात मोहाला हमरे बाबूजी For feeding of my brother, you have given him khau and cream and for me rice and dal is only desired.
10.30-2.30pm	Seasonal work (Field work, Thapua (Kanda) making, broom making mudding etc.)	भइया के पढ़ावे खातिर नौकरी धराई दिहला हमरे को स्कूल नहीं दिखउला हमरे बाबूजी You have milling burdened yourself by labor work for brothers schooling but you even didn't sent me to school.
2.30 - 3.30 pm	Taking bath, washing clothes, utensils, cleaning homes.	भइया के खबरिया खातिर जियरा तरस गइला, दूसरे से चिठिया बचइला हमरे बाबूजी, For information regarding brother's well being, my heart gets thirsty. I have to give letter to others to read it out.
3.30 - 5.30 pm	Fuel collection, water collection.	भइया के पढ़ावे खातिर रुपिया पैइसा दिहला हमरे से बर्तन मन्जइला हमरे बाबू जी For brothers education you give him money and asked me to clean kitchen utensils.
6.00-7.00 pm	Chulha making, food preparation, serving and eating food.	माता हमरी बाली हमके समझली हो एक नजर तकली भइया बहनी को नाही दे गइया, नाही देत दहेजवा तू पंच तक स्कूल दिखउला हमरे बाबू जी। My mother understands me well and keeps equal eyes to both of brothers and sisters. And it is my request to you that even you need not to give me cow and dowry in my marriage, but you must try to give us primary education.

From the table it can be observed that women in the area perform almost all household and outdoor activities. She is involved in all agricultural activities except ploughing. Starting from sowing of seeds to harvesting of crops, she is engaged in all types of work. During sowing season of paddy or during harvesting she spends up to 10 hrs. a day in her form continuously. Household activities like cooking, serving, washing cloths, cleaning utensils and home, fetching water, child care practices, live stock management, collecting fuel water, collecting forest food products like mahua, tendu, piyar and makoy, making brooms, thapua for house building etc. are numerous activities in which she is involved with little recognition.

Gender discrimination as perceived by women :

Researcher used to listen their folk songs in night for rapport building and to get closer to their lives. These songs were recorded and these women re listened their own voices with great interest. It became an important tool to collect various information regarding different aspects.

Interestingly, some songs which were sung by these women in different villages in different ragas depicted the same story of discrimination against women girl and child for example.

Folk song:

काहे करेला मोरे बाबू जी दोरंगी नीतिया

Why my father do dual policy.

उही जन बाबा मोरे, बेटा जनइला से

उही जन बेटा जनमउला हमरे बाबूजी

Father, from same parents, son has born and daughter also.

बेटा के पढ़ावे खातिर भेजिया स्कूलिया से

हमरे से घर पुतउला हमरे बाबूजी

You have sent my brother for schooling and asked me to mud the home.

भईया को पढ़ावे खातिर देसवा बिदेस भेजला

हमरे से बकरी चरउला हमरे बाबू जी

You have sent my brother country or abroad for schooling and asked me to gaze the goats. (Country or abroad means of their village)

Conclusion:

From the study, it may be concluded that social economic backwardness and gender discrimination were the main hindrances in the upliftment of women in the area Gender discrimination is quiet evident in all spheres of life the PRA method was successfully applied in the present study proved an effecting technique for collecting and interpreting meaningful informations from the actual subjects. The studies of Gujeet I (1994) and Alim A (2009) shows the similar results concluding that gender differences are historically determined, culturally specific and dynamic.

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