

Human Development and Economic Growth: A Case Study on Traditional Assamese Fisherman of Niz-Saldah village, Sarthebari Revenue Circle, Barpeta District, Assam

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Abstract- Human Development described as the ultimate goal of the development process with economic growth, or as a means towards improved human development. Economic growth is an important factor in reducing poverty and generating the resources necessary for human development and environmental protection. The human development is a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. There is a strong correlation between gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and indicators of development such as life expectancy, infant mortality, adult literacy, political and civil rights, and some indicators of environmental quality. However, economic growth alone does not guarantee human development. In fact, the performance of an economy or region has begun to be measured by how it fares with respect to its attainments in human development. The current study attempts to analyze the relationships among Human Development and Economic Growth for traditional Assamese fisherman of Niz-Saldah village in Sarthebari Revenue Circle of Barpeta District, Assam. The study will be able to draw a clear cut picture of the traditional Assamese fisherman in Niz-Saldah village and also analyse their various problems and prospects. It will help the researchers to carry out further study in state level, regional level and national level. Side by side the study will be helpful for up gradation and development of those communities and so on. SOI topographical maps, secondary data, field data, GIS and field observations will be used to carry out this study.

Index Terms- Human Development, Economic Growth, Traditional Assamese Fisherman, GIS

I. INTRODUCTION

Human development has recently been advanced as the ultimate objective of human activity in place of economic growth. Human development has been defined as enlarging people's choices in a way which enables them to lead longer, healthier and fuller lives. Clearly, there exists a strong connection between economic growth and human development. The greater freedom and capabilities improve economic performance; human development will have an important effect on growth. Similarly, to the extent that increased incomes will increase the range of choices and capabilities enjoyed by households and governments. The impact of economic growth on a nation's human development level also depends on other

conditions of the society. One important is the role of the distribution of income. The same level of GNP can lead to very different performance on human development according to the allocation of GNP among and within these institutions: household, government activity, civil society, community organizations and other non-governmental organizations. There exists a strong connection between economic growth and human development. On the one hand, economic growth provides the resources to permit sustained improvements in human development. On the other, improvements in the quality of the labor force are an important contributor to economic growth. The relationship between human development and economic growth may now be widely accepted. The purpose of this paper is to understand the link between the Assamese Fisherman and their Economic Growth. This in turn permits us to analyze priorities in the phasing of policy and to examine the usual assumption that economic growth must precede progress on human development.

II. OBJECTIVES

The study covers only a small part of the fishery community of Niz-Saldah Village of Barpeta District. Principal objectives of the present study are:

- i) To study the social behavior of the fisherman.
- ii) To know the seasonal change of fishing culture.
- iii) To study the causes and problems which influence the development of fishing community in the area.
- iv) To study the trend of change of occupation and culture among the fisherman.
- v) To suggest few remedial measures and suggestion for the development of the community in the study area.

III. METHODOLOGY AND DATABASE

The entire study had involved nos. of steps:

- i) Pre-fieldwork Stage: In this stage, the problem is formulated on the basis of studies of various published documents and personal field investigations. The secondary data and information will be collected from various sources. The base map for the study area will be prepared from the toposheet

published by the Survey of India, Census Reports and different official maps.

ii). Fieldwork Stage: This is the stage of collecting primary data from the field. Field works are to be conducted through household survey, personal interview. Some data on socio-economic condition like population structure, cropping pattern, fishing category, educational status, occupational structure, income pattern, expenditure pattern, problems of the fishing activities, etc.

The secondary data are collected from the Govt. offices within Sarthebari and also from different offices from Barpeta and Guwahati.

The main secondary data sources are:

- a) Circle office, Sarthebari Revenue Circle.
- b) Assam Samabay Kahar Sangha, Sarthebari.
- c) District Census office, Barpeta
- d) Sarthebari town committee.
- e) Deptt. Of Economics and Statistics Govt. of Assam.
- f) Statistical Handbook of Assam.

iii). Post-fieldwork Stage: This stage deals with the processing and summarisation of raw data into various levels in the laboratory using computer applications with GIS. Various cartographic and quantitative techniques will be used to prepare maps, charts, tables, diagrams, etc. Inferences drawn from data analysis are to be verified again and again in the field itself for final validation.

IV. A PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Geographical Setting of the study area:

The study area is a place under Sarthebari Revenue Circle in Barpeta District, Assam. The village Niz-Saldah is a low land area. The name Niz-Saldah "Sal" means a type of fish and "dah" means low land. In a time Sal fish are abundantly found here for this cause the area is named Niz-Saldah. The area is located at a distance about ten kilometers from the mighty river Brahmaputra therefore it is situated within the boundary of active floodplain. The area is locally called "Da" where the fish "Sal" (locally called) was available. Combinedly the name "Saldah" came into existence among the people. The area is located at the geographical intersection of 26°48'N longitude and 91°16'E. The surface configuration is characterized by a multitude of dead and active rivers. The area is affected by flood waters by the river Kaldia. There are several bills surrounding the whole area and exhibit a marshy characteristics.

Physiographically this region is a flood plain. General height of the area is about 45ft from sea level and general gradient of the area is from north to south, for which the various local streams flow from north to south with local meandering. Basically whole of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam forms alluvial soil. It is the deposition of alluvial soil carried by the river Kaldia. The region is climatically dominated by four seasons 1) Summer monsoon season 2) Retreating monsoon season, 3) Winter season, 4) Pre-monsoon season.

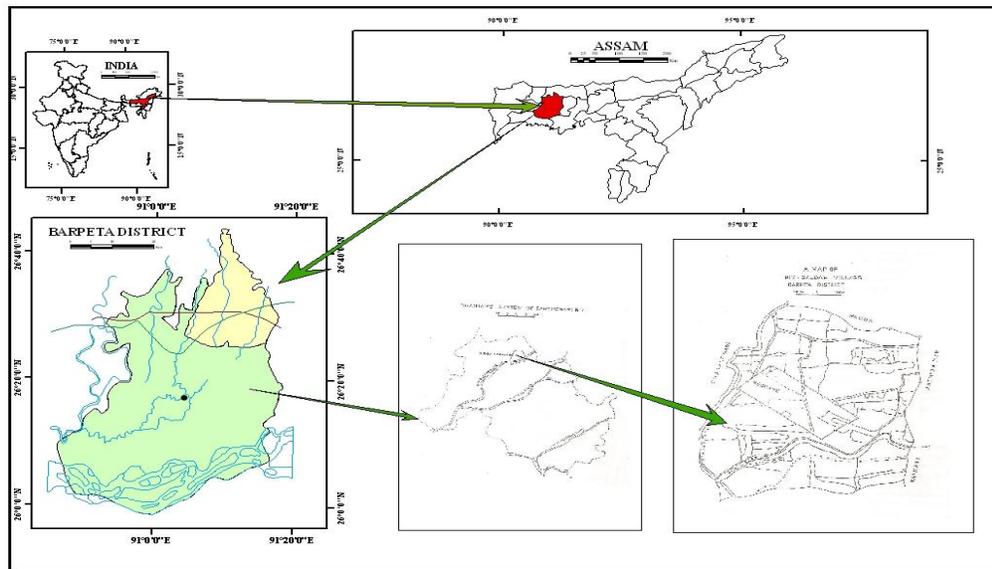


Fig.1: Location map of Niz-Saldah Village

V. POPULATION STRUCTURE

The total population of the study area is 1638 of which 825 are male and 813 are female with total households of 270 as per 2001 census. The average household size of the village is 6.07. The percentage of scheduled caste population is 40.47% while scheduled tribe population is 0.18% and rest population are general caste population. The literacy rate is 68.7% with 57.6% of males and 42.4% of females being literate. About 98% of the total population are Hindu and very little portion of population are Muslim. The area is dominated by the people of Assamese community.

VI. OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

The occupation depends upon the man’s environment. The work of livelihood by which they fulfill their needs is occupation. Fishing is the main occupation of the people in the study area, 52.43% of the people are engage in fishing. Agriculture is another important occupation of the study area. About 30.48% people are engaged in agriculture. 6% are engaged in government services and 7.31% people are work as a daily labourer. Only 3.65% people are directly engaged in business and other activities.

Fig.2: Showing the occupational structure of Niz-Saldah village in percentage.

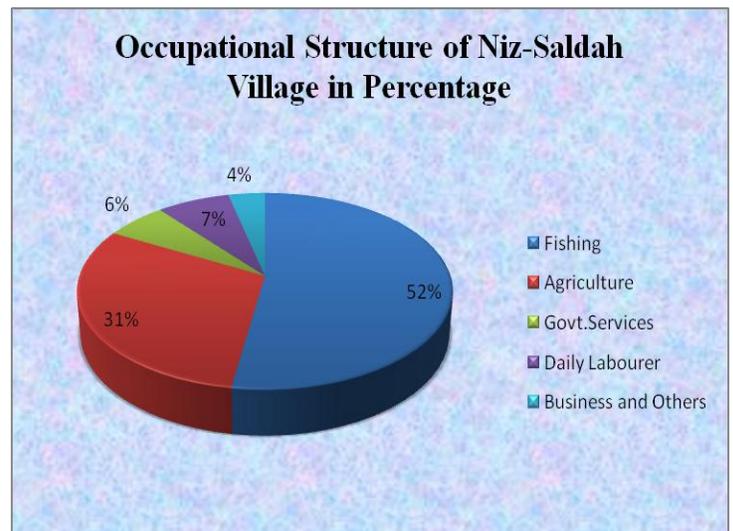


Table 1: Occupational Structure of the study area

Occupation	People Engaged	Percentage
Fishing	860	52.43
Agriculture	499	30.48
Govt. Services	99	6.09
Daily labourer	120	7.31
Business and Others	60	3.65
Total Population	1638	100

VII. MONTHLY INCOME PATTERN

The total monthly income of the Niz-Saldah village is about Rs1,00,98,000. Out of them Rs.61,56,000 comes from fishing and fishery, Rs.15,62,500 from agricultural sector, 9,94,000 from govt. services, Rs.7,78,000 as a labourer and about 6,07,500 from business and other activities.

Table 2: Monthly Expenditure Pattern

Item	Amount(Rs.)	Percentage
Food	49,54,000	72.05
Education	17,44,500	9.01
Medical Treatment	11,0000	2.58
Household Expenditure	83,900	1.98
Agricultural Inputs	9,49,500	5.51
Labour Cost	102,800	2.68
Clothing	6,67,000	6.15

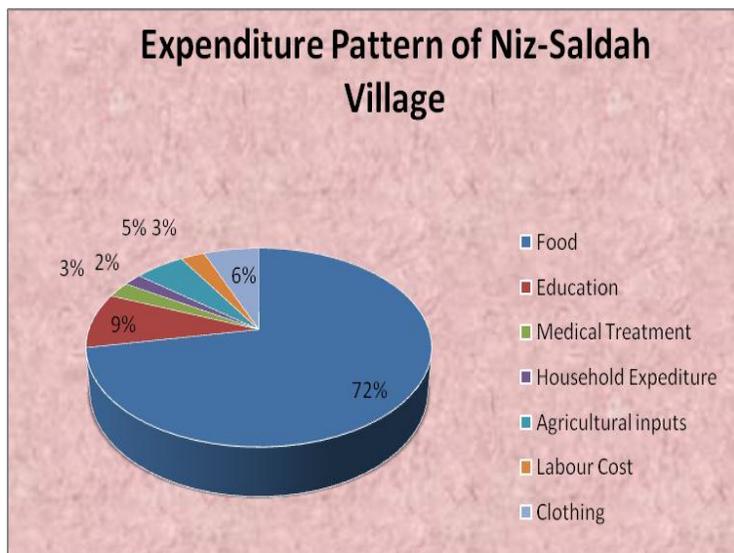


Fig.3: Expenditure Pattern of Niz-Saldah Village

Other Facilities:

The village survey data shows that almost all houses were electrified except few poor families. The average hours of electricity available in the village is about 8 hours. Distribution of common drinking water facilities shows that of the different sources 90 percent are private tubewell. Few families depend on pond and river for water. The sanitation status of the sample village shows that only 18.52% families have pucca latrine, 50.17% have kutchra latrines and about 31.31% use open field. The village is located at a distance of 6 km from Dubi and about 2 km from Bangaon. The important market centre is Pathsala which is about 10 km from the study area. Another important market centre is Barpeta which is 40 km from the study area and Sarthebari is another market which is 20 km far from the study area. The connectivity status of the village shows that

from Pathsala to Dubi, it has a pucca approach road. From Dubi to Niz-Saldah it is a kucca road. The Primary Health Sub-Centre is located within the village. However, motorable roads are only for a limited period of time during winter months. Same is the case with the medicine shops although they are better accessible than the health facilities. Thus, effectively the accessibility of the health services is severely constrained.

Social behavior of Fisherman

The traditional Assamese fisherman are simple and straightforward and visitors are pleased with their hospitality. The social behavior of the traditional Assamese fisherman in the study area is the same as the Assamese traditional behavior. They serve "Pan and Tamul" to their guest and also serve tea. The people in this area have their traditional dresses like Curia, Kames, Gamocha and shirt etc. Females are dressed with Machala Chador, Riha etc. Rice is the staple food in the study area and they also take other Assamese dishes like fish, meat, vegetables etc. 'Gopinath Sabah' is their most important festival held every year in the month of March. They also observe different types of Bihu and Pujas.

Fishing as a source of Income:

For a large proportion of the world's population, fishing is not only the way of getting the food, it is also the source of income. It is therefore the most vulnerable people who suffer most if water resources dry up as a consequence of overfishing or climate change. Fishing is a global industry that employs up to about 200 million people all over the world. Furthermore, there are more people who are in some way dependent on fishing for their survival. In Assam, there are about 3.91 lakh hectares of water area in the form of rivers, beels, derelict waterbodies and ponds and tanks. In the study area, the main source of fish is the Kaldia river and the other source is from bils and ponds. Monthly, Assamese fishermen in the study area earn an amount of about Rs.61,56,000.

Seasonal Change of fishing area and fishing culture:

In the Niz-Saldah village, the traditional Assamese fisherman change their fishing area from season to season. In the rainy season, they catch fish from the river Kaldia and in the winter season, the main source of fish is Bils, Ponds. They capture fish from their village and also from the other nearest village. Common species are Carp, Climbin fish, Mud water fish, Scorpion fishes, Eel, Sal etc. The traditional Assamese fisherman are economically backward. Their fishing culture also changes seasonally. They use different types of instruments like Jal/Net, Jakari, Pala, Jaoki, Chepa, Chorha, Barashi, Boa. These fishermen also depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

VIII. CONCLUDING PART

Identification of the problems:

The present study tries to identify some problems of socio-economic backwardness of traditional Assamese fishermen of the area. These problems are interrelated with each other. One is the cause of another problem. These can be identified as:

- i) Excessive dependence on fishing.
- ii) Traditional method of Fishing.

- iii) Illiteracy among the people.
- iv) Predominance of fishing in economy.
- v) Problem of immigration from Bangladesh.
- vi) Improper management of social resources like fields, fisheries, bridge, canals etc.
- vii) Transport facilities are not well developed.
- viii) Lack of nearest market.
- ix) People are not economically conscious.
- x) Modern culture also affects their traditional folk culture.
- xi) Low standard of living.
- xii) Lack of proper medical facilities.

After observation in the Niz-Saldah Village it is observed that traditional and environmental aspects determine the occupation of the fisherman. They were little aware of government schemes and policy. Unaware of scientific method of fishing. Their standard of living is also very poor. With the Human Development Index of 0.396 which are below the HDI value for the state as a whole (0.407). Barpeta ranks 9th among the 27 districts in terms of capabilities to lead productive and satisfying lives.

IX. REMEDIAL MEASURES CUM SUGGESTIONS

For the development of the traditional Assamese fisherman in the study area some points are included here which will help not only the fisherman but also help in the economic development of the area. The measures are:

- i) It is very essential to develop the fishing methods and techniques for the economic development of the study area.
- ii) Side by side it is essential to develop agriculture methods and techniques.
- iii) There is urgent need for the development of transport and communication network to develop the area.
- iv) To remove illiteracy, the education level must be higher. In elementary stage there should be provision of compulsory and free education facilities in the study area.
- v) Health is the primary and chief resource of human being. For the development purpose it is necessary to become a good health of locality. That is why the facilities of medicine, doctor and proper health care centres must be set up in the study area.
- vi) There is a need to change the social attitude and attributes for the development of fisherman in the area. The social system, social restrictions should be removed for better development of the fisherman in the area.

- vii) There are many other factors which help in improving the socio-economic condition of the fisherman like financial assistance by the government for proper development of the area and also arrangement of training programmes to increase fish production etc.

X. FUTURE PROSPECTS

Although the traditional Assamese fisherman depends on traditional methods for fishing, some future prospects have been noticed in their life and culture which are affecting the core of their culture to some extent. Changes are noticed in respect of religions, beliefs and practices. Also changes are noticed in their fish capturing methods. Recently emphasis has been given for scientific fish farming in bills and community tank through awareness, training, government support. There is a positive trend in fish productivity during the recent past. With a view to achieve the goal towards self-sufficiency in fish production the traditional Assamese fisherman should be aware about the developmental program/schemes. So, economic growth itself will not be sustained unless preceded by improvements in human development.

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