

Assessing spatial inequality within Koch Rajbanshi community people of Koch Behar

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I. INTRODUCTION

Here we are talking about spatial inequality, but before starting to write about it, we need to understand what we mean when we talk about spatial inequality. According to Wikipedia “Spatial inequality is defined as the distribution of qualities/resources and services like welfare in bias or unequal amounts. It occurs as a result of greed, religion, race or culture. Spatial inequality is countered by equal distribution of resources and services”. It has been observed that people are living in same socioeconomic conditions in the same cluster.

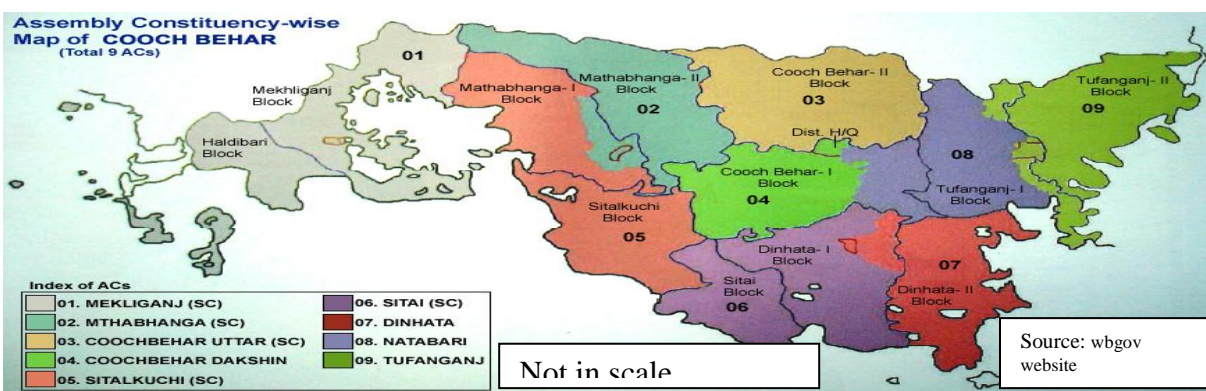
Historically, people are living in communities and these communities rarely give opportunity to the other community to mingle. Particularly this character makes this group vulnerable to inequality (Khan 1911). If we see the major reasons for spatial inequality we found that religion, culture and ethnicity are in top. Studies on spatial inequality have become important in recent years, as it remains persist in the society and rapidly increasing, the spatial dimensions of inequality have begun to attract considerable policy interest also. In our country as well as other developing countries, there is a sense that spatial and regional inequality, of economic activity, incomes and social indicators, is on the increase (Lall et al, 2005). To some extent this may be a normal feature of economic growth, as new activities develop around coasts or border regions. But are such patterns transient

or permanent? What factors are conducive to the spread of activity from booming to backwards regions? Also important in the policy debate is a perceived sense that increasing internal spatial inequality is related to greater openness of economies and to globalization in general.

When market at risk, we expect the fruit of development should reach the peoples. Spatial inequality ruined all the benefits. The growth of mega-cities may be one aspect of this policy, but responses are far from clear. Should infrastructure expenditure be concentrated or dispersed? Should internal migration flows to be restricted or facilitated in order to narrow spatial wage gaps? Spatial inequality is a dimension of overall inequality, but it has added significance when spatial and regional divisions align with political and ethnic tensions to undermine social and political stability. So here, our ultimate objective is to see the socioeconomic condition of Koch Rajbanshi community people and to examine whether they are in an unequal situation.

The onset of the above reasons here we try to select a distinct ethnic group i.e Koch Rajbanshi community to see how of spatial inequality curve the development of this society. Koch Behar was the capital of Koch kingdom. Since a long time Koch Rajbanshi people are living here.

The map is only for representation purpose:



Although Koch Behar is the only place where we get a large number of Koch Rajbanshi people, and on the basis of this we select this place for our study. According to Sir Edward Gait, “True Koches were a Mongoloid race, very closely allied to the Meches and Garos; and we find that in Jalpaiguri, Koch Behar and Goalpara, who, though dark, have a distinctly Mongoloid physiognomy, or else a mixed breed, in which the Mongoloid

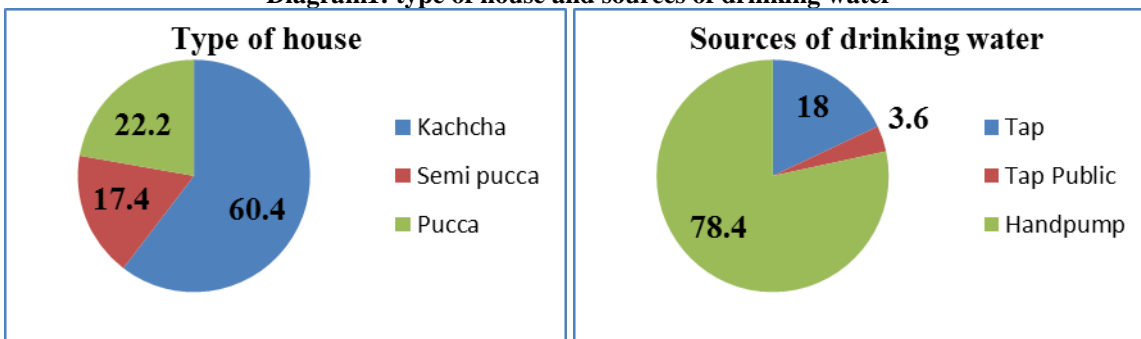
element usually predominant”. Two captures the socioeconomic condition of this community 500 household has been selected using two stage sampling procedures.

To study the socioeconomic characteristics of the community here, we try to focus on the basic economic, social and demographic indicators. For this reason simple frequency tables and cross tabulation has been done of various variables.

Lorenz curve will be drawn to see the existence of inequality within the community. A social connection with someone having migrant experience at a particular destination represents an important resource that can be utilized to facilitate movement. We also review the policy which has been implemented by government to remove the inequality and try to see its pros and cons. There are near about eight different groups of people live in Koch Behar. Among them the Koch Rajbanshi community is a most prominent ethnic group of people in the district because

they were from the beginning of our known history. Since the attainment of independence, this particular ethnic group of people alienated from the side of the ruling class and rulers of West Bengal who dint of their plans and activities failed to command the support and respect of them. If we see the type of house they live, we found at least 60 percent household living in kuchcha houses followed by 22 percent in pucca and 17 percent in semi-pucca houses.

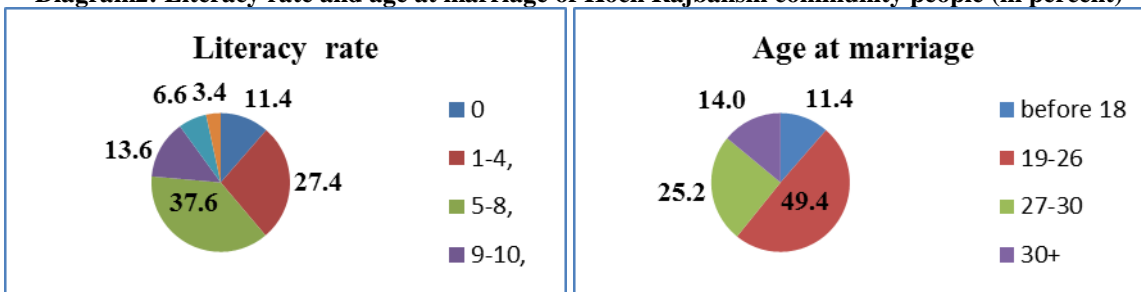
Diagram1: type of house and sources of drinking water



The sources of drinking water are also shown that the most of the houses depend on hand pump followed by 18 percent of

tap water and near about 4 percent depend on public water supply.

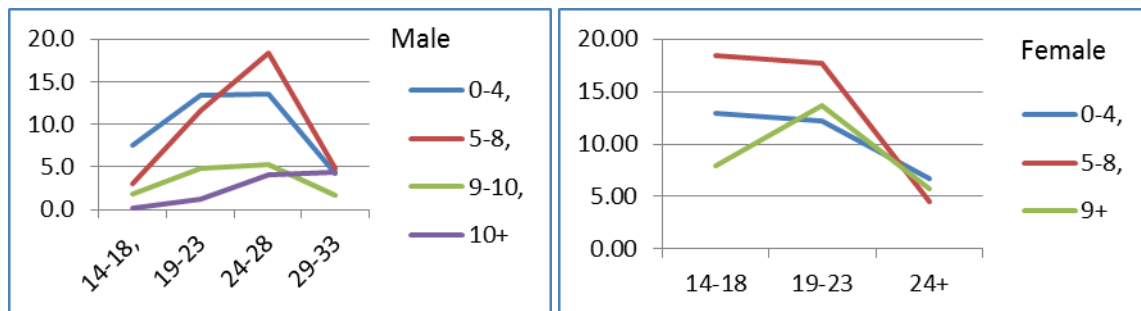
Diagram2: Literacy rate and age at marriage of Koch Rajbanshi community people (in percent)



The average literacy rate is 88.6 percent. Most of the people have below 8th standard of schooling. This phenomenon has a historical background and persists till date. The King himself liked to give the real power of administration into the hands of educated persons who were outsiders from Southern and Eastern Bengal which further alienate them from the mainstream. Eminent scholars have written that during ancient period general people of Koch province remained engaged with playing and

household chores till the age of 17-18 without undertaking any kind of studies. Women were involved in breeding of cocoons and weaving the yarn. If we see the age at marriage of the Koch Rajbanshi people we certainly found that most of the people are married in their lower age. These because they are unable to find any other work and got married in early age. They also have a very low level of education.

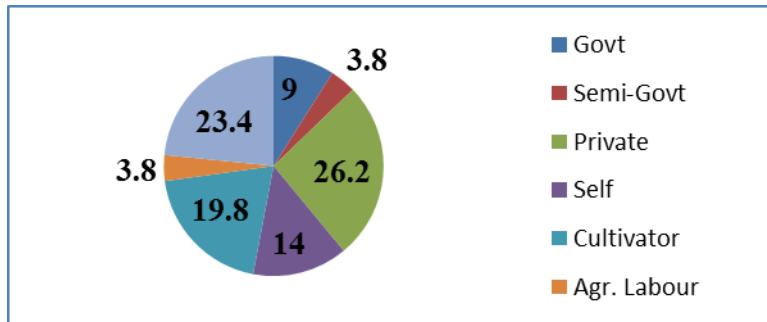
Diagram3: Interaction between age at marriage and education of Koch Rajbanshi community people.



In the above picture the vertical axis shows the year of schooling and the horizontal axis shows the age at marriage. Interestingly, it shows that irrespective of educational attainment, age of marriage for girls is low compared to their male counterpart. Average age of marriage is 24 years for Male and 20 years for females. At present most of the Koch Rajbanshi family hold on an average 0.35bigha. For a five member family this

amount of land is very small considered that this land is average in quality and most do not have the irrigation facility. Mass level mall practice of operation 'Barga' decimates the land owners. We found that about 65 percent of households have 4 or more members.

Diagram4: Occupational pattern of Koch Rajbanshi community people (in percent)



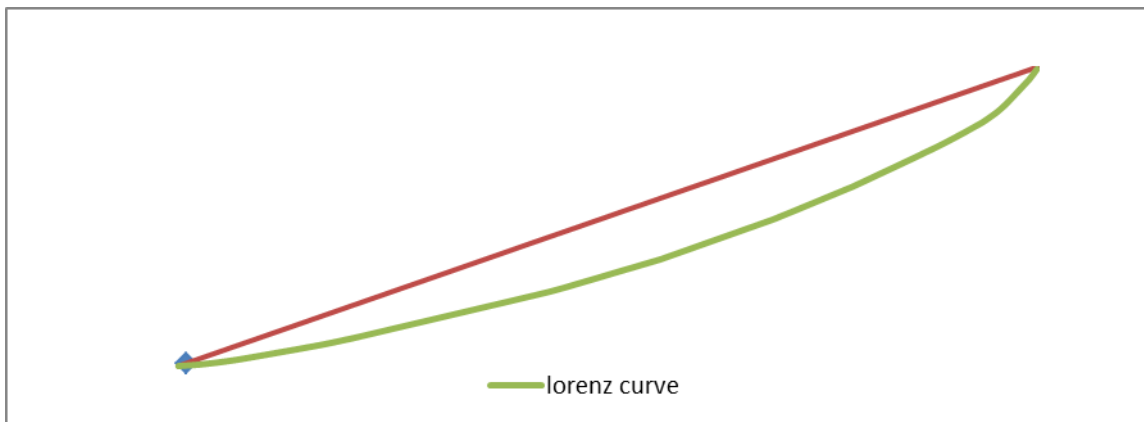
Most of the Koch Rajbanshi community people working with the non-agricultural sector. This is because of migration. People migrate to the other places to work industries.

Among the entire household belongs to Koch Rajbanshi community people, only near about 27 percent of them having at least one member residing outside, working and earning money. If we see the reasons for migration, we found that 83 percent people migrate to get a work and only 13 percent are going to outside for settlement purpose. As more people go outside for

work more amounts of remittances received the sending place which ultimately helps to develop the region.

Although the average household income is just Rs.5898, the lorenz curve shows that there us very little existence of income inequality. The upper part of the curve is little flat means within community only a few household earn little more money compare to the others.

Diagram5: Lorenz curve



If we compare all the above indicators to the state or national level, we found that all the indicators of Koch Rajbanshi households are below average which strongly suggests that existence of inequality. The existence of inequality within the community is very little. To remove the spatial inequality we must try to improve the condition of Koch Rajbanshi people will may possible by improving socioeconomic factors like education, health and providing more infrastructure such as roads, drinking water, and agro based industries.

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