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SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF HILL COMMUNITY– A FIELD STUDY ON RISHOP VILLAGE OF DARJEELING DISTRICT.

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Abstract:

Socio-economic status of plain and hill area differ to a large degree from each other. Such type of study is very much common for both the areas. Rishop village of Darjeeling is very much interesting from social as well as economic point of view. On one hand tourism is a part of their economic life, on the other hand they are exceptional in West Bengal in terms of language, religion, way of life style etc. All these are due to the especial category of physical, and atmospheric set up.

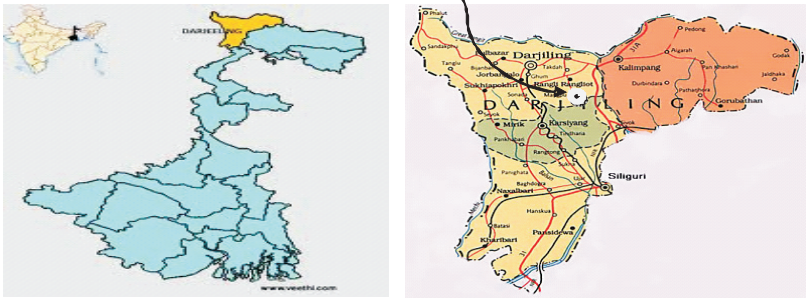
KEYWORDS:

Demographic condition, education, religion, house type, occupation, source of energy and water, transport and communication.

INTRODUCTION

Rishop village, sited at Rishop valley (altitude 7080 ft.), is under the Kalimpong police station of Darjeeling district (marked in Figure: 1). The term Rishop has derived from two words, viz: 'Ri' meaning High or lofty and 'Shayap' meaning a forest with age old trees. So literary meaning of this word is high or lofty age old forest. This village is bounded by Linkseka ito the North, Neora national park to the east, Samrian tea estate to the south, Algarh market to the west. Here Humid Tropical type of climate is found. The temperature of summer remains between 8 c - 16 c and that of winter between 3 c – 8 c. Average annual rainfall is 110 Inch. Pine, Fur, Birch, Rododendronand Orchid are grown here as major vegetation. Rorgoly river is nearest river.

Figure: 1- Location map (Rishpop village).



PROBLEMS:

The problems of the regions are-

- a) There is no government hospital and primary health centre.
- b) There is insufficiency in electricity.
- c) Drinking water problem.
- d) Tele-communication system is not enough.
- e) Educational problem- mainly the higher education.
- f) Communication problem.

METHODOLOGY:

- i) Pre-field- a) Selection of the study area, b) To find out the problem of the study area, c) Collection of maps, d) Selection of suitable sampling techniques, f) Preparation of suitable questionnaire.
- ii) Field- a) Generation of primary data through field survey.
- iii) Post-field- a) Preparation of suitable tables, b) Preparation of suitable maps and diagrams, c) Analysis of data, d) Finally concluding remarks about getting results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Social and demographic life:

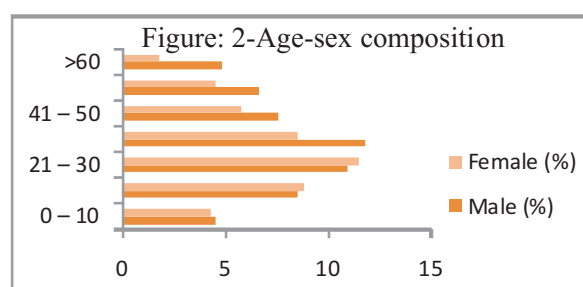
This village was established in 1991 with only 381 people. Survey has been conducted on 60 households.

A disparity is found in sex composition as well as in age-sex composition. About 54.80 % of total population are male, where as 45.20 % are female. But if we justify the age-sex composition (See Table: 1 and Figure: 2) then we come to know that within 11 – 20 and 21 – 30 years of age group, female percentage is than the male percentage. Within 0 – 10 difference of this percentage is meagre. This is a good sign perhaps because of increasing consciousness among the mass. But in last three age groups male population leads the female.

Table: 1-Age-sex composition

Age group	Male (%)	Female (%)
0 – 10	4.54	4.24
11 – 20	8.48	8.79
21 – 30	10.90	11.50
31 – 40	11.80	8.48
41 – 50	7.57	5.76
51 – 60	6.67	4.54
>60	4.84	1.80

Source: Field survey (2012).



We can see difference in family members dwelling in this village. About 10 % families contain 4 – 7 members. 63 % families contain 8 – 11 members. 8.30 % families have members above 11.

Level of literacy is very much weak i.e. 65.36 %. Of this 19.39 % are male and 16.97 % are female who have qualified only the primary education. 12.58 % are male and 7.58 % are female who have qualified secondary education. On the other hand 2.42 % are male and 2.12 % are female who have qualified higher secondary education. The percentage of graduate male is 3.33 and that of female is 0.60. There is lack of higher education facility.

Followers of Buddhism are 70 %, percentage of Hindu population are 21 %, whereas Christian population are 9 %. As almost all of them are Nepali, thus perhaps due to racial causes they are demanding for a separate state as Gorkhaland being divided from West Bengal. Almost all of them are used to say the Nepali language as mother tongue. But for the purpose of tourism they try to communicate through Hindi, Bengali, and English.

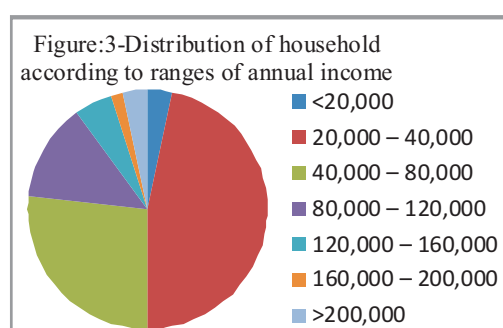
Percentage of wooden house is 45 %, that of pukka house is 15 % and mixed is 40 %. Thus it can be inferred from here that wooden and mixed houses are dominating house type of this village. They use water of Neora river by pipeline supply. Beside this, they use to do water harvesting in plastic tank directly from roof of house. After this they do filter this water by boiling. Wood is an leading energy source to heat themselves during bitterly cold weather.

ECONOMIC LIFE:

The occupations in which the people of this village are engaged are agriculture, hotel, car driving, business service and others. 52.42 % of total population (not the total working population) are engaged in agriculture. 7.27 % are engaged in transport and communication sector (car driving). 26.96 % in household work and 3.03 % in service. The main problems associated with the agriculture are high slope and lake of drainage. Though the first one is to some extent eradicated by stepping the slope but second one can not be eradicated because of hard surface which can not be possible to drag to get the groundwater.

Table: 2- Annual income range.

Classes of annual income	No. of household surveyed
<20,000	2
20,000 – 40,000	28
40,000 – 80,000	16
80,000 – 120,000	8
120,000 – 160,000	3
160,000 – 200,000	1
>200,000	2



Source: Field survey (2012).

From the Table: 2 we make an understand about the annual income. No. of household surveyed is 60. Almost half (28) of which lies in the class of 20 to 40 thousand rupees. More than 25 % people (16) have income within the range of 40 to 80 thousand rupees (Figure: 3). The population are decreasing with increase in income. We can see that the people of Rishop village are mainly engaged in primary works. Among all the workers, 80 % works at local place and 20 % works at outside.

Livestock farming is another unavoidable source of income for them. Of all livestock hen is prime (50.31 %) exceeding half of the total. This is followed by goat (22.86%), cow (16.35 %), dog (3.77 %) and ox (2.52 %). All these live stock are of great demand in local area because of cold weather.

The main problem of the Rishop village is road problem. In this area transport and communication is no good because of the ruggedness of relief. 6.64 % families uses motor cycle and 26.67 % family uses jeep for mode of travelling and rest of the families used to walk to travel in locality.

A leading portion of Rishop villagers income is generated from tourism. “Over the years a number of tourist accommodations have come up at Rishop.” Though it is a good sign for regional economy but during the field survey it has been noticed (though the data are not available now) that young generation have lack interest in higher education because of tourism which has provided chance of income.

A reasonable portion of the entire energy used by them is devoted to increase body heat during intolerable winter. Generally the wood is used for this. This is the compensating use to the freeze user people of plain area in peak summer.

Conclusion:

From above discussion, several problems have been noted. Most highlighting of those are problem of health service, i.e. primary health centre is 29 km. away; drinking water scarcity i.e. during dry season many streams do not flow; road problem etc. Tourism is a great economic resource for the villagers. That must be encouraged. But young generation should also be encouraged for higher education. North Bengal University is only university for them. A separate university should be established in hill for them. Then they can be an economic man, i.e., “a theoretical being who has perfect knowledge of an economy and has the ability to act his or her own interests to maximum profits”(Mayhew. S, 2007). All these must be solved by the government. Such type of study gets importance to find out and searching the way of solving

the problems as discussed here.

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