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Journey of a Village: An Anthropological Perspective in the Light of Re-Study

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Abstract:

Rampur is the village studied by Oscar Lewis having its' original name Rani khera, situated near Delhi. This is the restudy after 62 years after Oscar Lewis in 1952-54. Thereality of the village changed its perspectives. Now this might be called as urban village. Re-study of villages now became the cutting edge research. The area now became a urban village. It is very important to say that even there is a number of change and transformation in the village but the philosophy of the central theme of the village became same and it goes in the same tune. The people now also feel very united themselves as a member of the village rani khera. There is a new flavor came out in the present study that Oscar Lewis has not focused on the women economy as because of strong effect of patriarchy. But now the scenario changed and woman is coming in the leading part, and some of them are in a mentionable job. The strong effect of patriarchy became lucid but the value system and the philosophy became same, even in the light of westernization and modenisation.

1. Introduction

Rampur is the village studied by Oscar Lewis. This is pseudo name. the original name is Rani khera. This is the restudy after 62 years after Oscar Lewis in 1952-54. Thereality of the village changed its perspectives. Now this might be called as an urban village. Re-study of any village has a great tradition in anthropology. Considering the re-study anthropological survey of India taken a project for re-study of the villages. there are so many problems in the study, but a good results came out. So re-study of villages now became the cutting edge research.

The village is now situated in the following political sphere:-

- Tehsil Name : North West Delhi
- District : North West Delhi
- State : Delhi
- Language : Hindi
- Time zone: IST (UTC+5:30)
- Elevation / Altitude: 217 meters. Above Seal level
- Telephone Code / Std Code: 011
- Pin Code : 110081
- Post Office Name : Kanjhawla

Traditionally nations have been represented, to themselves and to each other, by their governing classes. The Roman, one remembers, was a Senator; the supposedly typical Englishman is a member of *the* Establishment; Indian culture often turns out on further inspection to be Brahmin culture.

This is because, normally, the governing classes are also educated. They have therefore the capacity as well as the power to impress their image of themselves on the world. In the past this did not perhaps matter very much. Today, in the new world of egalitarianism and the socialistic pattern. it matters desperately. When everybody has a vote, everybody is a member of the governing classes. If, therefore, government is expressing coherently the people's ideals, and if nations are to have some understanding of each other's aspirations, the ways of thought and life of all sections of society, and not just of the few educated and influential, must be recorded and made known.

The example has been set largely by America, the country in which everybody has belonged to the governing classes longest. As the common man accedes to power elsewhere, sociology takes roots in other countries too. Here the great increase in the importance of the villager since independence has naturally been followed by a series of village studies, studies in the publication of which the 'Economic Weekly' has been the pioneer.

Of these studies Professor Lewis's book is one. Professor Lewis is primarily an observer and recorder. His one really wild generalisation is his title. His is not a study of Northern India; or even of Haryana. It is a study of a particular village of Dabas .Tats in the vicinity of Delhi. A village in Meerut or His-sar would have less bicycles, less people employed outside: probably less

matriculates. A village in the East U P or Bihar would have a quite different caste structure, probably different attitudes to work and different marriage customs, almost certainly a different power distribution. (Zinkin,1959).

For his own village of Rampur, however, Professor Lewis is a careful and thorough observer. He gives us all the external facts we need, who owns the land, how the population is divided over castes, how the jajmani system works, how the festivals are observed, how people get married, how they look on the gods, and how they divide up into factions. He does not tell us much of their inner feelings about each other, or of the sort of religious experience the people have, or of what Jats feel about Chamars and vice-versa (as distinct from how they act towards each other in certain well-defined situations). But such description would require a psychiatrist or a novelist, and Professor Lewis does not pretend to be giving us more than sociology.

Within his self-imposed limitations Professor Lewis is admirably comprehensive and beautifully impartial. If he has views on what village life ought to be like, he never intrudes them. He confines himself to telling us what it is like. Unfortunately he often does so with unnecessary jargon and his socio-grams are not very clear. And he perhaps exaggerates the importance of factions.

To generalise from what he tells us about Rampur is perhaps to fall into the very pit Professor Lewis has so carefully avoided, but certain of his facts are at least suggestive of wider conclusions. The jajmani system, for instance, is breaking down because the jajman every now and then, tries to pay less, and the kamin occasionally tries to get more. Each time this happens, some jajmans learn to do without kamins by doing the work for themselves and perhaps even for others, and some kamins drift away to other jobs.

Tenancy is not important in this village, only 1/12 of the land is tenant cultivated, but this 1/12 is not recorded; people know enough about land reforms to take care to get their land recorded as self-cultivated, and when they live in the village or the tenant is a near relation, this is not difficult.

The Delhi revenue records are of a form and kept in a way that seems to invite the patwari to be corrupt; they have none of the simplicity of the Bombay system. Nevertheless, now that so many villagers have some education, the willingness to pay the patwari's bribes has obviously gone down. He is having a temporary hey day because of consolidation, but once consolidation is over, his already lessened opportunities will lessen further.

The education which is defeating the patwari is now becoming general. Nearly all the Jat boys go to school, for instance, and about 1/3 of the girls. One wonders what a generation of this will do to the festivals people so seldom seem to worry about the meaning of, or to the traditional ways of dealing with disease which Professor Lewis describes so carefully.

The dominant fact about Rampur, however, is that it is a Jat village. Two thirds of the inhabitants are Jats and an even larger percentage of the land belongs to them. They control everything; when they quarrel with the other castes, they nearly always win. This is perhaps the situation Pandit Nehru hopes to break down by cooperative joint farming; but one wonders why a Rampur Jat should ever agree thus to destroy his own importance.

Rampur is only one village. Before one draws conclusions for national policy, one needs a score of studies like Professor Lewis's. But they need to be made quickly, for at present policy is made by urban intellectuals for the satisfaction of urban intellectuals. After all they do not know what the villagers would like.

There are a number of changes has taken place in the village in course of time. This might happen due to migration, modern education and change in economy. Specially Oscar Lewis focused by Mexican perspectives, on the influenced by Robert Redfield. Considering the present perspective, this restudy done in the light of Indian perspective. There should be some philosophical differences in Oscar Lewis and his present study. The villagers are very cordial and gave us the warm welcome at the beginning. When we put the book of Oscar Lewis they are wondering. We met with few persons who met with Oscar Lewis. They are very eager to sharing their sweet memories with Oscar Lewis. We met with Mr. Singh, a very old person belongs to Jat community met with Lewis, identified the persons those who are seen in the photograph given by Lewis, we are overwhelmed. The critical study of Lewis produce a lucid, scientific understandable description in the book. He focussed on the complex social network and specially on the structural- functional aspects of the village. The study was done following the standard methodology and standard protocol (Bernard,2010).

Oscar Lewis invited by Government of India during 1st Five year plan as expert adviser. It has been came out from the memory of the villagers that he suppose to come by an old car and this might be the first car entered in the village. The children of the village are very fond of this car. All are ready volunteer themselves for the fieldwork and get a joy ride of the car at the end of the day. The villagers feel proud of him and Lewis has a great impact over the villagers.

There is the old heritage places and the houses existed as seen in the book of Lewis. The villagers feel proud to keep it intact when after a number of renovation work and modifications. We have identified the places.

Considering the land alienation all the lands of the village owned mainly by Jats and few by Brahmins. Lands are greatly valued in the village as because they are traditionally agriculturist. When we asked the informant the meaning of the word 'Jat' they answered that it means 'traditional agriculturist'. The Brahmins and the Jats has the Kaim- Jajman relationship, and the suppose to gave the land to the Brahmins. In the study of Oscar Lewis he mentioned about two Pana and four Tholla. i.e

- i. Pana – Dhan Singh
 - a. Tholla - Teka
 - b. Tholla – Dhan Singh.
- ii. Pana – Harditt
 - a. Thola – Jaimal
 - b. Tholla – Harditt

It means like small pockets as para or tolla. When we asked for, they replied there it is but not functional as because the panchayet system replaced this concept and land alienation replaced this old concept. Now in the modern perspective panchayet system abolished

and replaced by the Modern formed Municipality. After formation of municipality people are getting more facilities and public amenities.

We had a visit during our study with the family members of the Pana – Dhan Singh and Harditt. They feel proud of it.

There are different types of land in the village

- a. Habitation land – owned by by the villagers of all caste.
- b. Agricultural land – owned by the Jats and Brahmins.
- c. Communal land – owned by the Jats
- d. Common Land – no one but Jats are claiming it was there.
- e. Government land – owned by government.

Presently government acquire lands for the Metro railway (DMRC) and given the Jats as Rs. 17 lacs per acre as compensation, but Jats are very much unhappy of it as because the actual cost of the land is Rs. 50 lack per acre.

Changes have been taken place in the land use pattern, steaming fro the land pressure and other factors. There has been an increase in the number of individual holdings and decrease in their size. Moreover, land holders are afraid to ret the land, because of the occupancy rights which may be gained by the renter.

William H Wisler introduced the term Jajmani system in the vocabulary of Indian sociology through his book The Hindu Jajmani system where he described in detail how different caste group interact with each other in the production and exchange of goods and services. In different parts of India different terms are used to describe this economic interaction among the castes for example in Maharashtra the term Balutar is used. However, in sociological literature jajmani system has come to be accepted as a general term to describe the economic interaction between the castes at the village level. This system is also a ritual system concerned with the aspects of purity and pollution as with economic aspects. It functions so that the highest caste remains pure while the lowest castes absorb pollution from them. Villages are composed of number of jatis each having its occupational speciality. Jajmani system is essentially an agriculture based system of production and distribution of goods and services. Through jajmani relations these occupational jatis get linked with the landowning dominant caste. The jajmani system operates around the families belonging to the land owning dominant caste the numbers of which are called jajmans. The land owning caste occupy a privileged position in the jajmani relations. The interaction between occupational castes and the land owning castes take place within the framework of non-reciprocal and asymmetrical type of relations. The land owning castes maintain a paternalistic attitude of superiority towards their occupational castes that are called Kamins in North India. The term Kamin means one who works for somebody or serves him.

This pattern has been seen in the village as reported by Oscar Lewis and also depicted in the present study. Considering the land teancy, we have seen wto types as proposed by Oscar Lewis.

- a. Malik Kamil – the land owned by any person and have defenite papers / Patta and registered in the govt. office.
- b. Malik Kabza – the land is owned by any family generation after generation but do not have the proper papers / Patta and have not registered in the govt office.

After a long discussion with the villagers we have tried to identified the reason, the Jats registered their lands and get the Patta and the lower caste people did not have the sufficient money to get registered to the govt. office. Any way the land mortgaged to the Jats by the low caste people has been registered by the Jats in thir own name and the lower caste people land less in this way.

Now during the share cropping the lower caste people getting land against Rs 10-12,000 per year for per acre of land. They have the right to enjoy the crops of the land as mucha as possible. They are getting crops twice or thrice in a year.

Every caste have their own traditinal occupation but the schenarip are changing in the present perspectives. But during the occasion they are liable to perform their own traditional occupation. i.e. the Chippi caste are the bearer of water, this was their traditional caste occupation. Now during the marriage ceremony of any higher caste people Chippy have to give water to the family as an ornamental manner. Now the traditional caste occupaton and agriculture are not sufficient to meet up the livelihood so all the villagers are engaged in few other works.

We have seen one change that previously the higher caste people did not get waer and ‘ Hucca’ from the lower caste people. But now the social norms are lossening its rigidity. The lower caste people running a number of shops including the food shops and the higher caste people getting the things and edibles from them. But they have certein restriction to take ‘hucca’ from the lower caste people even now. But as a result of modernisation this believes also loosening and yeang adults are sitting together and taking the smokings together.

Migratin caused the much change in the village. The people as reported by Oscar Lewis was Jat, Brahmin, Camar, Bhangi, Kumhar, Jhinvar, Khati, Dhobi, Nai, Chipi, Lohar, Baniya. But now the people of the other caste came there in the village and even the muslims settled there in the village. Probably the people of other caste and other religion came for labouring and also for sharecropping and for few other works, but they settled there. In cpruse of time ehey are engaged in other works.

In terms of Karl Polanyi's classification of exchange system -Jajmani exchange can be termed as redistributive system of exchange. The Functionalist view of jajmani system regards it as the basis of self-sufficiency, unity, harmony and stability in the village community. However the Marxist scholars hold a very different opinion. They regard the jajmani system as essentially exploitative, characterized by a latent conflict of interest which could not crystallize due to the prevalent social setup. Thus if in future the conditions of the lower caste improve an open conflict between the lower and upper caste is inevitable. Oscar Lewis who studied Rampur village near Delhi and Biedelmn has been critical of the Jajmani system which they regard as exploitative. According to them the members of occupational jatis are largely landless labourers and have no resources to wage a struggle against the dominant caste out of the compulsion of the need for survival. They succumb to all injustice perpetuated by the landowning dominant caste who enjoy both economic and political power. Scholars like Berreman, Harold Gould and Pauline Kolenda etc accept that there is an element of

truth in both the functionalist and Marxist views of the jajmani system. They believe that consensus and harmony as well as conflict and exploitation are prevalent in the village society. According to Dumont jajmani system makes use of hereditary personal relationships to express the division of labour. This system is a ritual expression rather than just an economic arrangement. S.C Dube refers to the system as corresponding to the presentation and counter presentation by which castes as a whole are bound together in a village which is more or less universal in nature. Leach believes that the system maintains and regulates the division of labour and economic interdependence of castes. In the previous scenario same has been reported by Oscar Lewis and considering the present scenario it has been seen that there are few in feeling of the higher caste people of the village. They have tried to maintain a distance of the new settlers of the village. In a narrative of the person belongs to the higher caste they suppose not ready send their children in the same school with the children belongs to the lower caste and the new settlers. Generally the children of higher caste go to the private school and the lower caste to the government sponsored schools. The newcomers might have a cultural shock and there is a plenty of chance of diffusion of culture from lower caste and new comers to the higher caste people. For that reason higher caste people are getting aside their children from the lower caste people and in a special grooming process up to the logic making age.

The Jats are the dominant caste, they are the main decision maker of the village.

It was asked to them regarding the marriage pattern they answered that they do not prefer inter caste marriage and it was not happen earlier in the village. Even in the lower caste people the inter caste marriage happened and they probably settled in the outside of the village in Delhi city.

The higher case people and also the people of lower caste people they are very exposed of modernisation. So now all of them are very fond of all modern facilities and livelihood.

The village has now its own modern water supply system and everybody uses the water from it. The previous sources of water was a big pond and a big well. There was few restrictions for taking water from it, Oscar Lewis mentioned about these in his book and given the photographs. Now these sources are dying and these are in un-use condition. The old people of the village and the original inhabitants has a repentance for dying these two sources, as because these to was their pride and they tied these two with their life.

It is very important to say that even there is a number of change and transformation in the village but the philosophy of the central theme of the village became same and it goes in the same tune. The people now also feel very united themselves as a member of the village rani khera. There is a new flavor came out in the present study that Oscar Lewis has not focused on the women economy as because of strong effect of patriarchy. But now the scenario changed and woman is coming in the leading part, and some of them are in a mentionable job. The strong effect of patriarchy became lucid but the value system and the philosophy became same, even in the light of westernization and modenisation.

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