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## **An Analytical Study Of The Socio-Economic And Political Status Of The Fishermen Community In Golakganj, Dhubri District Of Assam (INDIA)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study relates to the socio-economic and political characteristics of the fishermen community in Golakganj, Dhubri district of Assam, India. In the study a total sample of respondents was 60 families and head of the family was considered as respondent for collection of the data. The study revealed that highest number of fishers that are 41.6% who are from the age group of 41years to 50 years. The literacy among the respondents is very poor. Among the literates, none has been found to have education above the Xth standard. According to the study, 75% of respondents have families with 5 to 7 members as the community has not adopted the idea of family planning again the result shows that 35% of fishermen their family income is less than rupees five thousand only. Regarding the electoral participation in the election campaigns, 30% respondents have said they have no interest Interestingly, 8.3% of the respondents have said that they campaign for the sake of money or profit making and they are least bothered about which party wins and forms the government.

**Keywords:** Fishermen, Socio-Economic, Political characteristics, Golakganj, Profit making.

### **INTRODUCTION**

There is a great deal of potential for direct and indirect employment related to our country's inland wetlands. However, this can only be done when they are well organized and managed through the effective participation of the relevant primary and secondary stakeholders. Fishermen are a key stakeholder group whose ability and willingness to work and work is

highly dependent on the prospects of the fishing industry. The flood plain wetlands are important fisheries resources in Assam, with the potential not only to meet the state's domestic demand for fish, but also to export fish to other Indian states. As a result, in addition to providing cheap human nutrition, wetland resources can also contribute to the state economy of Assam. However, the significant role that it can play has yet to be recognized. Wetlands provide numerous other direct and indirect benefits to society, particularly to fishers' livelihoods. In India, development of fishermen is often restricted to the traditional fishing communities near the coastal areas in maritime states while the interest of those associated with inland fishery is relatively neglected [1]. To meet demand, the state is importing fish from other Indian states such as Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. The fishing community is important not only in the use of wetlands, but also in their conservation. The research on the socioeconomic condition of the flood plain wetlands fisher community in India is very limited. As a result, a lack of information in this area is a significant impediment to the implementation of developmental programs for them. The current study was carried out with the intention of investigating the ground state and analyzing information about the socio-economic and political status of the fishing community, a marginalized, Scheduled caste community in Golakganj.

## **SELECTION OF AREA AND METHODOLOGY**

Golakganj is situated on the east bank of Gangadhar river and surrounded by many wetlands ('beels' in local language). The researcher took the study area Golakganj because the fishermen community of the area is used to go for fishing in nearby wetlands namely 'Gobrachara beel', 'Rakhalpat beel', 'Vindow beel', 'Pokiaga beel', 'Nandini beel' 'Chakla beel' etc. Golakganj is a census town situated in Golakganj Circle of Dhubri district of Assam. As per the Population Census 2011, there are a total 1,857 families residing in the Golakganj town area. The total population of Golakganj is 8,244 out of which 4,276 are males and 3,968 are females and thus the Average Sex Ratio of Golakganj is 928. The fishermen community mostly belongs to Schedule Caste. As per the census data the total population of Schedule Caste community is 2,004 out of which 1,054 are men and 950 are women. Schedule Caste (SC) constitutes 24.3% of total population in Golakganj. Among the SC population near about 200 families are from fishing community. These 200 families resides in South Tokrerchara Part-III and Part- IV of Golakganj town area. From each part 30 families were randomly selected and thus a total of 60 (sample size) fisher families were visited randomly for interview.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The current study will investigate the socio-economic and political status of the fishing community of Golakganj town. The researcher surveyed 60 families and make interview with the main head of the family.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age. (n=60)

| Age- Years | Number of fishers |            |
|------------|-------------------|------------|
|            | Frequency         | Percentage |
| Below 30   | 11                | 18%        |
| 31-40      | 18                | 30%        |
| 41-50      | 25                | 41.6%      |
| Above 50   | 06                | 10%        |
| Total      | 60                | 100%       |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

In the present study it was found that the highest number of fishers that are 41.6% who are from the age group of 41years to 50 years where 30% represents the age group 31years to 40 years. 30 % represents the age group 31 years to 40 years followed by 18% are below 30 years of age category. The table-1 indicate that young people mainly below 30 years they are less in numbers than the age group above 40 years means the fishing profession loss its popularity among the young people as they attracted to other occupation.

**Table 2.** Distribution of respondents by education, family member, monthly income, type of house, poverty level, fishing vessel & gears, insurance (n=60)

| Sl.No | Variables            | Category                  | Frequenc<br>y | Percentage<br>% |       |
|-------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1     | Education            | Illiterate                | <b>17</b>     | <b>28.33</b>    |       |
|       |                      | literate                  | Below class-V | 23              | 53.48 |
|       |                      |                           | Class VI to X | 20              | 46.51 |
|       |                      |                           | > class X     | 00              | 0     |
|       | Total literate       | <b>43</b>                 | <b>71.66</b>  |                 |       |
| 2     | Family Member        | <4                        | 11            | 18.33           |       |
|       |                      | 5-7                       | 45            | 75              |       |
|       |                      | >7                        | 04            | 6.66            |       |
| 3     | Monthly Income (INR) | <5000                     | 21            | 35              |       |
|       |                      | 5000-7000                 | 15            | 25              |       |
|       |                      | 7001-9000                 | 19            | 31.66           |       |
|       |                      | >9000                     | 05            | 08.33           |       |
| 4     | Type of House        | Tin-Fence Made            | 50            | 83.33           |       |
|       |                      | Semi Building             | 10            | 16.66           |       |
|       |                      | Building                  | 0             | 0               |       |
| 5     | Poverty level        | APL (Above Poverty Level) | 00            | 0               |       |
|       |                      | BPL (Below Poverty Level) | 60            | 100             |       |
| 6     | Fishing vessel       | Available                 | 08            | 13.33           |       |
|       |                      | Not available             | 52            | 86.66           |       |
|       | Fishing gears        | Available                 | 24            | 40              |       |
|       |                      | Not available             | 36            | 60              |       |
| 7     | Insurance            | Insured                   | 14            | 23.33           |       |
|       |                      | Not Insured               | 46            | 76.66           |       |

Source: Field Survey,2019

It has been noted that 71.66% of respondents are literate, compared to 28.33% who are illiterate (Table: 2, serial no-1). The lowest literacy rate in the state is in the Dhubri district, and the literacy levels among fishers in this study are significantly lower than the district's average. Education is essential for helping fishermen understand the technical and financial aspects of their line of work. None of the literate respondents have access to schooling beyond class X, according to the inquiry of their level of education. 53.48% of the respondents have education levels below class V, and only 46.51% fall within the class(VIth - Xth) standard, as indicated in Table: 2, (serial no-1).

According to the study, 75% of respondents have families with 5 to 7 members, compared to 18.33% who have families with fewer than 4 members and 6.66% who have

families with more than 7 members Table: 2, (serial no-2). The family size parameter is a significant socioeconomic indicator because it affects things like family savings, children's education, health, nutrition, households, living standards, and many other things. The outcome suggests that the community has not adopted the idea of family planning.

Only 08.33% of respondents have average family incomes over Rs. 9000 as stated in the table no-2, (series no-3), with 35% having an average family monthly income of less than Rs. 5000, 25% in the range of Rs. 5000 to Rs. 7000, and 31.66% in the range of Rs. 7001 to Rs. 9000. As a result, it is evident that most of the the respondents' income levels are extremely low.

It has been observed that 83.33 % of the respondents' house is of tin-fench made type and 16.66% have semi building type (Table: 2, serial no-4). None of the responders has a bathroom that is sanitary in their home. Many of them utilize an open field on the wetland bank because they don't have latrines in their homes.

It has been revealed that all respondents possess BPL cards from the District Administration, indicating that they are living below the poverty line (Table: 2, serial no-5).

Fishermen utilize several kinds of fishing nets with different mesh sizes as fishing gear, while small country boats are used as fishing vessels. Only 13.33% of the respondents who are fishermen own a boat for fishing, and 86.66% do not have boat for fishing (Table:2, serial no-6). They resort to renting boats for fishing at exorbitant rates or in exchange for a share of the fish caught. Only 40% of the respondent fishers possess their own net for fishing, according to the research, while 60% of the respondents fish with rental nets. Meaning that more than 3/4 of the respondents will pay for a fishing vessel with money or a share of the fish caught.

Only 23.33% of the respondent fishermen had life insurance, and 76.66% of them have no insurance, according to the survey (Table: 2. Serial no-7). Despite the numerous risks to their life associated with the fishing industry, 80% of the fisher respondents still practice their trade uninsured. The situation poses a threat to both the fishermen's future and that of their family.

**Table 3.** Political Participation of respondents ( Lok Sabha election, 2019) (n=60)

| Sr. No | Participation in   | Response | Frequency                | %         |       |
|--------|--------------------|----------|--------------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1      | Voting             | Yes      | 52                       | 86.66     |       |
|        |                    | No       | 08                       | 13.33     |       |
| 2      | Election Campaign  | Yes      | Personal Interest        | 11        | 18.33 |
|        |                    |          | Social service           | 12        | 20    |
|        |                    |          | Profit making            | 05        | 8.33  |
|        |                    |          | Political Party Interest | 14        | 23.33 |
|        |                    |          | Total                    | <b>42</b> | 70    |
|        |                    | No       |                          | <b>18</b> | 30    |
| 3      | Attaining Meetings | Yes      | 38                       | 63.33     |       |
|        |                    | No       | 22                       | 36.66     |       |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The purpose of the study, which focused on the Lok Sabha election 2019, was to comprehend and explicate the electoral engagement of the local fishing community. In order to determine the importance of the fishing community in the electoral politics of the research area, it focuses on voter political engagement, which is being investigated. The participatory theory of democracy, which encourages participation from all parties and seeks to advance the interests of the people, is being used to try to understand the electoral activities of the fishermen community.

The vote percentage of the fishers in the area is shown in table 3. 86.66% of the sample respondents, or the majority, gave positive answers. Just 13.33% of those who responded to the sample survey said they didn't vote this time (2019 Lok Sabha election). Therefore, this is encouraging signs for a democracy that majority of people participate in voting.

The motivations for participation in the electoral process are shown in Table 3. One of the most crucial requirements for electoral participation is election campaigning. The respondents gave a variety of justifications, such as: personal interest, social service, profit making, political party interest, etc. According to 18.33% of respondents, a certain party's campaign was driven in part by personal interests. Another element is political party

interest; 23.33% of them claimed to have participated in the election process because of a particular political party. It's interesting to note that 8.33% of respondents claimed to only care about which party forms the government if it means generating money or profit from their campaigning. As a result of their lack of interest, 30% of respondents gave unfavorable feedback.

Table 3 shows that 63.33% of respondents indicated they would be interested in attending meetings sponsored by any political party, while 36.66% indicated they would have no interest in attending such meetings.

## **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

The local fishermen's population is underprivileged, uneducated or semi-illiterate and has little opportunities to transition to other types of employment. The little money they would have been able to save is spent on things like medicine or net maintenance, which go unused for the majority of the year. Numerous fishermen still find themselves in precarious financial situations as a result of their low family income, low literacy rate, large family sizes, and other factors as well as bad financial inputs. The children of fishermen have frequently been forced to look for alternate employment opportunities due to instability in their earning potential from their line of work as fishermen. The role of government as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or local organizations in spreading literacy, or even spreading education remotely through print or electronic media, are necessary prerequisites to prevent potential migration of people away from traditional fishing activities in the near future. Human resource development programs emphasize sanitation and health insurance, better training facilities, application of reduced family standards, and restoration of wetlands up to currently underutilized and need-based public subsidies are some of the ways that can activate fishermen in the area.

Going into the political profile of the fishing community in the study area, we find that this community is gradually becoming active in electoral politics. Although their turnout in the most recent Lok Sabha election was higher than in previous elections, they were much less aware of the entire political scenario in the state. The fishing community is living a very difficult life hence they are expecting more from the government, management, unions and other organizations in the hope put an end to their miseries. In addition, they gradually became interested in political activities that would increase their participation in the political sphere. This is a good sign in a democratic process.

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