

Border and Its Effects on Village Institutions: A Sociological Study of Jammu District

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Abstract

Present paper is divided into two parts. First section deals with caste system and its effects on the people during evacuation whereas second part focuses on matrimonial processes of boys and girls and how border is affecting it. Both caste and marriage are important aspects of village life. There is a continuous ceasefire violation on border which create disturbance for border area residents. The tensions always remain in border area and these areas get affected due to the firing and shelling. People get displaced due to disturbance and the whole social structure gets divided into parts. Study is confined to the rural border belt of Jammu district. Agriculture is the major occupation in selected villages as agriculture is a main base of rural economy. Five villages are selected for the study and simple random sampling technique was used to select 280 households in whole.

Key-words: 1. Border, 2. Caste, 3. Effect, 4. Evacuation, 5. Marriage.

I. OBJECTIVE

In present study attempt has been made to get insights about problems people of border area are facing in terms of marriage of their children and caste system due to continuous disturbance on border. Therefore, the broad objective is to study the impact of border on the lives of people living in border area.

II. METHODOLOGY

Present study is qualitative in nature. Both primary and secondary data is used in the study. It is confined to the Khour block of Jammu district (J&K). Five border villages were chosen randomly and those villages were selected which lies within the radius of one kilometer from the Line of Control (LoC). Simple random sampling technique was used to select 280 households in whole. Selected border villages are situated on the rural area of Jammu district.

III. INTRODUCTION

In Indian society, caste is considered as a social identity of an individual to which he/she belongs. There are so many castes in India and it plays an important role in social parameters established by communities. Caste is such an irresistible variable on the bases of which occupations are assigned/ acquired. What makes the Indian society distinct and unique with regard to exclusionary practices is not its economic dimension, but its social roots and shades best manifested through caste-based exclusions. Caste could be regarded as the single most structural element of the Indian society whose dynamic processes in the form of discrimination tend to be overwhelming. Each caste is placed

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at a position in the hierarchy of castes. One cannot change one's caste status though the position of caste may undergo some changes over a period of time (Judge, 2014). The basic principle of the caste system is hierarchy. The essence of hierarchy is the presence of social inequality between castes. The Varna model of the five-fold divisions such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Sudra and Untouchables is an important reference to identify the local hierarchy very easily within the local patterns. In the village the lower castes tend to imitate the dominant or higher castes to upgrade their social positions, but the latter do not allow them to reach their stage (Subramanyam, 2010). The caste system has several unique features ranging from segmental division of society, restriction on occupation, marriage and social interaction to civil rights. An individual's status and social prestige is determined by his position in the varna hierarchy. Brahmin is at the top and Shudra is at the bottom of the hierarchy. Still another group, which was not even included in the social hierarchy, was that of untouchables. Their touch or even reflection could pollute the upper-caste persons. They were kept at the margins though they were performing vital functions for the people in the centre (Judge and Bal, 2009). Caste as a dynamic process subsumes two major institutions of Indian society, namely religion and village. In Indian villages, caste is very much important for the people as they are pre-determined for their recognition in defined castes.

Caste is an important variable of Indian villages so as the selected villages. Agriculture is the main economic activity in the village. People from different castes are involved in agriculture whether agriculture is their primary occupation or secondary occupation. People of different caste interact with each other and dependent on each other whether jajmani system is not prevailing in their village. Currently, jajmani system is not functioning fully but some of the families among barber, carpenter, blacksmith are still providing their services to other castes. But for these castes agriculture is their primary occupation and very less number of people are involved in traditional caste based occupation. Subramanyam (2010) in his work on social exclusion stated that in the agricultural field, people belong to both touchable and untouchable castes collectively work together, they touch and eat with each other. But similar situation cannot be seen at the household of the upper or dominant caste. Same situation observed in selected villages of border area that the landowner and low caste agricultural labour smoke, drink and eat together when involved in agricultural activities but not at the household of upper castes. The norms of purity and pollution are not strictly followed outside the home especially in agricultural activities. Settlement pattern of the villages selected for the present study are caste-based. Change of residence affects the socio-cultural lives of the people of border area. There are a number of caste-based issues which remain same at temporary places where border area people live during evacuation. It creates problems in planning of settlement pattern. The displacement caused by disturbance on border creates tensions and conflicts for the large number of population. The problems of caste and community are observed at the shifted places.

In this part of the paper, an attempt has been made to collect data from the respondents regarding their views on caste-based interaction in the village, which is discussed below.

IV. INTERACTION WITH OTHER CASTE PEOPLE

Under various caste systems throughout the world, caste divisions also dominate in housing, marriage and general social interaction. Rigid social norms of purity and pollution are socially enforced through strict prohibitions on marriage or other social interaction between castes. In this concern when it was asked to the respondents that whether they interact with other caste people, particularly the lower castes or not during displacement in camps. Figure 1 shows the responses given by the respondents.

Figure 1

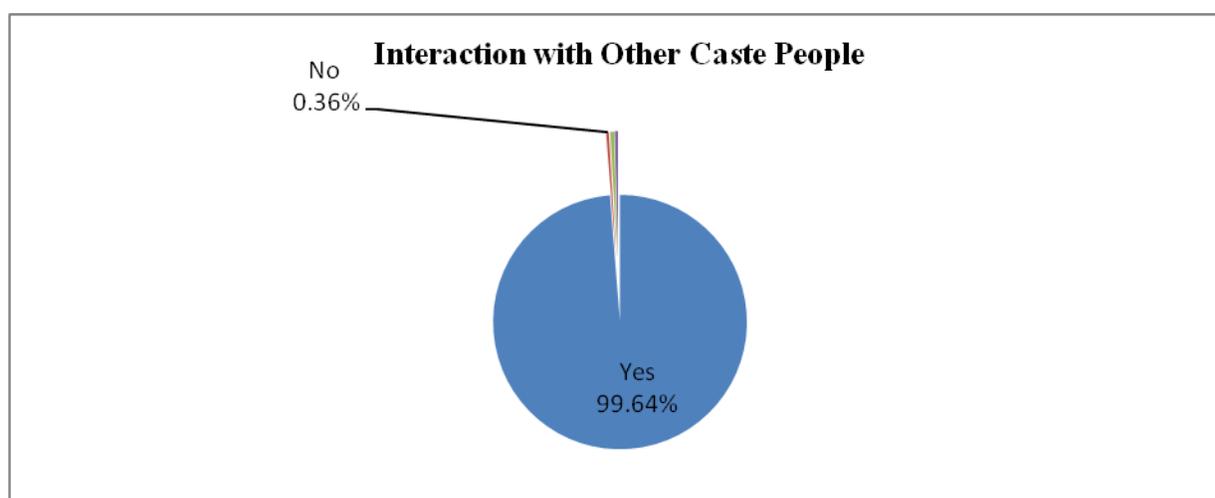


Figure 1 clearly shows that almost all the respondents i.e., 99.64 per cent interact with other caste people and it's a daily interaction. But only one respondent was there who said that he and his family are not interested in interaction with lower caste people but he interacts with people from same caste and upper caste.

An experience shared by one of the respondents about evacuation. He said that casteism has been deeply rooted in the people of border area that even at the time of evacuation the rigidity of caste system remains there. Respondent revealed that at the time of evacuation lower caste and upper caste people live separately. He shared an experience of Kargil war when they were shifted to government schools. Almost 4-5 families were staying in one room. When the respondent's family was searching a room where one lower caste family was staying but respondent's family refused to stay with lower caste family and they shifted to another room where 4-5 families were already staying. According to respondent people in border area can give and take help from lower caste people when in need but they cannot share space and food with lower caste people.

It was observed by the researcher that caste system is such an unavoidable factor for the people of border villages as it is deeply rooted in the minds, hearts and characters of the people. During firing and shelling, when people are forced to evacuate then people at new places behave normally in terms of interaction and helping others. But when it

comes to sharing food and space then their evil of casteism arises and people from upper caste avoid the lower caste. It is very strange on this part that even in these tensed and critical situations they are strict to the caste system.

4.1. INVITATION TO OTHER CASTE PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT OCCASIONS

Again it was asked to the respondents about invitation for different occasions (like parties, marriages, etc.). About 39.29 per cent respondents said that they invite other caste people in different occasions but mostly people from upper caste, it is very rare that they invite lower caste people. Thus, most of the respondents (i.e., 60.71 per cent) are not interested to invite other caste people in different occasions. They interact with other caste people but when it comes to invitation or we can say sharing food they are interested in inviting people from same caste and upper caste but not from lower caste.

There were respondents who invite other caste people whether lower or upper caste for different occasions. Those respondents who said they invite other caste people for different occasions, the responses are given in the table 1 below.

Table 1

Reasons Stated	Number	Percentage
Only money and services are exchanged	58	52.73
Only lower caste people take food in upper caste house	40	36.36
We both invite each other	12	10.91
Total	110*	100

*No. of Respondents=110

Data in table 1 highlight that 52.73 per cent respondents said that if lower caste people invite them, they only exchange money (shagun) and services but do not eat at their places. Nearly 37 per cent respondents told that only lower caste people eat food in upper caste houses but upper caste people do not eat food at their places. Exactly, 10.91 per cent respondents said that they both invite each other (lower and upper caste people) but very few respondents were there who said that they eat at lower caste peoples' home. They further told that they hardly bother to take food from lower caste people. Rest all the respondents were not interested in taking food from lower caste. Respondents who said that they do not invite other caste people especially lower caste, the reasons for this given by them are stated in the table below:-

Table 2

Reason stated	Number	Percentage
We get polluted if we go to their places	94	38.68
We don't like to go to their places	66	27.16
Our caste status inhibits us to go there	40	16.46
Not interested to invite upper caste people	29	11.93
Lower caste people are unhygienic	11	4.53
Lower caste people are very loud	3	1.24
Total	243*	100

***No. of Respondents=243**

Table 2 shows why upper caste people do not want to go to the houses of the people of lower caste. There were 38.68 per cent respondents who said that they get polluted if they go to the houses of lower caste. Nearly, 27 per cent respondents revealed that they do not like to go to their places because lower caste people are unhygienic and very abusive that's why they do not want to interact with lower caste people. Exactly, 16.46 per cent told that their caste status inhibit them to go to the places of lower caste. But few respondents who belongs to lower caste are also not interested to invite upper caste people to their places because they said that they feel discriminated by upper caste people because they do not like to share anything with us so that we are not interested to eat at their places and also not interested to invite them for different occasions.

One of the respondents revealed that casteism is rigidly practice in almost every part of the country and so is in border area. Respondent interact with people from each caste, personally he does not believe in caste system and untouchability because while doing agricultural activities they share their things with lower caste people. But the pressure of the society and family make him do all this. Sometimes he wants to invite his friend from lower caste at home in functions but people around him do not allow him to do so. Respondent is also in a fear that if he share food and other things with lower caste people then his caste members will not accept him and they may forbid to involve in his caste fellow. Thus, it can be said that people want to rise above the caste system and they want to share everything with other caste people but their caste status and people around restrict them to do so.

It is observed by the researcher during field work that upper caste people use different utensils for lower caste people and if lower caste people are having food in upper caste house then they have to wash those utensils. Lower caste people have been socialized in a way that after eating at the house of upper caste people they always wash the utensils even if nobody is asking to wash.

4.2. DETERMINANTS OF ONE'S STATUS IN THE VILLAGE

Table 3

Determinants of one's Status in the village	Number	Percentage
Wealth/Property	89	31.79
Occupation	87	31.07
Education	73	26.07
Caste	20	7.14
Religion	11	3.93
Total	280	100

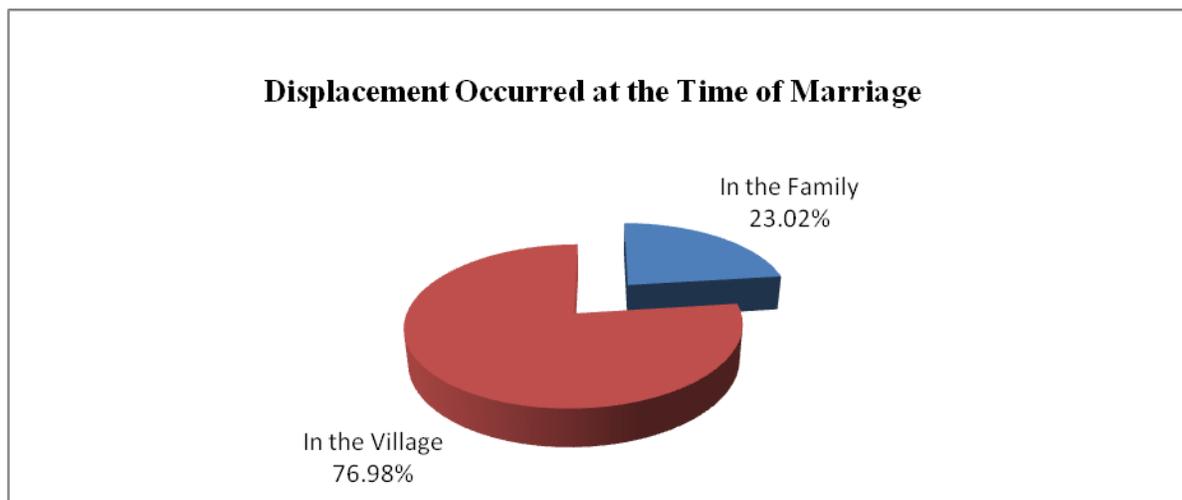
It is very known to all that the status of the person is determined on the basis of some criteria such as education, occupation, wealth, etc.,. The villages have its own different criteria for determining the status of an individual which is based on the above variables. Further, a question was put to the respondents that by which criteria one's status is determined in the village and accordingly table 3 highlights that 89 respondents which constitute 31.79 per cent said that wealth/ property determines person's status in village. Thus, 87 (i.e., 31.07 per cent) respondents said that occupation whereas 73 (i.e., 26.07 per cent) respondents said that education determines one's status in village. Exactly, 7.14 per cent respondents said caste and only 3.93 per cent respondents said that religion determines one's status in the village. Although caste is a most dominating factor in the village and the study also reveals the same. But on the other hand it is observed that people have their different opinion on account of determining the status of an individual. As there were very few people who said that caste determines the status of an individual and rest majority of the respondents said that the status of an individual is determined by wealth/ property, education and occupation. Because due to evacuation people face lot of economic loss and spend all their money on repairing their property which is damaged through firing and shelling. At the time of evacuation they hardly find job and spend all their savings to arrange and manage their daily needs at new places. Thus, the border area people are economically backward because mostly people depend upon agriculture and they face financial crisis during evacuation as they cannot continue their agricultural activities. The people who have jobs hardly face economic loss. That is why the reason the respondents said that education, occupation and wealth determines one's status. According to them, educated people get the jobs and hence they have many options to save themselves during evacuation. It is very

strange on this part where caste is the most important variable of the village, but people do not mean it when it comes to determine the status of an individual in the village.

After caste, marriage is an important institution of village in India. Institution of marriage has existed throughout the history of human civilization and all societies consider married life is the most desirable type of existence of adults. Traditionally, marriage among Hindus was considered a social duty towards the family and the community and it was necessary for a Hindu, both male and female, to obtain a partner through marriage for the fulfillment of one's religious duties i.e., Dharma. This was essential for the attainment of Moksha (final liberation) which is the ultimate aim of all Hindus in order to free herself/ himself from the bonds of a chain of links of births in the past and in the future (Sandhu, 2016). Since Independence, the social institutions in India are undergoing gradual changes and modifications. Marriage practices have undergone changes due to education and urbanization, however arranged marriages continue to exist and families continue to be influential in finding marriage partners. Geographical location, demographic factors like age, caste, religion, labour and economics has been key determinants of marriage in India (Singh, 2018). In this part of chapter focus will be laid on geographical location, how it effects the marriage practices of people who are residing in border area. Data collected from the respondents regarding marriage practices on border area is given below:

V. DISPLACEMENT OCCURRED AT THE TIME OF MARRIAGE

Figure 2



Marriage is an important institution of society. But in border areas it becomes a matter of highly disappointment and sadness because all the hopes and preparations for marriage get ruined by firing and shelling. There is no doubt that continuous firing and shelling at border makes the life of people a hell. It becomes worst then a hell when it comes to marriage, as the people start to renew their houses and they get engaged in the work related to marriage. But due to shelling they have to shift the venue of the marriage and also rearrange all work to other places. Figure 2 reveals the experiences of respondents when displacement occurred at the time of marriage. There were some respondents

which constitute 23.02 per cent said that they celebrated marriage during displacement in the family and that time was very tough for them. Thus, 76.98 per cent respondents said that they experienced marriage during displacement in the village. Hence, during displacement majority of respondents experienced marriage in the village but less number of respondents also experienced these kinds of disturbance of marriage in the family.

The case of one of the respondents, he said that he arranged his daughter's marriage and when the marriage was to be held within few days unfortunately firing and shelling started. They had to plan again for the marriage arrangements in a very short period of time. When he approached to his relatives to make all that arrangement at their houses, the relatives denied and refused to help him. At last, one of his known persons helped him by suggesting him to use his own house for the marriage. It can be said that a father goes through very hard time when he arrange his daughter's marriage but at the same time it is more painful when his own relatives refuse to help him at any cost. At this time a person feels helpless and blames himself that why he got birth in border area.

5.1. EFFECTS OF BORDER ON MATRIMONIAL PROCESSES

As it is understood marriage is an important aspect of almost everyone's life and so is in border areas. The parents always have hopes that their children will get good match for marriage. They always prefer arranged marriages and even themselves select/ find partner for their children. People are not in favour of inter-caste and love marriages although they face matrimonial problems because of their location on border area. In order to know the effect of border on matrimonial processes of village boys/ girls question was asked from the respondents. It was observed that 95 per cent respondents which constitute majority said that there is an impact of border on matrimonial processes of village boys and girls. Whereas, only 5 per cent respondents told that border is not playing any role in matrimonial processes of village boys and girls.

After knowing about effects of border on matrimonial processes of village boys and girls again a question was asked to the respondents that whose matrimonial process get more affected due to border? Responses collected from respondents regarding matrimonial processes are given in table 4.

Table 4

Impact on Matrimonial processes	Number	Percentage
Boy	255	91.07
Girls	17	6.07
Both	8	2.86
Total	280	100

Table 4 shows that 91.07 per cent respondents which constitute majority said that boys matrimonial process got more effected due to border because no one is interested to give their daughter in border area. There seems to be a

certain level of wariness in people about giving their daughters to the families residing in the border village. Overall, there seems to be a problem in these border villages regarding finding brides for the boys.

As Kaur (2014), discussed in her study that the matrimonial processes of village boys/girls are effected due to border. But the people belonging to the large or medium farmer category did not face this problem. In present study, border is also affecting the matrimonial processes of village boys/ girls but those who have jobs did not face this kind of problem. Although the people of sampled villages are depend upon agriculture or we can say that agriculture is the main source of economy for them. But these are not very big landlords and most of their lands are beyond the fence which they cannot use during evacuation.

One of the respondents revealed that the marriage of the boys living in border area always remain a major concern. The people of non-border area always refuse to marry their daughter with a boy living on border area because they remain in a fear that during evacuation their daughter may face problems and also the in-laws of the daughter may seek shelter at their home. The respondent was also in search of a girl living in non-border area for his boy so that they may seek shelter at their home during evacuation no doubt whether the girl belongs to the poor or rich family. It was very difficult for them to find a girl for his son because many people of non-border area refused to marry their daughter with his son. But after so many efforts they found a girl of non-border area and his son got married. Now whenever disturbance occur at border the respondent along with his family takes help from his son's in-laws and also shift themselves to their house. Thus, it can be said that the people of border area always want their son to get married in non-border area just because this is the way they want to develop their relationship with the people of non-border area and the only reason behind this is to have shelter at their home during displacement.

Thus, poverty is not the only reason for this sort of situation. There are number of hardships which the parents of the girls feel that she would face in border villages. The fear of evacuation hinders these families to do this thing because the girl's family would come under added pressure to take care of her in-laws during this time. Therefore, non-border villages are far better option for them for their daughter.

VI. CONCLUSION

Border is a place which is always uncertain. The border areas are one of the first areas to feel the impact of a tense war situation. It was observed that there is widespread ignorance about the problem of displacement. Majority of displaced persons belongs to lower socio-economic strata. Evacuation indicates change in the social and economic status of the affected people. When people are displaced, kinship groupings disrupted and long established residential settlements disorganized. Many displaced people have had a bitter experience with their relatives, as their relatives treated them like a burden. Evacuation makes border area people more dependent and backward both socially and economically. Settlement pattern of the villages selected for the present study are caste-based. Change of residence affects the socio-cultural lives of the people. It was observed by the researcher that caste system is such

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an unavoidable factor for the people of border villages as it is deeply rooted in the minds, hearts and characters of the people. All the caste groups of the village interact with each other, but when it comes to sharing food and space, people from upper caste avoid the lower caste. People of border area are tangled with so many problems, matrimonial problem is one of them. Although, border affects the matrimonial process of both boys and girls, but boys' matrimonial process get more affected due to border.

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