

A Study of Occupational Change in the Potter Community of Punjab

Abstract

The present paper was undertaken to find occupational change among potter community of Punjab. A sample of 300 respondents of Barnala and Sangrur districts was selected. Out of this sample 168 were males and 132 were females. Respondents were asked about their occupations with the help of interview schedule. It was found that 72 percent respondents had changed their traditional occupation of pottery. Occupation of pottery is losing its relevance in modern era of industrialization and urbanization.

Keywords: Occupational Change, Social Change, Modernization and Industrialization.

Introduction

Patterns of occupational change are very important indicators of the nature and extent of sociological transformation in a given society. However, as Wilbert E. Moore has indicated in his very significant work, *Social Change*, one of the primary assumptions of modern sociology lies in the realization of the fact that social change cannot be accepted as an entirely homogeneous idea. Historically, India has experienced transition from a largely feudal, rural and agricultural society ruled by kings and queens to a modern, democratic and industrial one. Although, agriculture still occupies an important place in the economic set up of the nation, the nature of agriculture has also undergone a change. Agricultural activity has been reorganized as a result of extensive and revolutionary introduction of agricultural technology, innovative methods and modern equipment. Rather than being practiced as a purely traditional vocation, agriculture today is commercially oriented exercise dependent on irrigation facilities and scientific and technological advancements. Moreover, with the passage of time agriculture has become large scale and modern form of vocational activity. Srinivas (2009) stated that the foundations of these changes were laid by the establishment of British rule over India, and the consequences, direct and indirect, which flowed from it. Srinivas further emphasizes that the progress of modernization and westernization superseded caste based divisions: "The new opportunities— educational, economic, political— were in theory caste-free; that is, they were open to all, and no one was banned from having access to them by reason of birth in a particular caste or sect or religion". According to Jha (1978) to the countries of Asia and Africa, the forces of the rapid social change came through the colonial rulers, all of whom belonged to Europe. On the one hand they economically exploited the colonies to their own enrichment. On the other, they also introduced in the colonies the results of scientific discoveries and technological inventions which had originally taken place in their home countries. Jammu (1974) concludes that traditional association of caste with occupation is fast losing ground. This occupational change is the highest among the priestly castes which are followed by artisans, commercial and agricultural castes in descending order. The occupational structure and make up of a society is an important reflection of its sociological realities. Thus, the evidence of sociological changes can be found in and related to changes in occupational patterns. As a general trend, with the growth of industry and modernization of agriculture various ancillary occupations which were an extension of agriculture activity became unsustainable. While the reasons for their becoming unsustainable could easily be traced back to larger phenomenon like industrialization and an exponential expansion of technology, it is the sociological implications of such transformations which have tremendous academic significance. The most important question from a sociological point of view is that how far and to what extent have these sociological shifts from largely feudal and traditional set up to an industrial modern one altered the socio-economic condition of the people.

Significance of the Study

Pottery has been an important ancillary occupation of Punjab. As has been stated above, it constituted an extension of agricultural activity in



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mainly agrarian societies of India. It is an important fact of sociology that India has been a caste based society for centuries. The concept of caste derives its genesis from the division of society on occupational lines. Thus, the traditional Indian society was organized on an overlap of caste and occupation. Pottery like several other traditional occupations in India is a hereditary occupation. It is an occupation which forms a sociological alignment with the potter caste and is practiced for generations as a matter of social custom and social law. Thus, the discontinuation and rejection of hereditary profession can have very serious sociological implications. However, at the present time, it is an occupation which is losing relevance at a very fast pace. In the present paper, an analysis of the nature and extent of exit from a traditional occupation like pottery needs to be projected in order to show the incremental nature of occupational transition.

Objectives of the Study

In the present paper, a study of the potters of Punjab was carried out with the objective of finding out the direction of occupational shifts and the socio-economic implications of these shifts.

1. To study occupations of ancestors of respondents.

2. To find out whether the respondents have changed their traditional occupation of pottery.
3. To identify the reasons behind their occupational change.
4. To classify the types of occupations adopted by respondents.

Hypotheses

1. Most persons have changed their occupation of pottery.
2. There are some reasons behind occupational change of respondents.
3. Respondents have changed their traditional occupation and adopted new occupations.

Sample

The present paper has its basis in a survey of 300 potters of Punjab out of which 168 are males and 132 females. These potters of Sangrur and Barnala districts were interviewed with the help of interview schedule. The potters were equally distributed on the basis area.

Methodology

The potters of were interviewed with the help of interview schedule to identify the reasons behind their occupational change and types of occupations adopted by them.

The table shows occupational change in the ancestors of the respondents.

Table 1.1 : Occupation of Grand Father and Fathers of Respondents

Types of Occupations	Numberof Grand Father Respondents	Percentage	Number of Fathers of Respondents	Percentage
Pottery	253	84.33	154	51.33
Brick kilns	008	02.67	029	09.67
Horse carriages	018	06.00	024	08.00
Agriculture	011	03.67	022	07.33
Private service	004	01.33	040	13.33
Govt. service	001	00.33	006	02.00
Trade	005	01.67	013	04.34
Shopkeeper	000	00.00	012	04.00
Total	300	100.00	300	100.00

Table shows an incremental pattern in occupational change over a period of two generations. It is clear from the table that whereas the grandfathers of the respondents were engaged in the occupation of pottery in reasonably high numbers; there was a steep decline in the case of their fathers. Total of 84.33 respondents said that the occupation of their grandfathers was pottery against 51.33 who said the same for their fathers. This shows that the economic and social unavailability of the occupation of pottery and the transition of potters into other occupations got manifested at a very fast pace. The data also reflects the pattern of increased movement into other occupations like the business of brick kilns, horse carriages, agriculture, service and shop keeping.

Table No-1.2 Distribution of the Respondents According to their Occupational Change

Occupational Change	Number	Percentage
Yes	216	72.00
No	084	28.00
Total	300	100.00

The table1.2 clearly shows that out of the total of 300 respondents 72 percent respondents have changed their occupation of pottery. It is clear from table that during the last few decades the potters have given up their occupation in increasing number.

The respondents were asked the factors which they thought were responsible for their decision to move out of their traditional and hereditary occupation. Table No 1.3 shows the reasons perceived by the respondents behind their occupational change.

Table No1.3 Distribution of the Respondents on the Basis of Reasons for Occupational Change

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Lack of raw material	19	08.80
Industrialization	45	20.83
Education	25	11.57
Dissatisfaction in the hereditary occupation	42	19.45
Desire for more income	23	10.65
Lack of expertise in the hereditary occupation	44	20.37
All the reasons cited above	18	08.33
Total	216	100.00

It is evident from the table that out of the total of 216 respondents, the largest number of 20.83 percent respondents identify industrialization as the main cause behind occupational transition. This group is closely followed by groups of 20.37 percent and 19.45 percent respondents respectively who held lack of expertise in the hereditary occupation and

dissatisfaction with it as reasons for opting out. 11.57 percent respondents cited their educational status as a disincentive for entering the occupation of the forefathers whereas 10.65 percent respondents expressed the opinion that desire for more income was the reason behind leaving the traditional occupation. 8.80 percent respondents held that the raw materials required for pottery are not freely available and 8.33 percent respondents are such who endorsed all the reasons cited above. It can be argued that almost all the reasons cited by the various respondents are directly or indirectly related with the structural changes in the society as a result of the advent and rise of industry. The process of industrialization is considered as the main reason for the disappearance of various traditional occupations. However, the responses of the rest of the respondents like dissatisfaction with the occupation, lack of skill, desire for more income, improved standard of education etc. are also indicators of the social changes that are brought about by the process of industrialization in conjunction with developments like urbanization, generation of wealth and expansion of literacy.

The table 1.4 shows systematic study of occupational change among the potters. An attempt has been made to compile and classify all the professions and occupations that the potters have chosen as alternatives to their traditional occupation. These occupations and professions have been classified mainly into the following categories: unskilled labour, skilled labour, shopkeepers, self employed, agriculture, employed in the original sector etc.

Table 1.4 Different Occupations Adopted by Respondents

Type of Occupation	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
Unskilled Labour	28	32	60	27.77
Skilled Labour	16	29	45	20.83
Shopkeepers	18	10	28	12.96
Self-employed	22	04	26	12.04
Agriculture	21	02	23	10.65
Employed in the organized sector	10	15	25	11.58
Household work	00	09	09	4.17
Total	115	101	216	100

It is clear from the table that the largest number of male respondents had started pursuing work involving unskilled labour; exploited opportunities of self-employment or adopted agriculture as their vocation. Compared to this a much

smaller number of respondents had become shopkeepers; taken up skilled work or have got employment in the organized sector. However, the most notable aspect was the wide distribution of the respondents in almost all the sectors of employment and work. It is notable that only 8.70 percent male respondents were employed in the organized sector. On the other hand, women showed an entirely different pattern in terms of their occupational transition into different sectors. It is notable that only 5.94 percent female respondents had explored avenues of self-employment or adopted agriculture. The largest number of 31.68 percent women were a part of the unskilled labour force and were working in homes and offices mainly as maids, *safai karamcharis*, cooks and labourers. A good number of them involved in work involving special skills. These skills are mainly related to work like sewing, knitting, weaving and working as beauticians. This is work which is traditionally assigned to women. Another important fact brought out by the data is that compared to men more women have got employment in the organized sector. 14.85 percent women were employed as teachers, nurses and *aanganwadi* workers.

Findings

1. 72 percent respondents had changed their traditional occupation of pottery.
2. Industrialization, desire for more income, education, lack of raw material, dissatisfaction in the hereditary occupation, Lack of expertise in the traditional occupation of pottery influenced the traditional occupation of pottery.
3. Respondents had adopted new occupations.

Suggestions

1. As art of pottery is being diminished, special steps by government should be taken to promote this occupation of pottery.
2. Young generations should try to learn the art of pottery by their ancestors.

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