

11. Socio-Economic Life of Mayong

Dr. Guneswar Deka

Principal I/C, Mayong Anchalik College, Assam.

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Assam. Approximately 69% percent of the total population of the state is engaged in agriculture and allied activities as per 1991 census. The village Raja-Mayong is becoming progressively a part of wider economy. The economy of the village is based primarily upon agriculture, and hence the relations of production consist essentially of relation between categories of persons, contributing in different ways to the process of agriculture. Such categories include landowners, tenants and agricultural labourers. These, together with their interrelations, constitute the agrarian class structure of the village.

The economic activities of Raja-Mayong also consisted of agriculture, fishing, handicrafts, trading, small industry, (rice-mill) etc. Earlier the occupational caste, by and large followed their traditional avocations along with other permissible occupations from which the largest income could be derived. They were the potters, blacksmiths, fishermen, weavers, traders, cobblers, etc. In Assam the traders, peddlers and merchants were called banik, mudai, bepari, saud, sajai, sadagar, pohari, etc.

Objectives

Objectives of this paper lie in its attempt to study and examine the impact of Economic Life of Mayong due to the facts of changing pattern of Agriculture and Small Industries. To understand and investigate the reasons of changing and to see the challenges for development of Economic Life of Mayong.

Methodology

The research techniques are applied based on socio-historico-Economic analytical method. The proposed study is in the attempt to explain the facts in production of Agriculture and its varieties. The method implemented for the collecting data is based on personal interview of well known persons in respected places and secondary sources.

Background

The economic structure of Raja-Mayong does not have an autonomous existence, but is related to the economy of the wider region. The village is linked by complex distributive

mechanisms to neighboring market. Not all agricultural product of the area Mayong is consumed locally. On the other hand, many of the things which are consumed in the village are acquired from outside.

The economic life of Raja-Mayong is a checkered one. The people of Raja-Mayong have to suffer a lot every year as a result of the unpredictable flood waters. The agrarian economy of the area is very badly affected by such natural calamities every year and the people have to cope with this situation almost every year. Hardly has the farmer of the locality has harvested to his satisfaction. Until recently the road communication to the locality from other neighboring places were also cut off for almost three months every year. The major economic activities of Raja-Mayong village are agriculture, trade and business, holding of jobs in Government Offices and other establishments, fishing, daily wage earning and miscellaneous occupations like honey collecting, mat making, carpentry etc.

In the survey conducted in the village in 2009, this residual category has been subdivided into six different specific groups in the context of the village, viz. Cultivators, Trader and businessmen, service holders in offices and establishments, daily wage earners, fishing and miscellaneous works.

In the context of Agricultural development a radical change took place. Boro paddy replaced "Ahu" or Bao paddy, which was cultivated in January, February. Ahu paddy and Bao paddy were completely rooted out in area of Raja-Mayong. Generally, Ahu and Bao were not able to fulfill the demand for rice of the locality. Boro paddy in Raja-Mayong is cultivated in low-land before mid January (before Magh Bihu) in high land after Magh Bihu from the fourth week of January to the end of February.

Agriculture is the prime occupation of the Raja-Mayong village on which land plays the most dominant role. The Circle office provided a machine for irrigation to the field of the cultivators of Raja-Mayong. The government also provided a pump set at Garanga. Ravi crops such as mustard were quite popular as a cash crop. The people who were earlier totally dependent on the weather for their cultivation started depending upon their own mode of irrigation, mostly from tube wells, for agriculture. Agricultural yields also increased manifold. This brought a drastic change to the economy of the farmers. From a condition of penury and starvation, they rose to a position of at least living from hand to mouth.

The shift from traditional cropping to modern crop pings can be regarded as radical change in the field of agriculture in the whole of Mayong. Traditional paddy yielded only 3.2 to 4 quintals of paddy while the new varieties yielded more than 10 quintals of paddy. Hence, the threefold increase in production led to a threefold increase in per capita income of at least the agriculturists of Mayong.

Boro

The Boro paddy is the most popular kind in the Raja-Mayong village. It comprises the main economy of cultivators as well as the jobholders. The process for the cultivation of this kind of paddy begins by November. Small well-fenced Nursery beds, called - kathiatali are prepared, generally, near of sallow pumps for convenience of water supply. The seeds, i.e. the Bidhan, are preserved from the preceding year's high yielding variety of crop in bamboo baskets or in good gunny bag of plastic or jute away from insects and rodents. The seeds are sprouted at home by sprinkling water over them in the basket or gunny bag. When the plot is ready for sowing after watering it sufficiently the sprouted seeds are shown on the Nursery beds. Some amount of Urea is spread over the plots.²

Sali

The sali or the winter crop is the second popular kind in the village. This variety is cultivated by transplantation from the month of July in Raja-Mayong. The process of transplanting the seedling is same as that of the Boro paddy and is done in August/September. Harvesting is done in November and December. Some of the varieties of high yielding varieties of sali paddy which are cultivated in Raja-Mayong are Basmati, 516, Ranjit, Culture-1 etc. I.T.T. while traditional varieties namely, Prasad Bhog, Moinagiri, Jaha, Kola Bora and Pakhoi Bora, Boka, Thiosali or Monoharsali, etc are also cultivated in the locality.

In paddy cultivation both the male and female members of the household are required to undertake lots of strain at the time of ploughing and transplantation in the fields. The male members take out their ploughing implements and bullocks to the fields as early as 5 a.m. and plough the fields till 10 to 11 a.m. Food for the ploughman is carried to the fields by other members of the family by the mid morning. Women also carry the food to the field. Carrying food to the field has become a custom among the people of Raja-Mayong.

Irrigation

The irrigation facilities are not adequate to the satisfaction of the cultivators. They have to spend a lot of money in irrigating the fields as it is done mostly by shallow pumps. The people of Raja-Mayong have their arable land outside the village near Garanga also. In this field the source of water for pumping to the fields is drawn from the Garanga swamp. In case of the other fields the source of water for pumping is ground water. The underground water is mostly drawn by diesel pumps while the water from the swamp is drawn by electric pumps. This system of irrigation began in the late seventies for cultivation of mustard though now a day it is used mostly for cultivation of paddy.³

Mustard

Mustard is cultivated in high and plain area by only four villagers in an area of around 30 bighas. Paddy cannot be grown in the area selected for mustard cultivation. They grow mustard as a cash crop and its cultivation has been recorded as second popular crop in the village Panchayat area.

Mustard seeds are shown in the month of October and November and plants become mature and harvested in January. "Mowa", insect is the main enemy of mustard. Every year, this insect disturbs the cultivators. So, they spray insecticides such as Malathian, Rogor, Darsban and Dimecron over the plants. Presently, manure, is applied in low quantities in mustard field also.

Jute

Jute is cultivated in the low lying and plain area where paddy cultivation is not possible. Jute requires considerable amount of labour and time. In fact, it was introduced in Assam as a commercial cash crop in the early part of the current century and grown in plenty in the District of Morigaon especially in Bhuragaon, Gerua, Japari and Dongapar Boralimari. It is known as "Golden fibre" because of its money value and demand in the international market.⁴ Traditionally, Jute was popular but at present, after the introduction of Boro paddy cultivation of jute has decreased. Yet, three villagers cultivate Jute for their domestic needs only.

Bamboo

Another important plant Bamboo plays a significant role in domestic economic life of Raja-Mayong. Bamboo is planted in almost every household of the locality. There are three villagers in Raja-Mayong who have taken up commercial production of bamboo. Two of the families earn at least Rs. 4100.00 per year per family and one family has earns Rs. 1500. per

year. Bamboo is used also as fire wood. The bamboo grown in the village is not used as firewood. People collect bamboo for using as firewood and other day to day use from the nearby hills.

Agricultural Implements

The farmers of Raja-Mayong use simple and primitive implements in their fields alongside modern equipments like the power tiller and the pumpsets.. The main implements used by them are the wooden plough (nangal), the harrow (moi), the hoes (kodal), and the sickles (kanchi). All these items are obtained within village. Prior to 1980, the farmers of Raja-Mayong used the above traditional implements. From the year of 1980 to 1990, the people with large land holdings used the modern implements in the agricultural field. That decade could be referred to as the decade of change to modern implements and ways of agriculture. In the last decade of the twentieth century the farmers of the area got organized and formed organizations called the Pathar Parichalana Samiti i.e. committees for looking after the fields. The use of mechanization in agriculture with the help of power tillers and irrigation with pump sets were looked after by these committees. The distribution of irrigation water, rates of tilling by power tillers, rates of wages of the agricultural labourers, etc are some of the issues which are taken care of by these committees. Some self help groups also have swung into action for the development in the field of agriculture and the committee decides the quantum of their involvement also. The self help groups are instrumental in uniting all the farmers of Mayong under an organization called the Mayong Krishak Club and agriculture has been increased to a great extent under this organisation.⁵

Trade and Commerce

This occupation of the trade commerce is called commercial occupation and it plays a very important role in the economic life of a village. It introduces cash economy in the village by importing consumer goods from the urban centers involving heavy transaction and thereby it links the village with the urban economy.”


On the basis of the information collected in the village in the beginning of 2009, there were 53(12%) shops of permanent nature. The earliest of them is one of the groceries started in 1975. All these shops are owned by the local residents. Among the group of 45 shop owners two are Bihari families, one working as barbers and the other working on quilts, pillows, etc. Three families belonging to the Nath community began dealing in Bamboo from the year 1989. Two

families deal in Paddy. They purchase paddy from the neighbouring villages and supply to urban centres. Altogether 53 families of Raja-Mayong belonging to the occupation of trade and business have been interviewed. Twenty families out of the fifty three are fully dependent on the trade while rest, keep shops as a supplementary income to the family. In the proposed study, they are divided into groups on the basis of the nature of trade and commerce they carry on. The first group consists of the shop keepers who own shops of permanent nature in the village, the second group ferries their wares in the weekly markets and the third group consists of the paddy traders who own godowns of permanent nature in the village.

Thus it has been observed in the discussion in this paper that the modernization of agriculture and change in the cropping pattern has brought in economic prosperity to a certain extent. The mechanization of agriculture and irrigation by pumps have made winter cropping in the area possible. The summer cropping often is destroyed by devastating floods. Hence this switch over to winter cropping is a great relief to the farmers of the locality. The use of fertilizers also has added to the increase in production. In other fields such as trade and commerce and the service sector also people of the have made considerable progress and the economy of the village is proceeding towards prosperity in spite of all odds.

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Principal
Mayang Anchalik College
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