

Educational System in the Village Bharatinagar- A Case Study in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal

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Abstract— The study was undertaken in the Namasudra Community residing in the Bharatinagar village in Habra-I block of Barasat sub-division of North 24 Parganas district in West Bengal state. The focus of the present paper was: to study the people their place of education that is the context of educational spheres, to study the concept of educational system, levels of education of the study area. To study the organizational structure and role of institutions and their changing aspects, to understand the issues and impacts of development projects on the people in the spheres of education in the area under study. The study possesses two major components In-depth school studies and Investigation ethnography. The data as per requirement of the aims and objectives collected from different sources, like, household's members, teachers, school, students, parents and other welfare as well as administrative units. The primary as well as contextual data have been collected through: 1. Case studies 2.Intensive Interviews, 3. Participant Observations, along with the Structured Questionnaires. The secondary data have also been used from books, journal, administrative reports, under the purview of anthropological ethnography. The main findings of the study are: Formal Education and knowledge of villagers, Mead-Day-Meal scheme which is the main attraction for pre and primary level students in the village and its present situation. The education as well as knowledge of traditional norms and values has to be incorporated in the formal educational system of the village through campaigning, awareness camps along with the incorporate of the same in the course curricula.

Key words: Educational System

I. PREAMBLE

The term 'Education' is interpreted differently by the various educationalist, philosopher, and social scientist (Duary, 2010). In fact the real meaning of education is nothing less than a total and integrated approach to the life of an individual for harmonious development of his whole personality in relation to the community in a specific cultural setting to which he/she belongs (Herskovits, 1955; Das Gupta, 1963).

Education is a process whose function is to bring individual behaviours in to line with the specific requirements of a culture. When we considered education, we must again take into account the important place specialization plays in machine culture. Educational techniques used by nonliterate people vary as widely as any other aspects of their cultures. Some aspects of education are universal. Every people condition the infant to control his bodily functions. All encourage linguistic communication, and to see it that the semantic values of the words in a language are probably used and understood during teaching and schooling. Education carried on by means of schooling in the hands of specialties cannot be overlooked in considering the framing of the children and others among pre-individual peoples. Therefore, the education of nonliterate peoples, then, must not be thought as reaching its completion with the assumption of adult

status, not even formal teaching and educational system ends them. But in the sense of education as the process whereby the knowledge of a people is passed from one generation to next (Herskovits, 1955).

Education provides necessary knowledge and skill which enable an individual to operate ideally in the society and also contribute its efficient function (Ahuja, 2006). Education is the process, which moulds the individual as per the expectation of a society (Herskovits, 1955; Basu Roy, 2010).

The education system now needs to be viewed as the master determinate of all aspect of change. It has become one of the prime movers of social change as it unlocked the door of modernization. (Duary, 2010:2) No educational system can operate without being influenced by the norms and values of the society (Ahuja, 2006:2). The education system can be divided into two broad categories such as formal and informal education system. The formal education system refers to Schooling- an organized system of training (i.e. which includes the syllabus, teacher, institutes, and period of time, examination and certificates) for development of knowledge, skills, mind, character etc. of individual. On the other hand informal education emanates from an individual own experiences and continuous throughout his/her life. (Duary, 2010: 5)

In a general sense, Educational anthropology involves the use of anthropological theory, data, and methods to study educational practices, institutions, and problems in their proper cultural contexts. The range of educational institutions studied varies from highly formal school systems in industrialized societies to very informal systems in which important cultural knowledge is passed down from generation to generation by kin through such means as storytelling, experiential learning, and peer interaction. . (Ferraro & Andreatta, 2010) Today some of the most interesting researches are being done in ordinary classrooms, where ethnographic methods are used to observe interactions among students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and visitors. And many contemporary studies are not confined to the classroom, but rather follow students into their homes and neighborhoods, because learning must be viewed within the wider cultural context of family and peers. The study of formal education has, until recently, been a relatively marginal concern within anthropology (Kottak, 2002; Thapan, 2006). By contrast, a more broadly-defined interest in learning, particularly as it relates to cultural transmission, has been central to the anthropological project. At various times, this broader interest has been reflected in studies of socialization, literacy, cognition, knowledge, childhood, the body, apprenticeship and so on. The lack of emphasis on formal education, as such may it part reflect a tradition of studying communities in which institutionalized education was either non-existent, had little obvious impact on informants, or was effectively beyond local aspiration (Barnard & Spencer,2002)

The principle methodology in educational anthropology is ethnography. The ethnographic approaches allows educational anthropologists to establish good rapport, obtain otherwise difficult data and collect data on actual behavior or educational events in their natural setting (Krishna Rao, 2007).

A. Aims and Objectives of the Present Study:

The present ethnographic study being a qualitative one, (Scupin, 2012) is indeed an attempt to observe the education as an integrated system of culture under study, the purview of educational anthropology which has certain specific aims and objectives-

- To study the people their place of education that is the context of educational spheres.
- To study the concept of educational system, levels of education of the study area.
- To study the organizational structure and role of institutions (Schools etc.) and their changing aspects.
- To understand the issues and impacts of development projects on the people in the spheres of education in the area under study.

The anthropology of education or educational anthropology is an interdisciplinary sub field of sociocultural anthropology that focuses on the cross cultural understanding of educational system in various ethnographic sites. The present ethnography was written at a particular time when everyday life was as central explanation of formal and informal education by institutionalized schooling through the experience on the basis of participant observation, intensive interview and case study along with certain relevant open ended questionnaires which necessary to achieve the aims and objectives of the study. It however, finally drowse out the perspective that the individuals in the web of interpersonal relations between different categories of ‘actors’(Thapan,2006) or role played in the Schools under study (i.e. organizing members, teachers, pupils etc.). Inspired by the some of the educational ethnographies, the present study was just an ethnographic narrative. It was a meaningful, in depth-approach for a cross-cultural perspective in future by the present researchers.

B. Venue of Observation:

The present study is based on an ethnographic field work covering 110 families in the Kumra Kashipur locality in the village Bharatinagar under the Kumra-Kashipur Gram Panchayet of Habra-I block, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The study possesses two major components: educational ethnography of the school under study and the possible strategies as suggested by the present researchers for the developmental aspects of the same as well as the area under study. The data as per requirement of the aims and objectives have been collected from different sources, like, household members, teachers, school, students, parents and other welfare as well as administrative units, like Gram Panchayet.

The primary as well as contextual data have been collected through: 1. Case studies 2.Intensive Interviews, 3. Participant Observations, along with the Structured

Questionnaires (Bernard, 2006). The secondary data have also been used from books, journal, administrative reports, under the purview of anthropological ethnography.

III. CONTEXTUAL OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Village, Bharatinagar and its People: An Overview

The village is surrounded by the canal and agricultural field. In the North the agricultural field demarcates the immediate boundary. In the South there is a canal and there is also a village Parpatna. The village comprises one main concrete road from the entrance stretching in East-South direction. The settlement pattern of the village mainly distributed in a cluster fashion along the village road. Maximum houses are made up with brick built with the use of mud as cementing medium. The village is completely linear type. The houses are linear in nature on both sides of the road.

The village is well communicated both physically and culturally with the main stream under the society, it comprises of mainly walk and bicycle at the intra village and van motor bike auto-rickshaw are the medium of the village communication. The villagers have to take the bus for the long journey from the nearest Kumra Bazar.

The cultural communication of the village comprises of mainly by the Television (colour and Black & white), radio possessed by most of the families of the village. There are numbers of modern cell phones in the village possessed by the younger generation. Besides the central communication of the village has been flourished with acceptance of news paper i.e. Ananda bazar, Bartaman, karmakhetra etc.

The village people of the Bharati Nagar originally have been migrated from the neighboring country Bangladesh during the partition of Bengal. The villagers belong to the Schedule-Caste category and their sub-caste is Namasudra. The Namasudras are inconsiderable as emigrated from the districts, like Faridpur, Bakherganj, Khulna, and Jessore. These villagers usually speak Bengali language when they communicate verbally with each other. But some of them are known Hindi language as well. They use to speak Bengali with outsiders in their day to day life.

Bharatinagar is a village of North 24 Parganas district in West Bengal. It is a village in Habra block- I. The village is situated 10 km. far from proper Habra. The village is Uni-caste. The major population of the village is scheduled castes. Total number of households in Bharatinagar village is 110 and total population is 490. Among the total population, number of males is 263 and number of females is 227. Sex ratio: 863 (female per 1000 male).

Village	Total no of Households	Total no of population	Total no of Male	Total no of Female
Bharatinagar	110	490	263	227

Table 1:

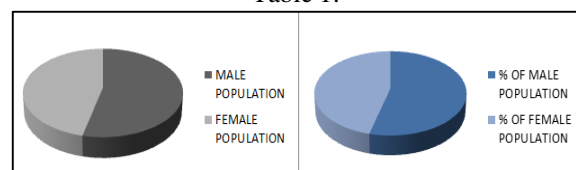


Fig. 1: Sex Wise Distribution of the Population

IV. CONCEPT OF 'SIKSHA' (EDUCATION) IN THE VILLAGE- AN EMIC PERSPECTIVE

The concept of education, locally known as 'siksha' in a community plays one of the significant roles in order to have a holistic domain of culture. Any kind of improvement in a particular society depends on a better conception of education in an area is very important. The concept of education of this village is not so poor, most of the families are quite concern about the education. That's why the parents of this village sent their children into the educational institution. The young villagers are quit knowledgeable in the graduation level of education and they try to reach up in this dream level. But due to poor economic condition most of the family most of the people do not prefer the higher education. On the basis of the objective, a case study has been taken from a villager who had completed his post graduation from Calcutta University.

A. Case 1: Pradip Mallick, (26 years, Male)

"I have done my Post Graduation in History in Calcutta University in the year 2007 with lots of difficulties. I belong to a very poor family, my father work as a day laborer, although little agricultural land also we have but we do not get sufficient crop in every season from this land."

"I have a dream to make myself as a good teacher that's why I am starting tuitions in my village and I teach few poor students. They give me little amount of money as tuition fees and with it I had completed my graduation and post graduation. Now I am doing B.Ed. from a Government B.Ed. college. Due to the poor financial condition I am facing lots of problems like tuitions fees, exam fees etc. with related to this expensive course,. My father always motivates to me to reach up a better position in academic line and my wishes are something like that."

According to the villagers, the informal education systems in which important cultural knowledge is passed down from generation to generation by kin through such means as storytelling, experiential learning, and peer interaction, these kinds of scenarios are comparatively very obscure. A different picture also found in the village and that is the villagers always give some special respect and status to the higher educated people during the cultural program, sports program etc. Not just the male members are getting this opportunity; the female members are also getting this honor from the villagers. During this investigation a female member of this village has given some explanation about how she feels the honor as an educated person.

B. Case 2: Kajol Mahanta (33 years, Female)

"As a profession I am a school teacher in a reputed school in Kolkata. But in the village I am an accountant in a female committee as because I am a mathematics teacher in the school. I feel much honored that I got this special status from the villagers. My active participation in the annual sports program in 12th January (Swami Vivekananda's Birthday) not just a prize provider as well as I can also participate in the different events such as 'chair sitting' and 'Handi Vanga' etc. Any kind of discussion for the developmental program of the village, I try to convince them about its positive result because this is my responsibility for my village which I feel."

V. MAJOR EDUCATIONAL ISSUES OF THE VILLAGE

A. Pre-Primary Education

This type of education belongs to the Integrated Center for Child Development Service (ICDS). This center has been established in the year 2008. The name of the center is '210 no. I.C.D.S Center'. Here 10 students are enrolled but the average students are 5 to 7 only per day. This center is ran by an 'Anganwadi Worker' cum teacher and a mid day meal Cooke. The classes per day schedule from 11am to 3pm.

B. Primary Education

A primary educational institution has been found in the center part of the village with a beautiful play ground. The name of the school is 'Bayarghata Free Primary School'. The school was set up in the year 1967. The staff of this institution includes, one Head Master who is responsible to oversee the administrative as well as academic functions of the institute. Another one is an assistant teacher. The classes per day schedule from 11am to 3:30pm.

C. Secondary Education

For secondary education villagers goes to "Dakshin Nangla K.U. institution" for boys and girls goes to "Dakshin Nangla Balika Vidyalay". These schools are 2/3 KM far from the village. Here the villagers can study up to 12th standard (Arts and Science stream). After that they are admitted to general, technical or others colleges on the basis of their interest. Few villagers are finishing their secondary education through distance mode education.

D. Graduation and Post-Graduation

For higher studies, the villager goes to different types of colleges. Most of the villagers goes to a general college namely "Sree Chitanya College" (Habra) and the "Netajee Satabarshiki college" (Haripur). There is also a Women College namely "Banipur Mahila Maha Vidyalay (Banipur)". Some technical colleges like diploma, ITI College etc. are also found in the surrounding area. Post graduation level student also have been see in this village. For their interest they go to "West Bengal State University (Barasat)" or in University of Calcutta.

E. Old-Age Education Center

Along with this type of formal educational institution, a non formal educational system can also be found in this village for 'do not read and write' people who belong to this village and they are comparatively old aged and agricultural laborer. This center had been established in the Primary school. The name of the center was "Oikotan Club" or 'Night School'. Here 30 to 35 persons who had been enrolled in this club. The classes scheduled from 8pm to 9:30pm. All the students of this center got same type of educational kites for their study which had been provided by 'Block Development Office' of Habra Block-I. Note book, pen, pencil, books oil lamp had been provided from this office.

VI. THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: ITS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE- A BRIEF PROFILE

Education is preventive and promotive components in its rural based development programmes. The study was conducted in the village Bharati Nagar. There is a primary

school and an ICDS center in this village. This primary school is located in the middle part of the village with a beautiful playground. According to the guide line, the primary school completely made on in brick built with a toilet and a kitchen. A hand pump also found beside the school most of the time the villagers use this to get arsenic free water.

VII. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary Education is the building block of developing literacy. Primary education in rural areas, it is common that children who have studied for as long as six year the basic reading and writing skills. But the scientific research found that language intelligence, personality, and social behavior are largely determinate by age four or five. To improve the situation, the Indian Government initiated Integrated Child Development service (ICDS) in 1975. ICDS is supported by the World Food Programme, Center for American Relief Everywhere, UNISEF, The European Union, USAID and the World Bank. The ICDS project attempts to combine education with basic Service to children, pregnant women and nourishing mother. The two project work through a network of Anganwadi (“Courtyard”) centers each run by an Anganwadi worker, usually selected from the local village. The Anganwadi worker provides non-formal pre-school education, supplementary feeding, immunizations, health checkups, medical referral. They also provide health and nutrition education, parenting education, through home visits maternal and child referral.

The study was conducted in an ICDS center and the Primary School of this village. The ICDS center is located at a village member’s house. Still not a separate place has been organized for this center. This center is run by an Anganwadi Worker and a Cooke. The Anganwadi Worker namely ‘Smt. Rasona Goldar’ who comes from a neighbor village Kumra and the cook who prepare the meal for children and women come from Kashipur village. Her name is Smt. Smriti Biswas. A case study has been taken from the teacher of this ICDS center.

A. Case 3: Smt. Rosonara Goldar, (31 years, Female)

“From the beginning of this center, I am doing this job as ‘Anganwadi Worker’. But it is very unfortunate for me that I don’t get any specific place where this center can be established in this village, due to this problem the classes and preparing food items are made up at a home.”

"A problematic situation I am always facing that is the enrollment of preparing food items which is very insufficient for children and the women. Even the quality of rice and pulse is very poor as well as the quantity of others ingredients is not so sufficient.

I would like to mention here another incident about the teaching aids and cooking element which is provided by the CDPO office at Hatthuba. It is seriously very insufficient allotment for my center to functioning and organizing this center with these elements. So it is very clear that due to insufficient educational aids and mid day meal allotment is not quite a good sign for development.”

VIII. PRIMARY EDUCATION

The name of the Primary School is “Bayarghata Free Primary School”. Since 1967 this school has been

established in this village. The activities of the primary school can be divided into two category namely administrative activities and educational activities.

IX. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

The directorate of school education with its office at the state level has the responsibility of controlling the inspectorate at the district level for both branches of primary and secondary education. Each district has a District Primary School Council (DPSC), an autonomous organization responsible for the overall administration of primary education in the district. It responsibility includes qualitative improvement in methodology of teaching, strengthening of the administration, recruitment of teachers and service benefits to the teachers. The DPSC office is headed by the DPSC chairman who is an appointed official of the Government. The DPSC office executes its responsibilities with the help of district and block level inspectorate staff. Below the block level there are school circle headed by the sub inspector with the Resource Teachers (renamed Shiksha Bandhu) acting as a supporting staff.

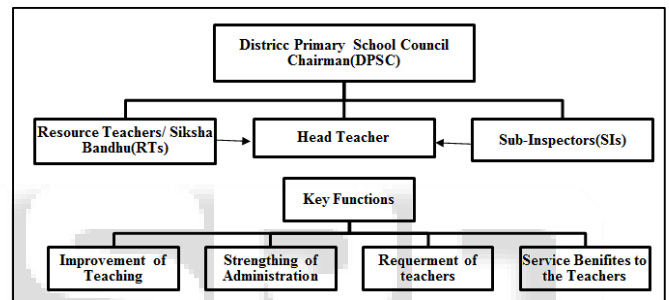


Fig. 2: District Primary Educational Structure

Various administrative issues are involved in the functioning of this institution. . In the primary school two teams of staff are working. The educational staff includes a Head Teacher and an Assistant Teacher and a cook who make food for student and teachers. The Head Teacher, who is the top of the staff hierarchy. His name is Shyamal Kumar Biswas. He lives couple of kilometer away from the school. Another assistant teacher is Ashit Kumar Biswas who come from a neighboring village Kashipur. The cooks who prepare the meal for student they are from this village.

The day is started with registration of the teacher. The head teacher takes a significant role in the total school and administration. He has to monitoring the time when teacher arrive in and leave school, student’s activities as well as tries to reduce the teacher absenteeism. Most importantly he always interacts with SI and RT officers about academic and administrative problems during school visit season and tracking school infrastructure and Mid-Day-Meal requirements.

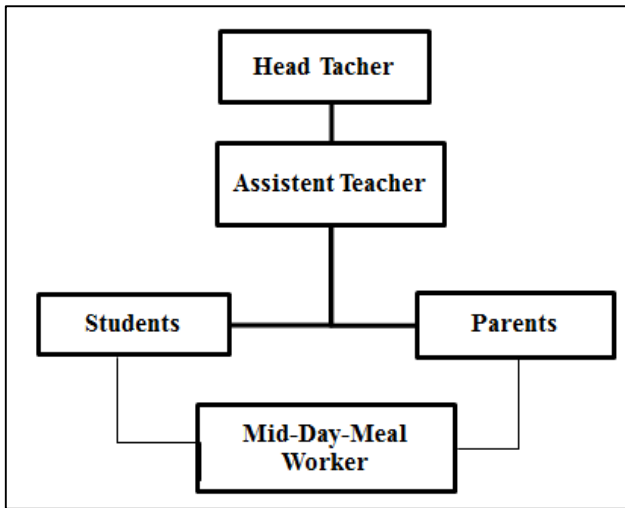


Fig. 2: Primary School Networks

It is obvious that the Mid-Day-Meal project which is provided by the “Sarba Siksha Avijan”, and is being operated by head of the school and also the accounts of this project is handled by him. The food preparing process of the Mid-Day-Meal is done by three female members of this village and they get some money for it. Smt. Laxmi Biswas (30 years old, female) works here as mid day meal Cook. Her working time started from 10:30am but she reaches at 10:45am. She returns home at 3:15 pm, two workers are also engaged in this work to cutting vegetable and washing dishes. Monday to Saturday they prepare different type of food items according to the instruction of the Government. Parent’s involvement can be seen for any kind meeting like discussion about student’s progress report of students after examination. Teachers give them the progress of their children. As a Mid-Day-Meal Workers, Most of the time student’s mothers come and cook for them.

X. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The main goal of the primary education is Educational Activities or roles. It is carried out four operational units and these are ritualistic assembly and attendance, classroom activities, extra curriculum along with the examination process.

Ritualistic Assembly and Attendance, There is a ritualistic assembly around the attendance every morning. The school is started with a prayer of our national anthem “jana gana mana” at 11:00am. After that they go to the classroom and then teachers take their attendance. Total Students of this school are only 50 among them 32 students are male and 18 students are female. The average number of student is per day 25 to 30. A large number of students are come at 10:30 am to 11:00am. The students try to follow same uniform when they are coming into the school.

Classroom Activities, in this unit the teaching-learning process is carried on through some classes which are divided into different periods. The classes are taken by the two teachers actively. The Class per day schedule from 11am to 3:30 pm and between this class schedules, the students get a recess time for forty five minutes which time they take their mid day meal. The peer interaction and their behavior also found at these situations. Another important issue of the classroom activities is teaching aids. Availability of teaching aids in primary school would be

meaningless if their appropriate utilization could not be communicated to the student. Some teaching aids can be seen in the school like an attached blackboard in the wall each of the room, chalk, duster, different type of learning chart, maps etc. On the basis of this objective it is found that the utilization of blackboards and other teaching aids, the students are less benefited from their use.

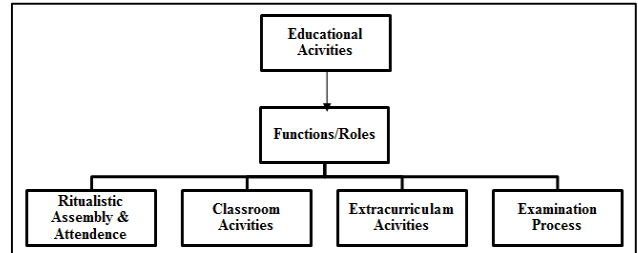


Fig. 3: Educational Activities of the School

Extra Curriculum Activities, a special attention is given to the students in the last period of the classes. The students learn some extracurricular activities through physical and work education such as physical exercise, drawing, art and craft and so one. The teachers help to the students to understand about the basic concept of hygiene also guide what is ‘good’ and what is ‘bad’ and what kind of behavior has to be done as a member of a society.

Examination Process, according to the present examination procedure of the District Primary Board, the examinations is held three times in a year in all the classes but in different marks basis. In class 1 & 2, 10 marks are allotted for the first and second unit test as well as the 30 marks is allotted for the annual examination. In class-3 & 4 the unit test include, 10 marks are for first unit test and 20 marks for the second unit test and the 50 marks are allotted for the annual examination. The progress report is given to the only parent’s hand as well as a meeting is also organized on that day with the parents on student’s evaluation.

XI. CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATIONS

A. Educational Profile

Based on the analysis of 490 individual belongs to this community, the distribution of the villagers as per the male and female literacy/illiteracy is follows:

B. Educational Status of the Villagers

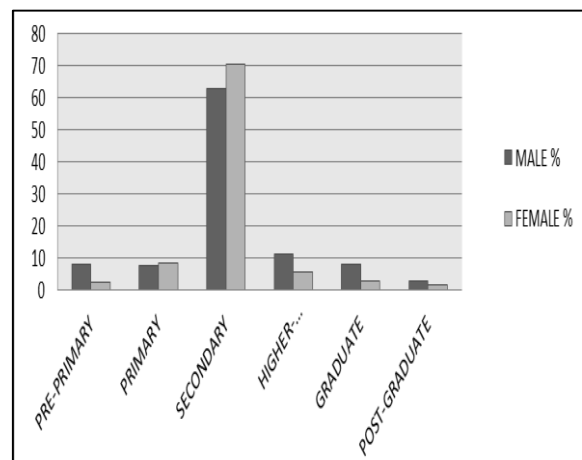


Fig. 4: Population Distribution on the Basis of Literacy All individuals i.e. 490 in number comprising of 263 males and 227 females has been taken into account to analyze

status of educational among Population. According to the primary data collected, the literacy rate among Population is 429 (Fig-2). The 'male literacy' among Population is 57.11% while the 'female literacy' among Population is 42.89%. This shows that the male literacy in population is higher than the female literacy.

C. Educational Level of the Villagers

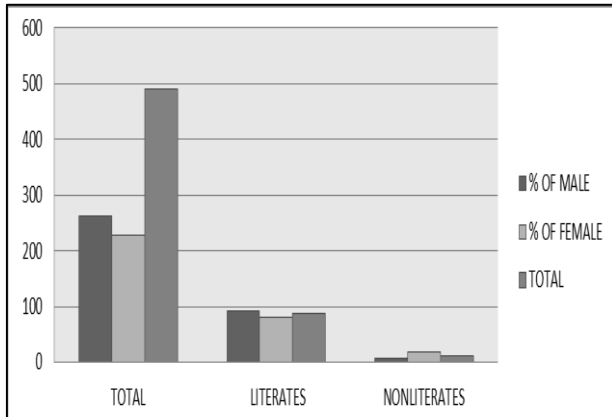


Fig. 5: Extent of Literacy of the Villagers

Though the community gives importance to education but they generally do not aspire for higher studies. Among the literates, only 16.79% individuals continued their education beyond class 12. Similarly, only 11.17% among literate Males and only 5.62% among literate females continued their studies beyond Class 12. The drop-out after secondary education is quite strangely high in both male and female cases.

D. Occupational Status of the Population

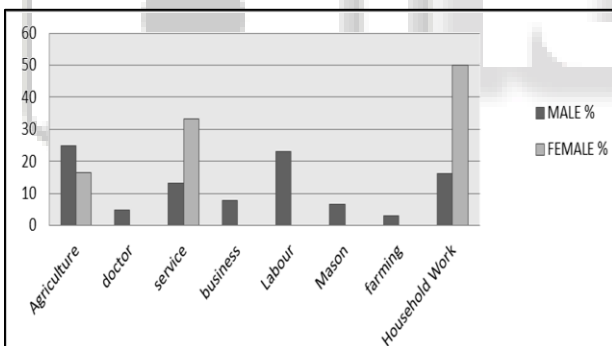


Fig. 6: Primary Occupation of the Studied Population

Fig: 6 shows that among male population maximum frequency (24.84%) is found in the engaged in agricultural. Maximum frequency of female member (50%) engaged in hold work. No women in the village is engaged in business but in service (13.33%) this scenario is little better.

XII. CONCLUDING REMARKS & SUGGESTIVE STRATEGIES

Their educational level knowledge concept about education and the socio economic status are the main factor responsible for their backwardness. Government is trying its level best to educate and provide villagers the developmental facilities. Here more focus is required along with practical approach towards village and the villagers. The present study, depicts that the following suggestive measures for the people of the Bharati Nagar as observed and interoperated by the present researchers-

- Formal Education and knowledge of villagers should be increased.
- Advertise various benefits provided by government.
- Local educational institution and soft skill learning based institution should provide more help.
- Mead-Day-Meal scheme which is the main attraction for pre and primary level students in the village should take a better place through the institution.
- The appreciation of the effects of students some type of scholarship either in the form of gifts or book can be given to them who perform well in the class in order to decrease the rate of dropouts.
- Last of all, the education as well as knowledge of traditional norms and values have to be incorporated in the formal educational system of the village through campaigning, awareness camps along with the incorporate of the same in the course curricula.

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