Chapter VII

RESUME

A number of sociological studies have appeared on changes that are taking place in the villages of India. Processes of change might be initiated by a variety of factors such as irrigation, planning, land legislation, industrialization and urbanization.

The process of urbanization as one of the factors of change has opened the wide avenues for sociologists to study its impact on rural society. Census reports and various studies indicate that migration from rural areas to large cities is constantly increasing. As a result rural to urban migration and changes taking place among the rural migrants has become one of the areas of study. The other aspect of this process is the merger of surrounding villages with the cities, which is also a remarkable factor for the urban expansion. Thus, the villages which are exposed or opened to urban influences become the focus of study. This situation provides good background to study rural-urban continuum. Western Sociologists had enough discussions on rural-urban fringe dichotomy. Without going into the controversy, one
should accept the fact that rural urban relationships should be examined in its socio-cultural and regional context. In Indian society rural-urban continuum can be best explained with the help of a village which is at the fringe of any growing city. This area of research is increasingly becoming popular. This type of studies give clear idea about the changing villages. M.S.A. Rao’s (1970) study of Yadavpur village near Delhi is a worth noting study. He has examined how the growth of the city of Delhi created diversified opportunities of market gardening, dairy and poultry farming, trade and transport and urban employment stimulating economic changes in the fringe village Yadavpur.

The other aspect of urbanization process is incorporation of rural communities into urban areas which has opened new avenue for the study of merged villages. This is a recent phenomenon. If we look at the 1961, 1971 and 1981 Censuses of India it gives a clear indication that many a surrounding villages nearby the big cities have been merged. Acceleration of the process of industrialization results into engulfing more and more agricultural villages into urban area. In order to expedite the process are created structures like Urban Development Authority through which agricultural villages are merged and are regulated for urban development. If we take an example of Gujarat,
Urban Development Authority has been constituted under the provision of the Gujarat Town Planning and Urban Development Act, 1976. The six major cities of Gujarat have been covered under this act are Vadodara, Surat, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Rajkot and Jamnagar. The merger of surrounding villages has led to the rapid expansion of these cities. Thus, between 1951 to 1971 Vadodara has engulfed 15 villages, Surat has 8, Ahmedabad 23, Bhavnagar 3, Rajkot 4 and Jamnagar 4. We can say to the extent that urban expansion is encouraged, rather it has been officially planned. How enormous would be this expansion can be explained with the help of Standard Urban Area. The Standard Urban Area is defined as the projected growth area of the principal city or town as it would be in 1991, including not only towns and villages that will be merged with it but also the intervening rural areas which are potentially urban.

If we take only those six cities mentioned above we can get an idea about the future of the surrounding villages. According to District Census of 1971 of those cities Baroda has covered 39 villages as Standard Urban Area, Surat has 17, Ahmedabad 54, Bhavnagar 7, Rajkot 9 and Jamnagar 10. In brief all these villages at least by 1991 will be declared as urban area.
When the villages are merged the following possible situations are likely to emerge.

One, the entire village agricultural land of a merged village is declared as non-agricultural land hence the wide possibility of free sale of the land by owner arises. The contractors or builders buy the land for housing construction, land owners get the sumptuous amount from the buyers. Such merged villages within a few years turn into complex urban area, because the development and construction are farmer. Nizampura, Mangalpur and Akota are the examples of such villages. Village identity (in terms of its original residents) becomes difficult to locate.

Two, the entire village land is taken by particular Development Authority and land prices are paid at par to land owners. Delhi Development Authority took away the land of the nearby villages and paid higher compensation. The Government offices and colonies were constructed on the land.

Third, yet another situation likely to emerge is that before the merger of the nearby village, private industrialists purchase the land from the land owners and/or land is partially acquired by Municipal Corporation. After the merger of such villages part of land is retained for
cultivation. The development (in terms of construction) is slow, village becomes a part of city and land transactions are stopped. This creates the doldrum situation, which is worth studying because village is neither turned into full-fledged urban complex nor it remains traditional village.

The present study is a modest attempt to examine sociologically the merged village of Gujarat State. Rajpur, the village after the merger comes under the jurisdiction of the city Municipal Corporation and becomes a part of Ward No. 6. With the dissolution of Village Panchayat the village, lost its administrative status as separate village. Formal merger does not imply automatic transformation of the village into urban area, villagers still have with them about 64 per cent of the total agricultural land under cultivation. One can call this situation a traditional period because a greater part of the agricultural land has not gone for urban use and economic organization based on agriculture is still predominant.

The following few considerations motivated the present researcher to take-up this village for study. Prior to the merger of village, landowners could sell their land, it was a free marketable commodity. As a result of this 49 factory industries were established on the village land. A large part of the land was also acquired by BMC
and VUDA. But after the merger of the village landowners cannot sell their land to any body for non-agricultural purpose. This land may be acquired later on by BMO/VUDA. This created the doldrum situation in which on the one side villagers cultivate land under constraints and on the other side the urban development is very slow. While the acquired land by BMO/VUDA is still lying unused.

Second consideration was time dimension, that is, village was under investigation in 1963 and again the same village was taken in 1985. It gives the picture of two points of time, the village before merger and the merged village. It is a rare opportunity to study the same village before and after the merger and that too by the same researcher. Of course the focus of the study of the previous project (1963) was to examine Child-rearing practices with special reference to different castes. The base line data of entire village which comprised of 352 households were collected. The other information regarding landholding pattern, agricultural activities, main sources of income, village politics etc., were also gathered. This provided the good background to the present study. The village by the time was also transformed with the infrastructural facilities like water, drainage, roads, street light, city bus services and post and telegraph.
When it was decided to take-up the village for study in 1983 it was found that the migrant families had settled both in and outside the village. In order to study the consequences of merger it was decided to take-up the families of the original residents of the village. Therefore, the original 332 households of 1963 were taken up for the present study. In 1963 the total population of the village was 1681, which comprised of 332 households representing 14 different castes. The village panchayat was functioning in its traditional way.

The present study sheds new light in the area of sociological study of merged village, by examining the following questions. When external forces operating on a particular social system—here in this case Rajpur village, uneven changes do occur and these changes influence different social groups differently. How different groups of the village adjust or accommodate with the merged situation? What happens to land based agrarian economy which is the core aspect of the rural community? How power structure changes with the merged situation? What are the hopes and despairs of different groups?

The respondents of the present study were (i) head of the family (made of 1963) (ii) in absence of male head of the family the eldest male member was chosen as the respondent, (iii) in case of disability of head, the eldest
son or brother of the head was the respondent.

Findings:

The following are the main findings that emerge from the study of Rajpur — a merged village.

Merger of the village with BMC brought infrastructural facilities like water, drainage, road and electricity for the villagers. These facilities motivated the villagers for changing their housing conditions. In this way better houses, broad streets with tarball roads, neon lights on the road and more frequency of buses to city have added the urban pomp to the village. These facilities attracted the migrant families to the village. The migrant families staying in the village (in rented houses) are from either upper middle or middle class and are from different states also. Outside the village on the village pasture land hundreds of hutments have been erected by migrants from low income group. In brief, in-migration is higher whereas out-migration is negligible. This demographic change will shape the social structure of the original settlers of the village in future. Local village population with its hierarchically arranged caste-structure might be pushed down in the background from power structure point of view. Theoretically speaking in the long run the social
relations based on primary and face to face relations will be supplanted by secondary and impersonal social relations in such situations.

As analysed in chapter three, due to merger weaker sections like Bhils, Vagharis, Vankers, Khalpa and Bhangis became the target groups for Urban Community Development Programmes sponsored by BMC. It was found that Bhils and Vankers took the maximum advantage by way of participating in economic, educational, recreational and cultural activities organized by Urban Community Development. Thus, traditionally disadvantaged groups seem to have been benefitted by this change as they picked-up the new opportunity. This was not possible before merger. The formal rules and regulations of BMC are operated in the village.

This study reveals how under different circumstances land goes out of cultivation. Prior to the merger, village was covered under industrial zone, hence city industrialists wanted land to establish factory industries. On the other side villagers were not much interested in selling their land. It was only through the channel of mediators that industrialists could buy the land. In this way 200 acres of agricultural land went to industries. The other attack was from BMC/YUDA which acquired 300 acres of
land under Land Acquisition Act. In the way 36.10 per cent of total arable land became non-agricultural land. This has affected the then existing land holding pattern of the village.

Those land holders (especially Patidars) who sold away their land to industrialists received good amount of compensation. This compensation was utilised either in constructing the new house or renovating the old one, for rental purpose. This group though drawing the fixed income out of rent is not happy with the income because the rent could not be raised in tune with rising prices. Secondly they fear that in future tenants may claim for ownership of the house or may not vacate it. Those whose land was acquired by BMC/VUDA were from small and marginal landowners and that two majority of them were from weaker sections. As it happened in the case of surrounding villages nearby Gujarat Refinery Baroda, landlosers, got the job guarantee from the management. Thus, landlosers got compensation plus security of job. The study of surrounding fringe villages nearby Delhi indicates that due to land acquisition by Delhi Development Authority among land sellers a neo-rich class has emerged because of sumptuous amount of compensation paid by Delhi Development Authority. As regards Rajpur village landsellers did not get job guarantee nor
could they get remarkable prices. On the contrary, due to lack of systematic planning of establishment of factories the problem of pollution is puzzling the cultivations.

In this process of merger it may happen that acquired land is lying frozen for some time. The goal of acquisition of land is not fulfilled if the execution of planning is delayed. The land which has been acquired by BMC/VUDA is lying unused for more than 10 years. This land is branded as 'Sarkari Jamin' (Government's land) and such land, under the pretext of Urban Development Authority is utilised clandestinely by contractors and builders. Such activities are connived at by the authorities and are alleged by pampered by politicians.

This has happened in the case of Bajpur village, though this has not been taken in the main text of thesis, the researcher could not resist his temptation of reporting the matter here. Two acres of land of a Bhil was acquired by BMC and Rs.15,000 were paid for the same. Later on one contractor who some how came to own that piece of land minted money out of it by constructing the society under the pretext of society for low income groups. The matter was discussed openly and reported in the local newspaper.
Now cultivators have 64 per cent of the total agricultural land under cultivation. They cannot sell their land to any body for non-agricultural use. Landowners are quite sure that sooner or later this land will be taken away for urban use as such, a state of uncertainty prevails among landholders.

In this state of uncertainty they still cultivate the land because they have to live the life. Even though situational constraints impinge on agriculture, landholders still struggle to get maximum yield out of cultivation. In this situation Patidars as major land-holding group finding difficulties in carrying out agricultural activities, and have become economically weaker. Though they have adopted different crops it is difficult for them to cope up with the situation. Barias (even marginal and small) cultivators have become economically stronger. The simple reasons for this are, Barias cultivate their land themselves, and have taken-up factory jobs. They have keen interest in the development of dairying. How long Barias will continue their interest in dairying will depend on how soon the village turns into urban complex.

Bhils and Untouchables were the agricultural labourers, but merger of the village and establishment of factory industries have opened the job opportunities for them. These groups have been benefitted because jobs are
available right at their door-steps. The varieties of non-agricultural activities have also increased. But again these local village groups have their competitors who have flocked in hundreds and staying in hutment colonies. Tankers of the village are still in better economic position due to education and jobs they have achieved.

Village Panchayat was a locus of power-structure which functioned at micro-level. The merger of the village took place under the Sarpanchship and Vice-Sarpanchship of a Bhil (ST) and Vanker (SC) respectively. Looking at the history of the power structure of the village it was found that because of the ownership and control of land, power was captured by one dominant Patidar for more than three decades. Even after the introduction of democratic panchayat power structure remained under the control of Patidars. As a result of factory jobs and contact with city people, Barias became conscious and active for achieving the power.

After the merger Rajpur became one of the parts of wider organization called BMC. Now power can be achieved through political support or through gaining majority from wider areas. Ownership of land, kinship relations, inter-caste relations are losing their significance. Who will dominate whom will depend on who wields
power and how. In this context hutment colonies, political parties have become important.

'Hopes and Despairs' of the villagers have been briefly articulated by narrating few case-studies. Those who can foresee the trend and adjust accordingly have good hopes, for those who cannot have despairs.

This small study is about only one village in Gujarat, still many more can be taken to add more empiric evidences. Theoretically, planners have their plans on the papers but nothing concrete has come out on the acquired village land. In future builders and contractors by bringing political pressure can take the land for their interest. It may happen also that pressure groups become more active in creating more huts, which may turn into rural slums. The planning of Vallabh Vidyanagar in Gujarat though of different kind of township is the example of foresightedness of the planners. The land givers gave their land and in return they got plot area. This incidently resulted in rapid development of the township. This brought attractive prices of plots to the plotholders, who became prosperous. Planning of this kind can help the land owners of merged villages and redress their grievances.

The same 332 households can be studied after 20 years to see the direction of change i.e. who is where doing what?
MAP I
Location of Rajpur in Taluka Baroda, District Baroda, Gujarat (before merger-1963)
Location of Rajpur in BMC (after merger - 1983)

Villages merged before 1971 and have become full-fledged urban. Total villages eight.

Villages merged on 1st December 1973. Total villages six.