CHAPTER II

IMPACT OF OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION ON SOCIETY

Occupational distribution of population tells us how people of the country earn their livelihood. It is also an index of the economic development of that country. If a large section of population is engaged in primary activities like agriculture, then the country will be economically backward. If on the other hand, majority of the population is occupied with secondary and tertiary activities, then the country will be economically developed.

According to Guru Nanak, every individual is sovereign, as God, the real Sovereign, pervades each and every being. Moreover, everyone has been engaged in some occupation by the Creator. To quote Guru Nanak:

He Himself has created
the whole world.
He who has made it;
He alone assigns tasks to it.¹

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Hail to the creator
the true king,
who has yoked the world
to its task.²

It indicates that an individual is entitled to
choose his occupation according to his capacity and capability — his real personal property — entrusted by God in him.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the impact of occupational distribution on the society, as has been depicted in Gurbani. Section I deals with classification of economic activities; and Section II with the factors determining the occupational distribution. Relative importance of different sectors has been discussed in Section III and impact of occupational distribution on society in Section IV.

I. CLASSIFICATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The occupations have been classified into three sectors: primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Agriculture and allied activities are known as "primary" activities. They are primary because their products are essential or vital for human existence. They are carried out with the help of nature.

The primary sector activities (agriculture and allied) which have been referred to in Guru Nanak Bani are as under:

- Farming (Kirsan)
- Gardening (Mali)
- Cattle-rearing (Gavala)

In the economic structure as depicted in Guru Nanak Bani, agriculture predominates the section of primary sector. Guru Nanak gives utmost importance to
agriculture as he conveys spiritual message by referring to the techniques of cultivation. To quote Guru Nanak:

Make thy mind the plough man,
good deeds the farming, modesty the water and thy body the field.
Let Lord's Name be thy seed,
contentment the cold crusher and
garb of humility thy fence.
Doing deeds of love, the seed
shall germinate. Fortunate then thou shalt see such a home.³

* * * * *

In the spacious farm of thy hearts' garden,
grow the plant of Guru's teaching
and irrigate it with Lord's love.
All the trees bear the fruit
of the Name of One God.
Without His grace how can man obtain it?⁴

Secondary sector is also called manufacturing industry in economics, referring to that sector of a nation's economy that includes the processing of raw-materials supplied by primary industries into consumer goods, or production of goods and manufacturing of products, components of products, or capital goods used
to manufacture consumer and non-consumer goods. Secondary industry also includes such industries as hydroelectric, geothermal, solar, wind and other electrical power generation that require generators or other specialized equipment to convert raw energy into electricity; and it also includes the construction industry.5

The secondary sector activities which have been referred to in Guru Nanak Bani are as under:

- Molasses (Gur) Agro
- Sugar refined - Agro
- Textile (Silk), (Resham)
- Brick-making (Bhattha)
- Ironsmith (Lohar)
- Metallurgical: Gold, Silver, Copper, Brass, Bronze, Glass, Iron, Coal.
- Jeweller (Saraf): Rubies, Pearls, Diamonds.
- Goldsmith (Sunar)
- Manufacturing: Carding & Weaving (Jullaha), Sewing Clothes (Darzi)
- Extraction of Oil (Teli) Agro
- Pottery making (Kumhar)
- Shoe-maker (Chamar)
- Carpenter (Tarkhan)

In the economy of Guru Nanak's vision, service industry also occupied an important place which is indicated by the references Guru Nanak makes to such
industry e.g. smithy, tailoring, pottery etc. in his compositions. To quote him:

Putting in a furnace as the iron is melted and refashioned, so it is materialistic cast into existences and made to roam and ramble about.⁶

* * * * *

Then cut by the scissors, by the tailor torn, with needle and thread it is stitched.⁷

Guru Nanak goes to the extent of conceiving even God Himself as a Manufacturer viz. Artisan or Potter who fashions all the vessels viz. beings. It means that manufacturing plays a very significant role in the whole scheme of the Universe. This opinion of Guru Nanak determines the significance attached to the manufacturing industry in the economy of his vision. To quote Guru Nanak:

The One (Potter) has fashioned all the vessels.⁸

Keeping in view the objective of the economy of Guru Nanak’s vision, the production in the sector of manufacturing industry is to be directed to make human life comfortable.
Trade, transport, communication, banking and finance, insurance and services are "tertiary" activities which help the primary and secondary sector activities in the country.

The tertiary sector activities which have been referred to in the Guru Nanak Bani are as under:

- Trade Wholesale (Saudagar)
- Trade Retail (Banjara)
- Banking/Usury (Shah)
- Broker (Dalal)
- Teaching, Reading of Vedas, Ceremonies (Brahmin)
- Fighting (Kshatriya)
- Shopkeeper (Bania-Hatwania)
- Service (Chakri)
- Washing (Dhobi)
- Fisherman (Machhua)
- Hunting (Shikari)
- Butcher (Kasai)
- Sweeper (Chandali)
- Barber (Nai)
- Groom (Siyas)
- Boatman (Khevat)
- Watchman (Pehrva)
- Magician (Bajigar)
- Drummer (Doom)
- Dancer (Rasdhari)
These activities greatly attract the thought of Guru Nanak. He is very particular that the traders should be honest in their dealings:

- Strike the bargain, O’traders!
- and take care of your merchandise.
- Purchase such goods as may last
- with thee.
- In the next world, is the wise merchant,
- who will take and preserve
- the genuine article.  

* * * * *

The true merchandise and wealth is
the name of the infinitely deep Lord,
Who permeates all the hearts.

Guru Nanak gives a note of caution to men,
specially bankers regarding amassing of wealth through false dealings. To quote him:

- Man amasses gold and silver but this false
- and poisonous wealth is like ashes.
- Amassing wealth, man calls himself a banker,
- but duality wastes him away.
Other Minor Professions

Apart from these, there were some ordinary professions which were normally taken up by the poor people for earning their livelihood. These people included jugglers and acrobats (bazigari), snake charmers, herdsmen, puppetmen and those who worked in the nat shalas (theatres) or performed their shows in the open before the people.

The popular tradition in Hindustan takes account of at least thirty-six social groups, including the various subdivisions of the higher castes. Among these social groups are included the occupations of the brewer, goldsmith, weaver, tin worker, betel-leaf seller, shepherd, milkman, carpenter, smith, bhat, dyer, flower seller, calico-printer, barber, oilman, musician, juggler and the mounte-bank. There is no reason to be sceptical about the existence of these occupational groups in the Punjab, rural and urban.12

Begging was a source of livelihood for some people who depended on alms and charity. In those days tendency of begging by sanyasis and hermits had increased so much that even healthy people had started shirking work. Guru Nanak was against such human parasites who lived on the earnings of others. He preached and emphasized on the necessity of labour to earn one's own livelihood. He declared in a clear and firm language that only those who earn their livelihood with the sweat of their brow can find the true path to
God. To quote Guru Nanak:

O Yog remain thou seated and
thy pain of duality shall be dispelled.
Thou feelest not shame in
begging from door to door.\(^{13}\)

* * * * *

One without Divine knowledge
sings sermons.
The hungry Mulla turns his own home
into a mosque.
Becoming an idle do nothing he has
ears pierced.
Another one embracing mendicacy loses
his caste.
Fall not thou ever at the feet of him,
who calls himself a Guru and a spiritual
perceptor and goes begging.\(^{14}\)

Guru Nanak talks about quite a few minor
professions in his Bani. He observes them critically
and acknowledges the position of each one in the society.

During those days, physicians enjoyed a position of
honour, though Guru Nanak ridicules the ignorant ones.
He says that the most effective medicine is the Holy
Name of the Omni Potent Himself. The fact to be always
kept in mind is that it is the Name ultimately that
saves. Only they who love the Name and hear its ringing in the deepest recesses of their souls are cured of the major diseases if unfortunately they are caught in. To quote Guru Nanak:

O ignorant physician, minister thou not any medicine to me.
The pain persists and the body’s suffering continues.
Such a medicine produces no effect on me, O brother.
Forgetting the Lord, man enjoys sexual pleasures,
Then do the ailments arise in his body.
The blind soul is punished.
O ignorant physician, apply not thy cure to me.15

Fishing, betel selling were also some of such occupations. We find references about people engaged in the above occupations in the following couplets in Guru Bani:

He Himself is the fisherman and the fish and Himself the water and net.
He Himself is the metal ball of the net and Himself the bait within.16

* * * * *
Where are those betal leaves, betal-sellers charming fairies?
They have vanished like the shadow.17

A huntman does not find much favour with Guru. To quote Him:

Falsehood is my dagger and to eat
by defrauding is carrion.
I live in the form of a huntsman,
O’ creator!18

* * * * *

Women have become divines and
men have become hunters.
Humility, self control, piety have run away from them and they eat
the indigestible food.19

Jugglers were common, but Guru Nanak does not belittle this simple occupation. He compares the very existence of everyone on the earth as jugglery; he plays and disappears:

Like mumbling in the night’s dream,
the jugglers have left the world,
after staging their play.20

Even the thieves, adulterers and gamblers did not escape Guru Nanak’s close and minute observations. For them, he believes, retribution and punishment would be
inevitable.

The thieves, adulterers and gamblers
are pressed like a milful of mustard.  

An actor does not find favour with Guru, but Guru lays emphasis on good deeds as is evident from the following couplet:

If someone wears a neat clean loin-cloth,
anoints his brow with the sacrificial mark
and puts on rosary on his neck,
but if he has wrath within him
he reads as one acts in a theatre.

Guru observes that a true teacher is a person who believes in God, and his deeds are fair to the society.
It is evident from the following couplet:

He is said to be saintly teacher;
if he imparts true instruction to his pupils.
Contemplate thou the Name, in gather thou the Name
and thus earn thou the profit in this world.
With the true wooden slate of the true mind
read thou the supremely sublime Gurbani.
Nanak, he alone is learned and he is the wise scholar, who wears the Necklace of the Lord’s Name.
Guru Nanak mentions a few other minor professions such as bracelet dealers in his Bani. He observes them critically and accords places for them in the society as it is seen in the following couplets:

Thou hast not the real bracelet dealer, neither bracelet, nor good glass bangles. The arms, which gridle not the spouse’s neck; they burn in anguish.24

Guru Nanak considers the life in this world as a temporary phase as he compares it with a pasture. God cares for those who are associated with the Lord’s Name, as a herdsman cares for his cattle. The above ideas are composed in the following couplets of Gurbani.

As a herdsman is in the pasture for a short time, so is the mortal in the world.25

* * * *

They who are associated with the Name see the world a temporary but in pastureland.26

* * * *

As a herdsman guards and keeps watch over his kine, so God cherishes and protects man day and night and
enshrines peace in his mind.

Guru Nanak describes characteristics of different ages with the symbols of chariot and charioteer in the following couplet:

Nanak, the prime human body has one chariot and one charioteer. They change after every age, The divines understand this.
In the Gold-age, contentment is the carriage and piety the driver, in front.
In the Silver-age, continence is the carriage and power the driver, in front.
In the Brass-age, penance is the carriage and truth the driver, in front.
In the Iron-age, fire is chariot and falsehood, the charioteer in front.

In the economy of Guru’s vision, the persons engaged in professional services serve the community by discharging their duties with dedication. To quote Guru Nanak:

With devoted heart render service:
make faith in the holy vocation.

Their real award lies in their selfless service to the people. Guru Nanak, conceiving human souls as
God's soldiers, says:

The Lord's soldiers take care of their homes,
Their pay is fixed before
their very advent into this world.
They perform the service of
their Supreme Lord and obtain the profit.
From their mind they forsake and forget
covetousness, avarice and evil.
In their body fortress they proclaim
the victory of their Monarch
and return not vanquished ever.\[30

* * * * *

If a servant engaged in service,
walks according to his Master's will,
his honour is magnified and
he receives double the wages.
If he pleads equality with his Master,
he incurs his displeasure.
He loses his fat salary and
and receives shoe beating on his very face.
whose gifts we eat, Him Let us say 'All Hail'
Nanak, command succeeds not with the Lord
It is only the imploration which works.\[31

* * * * *

He who calls himself the Lord's servant
and replies to Him in defiance;
He loses his wages and he is seated
not on the throne.32

Guru Nanak does not believe in astrology. He advises that only God’s Name is supreme. To quote him:

Speak thou not falsehood,
O Pandit and tell the truth.
When through the Name,
One’s ego is stilled,
then find’s he the Lord’s mansion.
Calculating and counting,
the astrologer draws out a horoscope
He pursues and reads it to others
but realises not the reality.
Deem thou the Guru’s hymns
over and above all.
Utter thou not any discourse
as all else is but ashes.33

Guru Nanak emphasised that actions of men are outcome of an interaction between organism and corresponding socio-economic-political environment. He says that even Narad Muni has been influenced by ‘Kalyug’ wave:

The mind’s impulses are like cymbals
and ankle bells and with them,
continually thumps the drum of the world
The hermits like Narad dance
under the influence of the Darkage.34

The professions discussed above clearly indicate that diversity in occupation was available to the people.

II. FACTORS DETERMINING THE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

Colin Clark, in his work 'Conditions of Economic Progress', argues that there is a close relationship between development of an economy on one hand, and occupational structure on the other; and economic progress is generally associated with certain distinct, necessary and predictable changes in occupational structure. A high average level of real income per head is always associated with a high proportion of the working population engaged in tertiary activities ... low real income per head is always associated with a low proportion of the working population engaged in tertiary production and a high percentage in primary production."35 If a country is in a developing stage, a major portion of its population is engaged in the primary sector. Same ideas have been expressed by Arthur Lewis "The most striking feature when comparing a census of rich with a census of poor countries, whether they be different countries at the same date or the same country of different dates, is the sharp fall
in the proportions recorded in agriculture as we pass from poverty to riches. The poorest countries show seventy per cent or more engaged in agriculture, whereas the richest can feed themselves twice as well with only twelve to fifteen per cent in agriculture.36

In the ancient Hinduism, all types of occupations, vocations and professions to earn livelihood were not open to all; they were adopted strictly on the basis of Varna-system or caste-system which forced persons to choose occupations according to their castes and not according to their ability.

"As caste determines occupations not only at birth but throughout the life of the individual, it is impossible for a person to give up his traditional occupation and move on to new occupation. The caste system, therefore, hindered the mobility of labour between occupations and at one time even between places."37

"The caste system was evolved to protect the Hindu society from decay but with the passage of time, the system became hereditary in stead of remaining functional and thus inhibited social and economic growth. It became extremely rigid resulting in the rise of vested interests. Lack of flexibility and quality was responsible for most of the defects of the system."38

With economic development, the occupational structure of a country undergoes significant changes.
A.G.B. Fisher observes "In every progressive economy there has been a shift of employment and investment from the essential 'primary activities' to secondary activities of all kinds and to a still greater extent into tertiary production". The reason for such a change is that as income increases with development, there is no corresponding rise in the demand for food and other agricultural products. This is because the income elasticity of demand for such goods is less than unity. At the same time with more capital and better techniques in agriculture, there is a large increase in the productivity of labour and land. As a result, there is less need of labour in agriculture. This brings down the proportion of labour force in this sector.

Since the income elasticity of demand for industrial products and services is greater than unity, an increase in income brings about a large increase in its demand. The mechanisation and automation results in increase in production per head. But the demand for industrial products increases at a faster rate than the rise in production per head. This process goes on resulting in an increasing demand for labour in the industry and tertiary sector. Besides, in the non-agricultural sectors, there are certain factors which draw labourers away from agriculture such as the lack of high wages, fixed working hours, better working...
conditions, availability of modern facilities for living etc. In this way the proportion of work-force engaged in these sectors increases.

Political set up of a country, too, affects occupational distribution directly. If the Government's policy is that of laissez-faire (non-interference of Govt. in free working of the economy), mostly people will depend on primary sector. But in a welfare State, there is a tendency of shift towards secondary and tertiary sectors.

Social set up and attitude towards life have their impact on occupational distribution in the sense that, those people and societies, where materialism is considered important, have a tendency to shift from primary to secondary and then to tertiary sectors.

Those economies, where there is a lack of transportation, are more dependent upon agriculture and self sufficient primitive economy. As transportation and communication improve, the tendency moves towards commercialisation. The improvement in transportation and communication facilities lead to increased demand. Hence, there is a shift towards commercialisation. The conditions of a traditional agrarian society are such that majority of people tend to depend on agriculture directly and even those who do not seem to be dependent on agriculture have a very close link with the agricultural activities. With the transformation of agrarian society into a commercial society, a basic
change is noticed in conditions which lead to a shift in occupational structure from agriculture to industry and to commerce.

Rapid industrialisation and the consequent growth of banking, finance, trade and commerce not only provide more employment but also generate the process of occupational shift in favour of secondary and tertiary sectors. The growth of urbanisation is a clear indication to this trend.

III. RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT SECTORS

It is not possible to make a generalisation as to which of the economic sectors is more important in an economy. In fact development of all sectors, viz. agriculture, industry, trade, commerce, banking, is equally important. It is rather unreal to consider the development of one sector to the exclusion of another because all these sectors are closely inter-related. Improvement in the productivity of agriculture is one of the most important means of promoting industrialization. In fact, unless agriculture is modernised substantially, industrial expansion is likely to proceed at a slow speed. At the same time, agricultural improvement cannot go very far unless there is industrial development to take up the released manpower and to provide a solid technical base for the equipment and services essential for modernised agriculture. In short, both these sectors are not
Further, we know that no production process is complete till the goods produced reach the distribution channel, that is till they are sent to the market. Thus trade and commerce are as important as the primary activities of production. Finance and credit are the life blood of the production activity; obviously the institution constituting money, money lending, credit and banking is necessary. We cannot overemphasise the importance of transport in carrying out all these economic activities. Infact, close inter-dependence of all sectors has always existed in the economy of a society although its patterns have undergone many changes in the process of economic evolution. It is possible that during a particular period one sector has been relatively more important than the other. It is determined by many factors like the level of economic development, level of technological development, factor endowment, economic and social attitudes and institutions and Government policy. For example, in an underdeveloped economy with poor technological progress, agriculture is more important, because it can be carried out with less capital and simple tools, whereas industry requires more capital and some machinery. In industry, technical coefficients are almost fixed whereas in agriculture they are variable. Sometimes social values also assign the role to a
particular sector. For example, in medieval India, the possession of land was a matter of social prestige. It was considered more a source of social pride than an economic factor. Availability of factors of production also determined the classification.

In the Punjab, as elsewhere, a broad social stratification in the Muslim society is easily discernible. The nobles undoubtedly formed what may be loosely called the social elite and they enjoyed greater economic advantages than any other section or group. The craftsmen, personal servants and domestic slaves, both male and female, formed the lowest strata, while the middle strata were formed by the peasants, soldiers, traders, scholars, writers, the sayyadis, the shaikhzadas and the administrative personnel.\textsuperscript{40}

This idea has been conveyed by Guru Nanak in the following couplet:

\begin{center}
One is a beggar, who lives on charity and
One a King, who remains absorbed in himself.
\end{center}

IV. IMPACT OF OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION ON SOCIETY

The occupational distribution of population has very deep impacts on both social as well as economic aspects of economy. On the social side the day-to-day customs, traditions, dress, festivals, birth, death and marriage celebrations are all affected directly by the occupational structure of the economy.

Similarly, occupational distribution affects
economic life directly because the means of living is earned through occupation and the manner of earning the means of living is an important aspect of economic life. The methods of production, items of production, manner of sale, pricing, savings, investments, taxation, imports and exports, working hours are all affected by occupational distribution.

The occupational distribution determines the economic structure of an economy and influences the social values of people. It also determines the way of life. When agriculture is the dominant sector, the village is the basic, economic and cultural unit of these people. The economy is mostly of subsistence nature. The customs and traditions are related to agriculture. Thus the institutions relating to agriculture emerge. In our country, in the medieval age, agriculture was the main occupation; so possession of land gave not only economic power to people but also political power. Feudal system was also related to the ownership of land. People were awarded by granting a piece of land. It also affects the nature of industries which may be agro-based. The trade also depend on the agricultural products. The character of people is also affected by it. People are illiterate, simple and fatalistic. Since agriculture depends on the benevolence or niggardliness of nature, people become fatalists. Infact, agriculture is the primary economic activity, so an agricultural economy is a
traditional society which uses pre-Newtonian techniques of production, and the production possibility curve is quite low. In such a society, people are not regarded for their personal qualities but for their belonging to a clan or a tribe.

However, as the society develops, the industrial sector becomes more important. When industry is the dominating sector, there is increased competition and individualism, there is a decline in communal spirit and village solidarity. There is an increasing trend of urbanization. The village which was the basic unit of society comes under the disrupting forces of technology. Its self-sufficiency disappears and it becomes tied up with the city, the nation and the outside world. The village which was formerly a family becomes transferred into an adjunct of the factory, a mob. It gives rise to a class of wage earners and the society is divided into two classes of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The pattern of production is such that there is more production of comforts and luxuries than necessaries. Then there are all the problems related to the factory system.

If services sector is more important in a society, then the society is economically highly advanced. It is more of an affluent society and has all the characteristics of a society of high mass consumption.

In Guru Nanak’s economic system, there is no
demarcation and specific assigning of work for anybody. Anyone (man or woman) can take to any occupation, vocation or profession according to his/her aptitude and ability. No occupation, vocation or profession has been kept reserved or restricted for any particular individual or section of the society. This freedom of choice of work in the economy of Guru Nanak's vision will automatically solve the problem of mobility of labour from one occupation to another and from one place to another.

According to Guru Nanak's thought, nobody is to be restrained from engaging in any occupation because of his caste. Besides, no occupation determines one's caste; rather it is one's deeds that determine one's status. Guru Nanak says:

That alone is man's caste and that his glory, as are the deeds, which he does.41

In the economy of Guru Nanak's vision, the interdependence of all the three sectors is well-recognised. That is why a proper and amicable co-ordination is established among them. In it, the farmer is contented to produce the life-sustaining commodities; the industrialist produces the goods at reasonable cost for the convenience of the people in purchasing them; the trader deals fairly; the officials serve the community with dedication.
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