

# BHADKAD

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SURVEY OF A VILLAGE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY

(1915 AND 1955)

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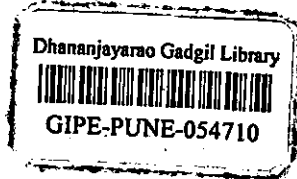
THE INDIAN SOCIETY OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

BOMBAY 1.

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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND OF THE FIRST SURVEY

The first survey of Bhadkad village was conducted in 1914-1918. The background under which this survey was undertaken forms necessarily an integral part of the narration. Though it would mean the recording of incidents of more or less a personal nature, it seems such a narration is essential in writing the history of the Bhadkad survey. The genesis of the first survey of Bhadkad dates back to the year 1912 when I submitted my report on "Agricultural Indebtedness in the Baroda State". On the basis of this report, the Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad III, Ruler of Baroda (the Former Princely State) felt that much light needs to be thrown on the life and living conditions of the people. He therefore expressed a desire that Government should undertake socio-economic studies of the population residing in different parts of the State. He also suggested that a beginning in this direction could be made by taking up a sociological study of the servants of the Khangi Department (Household Department) of the Maharaja. Later, a village in the Savli or the Petlad Taluka should be undertaken for a detailed socio-economic study.

Accordingly, the sociological study of the servants of the Maharaja's household numbering about 926 was made by me in co-operation with Rao Bahadur Govindbhai Desai, the then Naib Dewan and Dr. Mayer, the Chief Medical Officer of the State. This survey was very comprehensive covering almost every aspect of the life of the servants—their economic, social and family life. Besides, a thorough medical examination of all the persons was also conducted as part of the study. This report was submitted in the year 1914 when the Maharaja desired me to undertake a village survey with special emphasis on the study of the living conditions and food habits of the people.

For this purpose, Bhadkad, a village in the Petlad Taluka of the Baroda District was selected. There were two reasons for its selection: firstly, Bhadkad was a village which was not influenced by the impact of urbanisation, and secondly we were promised all possible local help from the late Motibhai N. Amin, the father of the old Baroda Library Movement. Shri Amin promised us to get the help of his old pupils in collecting information. Two forms were prepared for the survey—one a General Form intended for the entire village and the second an Individual Form intended for each family to be investigated. It was our desire to collect information on practically all householders residing in the village. So we collected information on

all the 356 households in the village. The Government Departments like Agriculture, Revenue, Sanitation, also rendered all possible help. In conducting this survey, an attempt was made to cover almost every important aspect of the life of the people including even their social customs. In fact, we also thought of carrying out medical examination of the people on the lines on which some of the servants of the Khangi Department were examined. But this had to be omitted because we felt that the people here especially women would not readily submit to such an examination. In other respects, however, the survey was as complete as our knowledge on this subject then went. The Revenue Officer, the late Raja Ratna Sevaklal Dalsukhbhai was actively associated with the first survey from its very beginning, and also worked as the special duty officer, in charge of Bhadkad Survey during the last year of the survey.

It is necessary to emphasise that at that time we had hardly any scientific surveys of this nature which could serve as a guide to us. Hence we thought the survey could be made comprehensive by including as many subjects as possible. Thus, it took us a fairly long time to complete the study and prepare a report.

It must be said that the people in the village offered their whole-hearted co-operation in the conduct of the survey. Mr. Himchandbhai, then a young man from the village, gave us two very interesting studies ; one, on the food habits of the people of various castes and on various occasions ; and the second, on what is called the crop-sharing system, i.e., the customary share in agricultural produce given to various craftsmen and village servants—such as Brahmins, carpenters, smiths, village watchman, and others—as a return in kind of the services they render to the farmers during the year. In addition to these studies, the revenue officer prepared a statement of the fragmentation of all the holdings in the village.

On the eve of the completion of the survey and when I was about to prepare the report, I was appointed as the Member-Secretary of a committee appointed to study the economic conditions of the people of the Baroda State in general. Thereafter, I had to go on long leave and thus my desire of preparing the report remained unfulfilled. The papers containing the investigation data and information, however, remained with me intact, and as I moved from one department to another, the thought of finishing the report was always in my mind, but it seems the right opportunity never came till I retired from the service.

#### THE RESURVEY

As President of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, looking at the original survey at this point of time, I felt that a resurvey of the village should be very useful. Such a resurvey after about 40 years, would give ample scope for gauging the progress of the village during the last four decades. The possession of papers of

the first survey was itself a unique opportunity in that we could have a picture of the village at that point of time. Only the papers relating to two special investigations viz. one on the crop-sharing system and the other on the fragmentation of holdings referred to above and some other statements were not with me. They were given to some one for publication and were never returned. However, some information about the crop-sharing system could be gathered from one of the 13 case studies conducted along with the main survey. A copy of this case study which is of special interest is attached to the report as it gives an interesting life study of a man in the lower grade of social life. It represents a customary system where payments were made in kind for services rendered during the year.

For the resurvey, we engaged the services of Shri Natvarlal Sevaklal Parikh who is well acquainted with the conditions in the rural areas of Gujarat and appointed him Research Officer, in charge of Bhadkad Survey. Bearing in mind the nature of the data and materials, as also the methods of the first survey, he collected, as far as possible similar information on more or less the same lines for the second survey so that it may be possible to obtain a comparative view. He made a socio-economic survey of the whole village consisting of all families therein.

The main and complete report of this survey is prepared in Gujarati. It is rather a big volume but contains a detailed record of social and economic conditions and changes in the village. It was thought advisable to prepare a summarised version of the report in English. This summary outlines the major findings of the two surveys and presents a fairly comparative view of the conditions of the village during two points of time namely, 1915 and 1955. The English report is drafted by Shri Natvarlal Parikh and is finalised by Shri S. Thirumalai, Research Officer of the Society.

While in the first survey, emphasis was primarily on the economic aspects of the village, in the resurvey an attempt has been made to present an analysis of the social aspects also. It is necessary to stress the impact of social conditions on the economic factors, especially in a country like ours where the influence of caste and creed is still not very inconsiderable. In the resurvey, we have, therefore, looked into all aspects of rural life—economic, social, cultural and religious—and have examined the economic data in the background of sociological conditions. This broadening of the compass of the resurvey is also applicable to some of the economic aspects, inasmuch as data on items like Housing and Clothing, which were not touched upon in the original survey, have been collected in the resurvey. Another interesting feature of the resurvey was that a regular house-to-house 'census' was taken of all households in the village and thus it has been possible to collect certain basic data pertaining to all families in the village. Naturally, at the time of the resurvey, schedules have also been revised and certain new features have been introduced.

This summary provides rich material in relation to aspects of considerable general interest such as the socio-economic characteristics of the village, its occupational structure, occupational mobility, growth of population and its impact on the development of the village, housing and employment, etc. As far as I am aware, such resurvey of a village is perhaps the first of its kind in Gujarat and it enables us to have an insight into problems confronted by a typical village during the process of growth over the last four decades.

#### SOME REVELATIONS

Many of the results revealed by this resurvey appear to have significance for the village economy in India in general. I may draw attention to what appear to me to be the more important of these.

It appears remarkable that in spite of the population growth of nearly 25 per cent during the last 40 years, the occupational structure of the village has not undergone any material change. Agriculture and other allied pursuits continue to be the mainstay of the village economy. Opportunities for non-agricultural employment show a definite decline with the extinction of some of the hereditary occupations of village artisans and craftsmen. This growing pressure of population on land resources has resulted in the predominance of small holdings which are on the increase. The bright side of the picture is that yields of crops show a slight improvement due to the relatively increasing use of manure and provision of irrigation facilities, through the installation of oil engines. The oil engines are symbolic of the technical improvements that the villages are now ushering in.

In regard to non-agricultural avenues of employment, the number of families employed totally or partially in village industries has decreased from 48 to 27, or by 41 per cent. This indicates that Bhadkad is no exception to the general trend of disintegration of the village economy and languishing of village industries in the country.

The decline in the number of money-lenders in the village from 63 in 1914 to nil in 1955 appears to be more apparent than real. Under the recent legislation, open money-lending on a legalised basis has almost disappeared. Unofficially, credit continues to be disbursed, possibly with the same unfair practices and exorbitant rates of interest. The total debt has increased in proportions during this period. The money-lending classes especially the Baniyas are practically disappearing. Among the merchant classes only a few shop-keepers have remained.

As open money-lending has disappeared in the village, it is reasonable to expect that the Co-operative Society, started in 1913, should have fulfilled the expectation of the sponsors. However, an examination of the conditions of the Society during the period 1951-55 presents a picture which is in sharp contrast to its initial, remarkable progress

in membership and sound position in financial results. In recent years, the Society which showed so healthy trends of development during the period 1913-17 is showing definite signs of decadence. Lack of proper local leadership and intelligent departmental guidance may be said to be at the root of its moribund condition.

The same trend is also visible in the working of Panchayat—another potent village institution. At the time of the first survey, the Panchayat was a live body, its members taking a keen interest not merely in the routine work but also in developmental programmes of the village such as the construction and repair of the village Chora, roads, Dharma Shala and in measures for improving sanitation, etc. It has now lost much of its vitality and as an officer of the District Local Board admitted, neither its members nor the villagers take any interest in its work. Many of the urgent needs of the village like water-logging in the *Sim* area have remained unattended to. Here again, lack of leadership has been responsible for turning it into a moribund institution. The co-operative spirit that expressed itself so forcefully among the village people formerly has practically disappeared now. The zeal and initiative with which the village people worked as one solid team are today absent. Guidance from higher local self-government institutions also seems to be lacking.

In spite of the facilities of medical relief provided by the opening of a dispensary in the village, the health conditions have remained the same. Malaria is extensively prevalent in the village. As for sanitation, the old Baroda Government maintained some sort of sweepers' service as part of the village administration. Now this function has been entrusted to the Village Panchayat which has neither funds to provide even a shadow of the old service nor the zest for carrying on the functions. Thus the roads and surroundings are left unattended to. There are hardly any private latrines. People use the open grounds surrounding the village.

In the matter of housing, a healthy trend is visible. The recently constructed houses show an unmistakable trend towards better houses, with more air and light and in some cases with separate kitchen and bathrooms.

In the sphere of literacy and education, there is a comparative improvement. Increasing use is being made of facilities afforded by the Library and Reading Room.

In regard to the incomes of rural families, the study has revealed some significant trends. While the percentage of "surplus" families, in the sense of families having income higher than expenditure, have increased, "deficit" families, in the sense of families having expenditure higher than income, have decreased during the course of these 40 years. There has also been an upward movement of families from lower to higher income-groups. The chronic poverty and indebted-



ness that appeared in the first survey has undergone a change for the better. The main cause for this improved level of incomes is the rise in prices during the period.

In the consumption habits of some families, the food components seem to have changed for better and expenditure on items such as tea and clothing have shown an upward trend. But in a majority of cases of the people in the lower grades, most of them live at a low subsistence level.

On the social side, the study has many important points to make. While caste rigidities in respect of inter-dining and inter-marriage still persist among the majority, there is evidence of relaxation of other external formalities connected with social contacts amongst castes. There is comparatively greater inter-mingling among the population. Most of the old social and religious customs and prejudices are losing their importance though they persist in varying degrees with different sections.

Thus a comparative review of the socio-economic conditions of the village in the first survey period and in the resurvey period goes to show that progress in development either in the economic sphere or in the field of social change has been visible though slow. The survey illustrates clearly the factors that resist development and the effects of piece-meal changes in the traditional institutions without properly conceived substitute organisations to replace them.

The purpose of this survey will be largely fulfilled if it goes to underline the importance of such resurveys both for purposes of concretely visualising the problems and process of growth and also for providing sufficient empirical material for framing of practical programmes. In such resurveys it is hardly necessary to emphasise the need for obtaining intensive case-studies. The latter alone can throw light on the intricate factors of economic growth and retrogression in the families or house-holds which constitute the units of village life and economy.

#### NEED FOR STUDY

I also take this opportunity to indicate the need for study of what can be broadly termed "urbanisation" in this part of Gujarat. Gujarat and Saurashtra offer an illustration of a distinct type of urbanisation. Though in this region there may not be any single centre of high-pitched economic activity such as Bombay, for instance, there is wider dispersal of urban units with higher productivity enterprises and these have had a very salutary effect on the rural economy of the region. Bhadkad forms a part of this progressive *Charotar* area of Gujarat. In this area, there is a chain of small towns viz., Bhadran, Dharmaj, Sojitra, Vaso, Karamsad, etc. These townships are very well-developed almost on the lines of modern urban centres. That

is evident from the number and types of various institutions that have sprung up, for instance, in two of the townships viz., Bhadran and Vaso. The leading community of this region—Patidars—have shown a remarkable civic sense and have been able to develop institutions of every type—educational, civic, and conomic. Interestingly enough, the impacts of urbanisation have not percolated to the smaller villages around this chain of townships. This is visible even in the case of Bhadkad which is so near to an industrial centre, Petlad, where there are cotton mills and dyeing factories etc. Anand, where a flourishing dairy industry is located, is also not far from Bhadkad. In spite of this nearness, it is not clear, at any rate, at first sight, why villages like Bhadkad remain isolated. It is, therefore, felt that if a special study of this peculiar type of urbanisation is carried out, it would yield useful results. This becomes especially important in the context of the emphasis placed on decentralisation. The rural university of Vallabh Vidyanagar nearby seems to be the most suitable institution to undertake such studies.

21st October, 1957.

MANILAL B. NANAVATI  
*President.*

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Shri J. M. Nanavati from the Society's office corrected the proofs and saw the book through the Press.

M. B. DESAI,  
*Hon. Secretary.*

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ix
CHAPTER	
I. LOCATION AND POPULATION	1
II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES AND ORGANISATION	5
III. LIVESTOCK AND PRODUCTION	16
IV. NON-AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS	19
V. CREDIT AND CO-OPERATION	22
VI. INCOME AND EXPENDITURE	28
VII. SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION	33
VIII. STANDARD AND METHOD OF LIVING	43
IX. HEALTH AND SANITATION	51
X. LITERACY AND EDUCATION	54
XI. VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION	60
XII. CONCLUSION	65
APPENDIX	69

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