



## Identifying Livelihood Patterns of Harijan Community and their Coping Strategies of Different Vulnerabilities Situation- A Sociological Investigation

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**Abstract:** The study aims to find the trend of traditional profession, livelihood situation of Harijan community and causes behind the living in between poverty in Bangladesh. In this research, an integrated quantitative and qualitative approach is taken into consideration for conducting the study. We have used questionnaire for quantitative data and case study for qualitative data collection. Our study area is Nabinbag Harijan Para which is located in Gopalganj sadar. The findings show that all household of the Harijan are being deprived from socio economic advantages, comparatively with general community. Most of the Harijan's households are burden by excess expenditure over income. They are depending on loan from informal sector. Over the generation, they have not been changing their profession radically due to several causes. Government and non- government sector should take more initiative that ensures Harijan communities access to same rights and services enjoyed by mainstream society. Immediate action is necessary to uplift and reform their livelihood and profession. This research is mainly focus on some findings- They are mainly involved with cleaning and small business activities. Their socio-economic condition is not so good. They have a little access to land right. In Harijan communities' status of women is so poor. Most of the Harijan people are illiterate. Their overall health condition is not satisfactory.

**Index Terms - Harijan, Traditional profession, Community, Livelihood, and Vulnerabilities**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Harijan who has been dedicating their lives for cleaning our community forever and a day treated as untouchable cast here. Mahatma Gandhi honored them with the title "Harijan" which means (children of God). Unfortunately the Harijan one of the 44 schedule Hindu cast communities is the most neglected part of the society. The people of this community said that their grandparents were bought by British Empire from Hyderabad to do physical work. Their language remains Madraji, Teluga or Hindi, not in Bangla. Still now, their cultures are different from upper caste Hindu and similar family also. Historically, this community has been employed in sweeping and cleaning city garbage. Habitually, they think themselves as Harijan for generation by generation. According to the international convention on the elimination of all forms of the racial discrimination (CEDR) agreement, the government is bound to fulfill the basic needs of the employment, houses, education, healthcare services of lower cast people. The community is isolated in terms of political, economic and mental aspect from the mainstream community. They are not allowed to eat in the hotel, read in the school, or sit in the public place of mainstream society. Their livelihood have not yet been changed a little. Moreover, the traditional job becoming more competitive to them because the government and semi government agency have been recruiting non-professional Harijan from other upper cast community. Being they are not capable for other profession and a part of poor they always have been enduring in the vicious cycle of poverty. Some local and international organization has formed with a view to protect their rights. Donor, international and local NGOs have been working for the sector for couple of years. Most of the country and United Nations are committed to reduce the racial discrimination also. There are a number of challenges and constraints which affect Harijan communities' rights and equal opportunities to enjoy fundamental human rights. Most notably, this concern the lack of access to education ,poverty issue, health, and housing problem, unequal access to work ,discrimination against women, bonded labor and child labor.( IDSN,2009) Many studies have been conducted abroad on Harijan community .Even some studies have been conducted on Harijan of Bangladesh (Kamal, Khan and IDSN 2008). A study has been addressed on the nature and extends of untouched ability, decent-based discrimination and social exclusion in contemporary rural Bangladesh (Iftakhar2009). But no sufficient study has found only on livelihood and profession of Harijan. In this study an attempt have been made to focus on Harijans of Gopalganj city.

### II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To get knowledge about their social, economic & political condition.
- To get knowledge about their cultures, tradition & religion.
- To get knowledge about their rights & discrimination.
- To get knowledge about their living condition.

### III. RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, an integrated quantitative and qualitative approach is taken into consideration for conducting the study. We have used questionnaire for quantitative data and case study for qualitative data collection. Among the quantitative strategy we used survey method. Among qualitative strategy we used case study method. Our study area is Nabinbag Harijan Para which is located in Gopalganj sadar choose as a purposely. Random sampling technique are used to collect data. After that collected data are classified, tabulated and analyzed in accordance to the objectives set for the study. 40 cases selected randomly to collect relevant information for the study and 5 cases selected for case study purposively. The information was collected through questioning and case study has been compiled for qualitative and quantitative analysis. After conducting interviews researcher have transcribed these later on verbatim to understand the real theme of our respondents information and experiences. Qualitative data have been condensed through classification or categorization and coding. Because qualitative coding is an integral part of data analysis. Quantitative data have been explained through tabulated on the master table to analyze with the help of tables, graphs and charts. After the analysis, the data are interpreted according to the analysis. This study firstly the collected data from the research areas will be edited. Then it have classify and categorizing and coding according to its characteristics and analyzed the coding data. Processed data have presented through the help of MS Word and MS Excel. Then the recommendations are made at the end of the report.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Education level of the Harijan Community

**Table- 1: Education level of the Harijan Community**

Stages of Education	Male	Female
Primary	33.33%	40%
Secondary	20%	13.33%
Higher Secondary	4%	2%
Higher Education	0.5%	0%
Illiterate	42.17%	44.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, (2016)

N=35

Table 1 displayed Education is the basic needs of human being. But the minority people are not well educated. In our study area the people are suffered much for lack of education. But it is good news that they are very conscious about their children education. The education level & educational situation of *Harijan* is not very good. Most of the *Harijan* received their education within primary level. Many *Harijan* are illiterate. The highest level of education of them can be said as secondary level. *Harijan* children start their education at Patshalas (primary schools). They receive both religious and linguistic education there.

### 4.2 Family Pattern of the Harijan peoples

**Table- 2: Family Pattern of the Harijan peoples**

Family Pattern	Rate
Nuclear	40%
Joint	55%
Broken	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, (2016)

N=35

In our study area the family type of the minority people is different to one another. There we were found joint, nuclear and broken family. The people are very peaceful. They want to live together. The relationship among the family members is good. The population growth rate is moderate in those families. They want both male and female child as their family pattern is patriarchal. Family is the smallest unit of social organization in the *Harijan* community.

### 4.3 Land Ownership Pattern

**Table-3: Land Ownership Pattern**

Land	Rate
Govt, Land	100%
Own Land	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>=100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, (2016)

N= 35

*Harijan* doesn't have any lands of their own & they live in a given land which has been allotted by the Government of Bangladesh. These people don't have any legal documents of their lands & they also don't have any right to sell their land and this land lease from the government for 99 years. But the land ownership passed from the father to daughter and son. Because their family pattern is patriarchal.

#### 4.4 Occupations of the Harijan Community

**Table-4: Occupations of the Harijan Community**

Occupations	Rate
Govt. Cleaner	18%
Public University	8%
Businessman	6%
Singer	1.2%
Teacher	0.8%
Housewife	22%
Others	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>= 100%</b>

Source: Field Survey, (2016)

N= 35

Cleaning and trading are the main occupation of the Harijan. They also weave fabrics and make salt and molasses. Both males and females take part in cleaning and trading work. But women take the leading role in livestock rearing and poultry. In some remote areas, Harijan women are engaged in fishing and some of them are involved in small business and in making handicrafts. Educated Harijans are now engaged in teaching, practicing medicine, and working as D.C office, Public University and in other jobs.

#### 4.5 Dowry, early marriage, social festival and its effects on livelihood

65 percent household has the record to pay dowry in the marriage of their member. To give dowry, they are undyingly engaging with loan and repayment with high rate of interest (300%). Consequently their expenditure always remaining over the income.

#### 4.6 Political Structure

The history of political movement of *Harijan* is very old (which have been discussed later). But generally they have the normal rights to take part in political movements. They take part in electing local and national leader. *Harijan* can take facilities from government and keep involvement with political parties. They can maintain the political rights given by the government

#### 4.7 Women's Right

They argued that in *Harijan* Community women and men are considered equal. Because all the property has gotten by inherited. Women have great scope in decision making. Their contribution has a great importance in their life style. They also take part in income activities with men.

#### 4.8 Satisfaction of Biological or Sex Need

Biological or sex imperatives are the needs of living organisms required continuing their existence to survive. Include the following hierarchy of logical imperatives for a living organism is important. Due to short living place various sexual problems create like sexual harassment, rape etc. Among the respondents, 38.6% family case changes in biological needs; where 32.4% family case is not changes in biological needs and 29.0% were no comments about this matter. Actually most of the respondents were not easily says about this matter. They feels heisted to talk about this matter.

#### Case Studies

There are five case studies which have been formulated from Harijan community.

##### Case study: 01

**Name: Shipon Babu (Pseudonym)**

**Age: 45**

**Sex: Male**

This case study was conducted on Shipon Babua male who is about 45 years old. He lives in the municipality area of Gopalganj which is called the **Adorsho Gram**. He used to live with his other 5 family members including two sons, one daughter, wife and mother. His skin color is white, face is round, eye and hair are also black and his height is about 5 feet 4 inches. His educational qualification is M.A. According to Shipon Babu about 245 hundred people lives in his community. Where about forty family lives familiarly. Most of the house of Harijan community is built with brick. He mentioned that most of the people of their community practices Hinduism religion and he is a Hindu. He said that family pattern of Harijan is mainly Paternal. And he is played role as head of the family and he takes the major role in the family decision making. They use Bangla as their Mother language. Their medium of education is also Bangla. He mainly held the job of D.C office in Gopalganj. He could only sign his name. He said poverty was the main constraint of his little education. Besides his parents never encouraged him to go to school. But he wants to educate his son and daughter. His elder son is studying HSC and another son and daughter is studying class eight. He mentioned that he has no land of his own to do cleaning and trading activities. But he has a piece of land where he and his family lives in. this land is given by the Head of the community of their community. Because they have no permanent ownership of land. The main occupation of the people is *Cleaning and small business*. Both Shipon and his wife work in the Government sector and both of them have major contribution in their family expenditure. He argued that the health condition of the people living in this area is not satisfactory. Particularly women and children are more vulnerable than male. Women did not get sufficient facilities of treatment and the housing condition is not well supported. There is a great lack of health care institution, hospital according

to their necessity. For emergency health service they have to go in Gopalganj private hospital which is very costly for them. He also said that male member is the head of the family. Most of the families are jointly. But there also exist nuclear families. In selection of their life partners they have not to follow the endogamous and religious rule and they are patriarchal. There is no scope of dowry or mohor or any other give and take system in their marriages. The *Harijan* people have no rights of ownership of land. But due to poor economic condition most of them are not afford to own a piece of land. *Harijan* male members wear lungi and shirt. And in special days they wear shirt and pant, turban. *Harijan* women cover the lower part of their body with 12 feet long unstitched cultured cloth called *a-tongue* and theme and wear bra, blouse and colorful modest scarf to dress up the upper portion of the body. They also use belts. Shipon has all political rights and he could participate in voting behavior. They don't face any kind of political discrimination as well as political influence in their voting behavior. To solve any kind of problem they generally depend on 'Shalish' system. Where *Head of the community* play the major role in the justice system. In the *Harijan* community the status of men is very high. There is no existence of gender discrimination in the *Harijan* community. They believe in equal rights. As a people of Bangladesh Shipon thanked that Bangladesh government provides the right of indigenous people properly. And he thinks that there is no discrimination between indigenous people and common people. He mentioned that modernization has a great impact on their life style. Such as because of mobile phone they can communicate easily.

### Case study: 02

**Name: Sagor Vokto (Pseudonym)**

**Age: 52**

**Sex: Male**

Sagor Vokto, a male who is about 52 years old and used to live with his other 9 family members including four sons, four daughters and wife. His skin color is light brown, face is round, eye and hair are also black and his height is about 5 feet 5 inches. He is a follower of Hinduism. His main language is Bengali. His education level is secondary. He achieved his occupation by his own choice, not by inherently. His monthly income is below 5000 TK. Sagor Vokto said that he don't believe in polygamy. His religion doesn't encourage polygamy. The age of his marriage was 20 & her wife was 19. He also doesn't support early marriage. There was no existence of dowry system during his marriage. After marriage the wives lives in the husband's house. He argued that in *Harijan* society men are considered as superior to women from every aspect. Women have right to land distribution as well as land ownership though the main land owner of *Harijan* community is Head of the community. They have great scope in decision making. They play signal role in the family. Their contribution has a great importance in their life style. He also argued that the economic condition of the overall people is very poor. Sometimes they get failed to support their family with their income. Hence they have to take loan from NGO or persons with high interest. He agreed with me that modernization has laid a great importance in their life. As a result of modernization they are now much more conscious about their children education, health status, and age of marriage and about their own culture. He mentioned that they have a close relationship with other communities living in the same society. They also enjoy the religious festivals of other communities. They also visit to other communities' people's house. There exist some problems in *Harijan* people's life. They have to face a number of problems in their daily life. Economic crisis is the main problem to them. There have many hospital and higher educational institutions in their area but all of these are too costly. Modern transports are the only way of communication to them. Their housing condition is not also good. Gossiping and playing indoor and outdoor games are the only means of recreation of the *Harijan* people. There also exist water problem in their life. Where there is a problem there is a way. The Government and the Non-Government and the private organization s can also make a contribution to solve the problems of *Harijan* people. They can set up new hospitals, more educational institutions, can sanction bank loan.

### Case study 3:

**Name: Tuly Mondol (Pseudonym)**

**Age: 35**

**Sex: Female**

This case study was conducted on *Tuly Mondol* a female who is about 35 years old and used to live with his other 7 family members. She is work at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman Science and Technology University, Gopalganj as a cleaner at Bongo Mata Sheikh Fazilutunnica Mujib Hall. Her skin color is Black, face is round, eye and hair are also black and his height is about 4 feet 4 inches. She told us that *Harijan* people believe in Hinduism. They keep faith on God. They bear a deep religious faith in their life. They observe their religious practices and festivals peacefully. She argued that in *Harijan* society men are considered as superior to woman from every aspect. Women have right to land distribution as well as land ownership though the main land owner of *Harijan* community is Head of the community. They have great scope in decision making. They play decision making role in the family. Their contribution has a great importance in their life style. She also said that male member is the head of the family. Her husband is a singer. Most of the families are jointly. But there also exist nuclear families. In selection of their life partners they have not to follow the endogamous and religious rule. Their families are Patriarchal. There is no scope of dowry or mohor or any other give and take system in their marriages. *Harijan* people have their own traditional cultural values which is different from the mainstream people. *Harijan* male members wear lungi and shirt. And in special days they wear shirt and pant, court. And the female members wear Tami and ornaments. The *Harijan* people observe different religious and cultural festivals. Their food habit is as like as the general people. She also argued that the economic condition of the overall people is very poor. Sometimes they get failed to support their family with their income. They take part in electing local and national leader. They can take facilities from govt. and keep involvement with political parties. They can maintain the political rights given by the govt. She argued that the health condition of the people living in this area is not satisfactory. Particularly women and children are more vulnerable than male. Women did not get sufficient facilities of treatment and the housing condition is not well supported. There is a great lack of health care institution, hospital according to their necessity. She agreed with me that modernization has laid a great importance in their life. As a result of modernization they are now much more conscious about their children education, health status, and age of marriage and about their own culture. She mentioned that they have a close relationship with other communities living in the same society. They also enjoy the religious festivals of other communities. They also visit to other communities' people's house. There exist some problems in *Harijan* people's life. They have to face a number of problems in their daily life. Economic crisis is the main problem to them. Their housing condition is not also good. Gossiping and playing indoor and outdoor games are the only means of recreation of the *Harijan* people. There also exist water problem in their life.

**Case study 4:****Name: Shantu Babu (Pseudonym)****Age: 35****Sex: Male**

*Shantu Babu*, a male who is about 35 years old and used to live with his other 7 family members including four sons, three daughters and wife. His skin color is white, face is round, eye and hair are also black and his height is about 5 feet 3 inches. *Shantu Babu* said that male member is the head of the family. Most of the families are not nuclear. But there also exist nuclear families. Their families are Patriarchal. There is no scope of dowry or any other give and take system in their marriages. He also argued that the economic condition of the overall people is very poor. Sometimes they get failed to support their family with their income. Hence they have to take loan from NGO or persons with high interest. He agreed with me that modernization has laid a great importance in their life. As a result of modernization they are now much more conscious about their children education, health status, and age of marriage and about their own culture. He mentioned that they have a close relationship with other communities living in the same society. They also enjoy the religious festivals of other communities. They also visit to other communities' people's house. There exist some problems in *Harijan* people's life. They have to face a number of problems in their daily life. Economic crisis is the main problem to them. Communication is an acute problem of them. There have many hospital and higher educational institutions in their area but costly. Their housing condition is not also good. Gossiping and playing indoor and outdoor games are the only means of recreation of the *Harijan* people. There also exist water problem in their life. Where there is a problem there is a way. The Govt. and the Non Govt. and the private organizations can also make a contribution to solve the problems of *Harijan* people. They can set up new hospitals, more educational institutions, can sanction bank loan.

**Case study 5:****Name: Shilpi Rani Mondal (Pseudonym)****Age: 36****Sex: Female**

This case study was conducted on *Shilpi Rani Mondal*, a female who is about 36 years old and used to live with his other 7 family members. She said that they use Bengali language as their first language to communicate with others verbally. They use Bangla as their 1<sup>st</sup> language. Their medium of education is also Bangla. Her skin color is white, face is round, eye and hair are also black and his height is about 4 feet 5 inches. She has no educational qualification, she is illiterate. She told us that *Harijan* people believe in Hinduism. They keep faith on God. They bear a deep religious faith in their life. They observe their religious practices and festivals peacefully. She argued that in *Harijan* society men are considered as superior to women from every aspect. Women have right to land distribution as well as land ownership though the main land owner of *Harijan* community is Head of the community. They have great scope in decision making. They play decision making role in the family. Their contribution has a great importance in their life style. She also said that male member is the head of the family. Most of the families are jointly. But there also exist nuclear families. In selection of their life partners they have to follow the endogamous and religious rule. Their families are monogamies and they are Patriarchal. There is no scope of dowry or any other give and take system in their marriages. *Harijan* people have their own traditional cultural values which is different from the mainstream people. *Harijan* male members wear lungi and shirt. And in special days they wear shirt and pant, court. And the female members wear Tami and ornaments. The *Harijan* people observe different religious and cultural festivals. Their food habit is as like as the general people. She also argued that the economic condition of the overall people is very poor. Sometimes they get failed to support their family with their income. They take part in electing local and national leader. They can take facilities from govt. and keep involvement with political parties. They can maintain the political rights given by the govt. She argued that the health condition of the people living in this area is not satisfactory. Particularly women and children are more vulnerable than male. Women did not get sufficient facilities of treatment and the housing condition is not well supported. There is a great lack of health care institution, hospital according to their necessity. She agreed with me that modernization has laid a great importance in their life. As a result of modernization they are now much more conscious about their children education, health status, and age of marriage and about their own culture. She mentioned that they have a close relationship with other communities living in the same society. They also enjoy the religious festivals of other communities. They also visit to other communities' people's house. There exist some problems in *Harijan* people's life. They have to face a number of problems in their daily life. Economic crisis is the main problem to them. Communication is an acute problem of them because of it, they cannot involve with proper education system. Gossiping and playing indoor and outdoor games are the only means of recreation of the *Harijan* people.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Education is low among minority groups. This is particularly evident in the Harijan community where education of children rarely progresses past primary level. Locations in municipality mean that medical facilities are high and very difficult to access. Employment problems are prevalent throughout indigenous communities. These problems are a product of the isolation of their communities and an unwillingness to integrate into mainstream society. Land issues pose a huge threat to the livelihood and future of all indigenous communities in greater Gopalganj region. The Harijan people are traditionally involved in cleaning activities. It is their ascribed occupation. Though modernization has made a difference in their traditional activities. The income of the population too insufficient to survive. Most of them earn a very little amount of money. Insufficient income promotes to live on poverty line. As a result they have to take loan from the wealthy people with a high interest. From the case studies we can find another major problem that exists among the Harijan people that is illiteracy. Due to illiteracy they are lagging behind in every sphere of life. They have no scope to provide higher education to their children also. The language of Harijan is mainly Bengali language. They talk in Bengali generally, especially with outsiders. It is seen that the Harijan people are culturally very well organized. They have their own tradition and culture. They have their own ancient Hindu religious and cultural beliefs and a distinct social structure and political system. The marriage pattern of Harijan is traditional. They marry according to their religious system. In many cases, boys & girls marry according to their own choice. Father mainly takes decision about marriage in their locality. Health is wealth. Sound health is very essential for everyone. Proper health care must be assured for everyone. But it is a matter of great sorrow that the health care condition is not good in Harijan community. Especially women and children are most vulnerable. Harijan are partly landless people. Some of them have their own lands. They have no proper documents of their lands & they have the no rights to sell it. Harijan doesn't have any lands of their own & they live in a given land which has been allotted by their Head of the community. The history of political movement of Harijan is very old. But generally they have the normal rights to take part in political movements. The situation of crime & violence in Harijan locality is not very bad. They generally don't face crime & violence in their locality. But sometimes their happen some incidents of crime which is not so serious & also in minor level.

##### Findings of the Study:

- a) Harijan people have their own traditional cultural and their ancient religious beliefs.
- b) They are mainly involved with cleaning and small business activities.
- c) Their socio economic condition is not so good.
- d) They have a little access to land right.
- e) In Harijan communities' status of women is so poor.
- f) Most of the Harijan people are illiterate.
- g) Their overall health condition is not satisfactory.
- h) They have the rights to take participation in electing local and national government.
- i) They cannot enjoy all their religious and traditional customs and festivals freely.
- j) They occupy a little amount of land and use the traditional method for cultivation.
- k) The statuses of them are ascribed.
- l) The education levels are so low; most of them are taking primary education.

#### CONCLUSION

The study reveals that Harijan community has been living in a dark and vulnerable situation. In addition, they have been suffering discrimination by different form. Though the Constitution prohibits discrimination by the state on the ground of religion, race, sex or place of birth in article 28(1) and in 28(4) "special measure" by the state for advancement of any backward section of the citizen, in fact scenario is too far from the declaration. Moreover the government is bound to fulfill the basic needs of the lower caste people. So, government and non- government sector should development strategy on policy that ensures Harijan communities access to same rights and services enjoyed by mainstream society. As Harijan community continuing their traditional profession generation by generation due to illiteracy and skill, government should arrange some technical education to overcome the hindrance. Development players that are already working for Harijan can build up their capacity for better job in home and abroad. Regarding the case, quota system should be introduced in education and employment for Harijan. One of the major problems set with the Harijan are landless and living in very congested houses. They should rehabilitate and leased the government land with loan facility for building houses.

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