



Assessment Of The Quality Of Life In Rural Varanasi: A Comprehensive Study Of Ganeshpur Village, Varanasi, India

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Abstract: This study investigates the quality of life of rural areas of Varanasi district by examining their housing conditions and occupational status. The study examines the socio-economic conditions in Ganeshpur, a rural village in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Through field survey and data analysis, this research examines different variables like literacy, communication, transportation, household conditions, variables related to occupation, etc. It reveals a lower middle-class community that is primarily reliant on agriculture and pottery making faces challenges to earn their livelihood. The study underscores the need for improved infrastructure, agricultural support and women's empowerment to enhance quality of life and economic resilience in Ganeshpur.

Index Terms: Quality of life, socio-economic, rural, household, occupation, infrastructure, empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

The discipline Geography is mainly concerned with the study of relationships between man and environment. In the earlier phases, Geography mainly dealt with the physical aspects on the earth surface that demanded explorations and discoveries of the earth mainly based on instrumental measurements. There was a great emphasis on rational description, interpretation of genesis, evolution of landforms, and identification of celestial bodies which got shifted to man and society. At present, geographers are laying much emphasis on numerous social and economic facets of mankind which include human well-being, quality of life, sustainable development, and so on.

After the second half of 20th century, Geography has reached in its peak developed period with methodological maturity and rapid growth in the application of remote sensing, GIS (Geographical Information System), GPS (Global Positioning System) on the physical and technical side. Whereas, for the well being of society the conduct of socio-economic surveys is one of the major developments of Human Geography. Geographers are giving much importance to field based socio-economic surveys to reveal minute details of human society, culture and economic realms of life. There are different criteria used for conducting socio-economic surveys. They are age, sex ratio, literacy, occupation, health and hygiene etc. To determine social and economic conditions of peoples, a primary survey was conducted in a village in the Varanasi district. This particular study will give an idea about the quality of life and socio-economic status in the rural areas of Varanasi.

Thus, taking into consideration all the above aspects, the study has been divided into 3 parts:

- General information of the respondents
- Household conditions
- Occupational status

II. OBJECTIVES

- To know the nature and extent of socio-economic condition in the area.
- To study the housing condition, demographic and occupational status of the dwellers.
- To know about the basic amenities they have been provided.
- To understand the problems of the dwellers.

III. METHODOLOGY

As the study has an exploratory design, to satisfy the above objectives, the report has been classified into 3 main categories. These are as follows:

3.1 Pre field method: This method includes framing of a questionnaire for the survey. The questionnaire contains different aspects like age, sex, literacy, number of family members, source of drinking water, availability of kitchen, toilet facility, power source, occupational options, agriculture, irrigation etc.

3.2 Field survey: This is the next step, where primary data and necessary information are collected. This is preliminary step to understand the condition of the village. Along with questionnaire, observation methods and face to face interviews took place with the respondents.

3.3 Post field method: It includes the analysis of information gathered during the survey. Computation and interpretation of data by using tools like SPSS, presentation of tables, graphs and texts, analysis of recorded observations are done concerning the social and economic conditions of the dwellers of the study area. Some information has also been taken from secondary data.

IV. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Ganeshpur is a small village in Harahua Block in Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, India. It belongs to Varanasi division. It is located 11km towards the north from district headquarters Varanasi and 300km from state capital Lucknow. Ganeshpur is surrounded by Varanasi Block towards south, Pindra Block towards north, Chiraigaon Block towards east and Cholahpur Block towards north. Varanasi, Saidpur, Ghazipur, Mirzapur, etc. are the nearby cities to Ganeshpur.

The village of Ganeshpur is highly characterised by plain area where the average elevation is 84 meters above sea level. The main rivers found near the village are the Ganga and Assi, while, there are some small tributaries, streams, and ponds as well. The weather of the village is kind of similar to Varanasi's, but due to less transport, less pollution, remoteness from the city, it's a bit favourable. The village experiences a humid sub-tropical climate. Being located in the Gangetic plains, the soil of the Ganeshpur village is quite fertile and major soil type could be recognized as sandy loam. Natural vegetation found is mainly of tropical dry deciduous. Trees like guava, neem, teak etc. are seen there.

Demographic characteristics of the study area:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| • Total households | 93 |
| • Total population | 559 |
| • Total male population | 301 |
| • Total female population | 258 |
| • Sex ratio | 857 |
| • Schedule Caste | 20 |
| • Schedule Tribe | 0 |
| • Literacy | 71.06% |

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

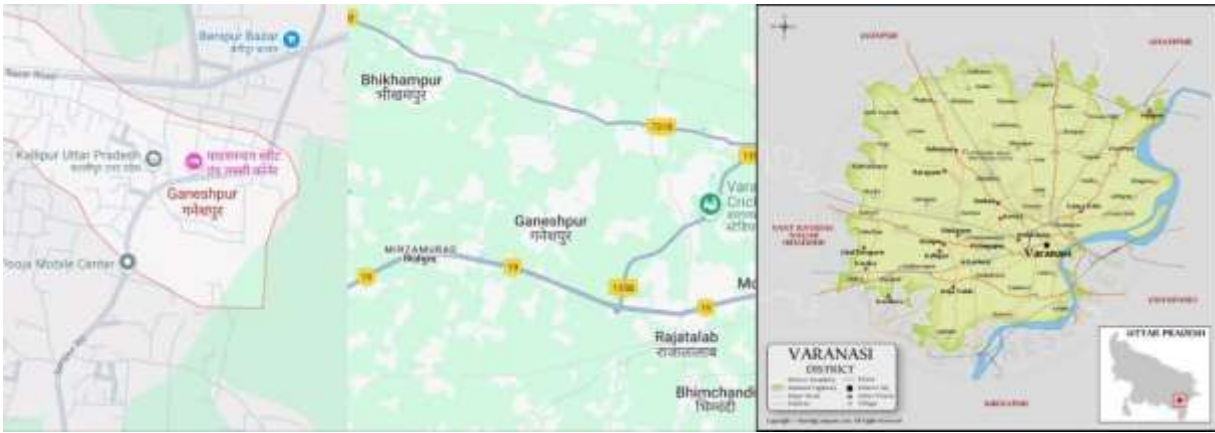


Figure 1: District map of Varanasi along with Ganeshpur area

V. GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Ganeshpur is a medium sized area with more than 559 people, out of which only 100 respondents were selected for this survey. General information includes age-sex composition, type of family, and literacy of the people. In the village, out of 100 respondents about 33.7% were males and 66.3% were females. Under the age group 0-14 years, there are 12 respondents were found; a total of 54 respondents were found under age group 15-59 years. The rest of them are found under above 60 years. Every household has different numbers of persons. It ranges from 2-15 persons in each household. The percentage of joint families is higher than nuclear and extended families. They practice Hinduism as religion, followed by Islam.

Literacy is one of the most essential indicators in determining the status of a society. A Government primary school is available in the village. Due to the unavailability of good primary educational institutions, people of Ganeshpur attended primary schools located in nearby towns like Shivpur, Bhojuveer and Varanasi, which is the only good option for higher studies. Among the respondents, 32.6% are illiterates, 3.5% are primary level educated, 18.6% are secondary level educated, 20.9% are higher secondary level educated and graduated and others include 24.4%.

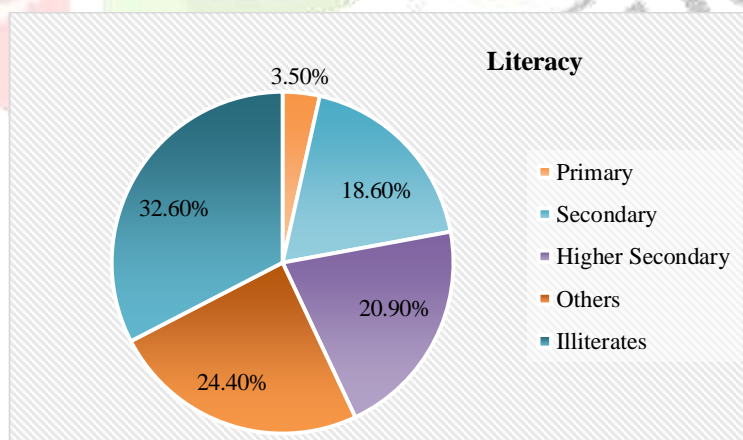


Figure- 2

Transportation and communication: In terms of transportation, the nearest bus stand and railway station is in less than 5 km. National highway, state highway and district roads pass through Ganeshpur. The main roads are in a good condition but the inner roads of the village are in an inadequate condition. For communication they

have mobile phones in every household. Other means of communication available are landlines, internet facilities, courier facilities and television.

VI. HOUSEHOLD CONDITIONS

Household condition assesses the condition of a house and the maintenance, improvements and needs of the household that lives there. The indicators used to determine the conditions of household are house type, total numbers of rooms, availability of kitchen, source of drinking water, sanitation facility, source of power etc.

Source of drinking water: The main sources of drinking water in Ganeshpur are hand pumps, wells, public hand pumps, shared hand pumps and others. The Government has provided shared hand pumps in some areas of the village. Treated tape water supply is also available all year. Among the respondents, 49.3% have reported to use their own hand pump.

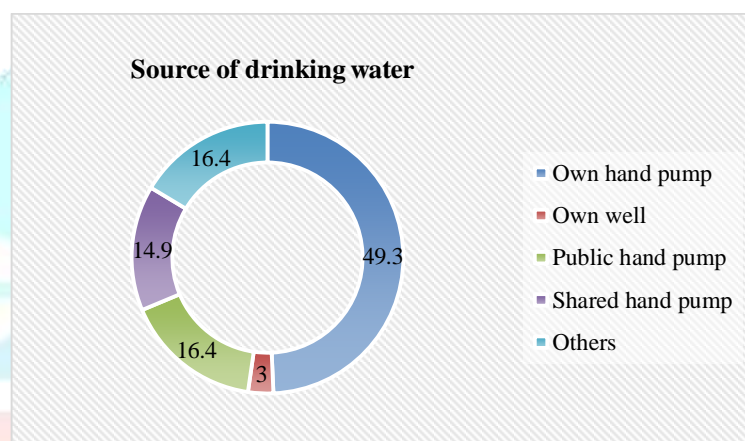


Figure- 3

Housing conditions: Most of the people of the village live in semi-pucca houses. A small percentage of them have fully kutchha house or pucca house. The quantity of rooms in the house ranges from 1 to 4, less than 10% respondents have 1 room and the rest of them have more than 2 rooms. The availability of separate kitchen is also an important aspect of understanding their quality of life. Total 60.5% of dwellers have the facility of a separate kitchen in their homes. While 39.5% don't have separate kitchen.

Sanitation facility: This survey has collected information on the type of sanitation facilities available in their household, such as availability of bathrooms and toilets, drainage facilities etc. Among them, more than 50% of people have their bathrooms and toilets within their own premise. Some of the toilets are availed by the Government, whereas, there is no proper drainage facility available in the village. There is no system to collect garbage in the village.

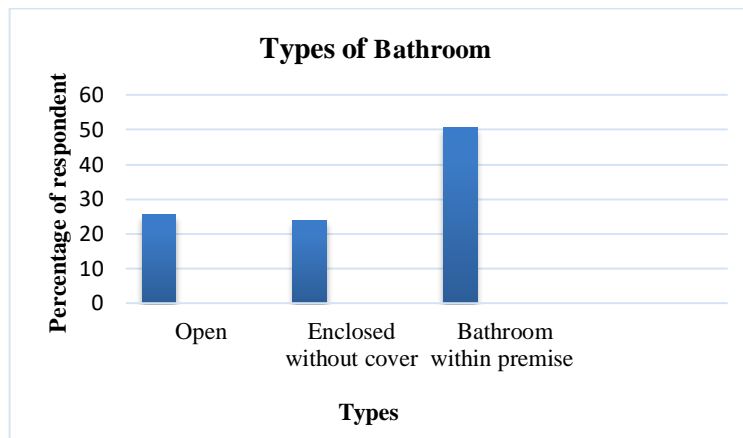


Figure- 4

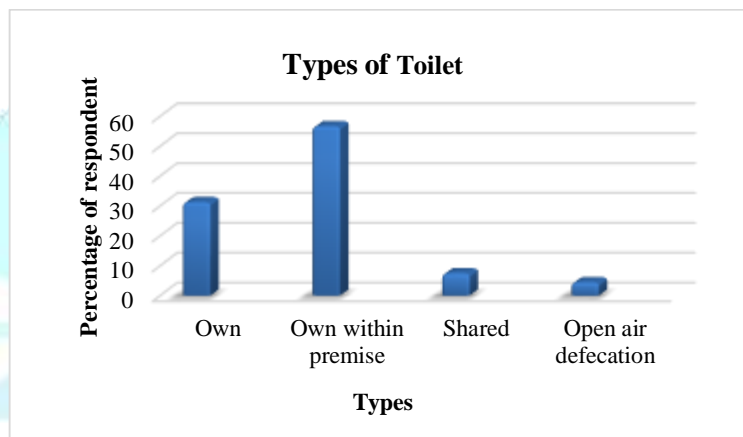


Figure- 5

Source of power: The sources of power in the village include fuelwood, animal dung, kerosene, lamps, electricity, gas and others. In Ganeshpur, almost 100% of the households have the facility of electricity in the homes, which is a good indicator of development. Most of the households use LPG for cooking while, some households can't afford it. Thus, they use dried cow dung cakes which is called '*Upla*' prepared by themselves.

Items possessed: Different items possessed by the households include pressure cooker, gas stove, hand pump, clock, cycle, motorcycle, three-wheeler, four-wheeler, generator, radio, electric fan, television, sewing machine, DVD player, computer, refrigerator, etc. The most possessed items among these are motorcycles and three-wheelers.

VII.

OCUUPATIONAL STATUS

The economic scenario of an area is constructed by various factors like the availability of natural resources, literacy of the people, availability of markets, transportation facilities, social and cultural background of the region, etc. The determinants to understand the occupational status of an area are types of occupation, agriculture availability, livestock availability, selling of product, input, output, fertilizers used for cropping, sharecropping scenario, irrigation facility, etc.

Occupation: Occupation means the source of livelihood. It changes with time and developing society. In Ganeshpur, people are generally farmers, non-agricultural labours, artisans, pottery makers, small businessman and others. Most of them depend on primary and secondary activities, while very few numbers are involved in tertiary or quaternary activities

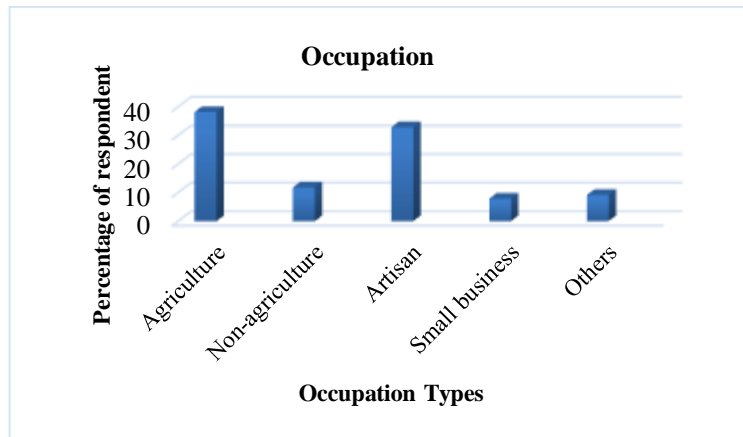


Figure- 6

Agricultural equipments: As it is shown above, that about 38.2% of respondents are engaged in agriculture or farming. Thus, agriculture is the main source of living of the village followed by pottery making or other activities. To practice agriculture, dwellers have to rely on many tools and equipments, like tractor, plough, thresher, tube well, fodder cutter, rotavator and many more, and chemicals, fertilizers as well. The percentage of the equipments possessed by the people of Ganeshpur is given below:

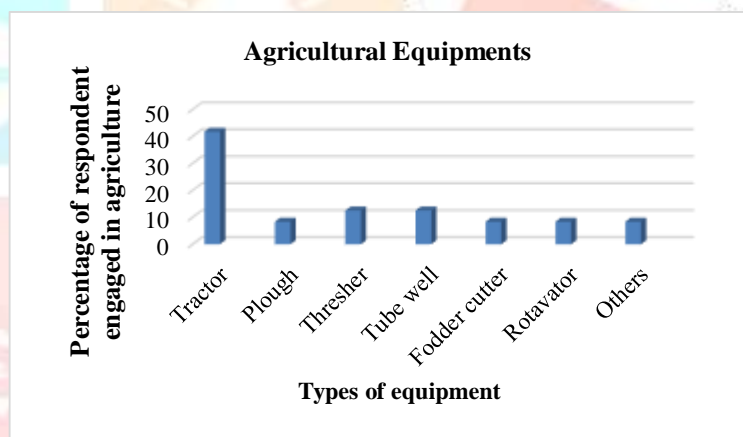


Figure- 7

Other variables related to farming: This category has included variables like the percentage of major crops grown, types of seeds used, source of irrigation, types of fertilizers used, sharecropping patterns, etc. It is very necessary to check these variables to understand their occupational condition. The structure of such variables is given below in orderly:

- **Major crops grown:** They mainly grow wheat, rice like '*Chintu*', and different types of seasonal vegetables,

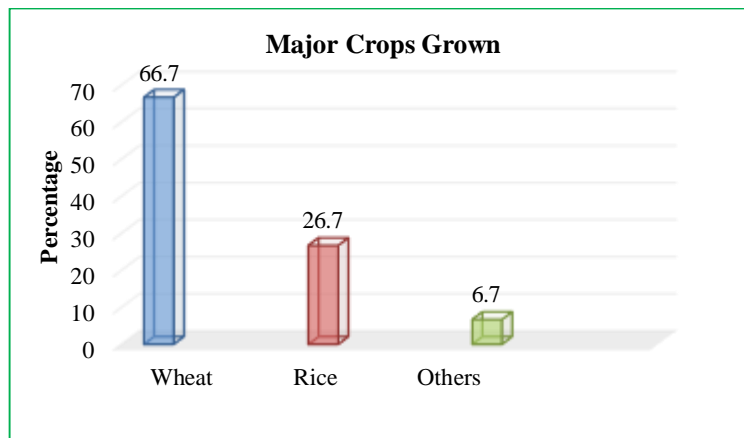


Figure- 8

- **Types of seeds used:** Almost 60% of respondents used traditional seeds for farming. They want to work with high-yield variety seeds but they are unable to access them. Only a few percent of people use HYV or both.

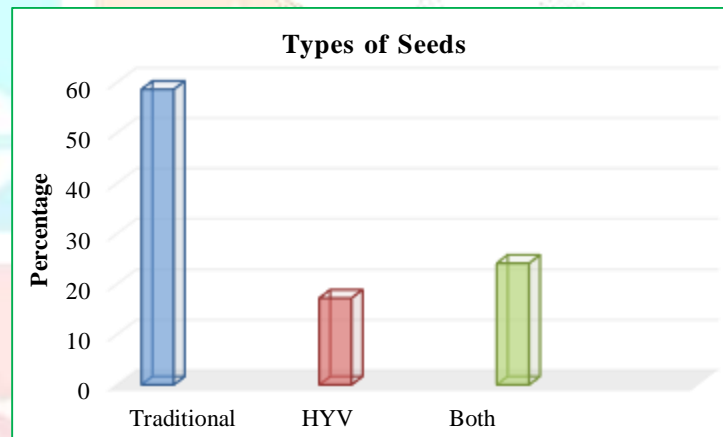


Figure- 9

- **Source of irrigation:** In a climate like Varanasi, it is very much essential to have irrigation facilities. The scenario of the village's irrigation facility is given below.

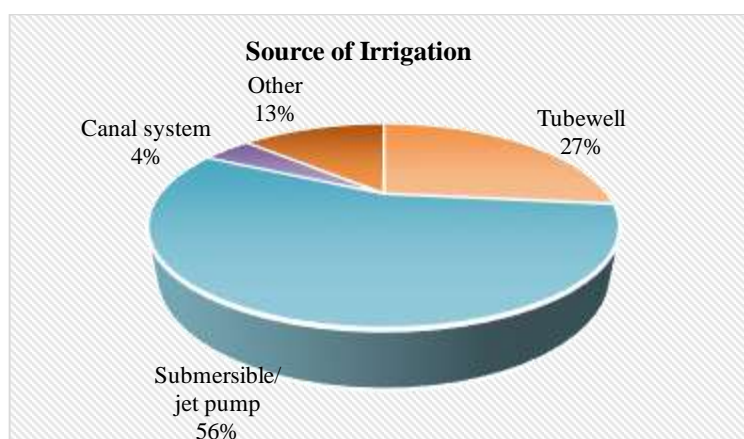


Figure- 10

- **Types of fertilizer:** Most people in the village prefer to use chemicalized fertilizers in their fields, while a total 28% use only organic fertilizers like cow dung, compost, etc.

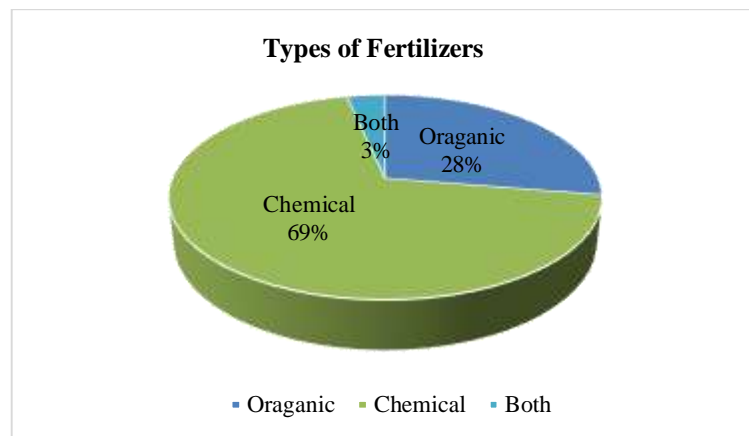


Figure- 11

- **Land taken for sharecropping:** Sharecropping is a system in which the landlord allows a farmer to use the land in exchange for a share of crop.

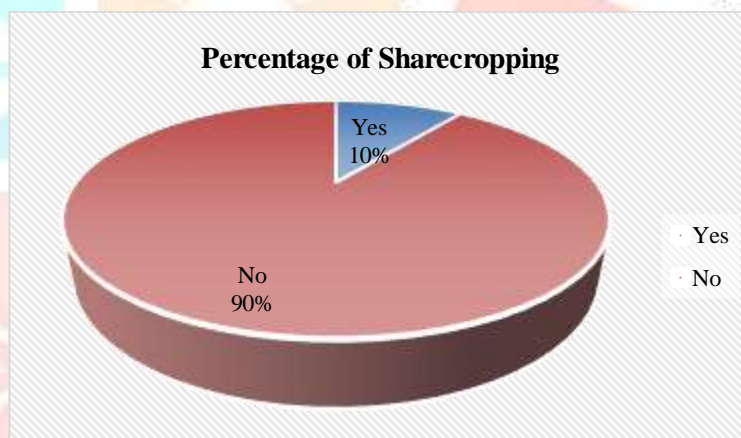


Figure- 12

Variables related to pottery making and other activities

- **Place of input purchase:** Pottery is the 2nd most accepted activity for livelihood after agriculture. They make little clay lamps, which are used in most of the religious places or temples in Varanasi. Though, the necessary items required for this activity are collected from Varanasi and the nearest towns.

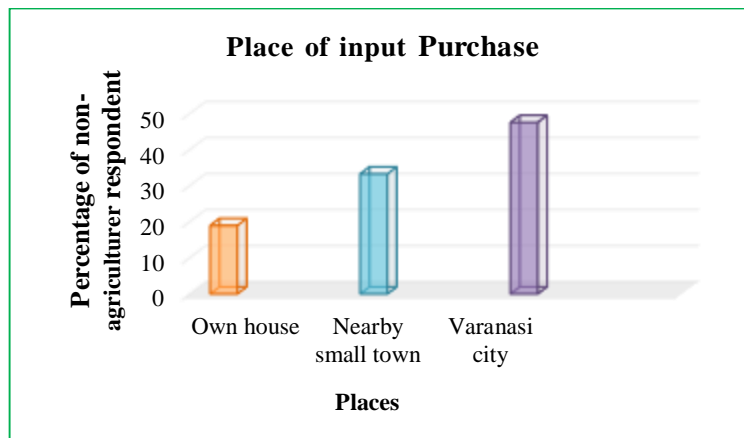


Figure- 13

- **Selling of finished products:** The pottery items have great demands in the entire Varanasi. For every religious practice, they are important. Thus, the villagers sell most of their products in Varanasi.



Figure- 14

- **Livestock purchase/sell:** Livestock in Ganeshpur includes cows, buffaloes, goats, chickens, etc. The livestock purchase/sell percentage is given below.

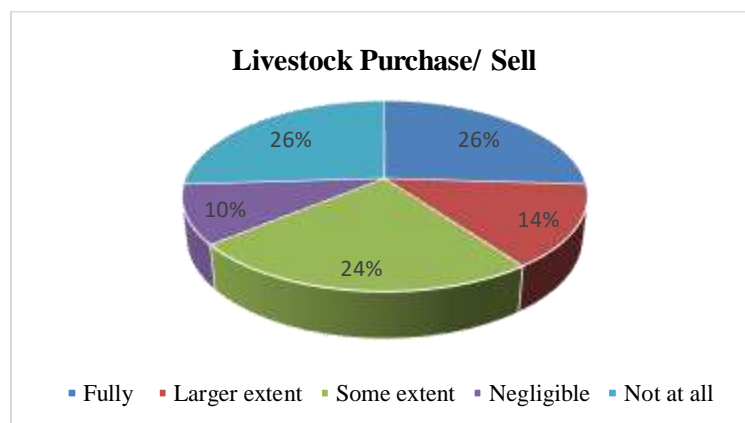


Figure- 15

VIII. PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS

The city of Varanasi is growing at a very fast rate. As compared to previous years, the infrastructure has developed, and the difference can be seen. Though, the surrounding villages are still facing many problems, like in Ganeshpur, people have reported that the conditions of roads are not very well, due to which they have been facing problems in transportation during rainy seasons. The village is lacking in a good drainage system. The shops, markets are at a far distance from their village. The problem of unemployment can also be seen to some extent.

Suggestions:

- The Government should focus on the improvement of infrastructures like roadways, educational institutions, hospitals, proper drainage etc.
- A garbage dumping facility or management system should be there.
- The dwellers who are connected with agriculture should be provided with modern equipments and tools, good quality of seeds, fertilizers and the instructions on their uses.
- Women's empowerment should be promoted.

IX. CONCLUSION

The study of the quality of life in Ganeshpur has included different socio-economic variables, that reveal a village with significant ties to traditional practices in agriculture and pottery making, coupled with limited access to modern infrastructure and amenities. Ganeshpur's demographic makeup, primarily composed of farmers and artisans, shows its economic reliance on primary activities. Despite a moderate literacy rate, the village still contends with structural deficiencies, including inadequate roads, limited educational facilities, lack of proper drainage and garbage disposal system.

The community's dependence on traditional agricultural methods, with limited adoption of high-yield variety seeds and organic fertilizers, highlights a need for updated agricultural support. Additionally, the pottery industry, which contributes to Varanasi's religious and cultural economy, relies on external sources for materials and markets, suggesting room for improved local support and infrastructure for artisans.

Recommendations from the study indicate a clear path for potential development, investment in infrastructure, better access to agricultural tools and training, enhanced educational facilities, and a push for women's empowerment could substantially improve the lives of the village. These steps would not only address the immediate challenges but also lay the foundation of sustained socio-economic development in rural settings.

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