

Rural Population Change and Migration in Radhaballavpur Village, West Bengal, India

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インド西ベンガル州ラダバラブプール村における
農村人口の変容と人口移動

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I. Introduction

India's population in 1991 comes to 844.32 million. The population of India as recorded at each Census from 1921 has grown steadily. Population growth rate decreased from 24.66% recorded in 1971-81 to 23.50% during 1981-91 (Census of India). Some regional differences in population growth are revealed. The population in West Bengal State in 1991 is 67.98 million and decade growth rate during 1981-91 is 24.55%, which shows that population growth has accelerated from 23.17% in 1971-81. These figures suggest us that the population problems in India are still in a serious situation as in other developing countries. One of the most important population problems in India is the surplus population in the large cities such as Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras as well as high fertility especially in rural area.

Understanding the regional differences in population growth rate requires knowledge on the migration flow. Indian migration is of 4 different types; i.e., rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural in accordance with the number of migrants. The rural to rural migrants are divided into 2 types; marriage migrant and labourer migrant such as plantation worker. Most of the rural to urban migrants are

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considered single male workers.

To understand the factors of the surplus population in the large cities, much attention has been paid at the rural to urban migration (e.g., Joint research project team of Osaka City University *et. al.* eds.,1980, Bhatia, A.S.,1992). Although the urban to rural migration such as return migration plays an important role in maintaining the rural population and Indian family system, study on the urban to rural migration has remained neglected until now (Oberai, A.S., Manmohan Singh, H.K., 1983).

A few studies have been published at the local scale (e.g., Khan, N., 1986), though a good deal of work has been done on Indian internal migration at the national scale (e.g., Rao, M.S. ed., 1986). One of the important reasons for the absence of studies at the local scale is that Indian census affords no statistics on the characteristics of migrants at the local scale. The study on migration at the local scale is not accomplished only by the statistics. Field work is of necessity.

This paper would try to deal with the rural population change at the local scale focusing upon both rural to urban and urban to rural migration to clarify the rural-urban relationship in India. Radhaballavpur village in West Bengal State is selected as a sample village, Yonekura ed. (1973) conducted the field work in 1967. The follow-up survey is carried on from Sep. to Oct. in 1992. This paper concentrates on the rural population change at the local scale by comparing the results from these 2 field works.

Radhaballavpur village, at Tamulk Taluk, on Midnapore/Medinipur District, in West Bengal State situates approximately 3 km distance from Tamluk town. It locates about 60 km from Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal State, 3 hours by train and bus. Agriculture, composed of rice and betel leaf cultivation, and hand loom weaving are the main industries in this village on the Lower Ganga Plain.

II. Population and household

The term 'population' in this paper is not defined as the number of family member including those who live out of this village but as the number of people who live in this village. The population in this village has grown steadily since 1961 (Tab.1). The population in this village is composed of the following 4 *jatis* in accordance with Indian social hierarchy.

- 1) *Brahman*, Priest caste and mainly independent farmer, is engaged in priest, officer

and other professional occupation. The number of the household is 4. Population is only 28 (male; 10, female; 18), 2 percent of the total population in this village.

2) *Kayastha*, Secretary caste and in most cases landowner, is engaged not in agricultural labour but in management and in tertiary industry such as clerical job. The number of household is 51. Population is 290 (male; 160, female; 130), 24 percent of the total population.

3) *Mahishaw*, Agriculture caste, is engaged in cultivating their own land or agricultural labour and hand loom weaving. The number of household is 144. Population is 895 (male; 454, female; 441), 73 percent of the total population.

4) *Dom*, Scheduled caste, is landless and engaged in small manufacturing, i.e., making bamboo ware or begging. The number of household is 3. Population is only 8 (male; 5, female; 3), 1 percent of the total population.

As the age structure of the population in this village is shown as Fig.1, it is the typical pyramid like the countries in the developing countries. There is no large

Table 1 Population and household changes in Radhaballavpur

	population			household	source
	male	female	total		
1961	449	408	857	135	Census of India
1967	457	438	895	161	Yonekura ed. (1973)
1971	530	502	1032	206	Census of India
1981	600	580	1180	193	Census of India
1992	629	592	1221	202	field work

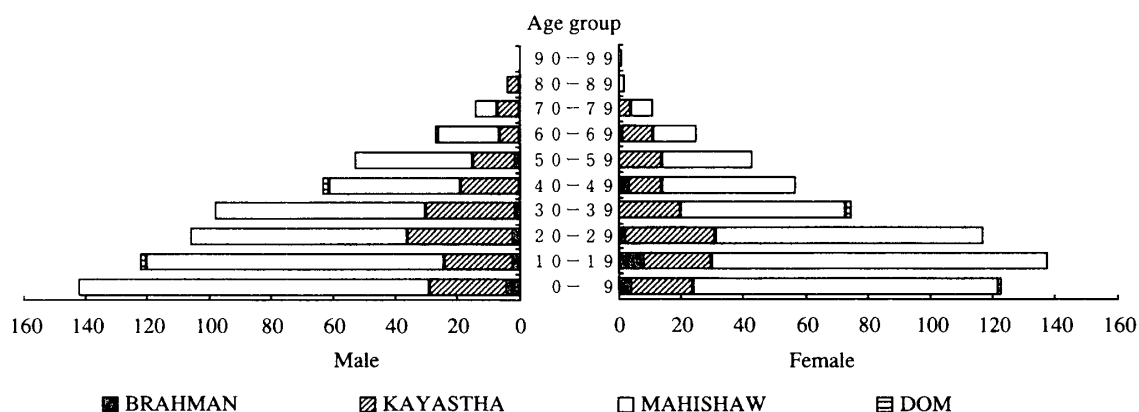


Fig.1 Age distribution of population in Radhaballavpur(jatiwise) 1992 (Source; Field work)

difference in this structure between 1992 and 1967 (Yonekura ed. 1973, p.171). First of all, the author would like to look at the age structure from the viewpoint of *jati*. Age structure of *Mahishaw* shows the typical pyramid as the developing country, which indicates its fertility still remains high. On the other hand, one of the most notable features of *Kayastha* is that 0-9 and 10-14 age groups are smaller than 15-19 age group. It tells *Kayastha's* fertility is getting lower due to its high level of education. Population of *Brahman* and *Dom* are too small to analyse the characteristics of age structure.

Lastly, the author shall discuss the human resources of this village. He shall confine his attention to the educational level of the population. Educational level in West Bengal State is of 4 stages; i.e., primary school (classes I-IV, aged 6-10), middle school (classes V-X, aged 10-15), higher secondary school (classes XI-XII, aged 15-17) and university stage (aged above 17). Generally in India, male is more educated than female. The same is true of this village (Fig.2).

As this figure shows the educational level of each *jati*, some differences among *jatis* are seen. *Kayastha* is marked by the highest level of education while *Dom* by the lowest. Most of *Kayastha* reach at above middle school level, i.e., classes V-X and the proportion of the university stage marks the highest point in this village while the illiterate rate is the lowest. On the contrary, *Dom* is coloured by the illiterate and

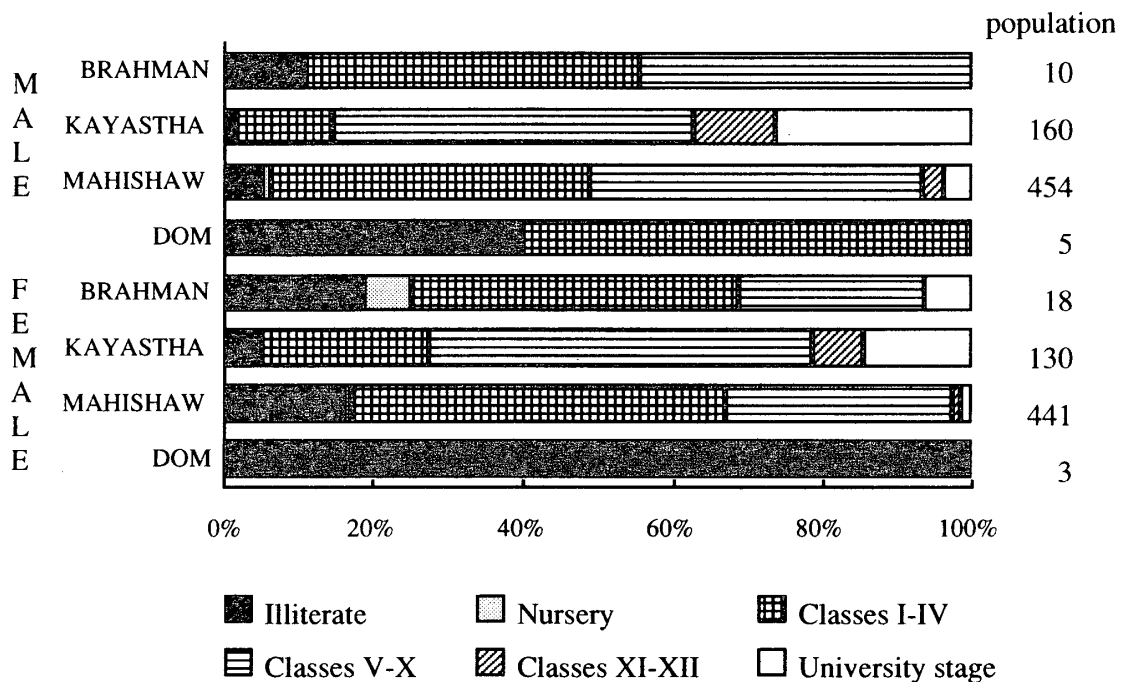


Fig:2 The educational level of the total population (Source: Field work)

classes I-IV. *Mahishaw* and *Brahman* are occupied by both classes I-IV and V-X, which indicates that both *jatis* are not so educated as *Kayastha*. According to Fig.3 that illustrates the educational level of the jobholder in this village, jobholder presents the same features as the total population on the educational qualification from the view point of *jati*.

So far, the author has seen some contrasts in the educational level from the point of *jati*. It is the case that there are some gaps in educational qualification among *jatis*, but it is a mistake to consider every *jati* has a single feature. What has to be noticed here is the diversity on educational level in the same *jati*. Take *Kayastha* for instance, some of them stop their education at primary school level while some *Mahishaw*, who is believed not so educated as *Kayastha* in general, reach at university stage. There are some gaps in economic situation among different levels of education even in the same *jati*. Not simply *jati* but educational qualification are indispensable indices to understand the diversity in Indian population.

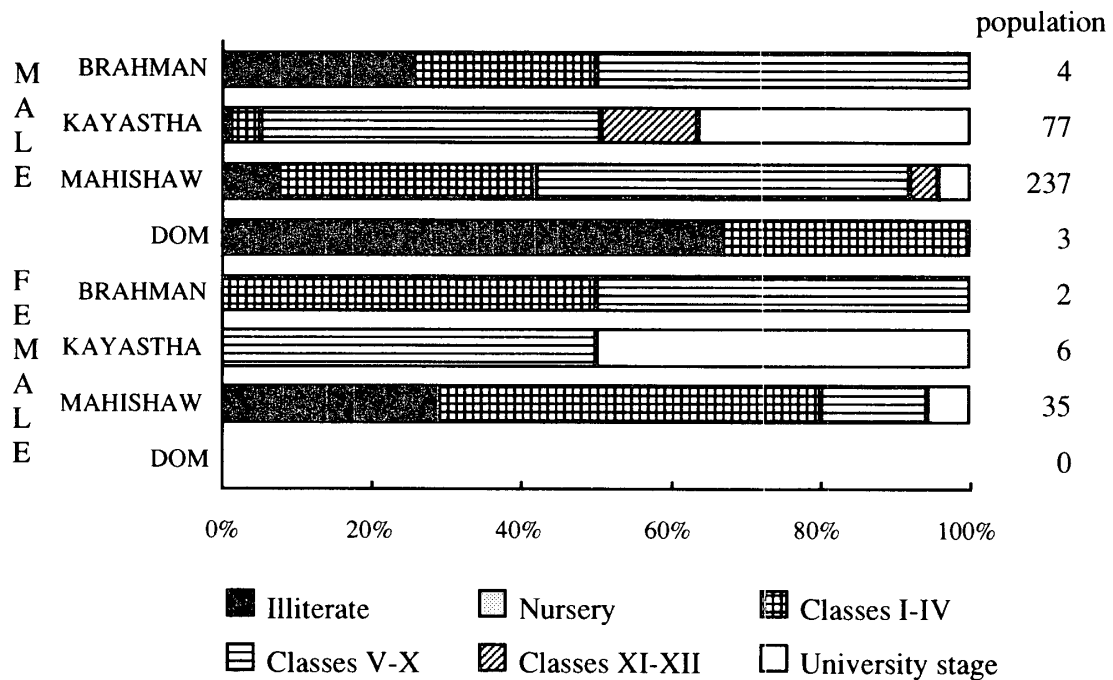


Fig.3 The educational level of jobholder (Source: Field work)

III. Migration

Migrants typically do not represent a random sample of overall population. On the contrary, they tend to be disproportionately selective of certain characteristics of the population which in most cases vary between sex, age groups, *jatis* and educational levels. This section will offer a detailed discussion on how and why migration is a selective process.

The features of age structure of outmigrants from this village in the period 1967-92 are that majority of outmigrants are 10-29 aged female marriage migrants and that most of the male overflow is 10-49 age group who shifts for a job (Fig. 4, Fig. 5).

It is useful to look closely at some of the features of outmigrants from the view point of *jati*. *Kayastha* occupies 39 percent of the total outmigrants while the proportion of

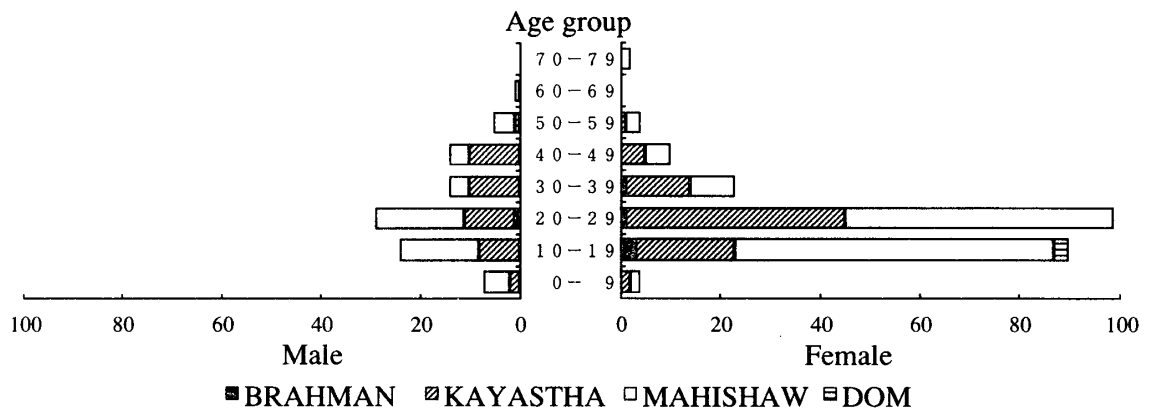


Fig.4 Age distribution of outmigrants from Radhaballavpur (1967-1992) (Source; Field work)

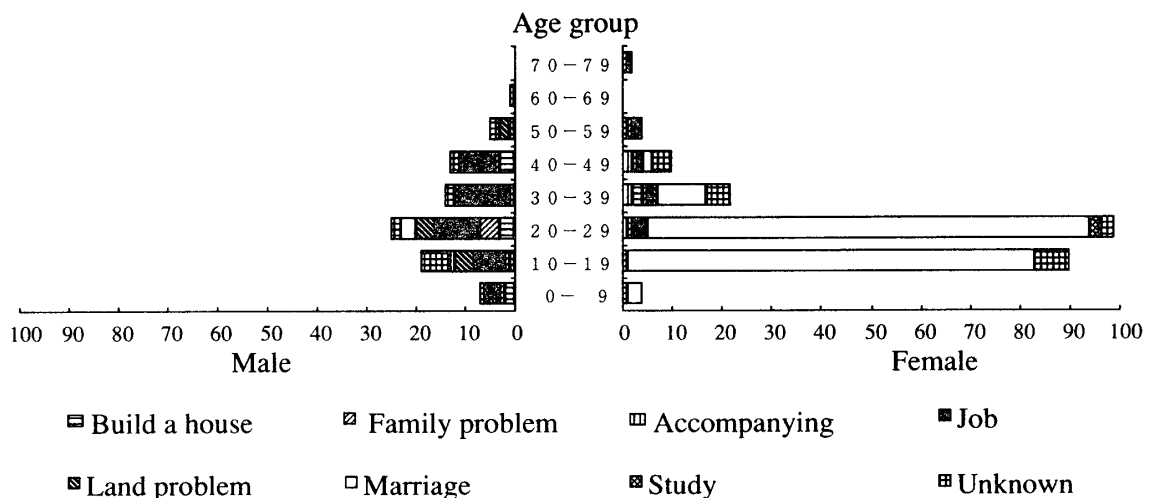


Fig.5 Reason of outmigration from Radhaballavpur (1967-1992) (Source: Field work)

Kayastha to the total population is only 24 percent. On the contrary, 59 percent of the outmigrants is *Mahishaw* who occupies no less than 73 percent of the total population. This gap illustrates that the residential mobility of *Kayastha* is higher than that of *Mahishaw*.

It is also worth concentrating on the outmigrants for job to reveal the difference between 2 *jatis* in residential mobility. Fig.6 illustrates the age distribution of outmigrants for job. Most of the outmigrants for job from this village are 10-49 aged *Kayastha* males though *Kayastha* is not the majority of the population in Radhaballavpur village. The residential mobility of 10-49 age *Kayastha* male is considered the

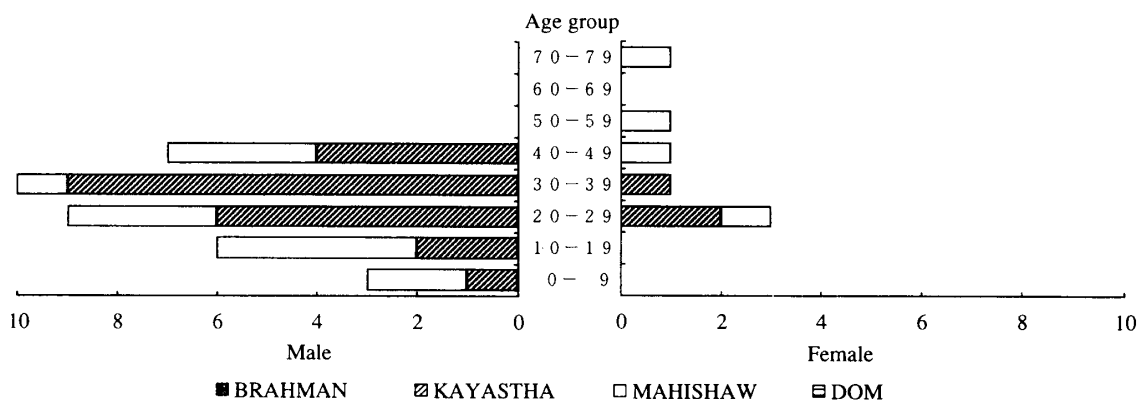


Fig.6 Age distribution of outmigrants for job from Radhaballavpur (1967-1992)
(Source: Field work)

Table 2 Destination of outmigration for job from Radhaballavpur (1967-1992)

		Calcutta ¹⁾	Tamluk Town	Tamluk Taluk ²⁾	Minapore District ³⁾	West Bengal ⁴⁾	Others	Total
male	Brahman							
	Kayastha	6	2	2	4	2	5	21
	Mahishaw		4	1	6		2	13
	Dom							
female	Brahman							
	Kayastha	2	1					3
	Mahishaw		1	1	2			4
	Dom							
Total		8	8	4	12	2	7	41

1)including Hawrah Taluk 2)except Tamluk Town 3)except Tamluk Taluk 4)except Midnapore District
(source; field work)

highest in this village. As Tab.2 shows the destination of migration, *Kayastha* male tends to move as far as Calcutta or other states while *Mahishaw* male is disposed to shift to Tamluk Town, the nearest town, or within Midnapore district. This fact tells us that *Kayastha* male tends to move longer distance than *Mahishaw* and to direct to the larger cities such as Calcutta.

The best way to reveal the feature of outmigrant for a job from the educational point is to make a comparison not with the total population but with the jobholder since both the outmigrant for a job and the jobholder have the same condition, i.e., engaged in a job. Previous studies on migration showed the principle that the educated are more migratory than the uneducated (e.g., Singh, J.P., 1986). This rule applies to *Mahishaw* on the grounds that the proportion of university stage in outmigrants is much higher than that of the jobholders (Fig.7). On the contrary, it does not apply to *Kayastha* since this proportion in the former is much lower than that of latter. In *Mahishaw*'s case the educated can get non-manual jobs out of the village easier than the uneducated who are able to get jobs only as labourers since educational qualification is indispensable for getting a non-manual work. In *Kayastha*'s case, however, the educated seem to stay at the village rather than to migrate. The educated *Kayastha*, especially males, are traditionally constrained not to engaged in agricultural labour.

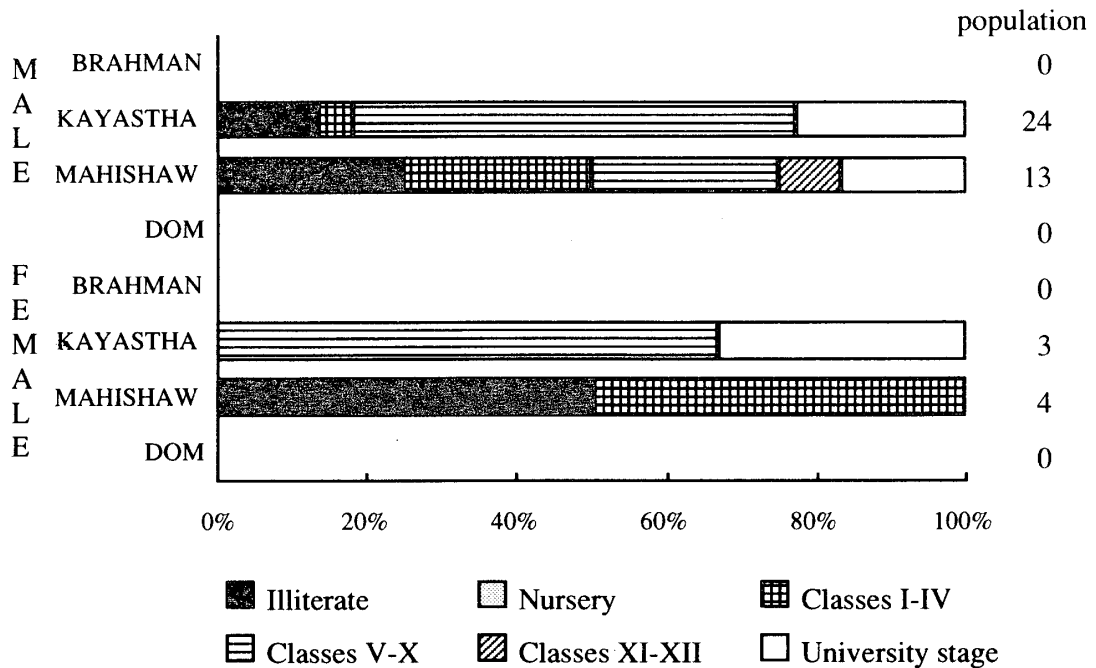


Fig.7 The educational level of the outmigrants for job (Source: Field work)

Clerical job is preferable for the educated *Kayastha* since *Kayastha* is a secretary Caste. In order to get a clerical job, they wish to shift to urban area, i.e., in most cases Calcutta. Calcutta, however, does not supply enough clerical jobs for the unemployed since Indian economy, especially in Calcutta, still sits in a serious depression. Accordingly, it is difficult for the educated *Kayastha* to move and get clerical jobs in Calcutta when they do not have human connections with government/ private companies. The educated *Kayastha* who can not get any clerical jobs are unwilling to stay at the village to try to get temporary jobs like private tutor rather than to be unemployed. They are regarded as the educated invisible unemployed. On the contrary, *Mahishaw* has the chance to cultivate the farmland or to be employed as the agricultural labourer even though they can not get any non-manual jobs, since *Mahishaw* is an agricultural Caste.

The rural to urban human stream in the developing country is considered to be pushed by the rural surplus population and pulled by the urban labour employment.

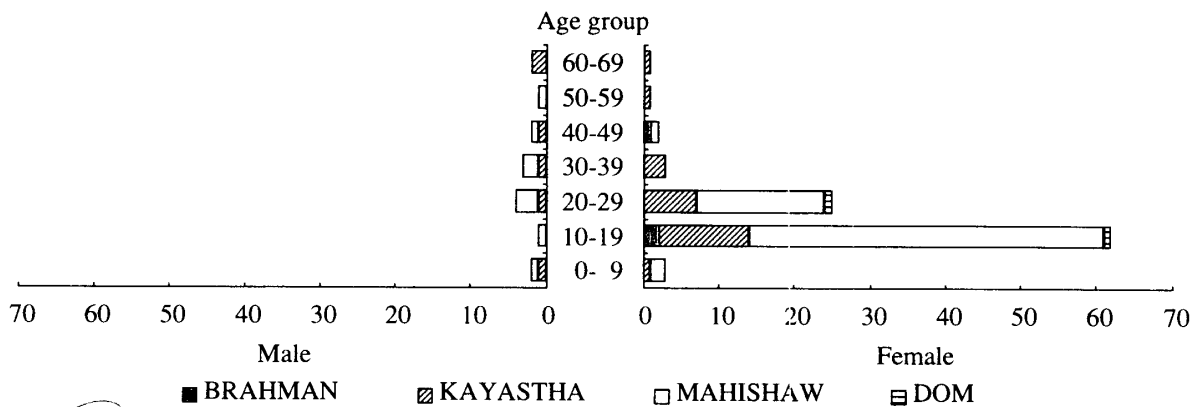


Fig.8 Age structure of immigrants to Radhaballavpur (1967-1992) (Source: Field work)

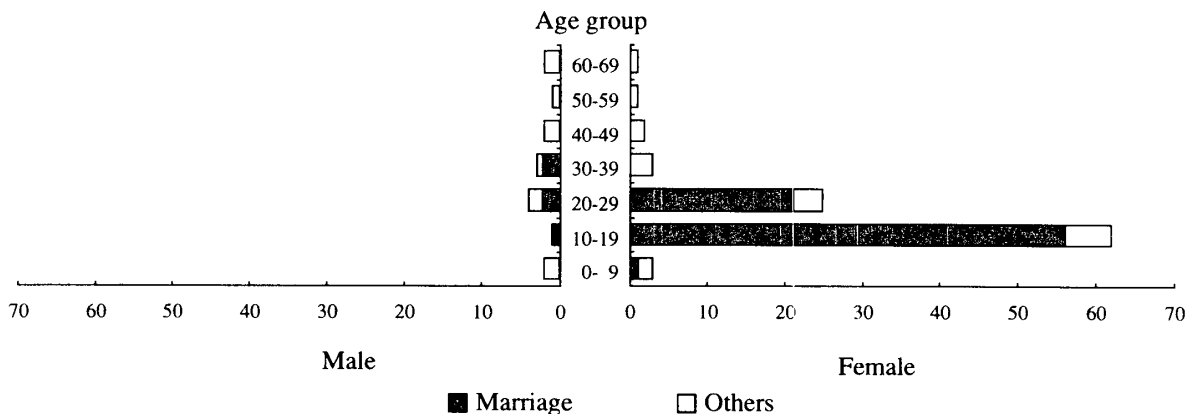


Fig.9 Reasons of immigration to Radhaballavpur (1967-1992) (Source: Field work)

This stream in this area is so restrained by the urban unemployment that residential mobility of the rural population is kept less even though it should have been much larger to decline the rural surplus population.

From the present, it may be useful to look closely at the characteristics of immigrants to Radhaballavpur village during 1967-92. According to Fig.8 and 9 that show the age structure and reasons for movement of immigrants to this village, most of them are occupied by 10-29 aged women who came for getting married. As the age distribution of immigrants except for marriage illustrated in Fig.10, the most notable feature is that half of them are *Kayastha* though the proportion of *Kayastha* to the total population is only 24 percent. This fact tells us that residential mobility of *Kayastha* is the highest in this village on immigration as well as outmigration.

These features apply to the outmigration pattern mentioned before. The difference in age distribution between outmigrants and immigrants is that at the age of 10-49 man leaves this village for job while the age is not fixed with the immigration. During the period 1967-92, except marriage migrants, number of outmigrants is much larger than that of immigrants. These facts indicate that most of the outmigrants left the village at the age of 10-49 to settle down at the destination in most cases urban area while some of them return to the original village at any ages even after their retirement from the job (Tab.3).

This pattern of rural-urban migration flow in this area is regarded as the chain migration. Outmigrants from the rural area settle at their family member or relatives' houses in the urban area to start their urban life. Family members, relatives or

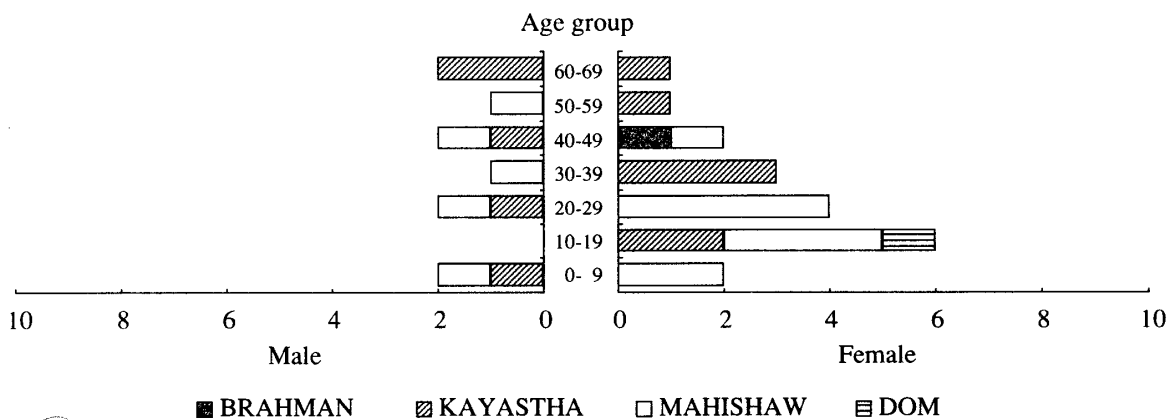


Fig.10 Age distribution of immigrants except for marriage to Radhaballavpur (1967-1992)
(Source; Field work)

Table 3 Origin of immigration except for marriage to Radhaballavpur (1967-1992)

		Calcutta ¹⁾	Tamluk Town	Tamluk Taluk ²⁾	Minapore District ³⁾	West Bengal ⁴⁾	Others	Total
male	Brahman							
	Kayastha	2			1	2		5
	Mahishaw		2	1	1	1		5
	Dom							
female	Brahman			1				1
	Kayastha				2	5		7
	Mahishaw		1	6	2	1		10
	Dom				1			1
Total		2	3	8	7	9		29

1)including Hawrah Taluk 2)except Tamluk Town 3)except Tamluk Taluk 4)except Midnapore District
(source; field work)

oldcomers of the same *jati* from the same village play the most important role in building the information channel to exchange the information on both urban and rural affairs. Newcomers start going to school, searching for/ engaging in a new job. This information channel makes return migration easier.

The chain migration is one of the common features of rural-urban migration in developing countries. The most distinctive feature in Indian case is that Indian's choice of occupation to be engaged is extremely limited due to its *jati* system that makes both vertical social mobility and residential mobility quite low. Take *Kayastha* for an example, they have no choice but to apply for clerical jobs when they want to settle at urban area. When their trials for jobs made no effects, they are reluctant to stay at their original village to remain the invisible unemployed since *Kayastha* is not allowed to be engaged in the agricultural labour.

IV. Conclusion

This paper would try to deal with rural population change in an Indian village focusing upon the rural-urban migration to clarify the rural-urban relationship based on field work.

The results obtained here are summarizes as follows;

Most of the migrants in this village are 10-29 aged female marriage migrants and

most of the male overflow is 10-49 aged group that shifts for a job. *Jati* is composed of several endogamous groups. The marriage is taken place strictly within the endogamous group especially in rural area. The kinship tie between this village and one's mother's original village exerts an influence upon the marriage migration flow. This flow is the major pattern of the rural-rural migration in rural India.

The rural to urban migration flow in the developing country is considered to be pushed by the rural surplus population and pulled by the urban labour employment. This migration flow in this area is so restrained by the urban unemployment that residential mobility of the rural population is kept less even though it should have been much larger to decline the rural surplus population. This flow is based on the chain migration that family, relatives and oldcomers of the same *jati* play an indispensable role in building the information channel between rural and urban area.

The migration process in this village is not uniform. It is categorized into the following several patterns based upon *jati* and their economic and educational situation.

Kayastha is of 3 categories.

K1) Educated large landowner. This type is engaged in a large farmland management in the remote village within West Bengal as well as this village employing *Mahishaw* as the agricultural labourers. The householder in this category transfers between the remote farmland and this village to manage the farmland. His wife would stay at this village to look after his parents and children. Besides being the land manager, he is able to get a clerical permanent job or school teacher owing to his high level of education. The income in this category is very stable and the highest in this village.

K2) Educated medium landowner. This type owns farmland in this village and in some cases with an adjacent village. The householder employs *Mahishaw* as the agricultural labour. Some of them graduate colleges in urban area, in most cases Calcutta. In this case, he had shifted to urban area after finishing the course of higher secondary school. After graduation from college, some settle at Calcutta to try to get a clerical permanent job. Others stay at the village to manage their farmland and in some cases commute to urban area, in most cases Calcutta, to be engaged in a clerical permanent job. After retiring from job, he would return home. His wife stays at this

village to take care of his family like above category. When man can not get a clerical job, he stays home to try to get a temporary job like private tutor or simply to depend his father/brothers until he gets a job. The income in this category is quite high and stable.

K3) Uneducated landless. This type lost its farmland. The householder is employed as the temporary unskilled labourer in the factory such as jute mill in Calcutta, since he has no production means and enough educational qualification for getting a clerical job. He shifts/commutes to urban area. His income is low and unstable. His family members are engaged in labour works.

Mahishaw is of the following 3 categories.

M1) Educated cultivator. The householder in this category cultivates his own farmland. Besides being a cultivator, he is employed as the labourer in the factory near this village such as Tamluk Town or Mechada Town in Midnapore District or gets a clerical job owing to his high educational qualification. Some shift to such area. The income is fairly high.

M2) Uneducated cultivator. The householder in this category cultivates his own farmland. He and his family stay at this village and try to be employed as agricultural/construction labourer or hand loom weaver since the income from cultivation is not sufficient for their life. The family members in this category seldom migrate except for marriage. Some rarely shift to the nearest town to be shopkeepers. The income is medium and unstable.

M3) Uneducated labour. The householder in this type does not own his farmland. He and his family stay at this village and earn a little from agricultural labour or temporal construction works. The income is low and quite unstable.

Brahman and *Dom* in this village seldom migrate except for marriage.

The variation among each subdivision mentioned above tells us that migration process is different among each subdivision. Therefore, migration is a selective process. The rural-urban migration in India is based on the chain migration as well as other developing countries. The most distinctive feature of Indian migration is that *jati* system is the most crucial restrain for both social mobility and residential mobility as well as one's economic and educational situation.

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