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A PRELIMINARY STUDY ON WEEKLY BAZAAR OF ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Weekly markets (Saptahik bazaar) in India also called as 'haats' set up in specific days of the week in a particular area. It is important to understand how markets play a role in modern capitalist economy. Studying markets from a sociological perspective provides insights in studying the relationship between the economy and the society. It shows how needs of people are fulfilled and how income is generated for the vendors. It helps us in understanding how the pattern of business is carried out by the market vendors. The present study is aimed at understanding how the weekly markets perform, how it supports and helps the small vendors (sellers) to satisfy their financial needs through a system of exchanges. The study relates to the comparative study of the systems and functions between two periodic markets in the areas of the states of Assam and Meghalaya.

KEY WORDS: *weekly market, social structure, composition*

INTRODUCTION

Market is made up of series of exchanges of people and constructed in specific way so that it can view as social institution. For instance markets are organized by particular class of people that have a specific connection with other institutions. Weekly markets in India also called as 'haats or bazaar' set up in specific days of the week in a particular area. These markets bring people together people from surrounding areas and also attract traders from outside the local area. These markets can be entirely tribal or non-tribal. Tribal markets are mostly rural while the latter can be either rural or urban in nature. Bazaars are the points through which the products of the rural areas are exchanged to the urban centres and the manufactured products from urban centres get distributed in the rural areas. Periodic markets are the entry point for locally produced goods into the larger marketing network. This paper is a preliminary study that attempts to put

forward a comparative analysis of two weekly markets situated in Assam (Beltola bazaar) and Meghalaya (Latakata) and tried to find out the underlying social structure existed in the market.

In the North Eastern Region is composed of four valley areas, i.e. Brahmaputra valley, Barak valley, Imphal valley and the Tripura plains. The total plain and valley areas account for about one-third of the total geographical area of the region and rest are hills and plateaus. For the past one thousand years the valleys were dominated by peasant societies, practising wet paddy cultivation at a subsistence level. Due to the inhospitable climate and inaccessibility, the rivers, particularly the great Brahmaputra provided possibly the only route of contact between the peasants of the valleys and also to some extent with the hill tribes. Emergence of trade within and between the peasant societies was little and if, at all occasional. With the coming of the Ahoms in the middle ages, trade was

encouraged as a part of the profit and went to them. Though the colonial economic exploitation of the region was temporarily the cause, but the partition affected a large number of trading points and market along the Indo-Bangladesh particularly affecting the farmers of the neighbouring areas of Meghalaya (erstwhile districts of Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills).

METHODOLOGY

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The secondary data has been collected from books, journals, web sources etc. The primary data has been collected from field survey based on convenient sampling method with observation technique. Total sample size is 60, with 30 respondents from each market.

Study area: The pilot study has been conducted in two weekly markets - Beltola bazaar in Beltola area

and Latakata bazaar near Basistha. Beltola is a prime residential area in the southern part of Guwahati, Assam. It is an adjoining area of the Dispur Capital Complex, the capital of Assam. Latakata falls under Ri-Bhoi district of the state of Meghalaya and is a tribal area.

Beltola bazaar is located in an urban setting comprising a mixture of non-tribal and tribal vendors in the central part of Beltola. It is a traditional bi-weekly market that set up on Thursdays and Sundays between 7 am to 9 pm. The market is running since historic past and serves as a trading point between the people from Khasi hills and the local people.

Latakata bazaar is predominantly a tribal market in a remote location which is also among the oldest of bi weekly markets of the region. It sets up on Thursday and Sunday between 9 am to 8 pm.

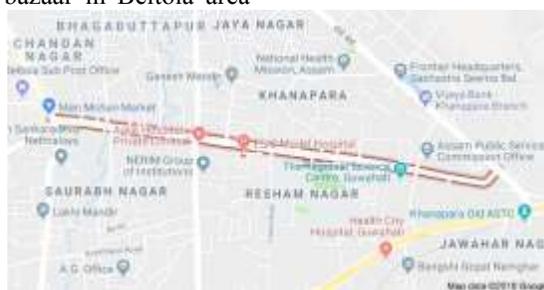


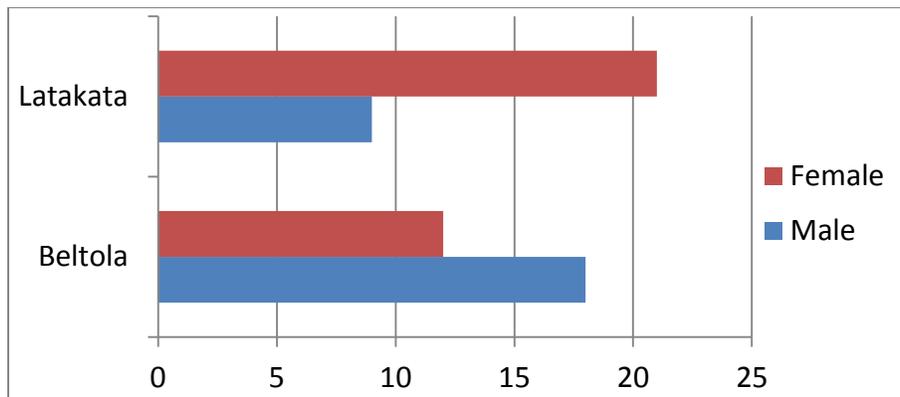
Fig- Beltola bazaar



Fig – Latakata bazaar

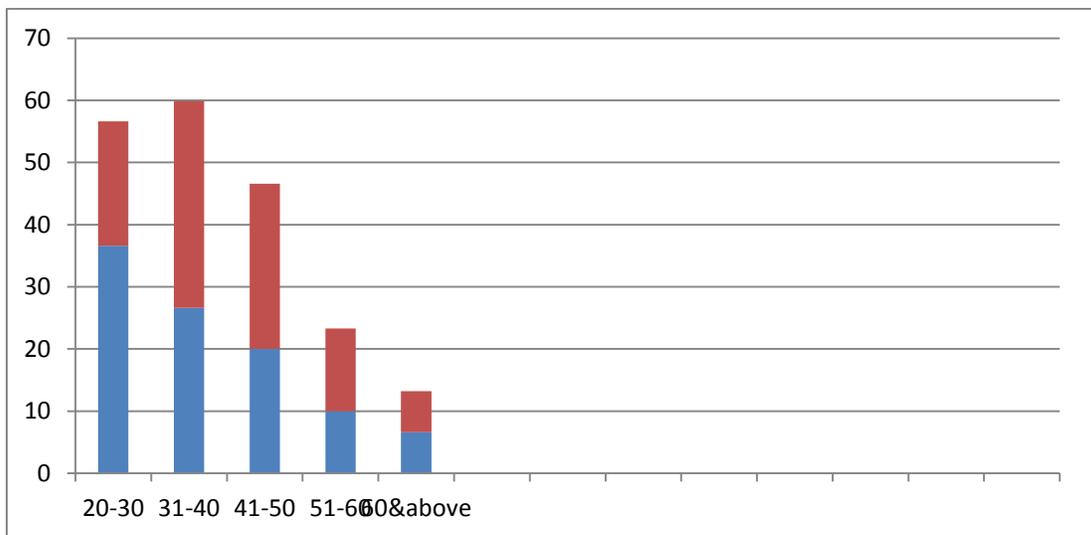
FINDINGS

Figure no.1
Sex category of the vendors



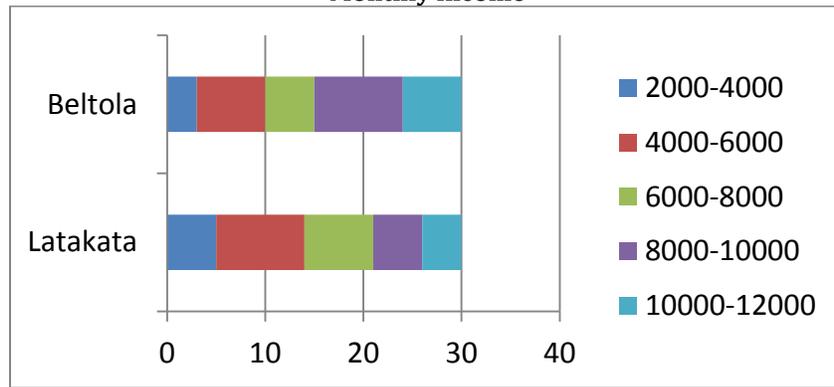
Above figure shows that majority of sellers in Beltola bazaar are male (60%) while majority of the sellers are female in Latakata bazaar (70%).

Figure no. 2
Age of the vendors



The above table shows that majority of the vendors of both the market belong to the age group of 20-40 age of total work group.

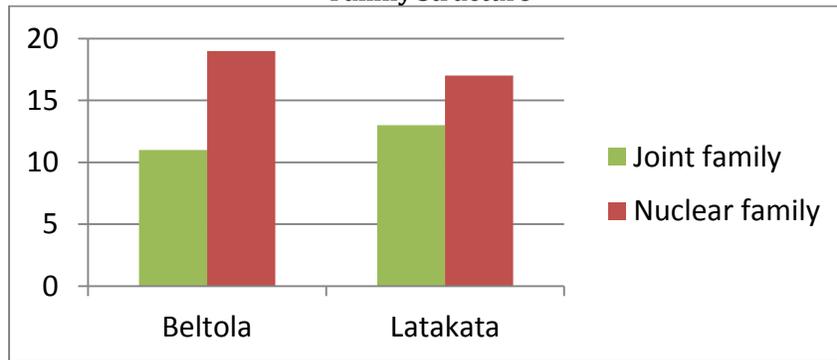
Table no. 3
Monthly income



In Beltola bazaar, majority of the respondents fall in the income category between Rs. 8000-10000 whereas

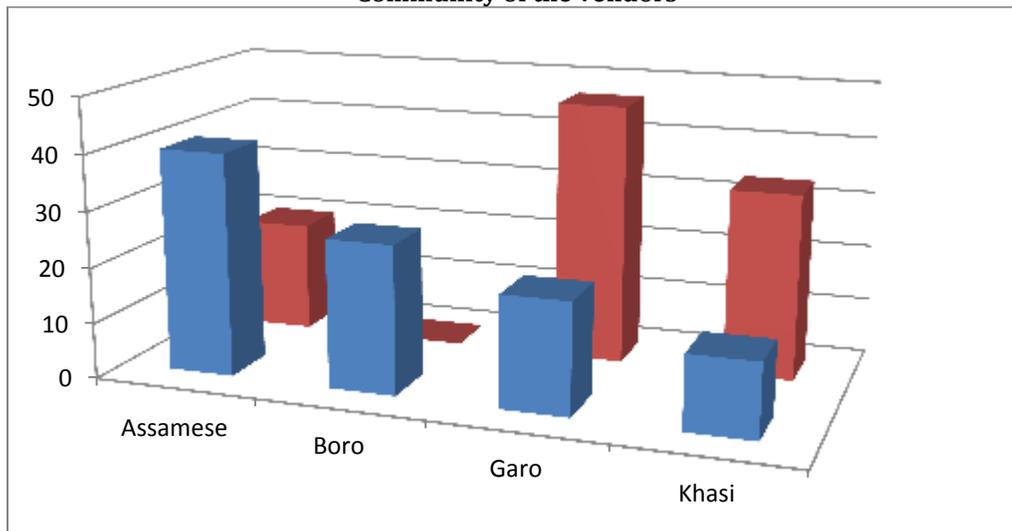
in Latakata bazaar majority of them are in the income range of Rs. 4000-6000.

Figure no.4
Family structure



The above data indicate that majority of vendors in both the markets prefer nuclear family instead of joint family system.

Table no. 5
Community of the vendors



The above table indicates  as Beltola market and  as Latakata market. The table shows that Beltola comprises of majority of vendors belong to Assamese community while Latakata market has the majority of Garo vendors. Though Beltola is a non-tribal market but it has tribal vendors too.

Beltola market is located in an urban setting comprising a mixture of non-tribal and tribal vendors with the former more in number. Latakata market is predominantly a tribal market situated in a more remote location. In Beltola market majority of the vendors are from the 20-40 age group consisting about 63% of the total work group whereas in Latakata market majority of the vendors are in the range 31-50 comprising about 60% of the total strength. Majority of sellers are male in Beltola market (60%) while majority of the sellers are female in Latakata market (70%). In Beltola market majority of the respondents fall in the income category between Rs. 8000-10000 whereas in Latakata market majority of them are in the income range of Rs. 4000-6000. Majority of vendors, 63.3% in Beltola market and 56.6% in Latakata respectively in both the markets prefer nuclear family instead of joint family system. In Beltola market 40% respondents are from Assamese community, 26.6% are Boro, 20% are Garo and 13.3% are from Khasi community. In Latakata market 46.6% respondents are from Garo community, 33.3% are Khasi and 20% are from Assamese community.

Other Findings are:

Types of commodity and pattern of business: In Latakata most of the vendors are nearby residents who bring their produce from the hills and the rest are resellers who buy their goods for resale through wholesalers and middlemen from other major markets like Lakhra, Garchuk and Beltola. It is a vegetable and fruit market along with herbs, spices, meat and dried fish. Whereas in Beltola majority are mobile vendors bringing their own produce from further off places while the rest are resellers and service sellers. Higher profitability for both buyers and sellers results in more crowd here as it is the one of the largest and oldest periodic markets of the region. The products are vegetables and fruits along with herbs and spices, meat, fish, tools, utensils, clothes and other services. It is more commercialized and structured than Latakata market.

Education level: Majority of the vendors in both the markets have basic or elementary education.

Tax collection: Municipality tax is collected from the vendors in Beltola bazaar. While no form of tax is collected from the vendors of Latakata bazaar.

Schemes and facilities: Most of the vendors seem to be unaware of any kind of government

schemes available to them due to poor implementation. No special facilities like drinking water or other infrastructure facility are available. Certain malpractice like illegal tax extortion used to be present in the market but now has been removed.

CONCLUSION

The role of market is very significant in the enhancement of economic activities for the development of the region. Beltola market which is essentially a non-tribal market is more commercialized and bigger in size with a wider variety of goods that also features a tax collection system by the municipality. On the other hand in Latakata market, which is a tribal market, is less commercialized, smaller in size with limited variety of goods that does not include any form of tax collection by any authority. Here researcher has tried to bring the functionalist perspective while analyzing the data from both the bazaar. It serves several functions such as work that gives people income and self-fulfillment. The rural people are largely depends upon weekly markets for the sale transactions of agricultural and non-agricultural commodities. These markets are responsible for establishing the links between its surrounding areas and establishing the grass root level networking of trade systems. Thus, these markets provide an employment to the workers of unorganized sector and source of livelihood for those traders who purchase the agricultural commodities from different places to sell in weekly markets.

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PHOTO GALLERY



Fig- Latakata bazaar



Fig- Beltola bazaar