



# SOCIO - ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF VAN- RICKSHAW PULLER (MANUAL) IN RURAL AREAS- A CASE STUDY

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**Abstract:-** *The present paper deals with the study of the socio-economic analysis of van- rickshaw puller (manual) in rural areas and to find out their socio- economic, living conditions, and income structure. The adverse effects of this profession on the health of the van- rickshaw pullers, the problems faced by them and their remedial measures have been also taken into consideration. The study is based on primary data collected through the field survey and direct questionnaire to the respondents in Mathabhanga Block (No. 1), Cooch Behar District, West Bengal, India. The survey was carried out during the months of november and december, 2012. The overall analysis of the study reveals that the van- rickshaw pullers in rural areas are one of the poorest sections of the society, living in abject poverty but play a pivotal role in intra-rural and rural- urban transportation system. Neither is their working environment regulated nor their social security issues are addressed. Their education level is very poor. It have been found that out of total population of sample household the 26.79 percent are literate population where 53.90 percent are female and 46.10 percent male persons. They are unaware about the governmental schemes launched for poverty alleviation and their accessibility in basic amenities and infrastructural facilities is also very poor.*

## INTRODUCTION

The word rickshaw derived from the Japanese word 'jinrikisha', which means human-powered vehicle. Though the Japanese are credited with inventing the vehicle but history says that the Chinese merchants launched rickshaws in West Bengal. These merchants for their convenience introduced rickshaws in the late 19th century mainly to carry goods but in modern time it also carries animals. At present we see many rickshaw-pullers in cities and towns, in stations, in stands and in village centres. They have become a very common feature now- a- days. We call them rickshaw-puller because they pull a rickshaw and it is their profession. Beforehand there were only hand-drawn rickshaws. Now we find cycle-rickshaws and van rickshaw (manual). Van-Rickshaw is a very popular human-powered transportation device used extensively in India as well as in many other south-east asian countries. It is used to carry passengers along with their luggage and goods. The people of poor and low socio-economic class remain engaged in the occupation of pulling cycle rickshaw and they have to do strenuous exercise during work for long hours; there is no fixed time for their work. They are exposed to extremes of the weather conditions in different seasons along with other hazardous substances from automobile exhaust. Majority of the people in rural areas are landless agricultural labourers, poor and middle class peasants. Small peasants are not able to sustain themselves from cultivation as their real income is decreasing and the number of rural unemployed and manual van Rickshaw- pulling population is progressively

increasing.

A review of the available literature is inevitable in order to locate the progress made in the concerned area and to identify the gaps to be filled in by the researcher. A large number of studies have been made so far on the socio economic conditions of the rickshaw puller and their occupational pattern in city, town and rural areas with fruitful findings and policy imperatives. Though some of the studies are comprehensive, yet some gaps still persist. Many issues on the problems of socio economic condition of van-rickshaw puller (manual) in rural areas have not been adequately examined and duly focused. While the findings, analytical framework and policy proposals developed by the scholars are worthy note, the present study is a diagnostic attempt of finding out the position, socioeconomic profile and structural analysis of van rickshaw- puller (manual) in rural areas.

A.T.M. Nurul Amin (1981) focuses on the labour force and rickshaw-pullers in the informal sector in Dhaka to demonstrate how the informal sector is a way out of poverty for the labour force, especially in urban areas. Through optimistic and pessimistic perspectives, he evaluates Bangladesh and its potential regarding the informal sector in terms of the labour's ownership and size, earning, saving, investment, motivation, and length of staying in the city. G Carrin, E Gray, J Almeida (1999) presented a simulation model of how a poor rickshaw puller in Bangladesh copes with illness, in particular tuberculosis (TB). They first

analyze the various coping mechanisms that are set in motion when he starts to suffer from tuberculosis; the impact on household assets, income and food intake will be studied. The simulation model is then used to analyse the effects on his household of a specific health intervention, namely the Directly Observer Treatment Short Course (DOTS) treatment. It shows that DOTS offers positive improvements of the overall well-being of the household by restoring the working capacity of the rickshaw puller in one treatment course and minimizing lost income. MD. Hedayet Ullah Chowdhury (2005) worked on the growing informal sector and rickshaw-pulling recognized as expanding source of employment in Bangladesh but the government discriminates these small enterprises. He fined out that developing country like Bangladesh has surplus labour force, while, the raise of the informal sector provides employment for poor and uneducated labour force especially in the rural and urban areas. Debashis Manna, Sridhar Thakur, Chandan K Pradhan(2012) said that Cycle rickshaw-pullers aware of the hazards of their occupation. They could be guided for taking care of their health by improvising their living style and work practice.

Objectives The following objectives have been taken in to consideration for the study

- 1.To examine the nature of workforce engaged in Rickshaw pulling in the study area.
- 2.To analyze the socio-economic profile of the Rickshaw-pullers in the selected study area.
- 3.To highlight the problems faced by Rickshaw puller.

**METHODOLOGY**

The present work is based on empirical study. Respondents have been selected from different parts of the study area (Mathabhanga block No. 1). The study area has total 102 villages, out of which 6 villages have been selected randomly for the study namely; Kurshamari, Pachagarh, Mahischaru, Satgram, Jorpatki, and Sibpur, 257 samples household have been selected out of total household of the study area. Data have been calculated through questionnaire direct interview with respondents.

**Study Area**

The study area is located in Mathabhanga subdivision of Cooch Behar district which lies between 25°57'47" and 26°36'20" north latitude; between 88°47'44" and 89°54'35" east longitude in the state West Bengal. Geographically the Mathabhanga belongs to the barind tract (a tract of old alluvium) of the lower ganga plain where the terai (a zone of marshy jungle) kind of vegetation prevails on the northern side. In the south-eastern side it is flat with a slight slope and some areas noticed to be low and liable to inundation. It is 48 km distance from the district headquarters by road. It is totally rural area and has 40083 households, 186658 total population where 68.5% is Schedule Caste (SC) and only 0.03% is Schedule Tribe (ST) population.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Sample village**

Sl. No.	Name of the villages	Total Population	Total no. of households	Total Area (Hectors)	No. of sample household
1	Kurshamari	2503	545	308.5	41
2	Pachagarh	5060	1089	572.0	57
3	Mahischaru	3114	677	510.2	36
4	Satgram	2101	422	254.3	21
5	Jorpatki	4764	951	816.9	49
6	Sibpur	2262	475	403.1	53
7	Total	19804	4159	2865	257

Source: Census of India 2001, West Bengal

Table 1 show the demographic profile of the sample village and 6 percent of the total numbers of households were randomly selected from each village and they all are engaged in the occupation of van rickshaw pulling. The total sample size consists of 6 villages and 257 households.



Figure: Van rickshaw – puller (Manual) with passengers.

**Survey results analysis of van rickshaw puller in the selected study area**

**Demographic Profile**

**Table 2: Distributional pattern of demographic Profile of the Sample Households**

Sl. No.	Name of the villages	Total Male (in percent)	Total Female (in percent)	Sex Ratio	Total is Schedule Caste (SC)Population	Total Population	Household Size of the Respondent
1	Kurshamari	59.91	45.08	821	20.08	244	5.95
2	Pachagarh	50.46	49.53	981	61.68	214	3.75
3	Mahischaru	50.84	49.15	967	72.38	177	4.92
4	Satgram	47.77	52.22	1093	53.33	90	4.29
5	Jorpatki	51.42	48.57	1007	76.19	277	5.65
6	Sibpur	49.81	50.18	944	43.33	210	3.96
7	Total	51.70	49.12	969	54.50	1212	4.75

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Table 2 demonstrate the total population of the sample household is 1212. Where 51.70 percent is male and 49.12 percent is female. Sex ratio expressed as the number of females per thousand males. It is a very important demographic characteristic. According to the field study results, sex ratio is high in Satgram (1093) and low in Kurshamari (821), both villages are characterised by high concentration of Muslim population, but rickshaw- pullers of Satgram are more Economical backward then Kurshamari. Average 54.50 percent of the rickshaw pullers in the study area are Schedule Caste (SC) population. High concentrations of Schedule Caste (SC) population are found

in Jorpatki (76.19%) village and low concentrations of Schedule Caste (SC) population found in Kurshamari (20.08) village. Maximum van- rickshaw pullers are belong in SC categorise because SC population in the study area have very poor economic condition, lack of education, lack of agricultural land as a reason of choosing this occupation. Income Structure

**Table 3: Monthly income structure of sampled household respondents**

SL. No	Name of the village	Income Index	No of rickshaw- Pullers Household	Percentage
1	Kurshamari	<3000	13	08
		3000- 6000	21	17
		>6000	07	07
2	Pachagarh	<3000	19	14
		3000- 6000	32	29
		>6000	06	05
3	Mahischaru	<3000	19	14
		3000- 6000	14	11
		>6000	03	02
4	Satgram	<3000	14	07
		3000- 6000	06	04
		>6000	01	<01
5	Jorpatki	<3000	21	16
		3000- 6000	24	21
		>6000	04	01
6	Sibpur	<3000	27	19
		3000- 6000	23	17
		>6000	03	02

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Table 3 shows the income structure of sample household of the rickshaw- puller. Rickshaw pullers' income is significantly low compare to other informal occupations, such as a day labour in the construction sector in urban areas or agricultural farmer earn minimum income Rupees 250 per day but a rickshaw puller income less than that. Monthly income of the rickshaw- puller have been categorised in to three types on the base of minimum and maximum income of rickshaw- pullers in the study area (<3000, 3000- 6000 and >6000). The Maximum rural van rickshaw- pullers' have been recorded monthly income bellow 3000 and minimum monthly income have been recorded 6000 per month. Out of total 7 percent of the rickshaw puller of Kurshamari village enjoys more than 6000 rupees and lowest is found in the village of Satgram (<1 percent). Most of the rickshaw pullers said their income very frequently fluctuate during the rainy season, when city road get stuck due to the heavy rain fall. They think their main challenges of earnings are unstable political situation of this block, as political parties call strike very frequent. If they have any savings during the strike they deplete, otherwise they depend on loan from other community members or relatives. Some of the rickshaw pullers also blame rickshaw owners for sharing a significant percentage of their income. They think the rent cost should be fixed on hour basis; in this case they do not have to pay if they work less hours for any reason.

**Rickshaw Ownership**

**Table 4: Percentage distributions of types of Rickshaw in the study area**

Sl. No.	Name of the villages	Personal Rickshaw	Rented Rickshaw		
			Daily Loan	Monthly Loan	Total
1	Kurshamari	42.50	52.50	7.50	100
2	Pachagarh	38.59	52.63	8.77	100
3	Mahischaru	30.55	44.45	25.00	100
4	Satgram	57.14	42.85	00	100
5	Jorpatki	42.85	50.02	6.12	100
6	Sibpur	37.70	52.85	9.43	100
7	Total	41.45	49.12	9.43	100

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Table 4 depicts the percentage distributions of types of rickshaw in the study area. The rickshaw-pullers are generally very poor man. They are not able to buy a rickshaw. So, they hire it from a rickshaw-owner. It have been find out that the 41.45 percents rickshaw pullers have his own rickshaw but 49.12 percents of the total rickshaw puller hire their rickshaw from a rickshaw owner as a daily loan and 9.43 percents as a monthly loan. In the study area highest percentage of personal rickshaw is recorded in Satgram (57.14) and lowest percentage is found in Mahischaru village (30.55), where the rented rickshaw on the basis of daily loan and monthly loan are highest recorded in the village of Sibpur and Mahischaru respectively. On the other hand the lowest percentages of daily loan and monthly loan basis rented rickshaw have been found in the village of Satgram. The van rickshaw- puller cannot work all the twenty-four hours. So, they hire it for the day or the night (mainly carry goods in business season). For this they pay rupees 20.00-40.00 as daily rent and 500.00- 700.00 rupees monthly rents. The owner is content with it and does not bother about how much the rickshaw-puller earns. The owner of the rickshaw bears all these costs. He bears the cost of the wear and tear, the damage and the loss due to accident that occurs to his rickshaw. The rickshaw puller pays his due everyday to the rickshaw-owner.

**Educational pattern of the study area  
Literacy Rate**

**Table 5: Distribution of educational status in study area of sample household**

Name of the villages	Total Literates	Total Illiterates	Total Male Population (in percent)	Total Female Population (in percent)	Total Literacy Rate
Kurshamari	63	181	12.30	13.52	25.82
Pachagarh	60	154	14.01	14.01	28.18
Mahischaru	34	143	10.16	9.03	19.19
Satgram	29	61	11.11	21.11	32.22
Sibpur	55	222	9.02	10.83	19.85
Jorpatki	67	143	17.61	18.09	35.69
Total	308	904	12.36	14.43	26.79

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Table 5 focused Educational status in study area of sample household. Literacy is one of the most important components of educational status. It reflects the socio-economic and culture setup of nation, even their groups or community. Literacy is essential not only for education of poverty, but also for mental isolation for cultivating peaceful and friendly international relations and for permitting the

free play of demographic processes as well. Out of total population of rickshaw pullers household only 26.79 (12.36- male and 14.43- female) are literate. The literacy rate of these villages of the van rickshaw- pullers is very low highest literacy rate is found in the village of Jorpatki and Satgram, 35.69 percent and 32.22 percent respectively, very low in Mahischaru (19.19). Some of the rickshaw pullers went to school but could not continue till grade five. This group of people can have basic knowledge of reading and writing but maximum van rickshaw pullers are illiterate. Out of total 24.12% rickshaw pullers said they have finished primary school but did not continue their studies and 9.72% rickshaw pullers said they studies more than six grade. Overall, according to the sample most of rickshaw pullers education level is poor. Survey samples and interviewees mainly blamed poverty for their lack of access in the education.

**Educational Status**

**Table 6: Distributional pattern of Educational Status in percentage:**

SL. No	Village Name	Primary	6 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	Graduation	Above Graduation	Total
1	Kurshamari	68.25	15.87	9.52	4.76	1.59	0	0	100
2	Pachagarh	56.67	20.00	11.67	6.67	3.33	1.67	0	100
3	Mahischaru	41.18	26.47	17.65	14.71	0	0	0	100
4	Satgram	55.17	6.90	17.24	13.79	6.90	0	0	100
5	Jorpatki	64.18	29.85	4.48	1.49	0	0	0	100
6	Sibpur	72.73	16.36	7.27	3.64	0	0	0	100
7	Total	59.70	20.75	10.37	7.23	1.95	0.27	0	100

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Table 6 show the distribution of educational status of the sampled household of the villages. The highest percentage of literate population up to primary level is recorded in Sibpur village (72.73), where the lowest percentage in Mahischaru village (41.18). The highest percentage of literate up to tenth level is found in Mahischaru village (14.71). The overall it have recorded among the literate population 59.70 percent have studied up to primary level, 20.75 percent up to 6th standard, 10.37 percent up to 8th standard, 7.23 percent up to 10th standard, a negligible 1.95 percent has acquired higher secondary level and 0.27 percent has acquired graduation level qualification out of total sample household.

**Socio- economic conditions of respondents in the study area Housing Conditions**

**Table 7: Types of Houses in percentage of sampled respondent**

SL.No	Village Name	Type of House				Total
		Tin	Katcha	Semi-pucca	Jhopad	
1	Kurshamari	50.00	35.00	12.50	2.50	100
2	Pachagarh	54.38	28.07	14.00	3.50	100
3	Mahischaru	50.00	33.33	8.33	8.33	100
4	Satgram	61.90	28.50	4.10	4.70	100
5	Jorpatki	59.18	28.57	10.20	2.04	100
6	Sibpur	33.06	45.28	16.98	3.77	100

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Housing is the basic need of the man. A proper shelter is necessary the performances of residents for their domestic as well as economic conditions. The table 7 shows the types of Houses in percentage of sampled respondent. . It have been find out that the highest percentage of tin house is recorded in Satgram village (61.90), where the lowest percentage of tin house is recorded in Sibpur village (33.06). Highest percentages of both Katcha and Semi pucca houses have been recorded in the village of Sibpur, 45.28 percent and 16.98 percent respectively. Lowest percentages of Katcha house have been recorded in Pachagarh village (28.07) and Semi- pucca house recorded in Satgram. Jhopad house have been recorded highest in the village of Mahischaru(8.33) and lowest in Jorpatki village(2.04). Some semi- pucca house are found, these houses are constructed by Government (Indira- bash Yojona).

**Water supply conditions**

**Table 8: Distribution of Water Supply facilities in study area**

SL.No.	Name of the Villages	Type of Water Supply		Total (in percent)
		Public Hand- pumps (in percent)	Private hand- pumps (in percent)	
1	Kurshamari	80.48	19.52	100
2	Pachagarh	80.71	19.29	100
3	Mahischaru	83.33	16.67	100
4	Satgram	66.67	33.33	100
5	Jorpatki	83.76	16.33	100
6	Sibpur	86.79	13.21	100

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

The table 8 depicts that the highest percentage of population used public hand pump in the village of Sibpur (86.79) they collect water from the government hand pumps and lowest in Satgram (66.67). On the other hand it have been find out that the highest percentage of privet hand pumps is recorded in Satgram (33.33) where lowest in Sibpur (13.21). But the quality of water from these pumps is very poor and largely untested. Most of these tube- wells are not bored deep enough and so are often unclean, muddy and dirty. Many of these pumps do not have concrete platforms around them and so dirty water seeps downward creating unsafe conditions.

**Type of Latrine**

**Table 9: Percentage distribution of Types of Latrines in the study area**

SL.No.	Name of the Villages	Types of Latrines			Total
		Septic	Pit	Open Area	
1	Kurshamari	27.50	40.00	32.50	100
2	Pachagarh	24.56	47.36	28.07	100
3	Mahischaru	27.78	38.88	33.34	100
4	Satgram	42.86	19.04	38.10	100
5	Jorpatki	24.49	40.82	34.69	100
6	Sibpur	54.47	22.63	41.50	100

Source: Field Survey, November and December- 2012

Poor sanitary conditions and poor quality of water lead to illnesses like dysentery, diarrhoea and water born disease affecting the life expectancy of the rickshaw pullers. Among water borne disease diarrhoea disproportionately affect the children under the age of five (planning

commission, 2002). The study reveals that access to basic latrines is worst among the rural rickshaw- pullers. It has been found out that the highest percentage of septic and open area type latrine is recorded in Sibpur village (54.47 and 41.50 percent respectively), where the pit types of latrine is found high in the village of Pachagarh (47.36). On the other hand lowest percentage of septic and pit types latrine have been recorded in the villages namely, Jorpatki (24.49), and Satgram (19.04) respectively (Table 9).

#### **CONCLUSION:**

It has been concluded that the socio- economic condition of the rural van rickshaw- pullers (manual) are very poor. They are facing many problems like improper sanitation, unhygienic environmental conditions, social, economic, health, education and cultural problems. The basic problem is they cannot get their remuneration, according to labour. Disease spread rapidly among the poor van rickshaw- pullers households due to unhygienic eating and environmental condition. The average household size of the respondent is large, it is 4.75 persons per household and economic condition of the rickshaw- pullers' is very backward because daily income is very little and their children cannot be higher educated for their economic problems. Their monthly income is very low because lack of passenger and development of modern vehicles which are easily carry huge passenger and take little time to communication. On the other hand condition of the rural road is very bad that they cannot carry passengers and goods properly. Highest percentage of semi pucca house, septic and open area type latrine is found in the village Sibpur because maximum of the household belong in the Below Poverty Level (BPL) and they got some semi pucca house and latrine from Indian government under the Indira- bash Yojana. Distribution of educational status of the sample household of villages is very low and negligible percent has acquire higher secondary level qualification but 1.67 percent have been recorded up to graduation level in the village of Pachagarh because this village is located near the Mathabhanga municipality for this causes communication and educational facility affect and encourage to take higher education. The government and the well educated persons should alert to their troublesome livelihood and they should extend their hand to help them.

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