



SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF RICKSHAW PULLERS IN URBAN CENTRES: A CASE STUDY OF UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

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Abstract: *Rickshaw is a familiar means of transport for short distance in the North Indian cities which is livelihood for rural immigrants. The work was conducted to analyse the socio-economic conditions of rickshaw pullers with objectives to assess the arrival and previous occupations, To examine age group, marital status, religion, and caste and analyse education level, major habits, residential conditions, basic amenities and facilities of rickshaw pullers in Aligarh. Data were collected through field survey in 2006-07 from functions of the area, i.e. education centre, CBD, residential area, mobility hub and sub-urban area. The rickshaw puller community was migrated, illiterate and poor rural people in majority who spent their nights in poor dwelling where civil amenities and facilities were absent or poor.*

Keywords: *Migration, rickshaw, society, income and employment*

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INTRODUCTION

India has made a remarkable progress in different sectors of the economy since last three decades. However, the benefit could not percolate to bottom level. However, different strategies have been made from time to time to improve the economic status of poor and population engaged in unorganized sector, but their conditions are still unsatisfactory (Ali 2009). People who belong to lower segment of the society, their deterioration continue day by day particularly in rural masses where More than 70% population resides. Unemployment, illiteracy, unhygienic health conditions and discrimination regarding distribution of resources and assets is common (Ali 2012, Madan 1971). A big segment of the rural population migrates to the urban centres for earning income and livelihood (Bhatt 1989). But, due to lack of money, education, industrial skills, these immigrated rural people especially, victims of natural calamities (flood, drought) as well as socio-religious factors could not find employment in the formal sector and other related sectors (Charles 2002). Finally, they prefer the business of rickshaw pulling to get quick cash earning and employment. It is the fact that now rickshaw pulling has become a popular source of income and employment among the rural immigrants in the urban masses (Begum and Binayak 2004). Ever-growing population and urban population growth add a new dimension in urban areas. Slums and ghettos have been fabric of rickshaw pullers particularly in the cities of BIMARU states.

The cycle rickshaw is a small-scale local means of transportation having three wheels. They are often used to carry passengers by negotiated fare and widely used in major cities of the South-Asia, South East-Asia particularly in India for shorter distance. Rickshaw pulling provides an essential income and employment for the poor (Kishwar 2009). Being the cheapest means of transportation for the short distance, it gets popularity in the urban localities of North Indian Cities. Though rickshaw pulling is a symbol of poverty, it provides bread and livelihood in majority of the socio-economic backward people who partly or solely depend on this profession.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Taking into consideration the significance of rickshaw pulling in socio-economic lives of people at grass roots level, the study was undertaken in Aligarh City, Uttar Pradesh with the following objectives.



- To assess the arrival and previous occupations of the people who engaged in rickshaw pulling.
- To examine age group, marital status, religion, and caste of rickshaw pullers
- To analyse education level, major habits, residential conditions, basic amenities and facilities of rickshaw pullers in Aligarh city.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The entire study is based on primary data, due to paucity of the published data regarding the socio-economic conditions of rickshaw pullers. They were generated through field survey in 2006-07. The city was divided in six strata on basis of functions of the area, i.e. education centres, business district, residential areas (lower, middle/upper middle class), mobility hubs and sub-urban areas. On the basis of stratified random sampling, 200 rickshaw pullers randomly were selected and interviewed for detail information regarding their socio-economic conditions. The direct questionnaire method was used to gather information from the respondents. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed with the simple statistical technique. Maps and diagrams were prepared to represent the findings using computer cartography and GIS technique.

Table 1 Procedure for selection of Respondents

| Targeted Area | Strata Character | Samples |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| Aligarh Muslim university | Education centre | 30 |
| Central Business district | Core of the city | 40 |
| Naraugabad-Janakuri area | Middle/upper class residences | 30 |
| Railway Station | Mobility hub | 40 |
| Jamalpur | Sub-urban type Area | 30 |
| Sasni gate area | Lower class residence | 30 |
| Total | | 200 |

Source: Field survey, 2005-06

STUDY AREA

Aligarh city was selected as study area keeping the view of its location in proposed extensional city of National Capital Region (NCR). The city situated at 27°55'1"N latitude and 78°5'39"E longitude in the western part of Uttar Pradesh, connected by road and railways from every corner the country. the city has 60 administrative wards containing 909,559 populations, residing over 36.1 sq km. Aligarh Metropolitan is a regional and district

headquarters where employment opportunities are more than adjacent cities. The city contains many small and light industries, i.e., lock industry, medicine, edible oils factories dairy farms, and slaughter houses. Besides, it is also known as educational city having a Central University (Aligarh Muslim University), half dozen degree collages and at least 100 schools which accommodate thousand of peoples who have good standard of living. But the city is still lacking a well connected city transport. So, rickshaw always is demanded as a means of transportation for shorter distance.

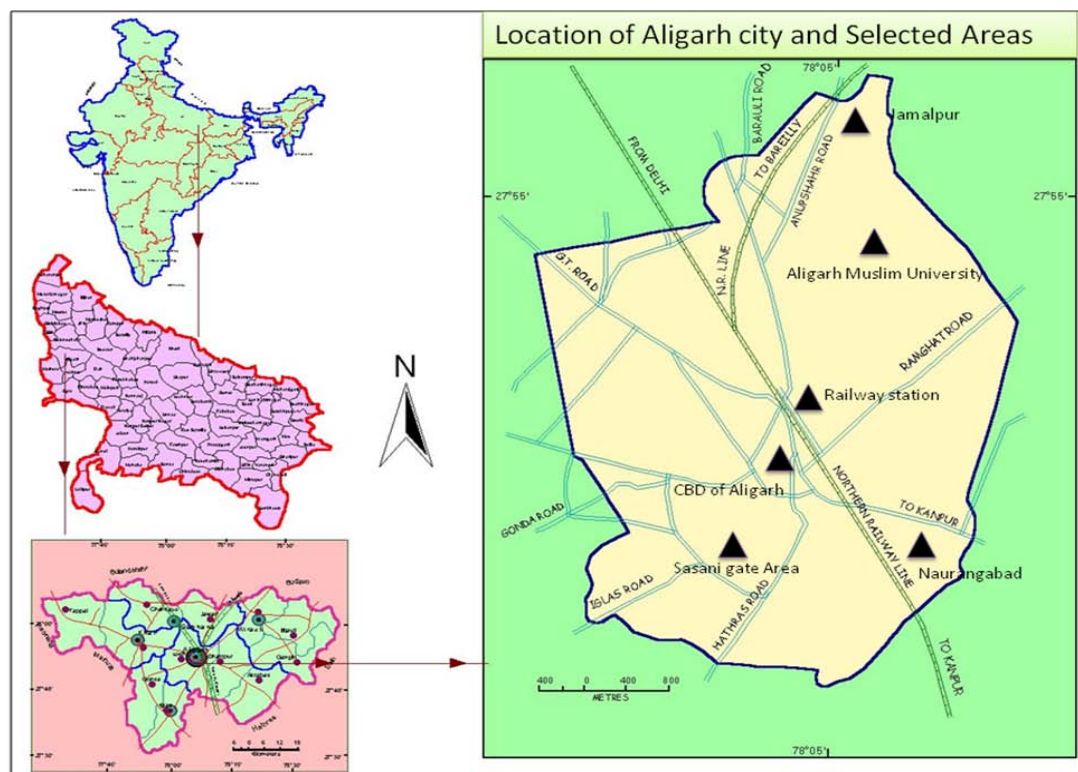


Fig 1 Location of study area and selected areas

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rickshaw pullers by their birth place

Rickshaw pullers are extremely marginalized section of the society. They arrived in Aligarh to earn their livelihood, Table 2 shows that majority of the rickshaw pullers (78%) were migrated different parts of the county as well as abroad; only 22% were recorded as local, having their birth place in city. More than half (52%) arrived from the other districts of Uttar Pradesh, and 21% belonged to neighbouring state Bihar. It was recorded during field survey that majority of the migrants were rural-marginal farmers or agricultural labourers arrived from adjacent districts where employment opportunities are lesser than that of Aligarh.



Table 2 Rickshaw pullers by their birth place

| Place of Birth | % |
|--------------------------|----|
| Local | 22 |
| Migrated | 78 |
| a. Within district | 26 |
| b. Neighbouring district | 42 |
| c. Distant district | 10 |
| d. Outside the state | 21 |
| e. Outside the country | 01 |

Source: Field survey, 2005-06

Rickshaw pullers by previous occupation

The previous occupation of is one of the important indicators for analysis of socio-economic conditions of rickshaw pullers. Fig 2 depicts that 25% rickshaw pullers were agricultural labourers, followed by non-workers (20%), farmers (18%), and construction labourers (11%), lock industry workers (10%) hawkers (7%), hotel-restaurant workers (4%), sweepers (3%) and other workers (2%). The proportion of agricultural labourers was high due to not availability work for all seasons of the year in agriculture. However, among the rickshaw pullers 18% were engaged previously in agriculture as farmers due to less income, over crowding, high input cost and lesser output forced them to earn their supplement income by rickshaw pulling.

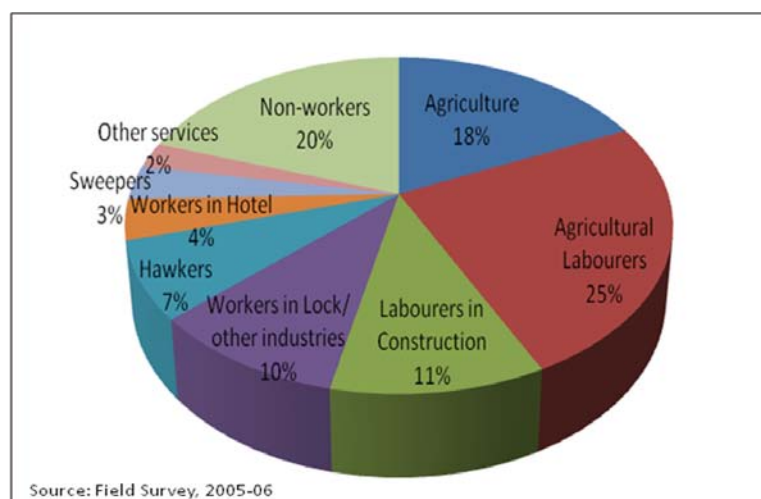


Fig 2 Rickshaw pullers by previous occupation

The other reasons were firstly quick cash to attract the people to do this arduous job secondly, rickshaw pulling need no skill while the high mechanization of even in the cottage and small scale industries has left least scope for unskilled workers. A considerable



proportion of rickshaw pullers were recorded as they were previously vegetable/fruit hawkers but due to some bad habits such as gambling, drug addicted, alcoholic and in some cases diseases among family members resulted as capital loss consequently they adopted the rickshaw pulling occupation.

Rickshaw pullers by religion

Religion is vital factor as far as socio-economic condition of such backward community is concerned because almost all the decisions of a person are determined by the religion. Fig.3 shows that 60% rickshaw pullers belonged to the Muslim community while nearly 40% were followers of the Hindu religion. Moreover, a negligible proportion was found of Christian population in rickshaw pulling service. High engagement of Muslims refers to their unemployment and poverty, however, Aligarh is considered to be perceived comparatively safer for Muslim immigrants even though the city is highly sensitive.

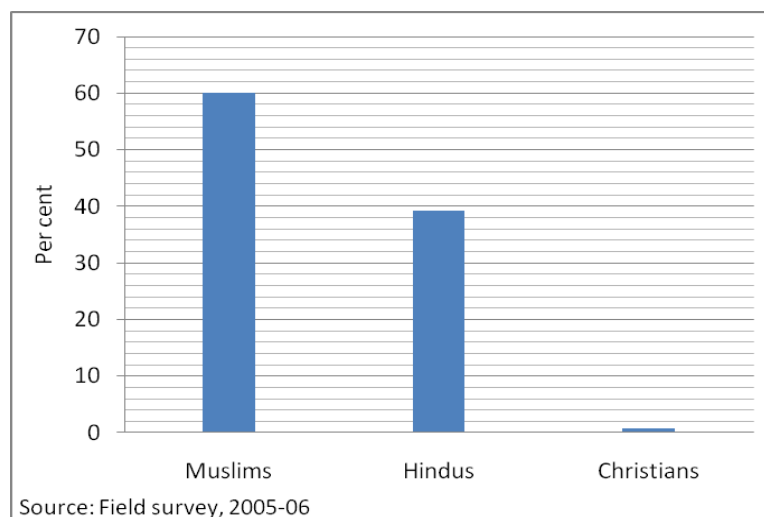


Fig 3 Rickshaw pullers by religion

Rickshaw pullers by caste

The caste system, with its societal stratification and social restrictions continues major impact on Indian social set. The system generally identified with the Hinduism, is also prevalent among Muslims, Christians and so on. It is caste that inextricably linked to a proxy for social-economic status (Kosambi 1946, Jacob 2009). Fig 4 reveals that backward castes constitute 56% among the rickshaw pullers, followed by general caste (37%) and schedule caste (7%) category. The rickshaw pullers belonged to backward caste, majority of them were Muslims. They were in more miserable conditions than that of schedule caste people (7.5%).

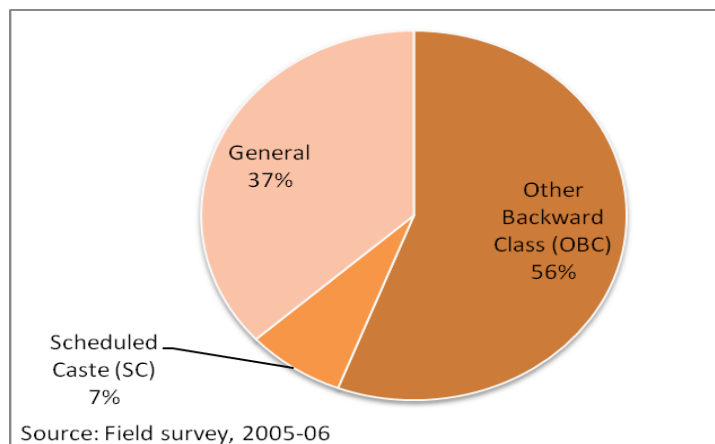


Fig 4 Rickshaw pullers by caste

Rickshaw pullers by age

Fig 5 shows that 69% rickshaw pullers were is below the age of 45 years because this occupation needs more physical labour and insecure for after an age so a large number of migrated jobless young people joined the profession to earn livelihood. However, those pullers are above the 55 years they were in lesser.

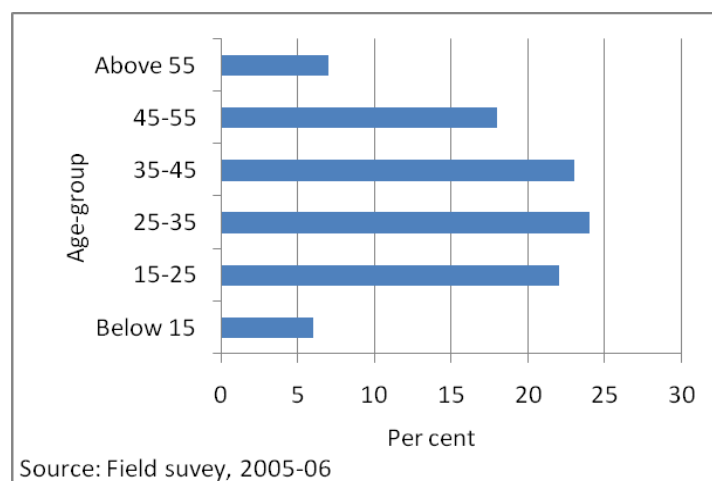


Fig 5 Rickshaw pullers by age-group

Rickshaw pullers by marital status

Marriage determines the reliability and stability social life (Waite and Gallagher 2000). Fig 6 shows that share of married rickshaw pullers was 70%, followed by unmarried (28%), widower/divorced (2%) respectively. Marriage is one of the pull factors those force unskilled worker to fill daily needs of the wife and children as rickshaw pulling provides more easily cash. However, a segment of them was as forced bachelor because they left their wives and children at the origin places and arrived to earn income. Similarly, due to poor socio-



economic conditions and to earn the livelihood a chunk of population was single; they also left the country (native places) to earn money.

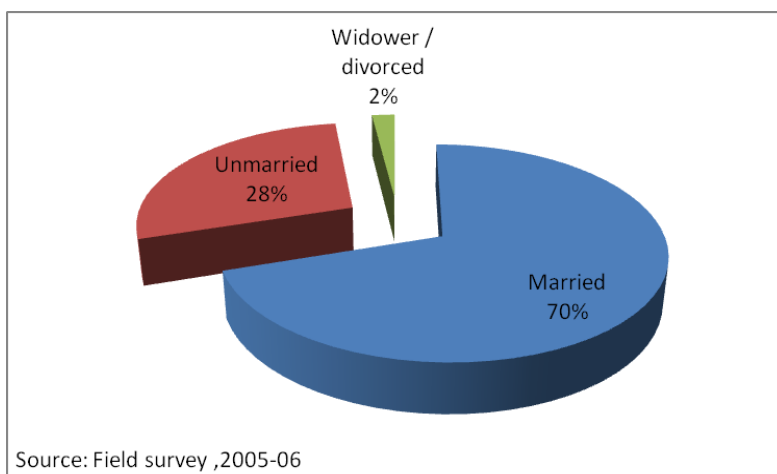


Fig 6 Rickshaw pullers by marital status

Rickshaw pullers by level of education

Level of education indicates the degree of social development. Table 3 explains that illiteracy was common in the rickshaw pullers' community (74%). Those are literate (26%), most of them got primary or upper primary level of education. It was found that rickshaw pullers were extremely backward regarding education. It was due to lower income, poverty, and lack of proper accessibility of the educational institutions and prevailing thinking about education as they considered to expense for education is unfruitful.

Table 3 Rickshaw pullers by level of education

| Education Level | (%) |
|-----------------|-----|
| Illiterate | 74 |
| Primary | 14 |
| Middle | 11 |
| High School | 01 |

Source: Field survey, 2005-06

Rickshaw pullers by income

Fig 7 depicts level of income of rickshaw pullers that majority of them 67% earned less than 2500 rupees per month; earning range 20% rickshaw was Rs 2500-3000 per month while 13% earned monthly more than 3000 rupees. The rickshaw pullers who had contract with schools or parents of school going children, they belonged to permanent or fixed source of income and got more income. While other fixed sources were daily office workers particularly ladies, they use hired rickshaw on monthly contract.

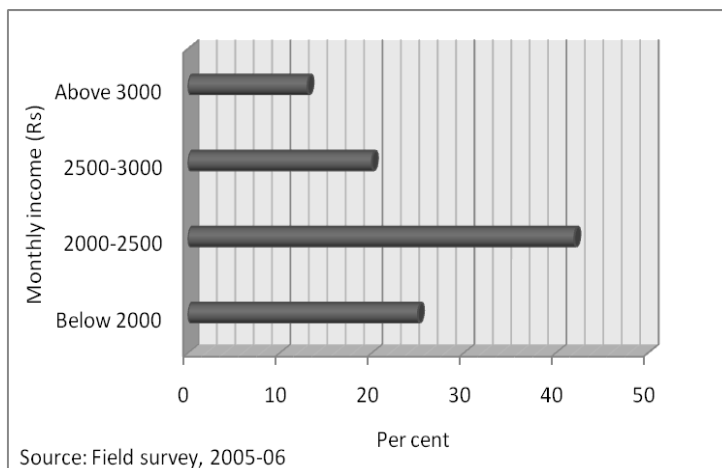


Fig 7 Rickshaw pullers by monthly income

Rickshaw pullers by dwellings

As pointed out earlier that most of the rickshaw pullers were rural immigrants and homeless, however, they spent their nights in many ways. Table 3 indicates that rickshaw pullers were 30% rising in lower class rented houses, followed garage dwellers (27%), own house dwellers (22%), Jhuggie/slum dwellers (12%) and living in either other houses (10%) respectively. The Jhuggies/slums, garages, others houses were without toilet and sanitation facilities and even no water facility. Those rickshaw pullers were living in either rented houses or in their own houses having poor condition of sanitation and improper water supply.

Table 3 Rickshaw Pullers by housing conditions

| Nature of Dwellings | (%) |
|-----------------------|------|
| Rented | 30 |
| Jhuggies/slums | 12 |
| Garage | 27 |
| Others' houses | 10 |
| Own House | 22 |
| a. Pucca | 50 |
| b. Semi Pucca/kachcha | 31.8 |
| c. Hut/Jhuggis | 17.2 |

Source: Field survey, 2005-06



Rickshaw pullers by amenities and facilities

Table 6 Distribution of facilities available in rickshaw pullers' dwellings

| Facilities | (%) |
|---|-----|
| 1. Drinking water | |
| -Govt. Tabs | 03 |
| -Govt. Hand pumps | 69 |
| -Private pumps | 28 |
| Total | 100 |
| 2. Distance from the source of drinking water | |
| -Within premises | 25 |
| -up to 50 metres | 70 |
| -51 to 100 metres | 10 |
| Total | 100 |
| 3. Type of toilet (latrine) | |
| -Service/seat/flush | 42 |
| -None (night soil) | 58 |
| Total | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2005-06

Table 6 shows a picture of civil amenities and facilities that 28% population rickshaw pullers got water from own hand pumps, and 72% were dependents on municipality hand pumps or tabs, they cover distance till 100 metres to fetch water. There were 58% rickshaw pullers used open spaces for night soil as they had no toilet facility.

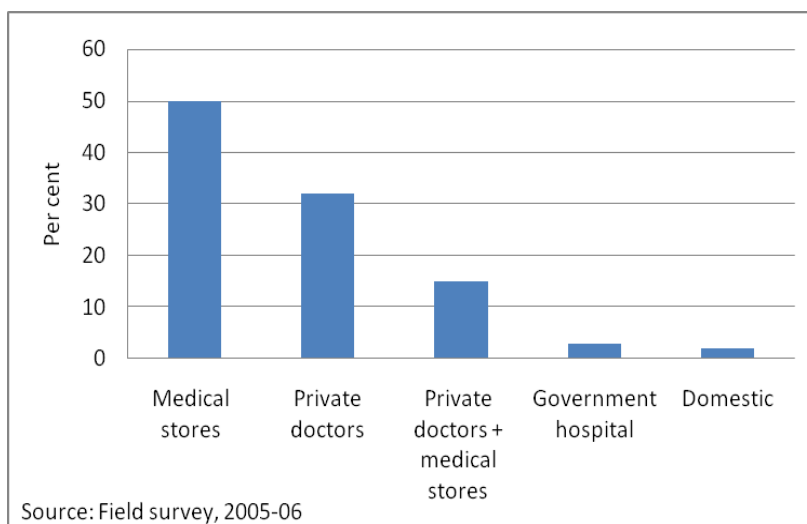


Fig. 7 Rickshaw pullers by healthcare facilities

It was recorded during field survey that in spite of hard physical work for pulling the rickshaw, almost the rickshaw puller community spent their lives without proper diets in the dwellings where amenities and facilities were poor. They were suffered with health problems, i.e. cough, body pain, fever, different chronic diseases. They took medicines from



the medical stores (50%) without consulting a medical physician or doctors. As they had poor income, and the consulting time and their earning hours are almost the same that is why they prefer to go at evening or in free hours to take cheaper medicines either from medical stores or poor, sub-standard private clinics for health care (Fig 7.).

CONCLUSION

Income (cash) and quick engagement in work pull a number of populations to join this occupation. A majority of rickshaw pullers were rural-immigrants arrived from the adjacent districts leaving their previous occupations. There was a high proportion of rickshaw pullers who were Muslims (60%) and mainly belonged to backward castes comparatively their conditions were more miserable than that of scheduled caste people. Rickshaw pulling needs a high physical labour so 69% rickshaw pullers were between 15-45 years. Illiteracy was their common feature (74%) due to low income, poverty, their attitudes as expensing time and money is unfruitful. The rickshaw pullers who had source of fixed income as contract for carrying school children were in better condition than who have not. Living at poor houses, slum and garage dwellings were their common attributes where civil amenities and facilities were either absent or poor. Prevailing health problems were cough, body pain, fever, different chronic diseases among the rickshaw pullers. They used medical stores or poor, sub-standard private clinics for health care at free hours to get cheaper medicines for diagnosis. There was lack of government commitments toward this community equally responsible for such dismal conditions. Active union and organization could have uplifted their socio-economic condition regarding few suggestions are incorporated as remedial measures for their improvement.

- Like other backward community, rickshaw community must be identified and treated as backward community.
- Special approach is needed to their uplift like other targeted groups for their socio-economic development, i.e. tribal area development.
- To check migration towards urban centres for livelihood, employment generation programmes must be initiated and implemented honestly in backward rural masses.



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