

## Marwari Community and Their Contribution in Economic Development of North-Eastern Bihar

Jay Lakshmi<sup>1</sup>, Pawan Kumar Jha<sup>2</sup>, Sanjib Kumar<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar

<sup>2</sup>Dean Faculty of Social Science, Purnea University, Purnea, Bihar India

<sup>3</sup>Principal, BSS College, Supaul Madhya Pradesh India

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\*Corresponding author: Sanjib Kumar

### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Marwaris are the leading business community who dominates in business in whole India. They are immigrant traders from Marwar, Shekhawati and adjoining regions of Rajasthan and Haryana. They have been migrated to different parts of the country and abroad too to establish and spread their business and now they have been permanently residing there. Their migration started since 19<sup>th</sup> century mainly due to conflicts between Rajput and Mughal emperors which were affecting their trades badly. In this connection they also reached to North-Eastern (N-E) regions of Bihar for trade purpose mainly. They put their concentration to establish themselves in trades in this region. After feeling secured they brought their families, relatives and neighbours too to establish in this new area. Their main aim was to bring these known people to flourish in trades. Slowly they became mixed with the local people and gradually started to play an effective role in commerce, trades, culture and politics too of this region. They have been well adapted to the local languages, customs, dresses and culture besides maintaining their own cultural identity. Besides establishing various trades they have also established several large and small scale industries in N-E Bihar and generated a large scope of employments for the local people. The present paper deals with the role of Marwari community in the economic development of N-E Bihar.

**Keywords:** Economic development, Trades, Industries, Employment, Marwari community, N-E Bihar.

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## INTRODUCTION

North-Eastern (N-E) part of Bihar state of India is known for cherishing /maintaining its religious, historical, social, economic and political legacy/patrimony. This region is very beautiful and surrounded by the rivers Ganga, Koshi and Mahananda. In search of commercial pursuits various merchant communities such as Bihari, Bengali, Marwari, Sindhi, Khatri, Punjabi and others came in this region and settled in this area but it is the Marwari community that has played a dominant and pioneering role in the commerce, industry and business sectors of Katihar, Purnea and other neighbouring districts of N-E Bihar [1, 2]. The word Marwari is a cultural as well as occupational identity. Mainly it refers to a commercial and industrial community originating from Marwar, an old state of Jodhpur in Rajasthan [3] and Haryana. About 85% of Marwaris belong from Rajasthan. They have migrated to different parts of the country and abroad too to spread their trades. In colloquial usage outside of Rajasthan, Marwari is used to refer to

emigrant businessmen from the vicinity of Rajasthan [4].

The industrial adventure of Marwari community is world famous. This community has the credit to establish several industrial units in the world based on new modern techniques. Starting from small thrones, their industrial journeys by establishing sovereignty over more than 50% of economic resources of private sectors in India have reached up to international level [5]. Presently they are found in all parts of India and known not only for its business acumen but also for their charitable, soft spoken and reliable behaviour. Now they have become the highly successful business community first as inland traders and later on as investors in industrial production and other sectors. Ever since the time of Akbar due to conflicts between Mughal and Rajput emperors Marwaris started to establish their business houses outside Rajasthan particularly in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa [3]. Adjacent to the international boundary of Nepal and Bangladesh and India's West Bengal,

thousands of Marwari families residing in N-E part of Bihar have established their specific identity. Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj, Madhepura, Saharsa and Supaul are such N-E districts of Bihar where richness, affection and culture of these Marwari families have not only thrown the fragrance of Marwari / Rajasthani culture in the soils of N-E Bihar but also established a new culture and brotherhood in this area by their presence. These Marwari families are so much happy and prosperous that they have shown their active participation in every cultural, social, religious, political, trade affair, disaster management and other sectors. Like other parts of country Marwari community has established their dominance in about 75% business of N-E Bihar [6]. Now they are playing a very important role in balancing the economic scenario and turning the economic wheel of the nation. So it was thought necessary to evaluate the role of the Marwari community in the economic development of N-E Bihar.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

A survey was undertaken during 2008-2018 to explore the role of Marwari community in the political process of N-E districts of Bihar including Katihar, Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj (Purnea Division), Supaul, Madhepura and Saharsa (Saharsa Division). The survey was based on empirical methods consisting of study of District souvenirs, statistical data, reference books and personal interviews with a set of questionnaire with different old and honourable marwari businessmen and industrialists of N-E Bihar.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The different types of trades in N-E Bihar are depicted in Table – 1. The table reflects that there are 3 main types of business/ trades running in N-E Bihar - large, small and others. About 80% trades of this region is dominated by Marwari community. In large scale business about 90% trades have been established by them. Among the different districts of N-E Bihar, Katihar district (under Purnea Division) has been the most important business and industrial city from the very beginning which has also played a very pioneering and important role in the development of business and economy of other districts. In Katihar district Jute Mills, Match Factory and Flour Mills were established before independence by the Marwari community. At that time Katihar (a Subdivision of Purnea District) was the main centre of jute industry in Bihar. Out of 3 jute mills in Bihar 2 jute mills were established in Katihar district. This has attracted the attention of workers of Mithilanchal, Magadh and Bhojpuri speaking regions of Bihar, Purvanchal region of U.P. and the adjacent Nepal country mainly. In search of jobs in Jute Factory, Match Factory and Flour Mills, people from different regions came to Katihar. They got jobs in these industries, settled here and became the permanent residents of Katihar [6].

Due to of inhabitation of people from different regions, cultures and religions, a mixed culture arose in Katihar. Thus Marwari community has played a great role in making Katihar a globalized city. The importance of 2 jute mills in Katihar can be judged from the facts that there were 3000 labourers working in jute mills of Katihar in which about 12000 tons of jute were consumed every year. Katihar Jute Mill (Old Jute Mill) was established in 1920 by Ratanlal Chamaria whereas RBHM Jute Mill Katihar was established in 1935 by Roy Bahadur Hardattmal. In 1988 the Old Jute Mill became close but from 2005 Govind Sharda, a businessman from Kolkata got this mill on lease and started production. Presently this mill is producing gunny bags and yarn from jute.

Before independence Manihari and Karhagola (presently blocks of Katihar district) had got very importance in trades. From here several commodities were used to send up to Allahabad and Kaliaganj through the river Ganga with the help of steamers and huge boats. Barsoi Mandi of Katihar alone exported about 8000 tons jute and 60 tons leather every year. After division of the country, Parvatipur became the part of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and it has caused the devaluation of importance of Barsoi mandi in trades [6, 7]. However, several people got employments in Jute Mills, Match Factory and Flour Mills (2) of Katihar which has contributed a lot in the primary strengthening of economic conditions of Katihar. In Katihar Match Factory was established by Roybahadur Hardattmal Motilal Chamaria and famous Yamuna Flour Mill by Ram Avtar Choudhary in 1938. Their contribution is very important in the development of Katihar as an industrial town. But after independence the Govt. did not take any proper response on the industries and the changing political and social scenario gradually caused the closure of Match factory, Jute Mills and Flour Mills. Presently only one flour mill *i.e.* Vishnu Flour Mill established recently by Ashok Agarwal is operational in which about 100 people are employed. Besides these Marwari community has also established several big industries like paper mill, concrete pole factory, tube well factory, aluminium balty factory, kanti factory, fertilizer factory, twine mill, movie hall, hotel cold storage, filtered water plants etc. (Table - 1) in Katihar and other districts of N-E Bihar in which several people have got employment. North – Eastern Bihar Industries Association has been established in Katihar in 1999 to establish new industries and to root out the day to day problems of businessmen. The working area of this association is the entire north- eastern region (Koshi and Purnea divisions) of Bihar [8].

In large shop keeping businesses, the Marwari community is dominating in almost all the fields. In wholesale business of clothes about 80% of merchants are Marwaris. In Katihar town alone, out of 250 wholesale cloth merchants about 200 are Marwaris.

Almost same situation exists in Purnea, Kishanganj, Araria, Supaul, Madhepura and Saharsa districts of north-eastern Bihar also. The merchants from the neighbour countries like Nepal and Bangladesh also use to visit Katihar to purchase cotton clothes. The merchants from adjacent districts also use to come here to purchase wholesale and retail clothes. To solve the problems of cloth merchants a Cloth Merchant Association is functional in Katihar. The Marwari community has played a very commendable job in establishing Katihar as the most important town of north-eastern Bihar [6]. In wholesale cement trade the Marwari community is dominating since very beginning. Kalyan Industries Cement is the oldest stockiest of ACC and Lafarge Cement of Katihar and still maintaining its status. The trades of building materials like iron rods, sheets, angles, beams, tins etc. and tiles, marbles, sanitary items, water supply materials are also dominated by Marwari community. They have big agencies of building materials throughout the N-E Bihar.

In Katihar Marwari community has established the biggest and the oldest showroom of bicycle in Bihar. Agarwal Cycle Corporation owned by Shri Ram Sharan Agarwal and Agarwal Cycle Company owned by Shri Arun Agarwal have the distributorship of famous Hero Cycles. Besides Koshi and Purnea divisions, Hero cycles are supplied to the businessmen of adjacent countries too. Shri Ram Sharan Agarwal has the partnership in making some of the parts of Hero bicycle with the Hero Cycle Company. He has also the distributorship of Hero Honda Motorcycles. There is no dealership of car in Katihar district. However Purnea town has become a hub in the field of automobile vehicles and spare parts. Most of the major automobile dealerships are owned by Marwari community including dealership of Maruti cars, Hyundai Cars, Tata Motors, and Mahindra Motors etc. In the field of medicine trades, most of the allopathic and ayurvedic business of N-E Bihar belong to the Marwari community. In these large scale showrooms and shops thousands of people have got employment.

Today is the days of consumerism. The increasing tendency of consumerism and earning more and more money have created the mall culture where almost all the domestic items are available under one roof. Marwari community has established several malls in headquarters of all the districts of N-E Bihar. Mall cultures in towns have affected severely the interests of small businessmen of this region [6].

In small scale business many small industries *viz.* papad, pickles, embroidery, tailoring, spices, flour, daliya, steel products, makhana, bricks, mustard oil etc. and small shops *viz.* galla, spices, fruits, clothes, readymade garments, medicines, surgical stores, jewelery, steel furniture, cosmetics, grocery, utensils, electrical goods, electronics items, plywood, glass,

watches, lime, stationary items, plastic furniture, restaurant, sweets etc. (Table – 1) have been established by the Marwari community in the N-E region of Bihar. Business of makhana in N-E Bihar needs special attention here. Cultivation of makhana is a cumbersome agricultural process but a boon for submerged regions. Bihar is the largest producer of makhana in India of which 80% is produced by the N-E region of Bihar. Recently Katihar district has emerged as an important hub for the production of makhana pops in Bihar. Makhana cultivation is mainly done by the local Gorhi caste /mallah community in N-E Bihar. They do the entire intricate procedures for the production of makhana including plantation in ponds, its care, seeds procurement from ponds and preparation of makhana pops from makhana seeds. However Marwari community has also entered in this field by providing financial assistance to cultivars. They obtain makhana pops from the farmers and transport them to other parts of the country. Due to their efficient management system Katihar district has gained popularity in makhana production in India. The art of traditional cultivation of makhana has also been conserved in this region [6, 9]. All these small scale industries and shops have provided employment opportunities to several unemployed in this region.

Besides these, Marwari community has also strengthened the economy of N-E Bihar by making their entries into some other fields also like petrol pump, transportation, contracts, money lending, news channels etc. Modern communication systems have created revolution in the entire country. The credit for the beginning of news channels in the N-E towns of Bihar also goes to the Marwari businessmen. The first TV channel (KBC) of N-E Bihar was started by Shri Lalit Agarwal in Katihar. Several unemployed boys and girls have got employment in TV channels. Local TV channels have also created a mass awareness amongst the people of towns of N-E Bihar.

Some years before no any Marwari thought of other professions except business. But the modern generations of Marwari prefer to shift on some other professions also. Although there number are very less as compared to others. Some Marwaris are associated with law practice and some with teaching profession in higher education. Almost all the Chartered Accountants are Marwaris in Katihar. Same is the situation in other districts of N-E Bihar also. Some Marwaris are inclined to live independently and working as doctors, engineers, contractors and employees of banks and income tax in Govt. service, journalists, business representatives etc. (Table - 1). They have also gained popularity in their respective fields. The old Marwari businessmen usually prefer to provide minimum essential educations to their boys for trades and only primary education to their girls [6]. But in the changing modern scenario they are putting more efforts to provide higher education to their talented sons and

daughters especially in the fields of engineering, medical, chartered accountancy, MBA, Biomedical etc. Some of them are also being selected in different competitive examinations every year. Some students of Marwari community are studying in foreign for higher education.

## CONCLUSIONS

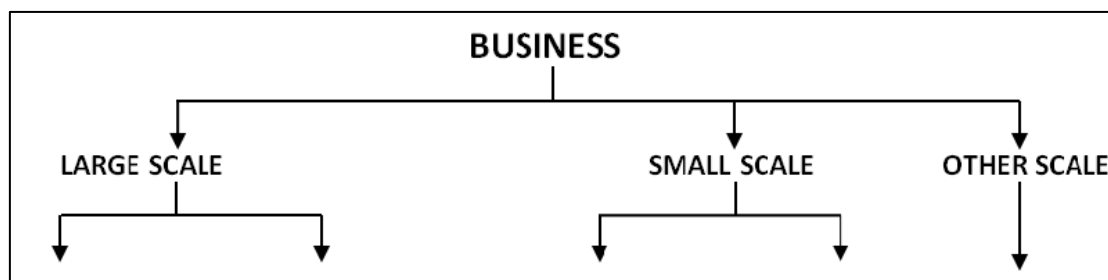
It is evident from the above studies that Marwari community has played a very important role in the economic development of N-E Bihar. Due to their continuous efforts and foresightedness employment was generated in every field, money generated, economic structures developed and development of towns took place. Katihar was categorised as an industrial town of Bihar and therefore, Katihar was used to known as Mini Calcutta. Today also, Katihar is the largest commercial and industrial city of Koshi and Purnea divisions of N-E Bihar. Katihar caters the several commercial and industrial requirements of Purnea, Araria, Kishanganj, Madhepura, Supaul and Saharsa district, Naugachia of Bhagalpur district and neighbour countries Nepal and Bangladesh.

However, the deeper analysis depicts that there is no any definite basis of salary payment of regular workers and daily wages labourers in industrial and business centers regulated by the Marwari community. They have also been found violating minimum daily wages to their employees. There are several cases prolonged in the offices of Labour Superintendent of N-E Bihar. It has also been observed that there has been a lack of sympathetic attitudes usually on the labourers and workers in the organizations/establishments of Marwari community. Thousands of Bihari coolies spent their lives by carrying goods in the cloth strips and transport companies established by the Marwari community. In several organizations of Marwari community, Bihari people work as *salesmen* but when they become unable to do work physically they have

not been provided any type of compensation. They have no any facility for PF, Gratuity and Life Insurance. There is no any proper provision for medical insurance or compensation in case of accident if any. This is a live example of exploitation of unorganized labour sector [6].

In some organizations some people of Bihari community are in partnerships with the Marwari businessmen and some are on the important post of managers. But in partnerships also, Bihari people have no equal rights and honours. Marwari businessmen keep their full occupancy and control on businesses in spite of setting some Bihari people on the key posts. The main objects of keeping Bihari people in partnerships or on important posts in their organizations are safety and security in case of any botheration or gathering from outside. In such cases Bihari partner acts as shield for the Marwari traders. In most of the organizations, Marwari businessmen themselves handle cash counters which indicate that they have not gained full faith on their Bihari partners even living together with Bihari community since a long time or they want to keep their full control on their business at any cost. There may be some other reasons too like incidence of robbery, rape and murder with some Marwari businessmen by some antisocial Bihari elements [6].

Therefore if the affluent businessmen of Marwari community put some sympathetic attitudes on their workers, fixation of minimum salary as per the Govt. rule, adoption of PF, Gratuity, Life insurance for unable retired servicemen and workers and Medclaim like facilities in case of any accident if any, then their progress in business will increase many folds. These will not only strengthen the trusts and believes of Bihari community and related workers on the Marwari community but also definitely be helpful in minimizing the untoward incidences with Marwari community also.



**Table - 1: Classification of Business Sectors in N-E Bihar**

S.N.	Large Scale Industry	Large Scale Shopkeeping	Small Scale Industry	Small Scale Shopkeeping	Other Occupations
1.	Jute Factory	Wholesale clothes	Papad	Galla	Petrol pump
2.	Matches Factory	Cement	Pickles	Spices	Vehicles
3.	Concrete Pole Factory	Iron Goods	Embroidery	Fruits	Contracts
4.	Flour Mills	Building materials	Tailoring	Clothes	Money laundering
5.	Paper Mills	Bicycle	Spices	Readymade Clothes	Agency, Distributorship
6.	Tube well Factory	Motor cycle	Flour	Medicines	Public Distribution System
7.	Aluminium Balty Factory	Medicines	Daliya	Surgical stores	House rent
8.	Bolt Factory	Malls	Steel products	Jewellery	Chartered accountancy
9.	Fertilizer Factory	Wines	Makhana	Steel furniture	Advocacy
10.	Twine Factory		Brick- Bhatta	Cosmetics	Medical service
11.	Cinema Hall		Mustard oil	Manihara	Govt. service
12.	Hotel			Utensils	Journalism
13.	Cold Storage			Electric goods	News channel
14.	Drinking Water			Electronic goods	Business representative
15.				Plywood, Glass	Others
16.				Watches	
17.				Spectacles	
18.				Lime	
19.				Stationary items	
20.				Plastic furniture	
21.				Restaurant	
22.				Sweets	
23.				Shoes-sleepers	
24.				Drycleaning	

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