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SOCIAL AREA ANALYSIS OF BARBER AND CHANGES: A MICRO LEVEL STUDY OF BOLPUR TOWN, WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract

India is a vivid experienced country about social stratification and differentiation. Since the Empire of *Ballal Sen* (king of *Gour* during middle of 12th century AD) this discrepancies was generated in Bengal's society and originated like – *Brahmin, Khatrion, Baishya, Sudrah*. Barber was a specific untouchable backward community of *sudrah*- society. Usually barbers belong to a heredity caste or clan and a reflector of purifying and cleaning of our blue planet's society. Due to untouchable they are not engaged in other jobs without their own saloon work and ultimately their economic, educational and social backbone cannot witness with significant developmental scenario till today in most part of our country. But with the adaptation of modernization and globalization, the saloon work and barber's social life has been changing. The present paper highlights such a group of barbers' people who are engaged in saloon work in *Bolpur* town depicting the social area, economic status, behavioral analysis, changing scenario of the location, problems related to their working life and the needs of their life with changing society.

Key Word: Napit, Sudrah, Globalization, Migration, Untouchable.

Introduction

A barber (from the Latin 'barber' mean 'beard') is someone whose occupation is to cut any type of hair, to style hair in order to change or maintain a person's image, give shaves and trim beard, hair texturing, hair coloring, provide facial and perm. Due to tropical and subtropical of India, most of year it is experienced with pretty hot and dusty nature. That's why perhaps cleanliness is some sort of obsession and most of people are sweeping or taking baths in all the time. Even very poor people try their best to look neat and tidy with frequent trips of the barber. The institution of barber is a very old one in Indian society. Generally they are belonging to a hereditary caste, variously called like-*Mangali, Hajjam, Nayee, Nayi Brahmin, Vaostaad, Napit*. This empirical study of barber reveals the rate and magnitude of changing scenario of saloon workers culture with barber shops in the context of modernization, nationalization and globalization in *Bolpur* town of West Bengal, India.

Methodology

The study is best on primary data which includes door to door survey of the total 51 barber shops and houses of barber, personal interview and other convenient sources due to complete non- availability of secondary data. Here random sampling techniques have been applied due to large number of observation.

About the Study Area

Bolpur is a municipality in *Birbhum* District in the state of West Bengal, India. It is 145 km north of Kolkata and is best known for the proximity to *Visva- Bharati*, the university set up by *Rabindranath Tagore* the Nobel laureate poet. *Bolpur* is located at 23°40'N 87°43'E / 23°67'N 87°72'E. As of 2001 India census,

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Bolpur had a population of 65,659. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. *Bolpur* has an average literacy rate of 73%, higher than the national average of 59.5%; with male literacy of 79% and female literacy of 66%. 10% of the population is under 6 years of age. *Bolpur* is 2 km away from *Shantiniketan*.

Objectives

The objectives of this study comprise the following-

1. To represent the socio-economic condition of barbers in *Bolpur* town and its changing scenario.
2. To show the present caste structure of *Napit's* of *Bolpur* and to search that, are the all barber genetically belonging in *Napit* community in today?
3. To find out their problems which they have been experienced.
4. To suggests some outcome to solve their problems.

Barber, Barbering and Barbershop: A Historical Overview

“*Mansuhanghita*” (a most ancient book of Hindu rules and regulations) is the parents of caste division of social stratification in Hindu society. According to this book, our society was classified into four-group like- *Brahmin*, *Khatrya*, *Baisahya*, *Sudhra*. Brahmin is the most higher caste and belonging to the tip of society or in social stratification in respect of all purity, ability, social administrative power, knowledge, regulator and controller of all lower caste mainly *Sudrhaya*. According to “*Manushanghita*”, the birthplace of *Brahmin* community is the mouth of Brahma (God of Universe). So Brahmin has highest power in society and all in caste. And *sudraya* is the servant of all the higher caste of the society. These *sudraya* people are untouchable in *Hindu* society so their work is to purity and clean the higher all castes (*Brahmin*, *Khatrio* & *Baishya*) through the cutting of their hair, beard ,nails. Barbers are identified in *Hindu* society specific some surnames like – *Brahmin*, *Paramanick*, *Thakur* etc .When we will open the historical page of barber, then a vast controversial background comes up. Archeologists have found well designed copper-bronze razors in Indus valley excavation. In ancient Indian barber’s were traditionally used a messengers & go between delicate matters. Even today in rural India, for instance, opening the discussion of an arranged marriage alliance to the father of a prospective groom & bride, barbers are the proffered go-between. Since the empire of *Ballal Sen* community division in Hindu society has been emerged strongly & from that time all the barbers were belonging in *Sudrah* community. For that reasons they are untouchable. They don’t touch to *Brahmin* (upper class community of society) and even unfortunately if they touch to *Brahmin*, they the upper class Brahmin expelled from one’s caste (or out-caste). So, the statuses of these *Napits* are belonging in untouchable part of our society till today. Though it has been slightly reformatted from modern scientific time period but most part of rural as well as urban India, it is doing maintained, that is, barbering work only made for barber community. Court barber’ with direct access to the kings and ministers were obviously men of influence. In fact the founder of the immense *Nanda Empire* (pre-Mayurayan) started life as a humble Barber. In ancient India they also performed surgery and dentistry to battle field injuries because of their expertise in handing the razor. If we want to find out the time period of the application of this barbering concept in Indian society, then we have huge winsome examples like- looking at old Indian sculpture(*Pasupati murti* of *Harrapa civilization*,sculpter of *Gautam Buddha* on rock etc.) we notice most of the men folk were clean shaves, except wondering wise men. In our country barber was basically attached to village and was paid every harvest in sacks of grain, granted some land which he could till, a place to stay and obtained some tips. In turn, he had to look after the hair of everybody in village. In some rural area hairy species of water buffalo too needed regular skin shaves. In ancient society the rural India was experienced the mobile barbers who moved around, bringing alone their kit as they move from village hut to village houses .So on that times the barbers shops were not developed in modern way or as like in permanent shop. Gradually with the stepping of time, barbers set up their shops under a convenient shady tree (or canopy type greenish trunk tree) or cross roads junction or markets. After that a ramshackle wooden shade or *kaccha* wall (made by bamboos strip with soil) with tin roof (or rice straw roof) –serve as a barber shop there is usually big mirror, and ancient wooden chair with an adjustable neck rest for shaving has emerged. Which ultimately move to concrete A.C. barber shop (mainly in urban area). With the improvement of our scientific civilization, curtain system (*Parda pratha* – in Bengali) of our society has been partially deteriorating and for this Indian female society has come

to contribute their contribution in barber activities with the help of barber shop, especially name as female beauty parlor.

Classification of Barbershop in the Study Area

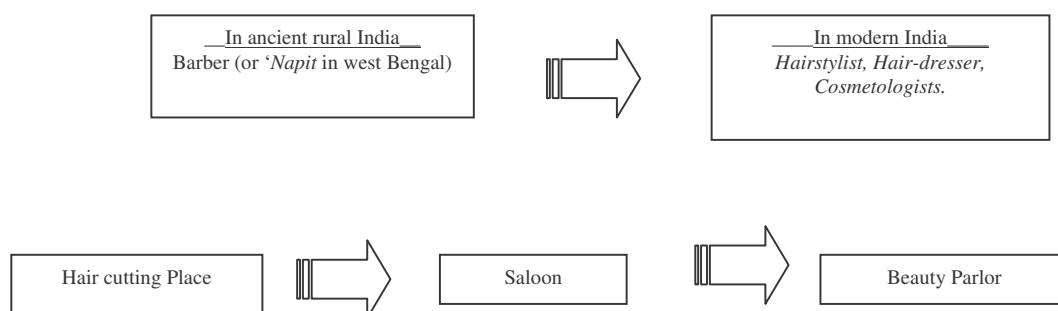
Different Types of Saloon in *Bolpur Town*

Basis of classification	Types of barbershop	Total no of saloon (%)	Examples of saloon	Location in <i>Bolpur town</i>
<u>Permanency</u>	Permanent	26%	Rupam salon Friends beauty parlor Keshbinmas saloon Fashion salon Eskew ladies beauty parlor Tip-top saloon	Chowrasta By-pass Mosjid road By-pass Jambuni Hgat-tala
	Non-permanent	74%	Glsamour saloon Rupayan saloon Lokenath saloon New Hair cutting saloon Rabi salon Brahamachari saloon Bijay hair cutting New adarsha hair cutting Aguntak saloon Lokenath cutting salon Swapan saloon Satabdi saloon	Sriniketan raod ,, ,, Jambuni ,, Santiniketan road ,, ,, Makarampur ,, Nanoor-chandidas more Sriniketan road
<u>Modernity</u>	Highly Modernized	10.63%	Friends beauty parlor Rupam saloon New rupam saloon Santiniketan saloon Nandanik Eskew ladies beauty parlor Soundaraya saloon Handsam saloon Fashion saloon Gajanan saloon	By-pass roadchowrasta Sriniketan road Super market 7-palli Jambuni Mosjid road Santiniketanroad By-pass road Sriniketan road
	Semi-modernized	60.20%	Hair style salon Tip-top salon Labani salon Sakuntala salon Rupasree salon Rabi salon Snigdha salon Hair cutting salon	Masjid road Hattala Bandhgora Bhuban danga Vivekananda Jambuni Sriniketan road Darjepatti
	General old fashion (all are nameless barbershop) and these saloons are identified by local people by the name of the barber's of the barbershop and these shops are structurally very poor)	29.17%	Madhusuda's saloon Kishanda's saloon Ambitadar's saloon Champakda's saloon	Darjeepati Sriniketan road Bi-pass Bi-pass
<u>Gender issues</u>	Male saloon /Beauty parlor	86%	Special notes: In this table rest of all ladies beauty parlor, are the examples of male saloon / beauty parlor	
	Female beauty parlor(all are permanent)	14%	Nandanik Santiniketan Shreya Beauty care Soundariya Mukhoshree Anuradha Mohini	7-Palli Supermarket ,, ,, ,, masjid road Bandhgora ,, Mosjid road

Data source: Direct field survey, 2010

Transformation of the terminologies of barbering concept:

A hairdresser is a universal term referring to someone whose occupation is to cut or style hair in order to change or change or maintain a person's image. This achieved using a combination of hair coloring, haircutting and hair texture techniques. In *Bolpur* town some barbers (like Barbers of *Rupam saloon*) prefer to see themselves as hairdressers or **hairstylists or cosmetologists**. There is a common misbelieve that barbers do not perform any service other than hair cutting, and that cosmetologists perform all coloring and perms. In fact, barbers can cut hair, trim beards, color, and perm, provide facials, and shave. Today, barbers and stylists may be found working side by side in establishments known as male salons. Male salons have afforded the barber the opportunity to remain traditional in all aspects of the term, yet also progressively contemporary as fashion and trends evolve. In male salons, hairstylists and barbers seek to accommodate the modern male hairstyle trends by employing traditional hair styling and straight razor shaves with modern practices, such as texture techniques and color.



Family Type

Usually the barber is the main earning person of his family. He earns as well as dominates the household. Seldom, it is found that patterns of the barber also contribute in the process of earning to encounter the poverty they have to face. Commonly women have to manage the family with their children and older persons, depending on the worker. They have to perform almost all the household activities ranging from cooking to washing. The family of the barber is primarily nuclear which includes 4-6members in general in these town .Joint families and families headed by women are absent .this entire family character bears traditional form of Indian society.

Religion

In general, *Bolpur* town is a having no diversified religious except Hindu in barbering community. From the whole surveying, a most interesting scenario has come to our investigation, that is, though the globalization process is moving to total religious along with all society , but it can be inference that is process can not touch the *Bolpur –Barber community* till March,2010.

Caste

Interestingly, during survey it has been found out that, most of the barbers & their family belong to OBC (Other Backward Classes) . Most of the barbers (96%) of *Bolpur* town are carried mainly their surname that is *Bhandari, Pramanic &Thakur* etc. and these three surname is belonging in *Sudrha* classes. Only 4% barbers area genetically are not barber community s e.g. there are some other surnames like *Das,Sharma, Roy* etc. are belonging in barber work of *Bolpur* town . So, it can be inference that the strong globalization &v modernization concept has touched to barbers work not totally to barber community because till the modern society barber's work strongly confined within barber community in *Bolpur* town. Though *Pramanic , Thakur & Bhandari* -three surnames belong to barber-*Sudraha* community ,but if we analyze the historical background , then there are some pattern of paleo-working differences for differentiation and identification, in ancient rural society *Pramanic's* main work was to give witness in different convocation or meeting .The main work of *Thakur* was to act as helper of Brahmin during worshipping and the main wok of *Bhandari* was to create a funny laughable situation to entertain the surrounding people.

House Type

The house types of the barbers of Bolpur show a heterogeneous character. Three types of houses has been identified so far viz- *Pucca*, *Semi Pucca* and *Kutchra*. Most of the barber along with their families was lived in *kutchra* houses up to last decade of 20th century. But due to changing behavioral pattern of *Bolpur* peoples in respect of globalised manner they are trying to maintain their good looking with refreshing body-mind presentation in their modern days, the number of customers in barbering concept has been increased in the initiation of 21st decade. So, ultimately, the numbers of professional barbers has been increased most frequently. And which is the fruitful causes of the increase of barbers economy in recent time period. So, most of the *kuccha* houses (31%) has changed its own identity and moved to *Pucca*- form (houses of the barbers, have permanent modernized barbershops). But, 55% barber's house of this town is *semi-kutchra* (houses of the barbers, have semi-modernized permanent barbershops) and 14% barber's house (barbers of those barbershops, which is situated on PWD area) is completely *kutchra*. The *Pucca* houses of the barbers are characterized by generally all modern items like T.V. with cable channel, electricity, specific toilet, kitchen, waiting room, special bed room, etc. The *kutchra* houses are made up of bamboo fencing with tin as roof material. Another type of it is tinned wall with cemented plinth. Almost all the houses have been *Angan* (Courtyard) in front of the houses. In some cases, the part of *Angan* has been used as shelter by cemented pillar with tinned roof without any wall. Most of the kitchen made up of bamboo fencing, but not of tin. Tin is used basically as building material of bed rooms. Bamboos fence most of the boundary of their houses, but there is also the presence of boundary of line of plants scrubs. A few houses have not any demarcation line of boundary. Most of the gates of *kutchra* houses are open and any one can easily enter there. The interior of the rooms is characterized by double beds and there is lack of open space. The ventilation of the room is not enough to enter sufficient air, as it is too small and very few in number.

Social Interaction

Barbershops are the most social interaction place of our civilization from old to new generation. In ancient India, barbershops were arranged under open -sky concept some time under tree shade to protect the scorching heat of the sun. On that period, barber communicated the customers and the path- running peoples in open environment process. But with the modernization, the open -air barbering has been moved to four wall barbering. So, the social interaction has bounded within *four-wall saloon* or beauty parlor norm. But I think, the rate of interaction between customers and barbers has been increased mostly in present day in *four-wall saloon- culture*. Because, in recent trend, in one barbershop, two or three barbers are working side by side. So, the interaction *between barbers* as well as the interaction between barbers and customers is highly generated in recent day. One matter also I have identified here that is, due to barbers hospitality they are trying to arrange a special waiting place for customers, for cutting hairs or beard and it is the souses of highly social interaction and discussion between them.

Age-sex structure

From whole surveying, a special age-sex structural scenario has been come to in front of us i.e. from 18-30 years age's peoples are mostly engaged (82%) in barbering process in this town because of their highly concentration, energetic hand mussels and good eye power. And 12% barbers of this town are belonging into 30-50 age. Finally, the rest of 6% *Bolpur* barber are higher ages (more than 60) for examples, *Amita Thakur* of *Sriniketan* road. In respect of gender analysis, a glitter analytical picture wipes out i.e.88% barbers are male and the rest 12% are female, which is also thoughtful questionable matter of *Bolpur* society i.e. -has the *Bolpur* society adopts with modernity? Or has the *certain system* present in *Bolpur* society in till today?

Migration

Most of the Barbers of this town are migrated from other states (like- *Uttar Pradesh*, *Bihar*,etc)or another district of West Bengal (like, *Burdwan* etc.)

Commuter Barber: Commuter Barbers are those barbers who are come to *Bolpur* town in early morning by specific transportation media (Like local train reach to Blopur- Santiniketan station at 7:10am) from nearer *Guskara* (10 km away from *Bolpur* to south) For instance, *Dilip Thakur* of Friends Barbershop came to *Bolpur* at early morning from *Guskara*.

Permanent migrated Barbers: - *Jadunath Thakur* of *Saloon Santiniketan* in this town is the permanent migrated from Bihar state (located western side of West Bengal).

Barber Association

Barber association – reflectors of improvemental set-up by which barbers can get the maximum development with their barbering .this association organized the affirmative action programs for the improvement of barbers and their families. These barbers are called backward community in our society; they are untouched person, so an organized association is needed to maintain them in some aggressive society. In *Bolpur* town there are no specific barber association is here. But ***Babasai-samati*** (or business association) is found here which partially control the barbers developmental planning. During surveying, the *babasai -samati* certificate is found the interior wall of barbershops in some highly modernized beauty parlour, not in all types of barbershops- which can not maintained the proper development of the barber life.

Educational Status

Educational attainment is proffered to analyze for SES (socio Economic Status) as it can be figure for all individuals. It does not only play an income but also upgrade one’s social position also. Education of the barbers including their families can be categorized under following heads for the convenience of discussion.

1. Level of education of individual worker.
2. Level of education of individual family excluding the worker.
3. Here it is mention worthily that child below 6 years of age is not counted in the given figure.

Recent (2010) Level of Education of Individual Barbers and Families

level of education	Individual barbers	Individual families	
		Wife Education	Childs Education
Up to class IV	37%	20%	40%
From V to VII	28%	29%	43%
From IX to X	10%	3%	9%
Above x	4%	1%	5%
Totally no education	21%	47%	5%

Data source: Direct field survey, 2010

So, from above table of educational status, a most shocked fully matter comes up in front of us. That is higher level education almost absent in *Bolpur –barber society*. Only *Kishan Bhandari*(barber of *sriniketan road*) &*Kashinath Pramanick* (barber of *Snigdha* saloon)are qualified secondary education and *Chayan Bhandari*(barber of *kashipur by-pass*) is qualified higher secondary education level. But, in recently, the consciousness of the barbers of this town about their child education is fruitful. Because about 91% barbers, they are trying to get educational touch through their Childs. In respect of *girl education* of their families, about 50% barbers support it. Because they think it is fruitful for these girls in respect of to make their future educated family. So it can be inference that, the barbers of this town are mostly illiterate but they are not un-educated about their future good planning of families.

Changing Cost Structure Related to Barbering

During this surveying, a most interesting cost structure has been come in front of us. That is, around 1970, the cost of hair cutting is 10 paisa & the cost of breading is 2 paisa (according to *Ambeta Thakur*, the first barber of *Bolpur* town who is coming from nearer *Burdwan* town during 1970th decade for barbering). In this 2010, this same town customer is being faced with 5 to 20 Rupees of one time cutting for beard and 5 to 10 rupees for cutting (one time) hair. Vary across this survey area, higher price in mainly interior of the town, depending on locality services, but in *Bolpur* town the cost of barbering is highly controlled by the style status presentation & modernization nature of barbershops. The saloon’s- who has no specific name established on PWD (Public Worker Department - Govt. regulation area) area & these saloon are very simple in respect of its structure i.e. these barbershop is made by ‘*bera*’ (Local term means- a temporary wall made by bamboo’s vertically cutting strips) or tin or simple wood structure or mud wall by soil with bamboo, - the cost of barbering here is comparatively less than permanent saloons.

Changing Working Time-period

In the initiation of barber civilization the main working period was 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. But in recent time period, it has changed, and now their working time period is averagely and generally from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., again from 4.p.m-10p.m (mainly followed by highly modernized saloon or beauty parlor). It is mainly due to evolution of electricity, changing human behavior as modernity, needs of higher fresh looking in office or customers working ground, changing perception about barbershops both in male and female. But comparatively less modernized non- permanent saloons (those are situated government area like; road side, railway side) follow slightly another time-period i.e.-7a.m. to dusk period of sun in summer and winter. These barbers are not followed temporarily or permanently closed their shops in mid-day to take meal rather they take *lunch* in their shops during working period, when customers are very less or absent in noon. On the other hand, female beauty parlors of this town are followed slightly change time –period. i.e. from 9 a.m.-9 p.m.

Earners and Dependent

During survey, it realized that family members of barbers are almost dependent on him. In most cases, the children and older persons have to depend on the barber. While calculating the depending ratio, it can be found out that it is 1:4.5 that means 4 to 5 members are dependent on the income of a barber.

Income Pattern

It is keenly felt that the economic status of the workers status above is not self sufficient to encounter the increasing demand of consumerism in *Bolpur* town, almost 30% barbers work in the other barbershops with monthly salary. But if we analyze the perception of barbers about doing barbering, then they prefer mostly to build shops lonely. The income scenario of this town is as below-

Income Pattern of *Bolpur*Barbers

(Based on 75 individual barbers interview)

Category of barbershops	Associated special location identity	Income per day (averagely) in Rs.
Permanent	A.C. with highly modernized	150-200
	withought A.C. but highly modernized	100-150
Non-permanent	Located at road side(PWD)	80-100
	Located at tree shade, railway side	50-80

Data source: Direct field survey, 2010

Other Economic Aspects

Other economic possession includes land ownership, livestock, mode of expenditure savings etc. In case of livestock occupancy 20% of the barbers have own livestock like cow, buffalo, goat etc .survey reveals that Bi-cycle is the most popular and essential mode of communication of the *Bolpur-barbers*.in recent day, 99% barbers of this town access the mobile phone in their working life, while asking their expenditure and saving , they were reluctant to answer but it has been identified after intimate discussion with them that they have been suffering a lot from the standard well being of living as their monthly income does not support to lead a most comfortable life at present day. With the struggling of modern economic demand, 30% barbers of *Bolpur* are maintained some other business in their daily life. For instance *Naresh Thakur* of Friends beauty parlor, to tackle the additional expenditure of his family he follow a specific business in early morning like daily newspaper seller.

Problems Related Barber and Barbering

1. In most cases, economically they are situated in BPL (Below Poverty Line).
2. Educational status of *Bolpur* Barbers is very poor. The literacy rate of whole India is 63.63% (2001 census) , where in this 51 barbershops and 75 barbers , so ,only two barbers (*Kashinath Pramanik of Snigdha* saloon& *Tapash Pramanick* of saloon has no definite name or identity -secondary examination qualified) and only one barber (*Chayan Bhandari of Kashipur By-pass* area is Higher secondary examination qualified)
3. Conflict within Barbers of Barbershop are the another Problem. From my surveying experience in the town I would like to highlight a veal conflict story of ‘Friends Beauty parlor’ The story like ...due to maintaining some extra- off day by *Nilkanta Bhandari* (Barber of this beauty parlor) the

main entrepreneur of this shop- *Amit Thakur* said a special local proverb that was- '*Dusta Gorur chahi Sunnah Goal Bhalo*' (in Bengali language) and the English translation is '*Blank Cowshed is better than wicked cow*'. That mean he indicated the absence of *Nilkanta Bhandari* by this proverbs & he want to deliberate his anger about his colleague's absence.

4. A proper development of *Barber Association* is not found in this town.
5. Lack of Government helpful planning to develop the Barber's socio Economic condition.
6. These *Napits* are OBC (Other Backward classes) but in most cases, Barbers (around 80%) of this town can't collect their OBC certificate till today due to official harassment.
7. This whole surveying I watch a special psychological view point of *Bolpur* Barber like they are trying to maintain their own profession in their own *Napit -Shudrah* caste genetically.
8. Only eight female beauty parlors are found in this town in respect of 43 *Gents* Saloon or beauty parlors. So through this data it can be conclude that, the female contribution comparative male contribution in barbering process is very lesser that indicates, controlling of male-regulatory society is higher or may be female hesitation about barbering.
9. Most of the time of their life, they spend on roadside of National highway or by-pass junction. These are mostly air-polluted. Due to speedy-moving careless vehicles, *Barbers* are staying here in this polluted environment in the most of time period of their life and vehicles accident may be dangerous for them some-time.

Suggestive Measures and Concluding Inference

If any body say me to tell – what are the present geography of *Bolpur* –barber? Then I will deliberate the answer in a nutshell view that is –their geography is un-touched geography in present *Bolpur* society in context of social- economical-cultural –behavioral- location. Because economically their status is very poor and genetically their barbering is confined in their own caste, governmentally they are backward people; socially they are not accepted in all higher class community. The social dimension is moving to scientific society partially. Again the perception of barbers in this town is facing to achieve higher educational status through their children. So it can be inference that, in near future, the barbers life will not confined into casket of untouched. Locally to give more cleanness in barbershops, local municipality authority maintained special cleaning methods. That is in every week a Tractor of municipality moved to in front of all barbershops and collects the waste materials from those shops. In my view point a special barber association is needed to organize for all around development of barbers. To improve the educational consciousness among them with their families members, local legislative assemble should give emphasized with special welfare opportunities. To development among barbers, OBC certificate facilities should deliver as soon as possible among them. Simultaneously with barbering, barbers should carry some other economic opportunities in their daily life to fulfill the money demand. Lastly, as a geographer I would like to channelize a catch word for marinating to all the peoples of our society to improve the barbers life –'*barbers are not untouched, with their barbering in our society, they are the Logo of cleanness in our physical & social life, by which, through which we the Bolpur people can get cleanness in our body- mind geography.*'

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