

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF
THE AGRANT TRAINEES
FROM REMOTE REGIONS OF
EASTERN NEPAL

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Preface

During many years of its existence Panchayat Agrani Training Centre has had the experiences of organizing training courses for many a groups representing a wide variety of roles at different tiers of the Panchayat System. The sole purpose behind these training courses has been to enhance the imagination, understanding and efficiency with which they discharge their respective roles.

However, a good training programme that fulfils the demands of such a purpose can be formulated only on the basis of the identification of the groups for which such training programmes are meant.

The following report, therefore, is an effort on the part of this training centre to understand some of the important socio-economic qualities that characterise the group of the Agrani-trainees who have come from Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha and Solukhumbu and are currently under training. It is hoped that this study will not only contribute to the organization of a more effective training programme for these Agrani-Trainees but will also serve as a record

for later use as an aid in evaluation as well as in developing more meaningful training course for similar groups in future.

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2027-12-6-6

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THE AGRANI TRAINEES FROM REMOTE REGIONS

2027

The Panchayat Training Centre in Kalbalguri, Jhapa, Nepal is one of the three training centre in the country specializing in the training of official and non-official workers (especially male) working in the field of Panchayat Development Programme which is designed to serve as one of the vital instruments to achieve the goal of the Panchayat System to bring progress and prosperity to the entire populace of the country. The Training Centre in Jhapa takes care of these training needs of the four eastern zones of Nepal namely Mechi, Kosi, Sagarmatha and Janakpur.

One of the groups that come for training in this training centre is the Agranis. The term 'Agrani' translates in English as a 'pioneer' and that is exactly what he is trained to be in Panchayat Development. An 'Agrani' is usually a youth from the village with potentialities to emerge as leader and decision-maker of his village community in his later adult life.

The objective of this training is to impress upon these

picneers the convictions that:

- a) There exists knowledge and resources that can improve the lot of their village people; and that
- b) The development of their village communities is in their own hands.

In order to achieve this objective proper curriculums for training are developed in different subjects like Panchayat, Agriculture, Rural Engineering, Sociology, Rural economics and other related fields which together orient them to the two essential aspects of village improvement namely What to change and How to change it. It is hoped that the Agraris equipped with these informations and know-how would go back to their villages and involve themselves in activities and projects for village improvement and thereby, gradually elevate themselves with the support of their fellow-villagers to positions of leaders and decision-makers of their village communities.

This training approach is based upon the strategic advantage that psychology has to offer in that people are inquisitive and prone to adopt new ideas and practices much better when they are young than in their later years. In

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other words, the Agrani-trainees in the Centre represent a new cadre of enlightened leaders-in-the-making. Thus the essence of this training project is the purposeful initiation in the village communities of a process of transition from the present leadership mostly emphasizing status quo to an enlightened leadership aiming at speedy improvement of the conditions of the village people and their lives.

Leadership, however, is a function of group behavior and therefore, there is no certainty that all of these Agrani trainees would definitely emerge as leaders and decision makers of their communities at a future date. From this standpoint, therefore, the training project is an experiment at trying to find out the socio-economic and cultural universals of emerging leadership and once they are established, to plan and implement a concerted effort to bring about qualitative change in their thought and decision-making processes. In the case of those returned trainees who fail to muster enough support to place themselves in these rolls, the fact still remains that they would still represent the nuclei at the village level for radiating new ideas and practices among their neighbours and fellow-villagers which in time will bring

to bear upon the leadership of the village communities pressures for change and development. From this viewpoint, therefore, the Agrani training project is an experiment with the best of the both worlds at hand.

The group of the Agrani trainees on whom this report is written came from remote regions of eastern Nepal. Three districts namely Taplejung, Sankhuwasabha and Sclukhumbu were represented and in all 101 trainees reported to the training centre. The information that follows consists of some socio-economic background of these trainees. It was collected on the basis of a questionnaire which was administered to all the reporting trainees before the commencement of the training programme. The informations were considered to be useful, first, for the purpose of organising an effective training course for them and secondly, as a record of the trainees for potential use as an instrument of evaluation at some future date. Furthermore, this would also serve as a correlate for an evaluation research that has already been mounted for a group of Agrani trainees from other (non-remote) hill districts of eastern Nepal who had received training in 2022 - 23.

Caste/Ethnic composition:Table 1

Table showing the caste/ethnic composition of the Agrani trainees

Srl No.	Name of caste/ethnic group	Districts			Total
		Taple jung	Sankhu wasabha	Soluk hambu	
1.	Bahun	9	9	2	20
2.	Chhetri	3	13	7	23
3.	Limbu	11	-	-	11
4.	Rai	2	11	10	23
5.	Newar	1	1	1	3
6.	Sanyasi	1	1	1	3
7.	Gurung	-	1	5	6
8.	Magar	-	-	2	2
9.	Sherpa	-	2	2	4
10.	Bhote	4	-	-	4
11.	Kami	1	1	-	2
Total		32	39	30	101

The above table shows the heterogenous composition of the trainees with Bahun, Chhetri and Rai and Limbu accounting for almost 77% of the group. Also included however, are two Kami (ritually unthouchable) trainees who freely move, eat and

sleep together with their 'higher' caste touchable counterparts including Bahuns who constitute the highest echelon in the Hindu caste hierarchy.

The Age Structure:

The following table shows the age-composition of the trainees group.

Table 2

Table showing the Age structure
of the trainees group

Srl No.	Age - Group	Districts			Total
		Taple Jung	Sankhuw asabha	Soluk hambu	
1.	16 to 19 yrs.	12	7	7	26
2.	20 to 24 yrs.	15	9	14	38
3.	25 to 29 yrs.	4	16	7	27
4.	30 to 34 yrs.	1	6	2	9
5.	35 +	-	1	-	1
Total:		32	39	30	101

In the above table it is noteworthy that the modal age group is 20 to 24 years, the notable contrast being provided by Taplejung with 12 in lower age bracket and by Sankhusabha with a substantia 1 number of 16 in the age bracket between 25 - 29. However, it can be seen that the age brackets

between 16 and 24 account for 64% of the trainee population.

Marital Status:

Table 3

Table showing the marital status of the trainees

Srl No.	Marital Status	Districts			Total
		Taple jung	Sankhuw asabha	Soluk hambu	
1.	Unmarried	9	7	11	27
2.	Married and without issues	16	9	10	35
3.	Married and with child/children	7	23	9	39
	Total:	32	39	30	101

From the above Table it can be seen that only 27% of the trainees are unmarried and almost 74% of them are married. Of the married 53% have fathered one or more children. Looking back at Table 2 in the context of the above Table it can be concluded that the major chunk of the trainee-population though young have also embarked upon a role of greater social responsibility.

Education:

Table 4Table showing the educational status of the trainees

Srl No.	Educational Status	Districts			Total
		Taple Jung	Sankhuw asabha	Soluk hambu	
1.	Illiterate	-	-	-	-
2.	Just Literate	2	13	1	16
3.	Passed 1 to 5 class	5	2	11	18
4.	Passed 6 to 9 class	21	19	15	55
5.	Matric and above	3	3	2	8
6.	Others	1	2	1	4
	Total	32	39	30	101

Educationally, this group is dominated by those who have passed between 6 to 9 classes that account for more than 50 percent. This is probably because 40 trainees (Table 5 below) are persons who have been working as teachers before they came for training. Those who had had schooling of any length account for 81 percent of all trainees, although their level of comprehension is bound to differ on the basis of the length of schooling.

Preoccupational background:

The trainees, when they reported for training came with a variety of background as can be seen from the table below.

Table 5

Table showing the preoccupation of
the training before training.

Srl No.	Categories of preoccupation	Districts			Total (101)
		Taple jung (32)	Sankhuw asabha (39)	Soluk hambu (30)	
1.	Teaching	17	13	10	40
2.	Member, Youth Organization	9	8	7	24
3.	Member, Peasants Organization	4	5	5	14
4.	Member, Village Panchayat	3	10	2	15
5.	Member, Ward Samiti	3	9	3	15
6.	Studying in school	2	-	4	6
7.	Not doing anything specific or engaged in agriculture only	11	6	10	27
8.	Others	5	9	1	15

From the table above it can be seen that more than half of the trainees of Taplejung and one-third from Sankhuwasabha and Solukhumbu each had teaching as their preoccupation.

Thirtyeight trainees were either member of Panchayat or ward committees. Only 33 persons were either studying in school or engaged in agriculture only. It can be thus seen that many kinds of roles and backgrounds are represented in the group.

Travel Experience of the trainees:

The following table shows the travel experience that the trainees had had previous to coming to this training centre. As would be seen, 36% of the trainees have not gone beyond the borders of their districts, while those who have outnumber the former. The places most frequently mentioned are Biratnagar, Dharan, Sunsari and Illam in Nepal and Assam, Darjeeling and Silguri in India. Some of them have also gone to Kathmandu.

Table 6

Table showing the travel experience for more than
15 days outside one's district

Srl No.	No. of places visited for more than 15 days	Districts			Total
		Taple jung	Sankhuw asabha	Soluk hambu	
1.	Has not yet left ones' district	11	15	10	36
2.	Has been to one place	11	10	11	32
3.	Has been to two places	5	11	5	21
4.	Has been to three places or more	5	3	4	12
Total:		32	39	30	101

Size of trainees' families:Table 7

Table showing the size of families
represented by the trainees

Family consisting of	Frequency	!	Family consisting of	Frequency
One person only	-	!	11 persons only	3
2 persons only	2	!	12 " "	1
3 " "	4	!	13 " "	3
4 " "	8	!	14 " "	3
5 " "	14	!	15 " "	1
6 " "	14	!	16 " "	2
7 " "	11	!	17 " "	1
8 " "	13	!	18 " "	-
9 " "	10	!	19 " "	1
10 " "	9	!		
			Total :	<u>100</u>
			Not reporting:	<u>1</u>
				101

From the above table the following mean, mode, median, and range can be obtained.

Mode	:	5 and 6 (Bimodal numbers)
Mean	:	7.7 members
Median	:	7 members
Range	:	2 to 19 members

Kinds of family:

Of the total reporting, it was observed that there is a high degree of association between the availability of a person as a trainee and the presence of brother or brothers of

the trainee in the family. Therefore, the kinds of the families have been categorised as with or without brothers in the following table.

Table 3

Table showing the kinds of families represented by the Agrani trainees

Srl No.	Kinds of families	Districts			Total
		Taple jung	Sankhuw asabha	Soluk hambu	
1.	Extended family with brothers	22	12	10	44
2.	Extended family without brothers	2	6	2	10
3.	Nuclear family with brothers	5	6	10	21
4.	Nuclear family without brothers	2	13	6	21
5.	Nonnuclear family with brothers	1	1	1	3
6.	Nonnuclear family without brothers	-	-	1	1
7.	Not reporting	-	1	-	1
	Total:	32	39	30	101

On the basis of the above table it can be gathered that it is the extended family (Trainee's (ego) nuclear family and his father's nuclear family with or without other individual members or Ego's father's nuclear family and father's father's

nuclear family with or without other individual members) with brothers of the trainees that has accounted for making available the highest number of trainees (44%). Extended family without brothers present quite a contrast accounting for only 10% of the trainees. Nuclear family with and without brother, sponsor 21 each. While sponsorship from nuclear family with brothers is understandable the nuclear families without brothers presents a little inexplicable case. In case of a few in this category, however, such nuclear families are living in close proximity to their primary or secondary relatives back home which enables these relatives to take care of the (trainee's) family in his absence. In sum, all kinds of families with brothers and the extended families without brothers (which all the same is in a better position to release its member or members than a nuclear family without brothers) account for 78% of the trainees represented.

Economic Standing:

Economic status of the trainees here are measured in terms of the status of trainees' families as farmers, their supplementary source of income and their own view of relative economic position of their families vis-a-vis those of their fellow-villagers in their villages.

From the point of view of the trainees' family as farmers all (101 trainees) of them own and till their own land. Out of them 31 families have rented out some land and 20 have rented in. However, the size of holding represented by those trainees could not be reported for want of a common measure of their land because there are intra-district and inter-district differences in the modes of measure of the land. Some lands are measured in terms of amount of seed used, while some are used in terms of numbers of bullocks used and still others in terms of repanis which again do not have a standard area measure to represent them.

In regard to supplementary sources of income the following are reported*

Service	30	Livestocks selling	18
Trading	6	Others	10
Cottage Ind.	9	No supplementary source reported	47

From the above it can be seen that service alone is the major source of supplementary income for sizable number of the agrani-trainees families.

* Note: Total more than 101 because a few have more than one source.

The trainees' own view of the economic position of their families relative to those of their fellow-villagers is as follows.

Richest in the village	x	Middle class	72
One among the rich	6	Lowest	111
Higher Middle class	112	Total:	<hr/> 190

It is usual practice among people that they always attempt to play it down when it comes to the question of reporting one's own economic standing in the village. In the light of this practice and above figures unequivocally states that the trainees represent middle class families or higher in their villages.

Mode of selection:

Most of the trainees were selected by District Panchayats except in one district where village panchayats were assigned to nominate the agrani-trainees and also with the exception partly of another district, Taplejung, where the Assistant Zonal commissioner did the nomination in the case of the trainees from village within his jurisdiction. To find out if personal kin relationship has played any role in their selection they were asked if they had relatives in the

selecting agency and if these relatives had any role in their selection. Out of the 98 trainees reporting, 47 had relatives in the selecting agency and of the 47, 20 actually claimed that their relatives had some influence in getting them selected for training. In other words, it can at least tentatively concluded that most of the trainees apparently were selected on the strength of their own merits.

Attempt was also made to find out if the trainees in offering themselves as candidates for training had any specific purpose in mind. As a result, it was found out that no specific purpose seemed to exist other than that they have come here for receiving whatever training will be given them and to later go back to village to act accordingly for village development.

It was further feared that the training could have been seen as an opportunity to visit one's land, relative or acquaintances in this region which conveniently constitutes Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari districts. The following is the finding.

Table 9

Table showing existence of land, relatives and acquaintances in Sunsari, Morang or Jhapa districts

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Not Reporting</u>	<u>Total</u>
1. Owns land in Jhapa, Morang or Sunsari	10	87	4	101
2. Has relatives in ,, ,, ,, ,,	26	69	6	101
3. Has acquaintances ,, ,, ,, ,,	37	59	5	101

From the above table it can be gathered that the families represented by the trainees are at what can be called the stage of incipient orientation to the terai region of the ease and this training opportunity could have very well meant also as an opportunity for scanning its wide expanses.

Summary

1. The composition of the trainees group is indeed very heterogeneous and is representative of the heterogeneity of the mountain region of eastern Nepal.
2. Many age-groups are represented within the range between 16 and 39 resulting in a large differential in the amounts of experience and ability for comprehension.

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3. Most of trainees are married and majority have fathered children.
4. Educationally also, they are very heterogenous. Majority have entered different stages of secondary education, although there are many below and only a few above it.
5. Many of them have been teachers when they came here and will go back to become teachers again. A few of them are also members of some organization. There are also a sizable number of them who have not been doing anything.
6. Many of them have travel experience beyond the district. About a third only has not left their districts at all.
7. The size of the families represented by the trainees consists of an average of 7.7 which is larger than our national average of 5.3 (1961 census).
8. Most of the trainees come from extended families and nuclear families with brothers, which are the social units that can more conveniently release a few of its members for adventure than other nuclear and nonnuclear families (also without brothers). The latter accounts for only 22% of the trainees' families.
9. The economic station of most of trainees' families seems to fall in the middle stratum of the economically pyramidal structure of the Nepalese society with the lowest stratum as its base.
- 10 Among the trainees families of this remote region, there seems to exist what can be called an incipient orientation towards the terai area.

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T.M.P.C.S. No. 14

Printed and Published by :-

Home Panchayat Ministry

Training Material Production Center

Jaulakhel, Nepal