

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF  
RURAL POVERTY IN BANGLADESH

by

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ABSTRACT

Poverty studies in the Third World, in general, and in Bangladesh, in particular, have been mostly concerned with the measurement of poverty, and far less with its explanation. In this study, the explicit concern has been to delineate the processes which cause, aggravate and maintain poverty in rural Bangladesh. The analysis that follows has been conducted at three levels. It seeks, firstly, to delineate the forces within the agrarian structure responsible for rural poverty. Secondly, it examines the urban forces contributing to rural poverty. Finally, it tries to establish the international dimensions of rural poverty. For the first set of forces, primary data were generated through a single village intensive study (lasting for more than a year), while for the latter two levels, secondary data have been used. The analytical framework of the study has been based on the Marxist concepts of "mode of production" and "socio-economic formation".

The major findings of the study are as follows: Firstly, natural disasters and lack of resources as causes of poverty are untenable. Secondly, there is no simple, one-way relationship between poverty and population growth. Thirdly, and most important, there is a strong convergence of interests among the rural rich, the urban rich and metropolitan forces; and it is this chain of forces, which, despite the expressed objectives of the Bangladesh state and its international aid donors, not only accounts for extremely inequitable distribution of the available social product but also militates against productive utilisation of the surplus generated. Finally, the existing super-structure, both local and central, also stands in the way of any change taking place in the existing economic relations in the rural society.

The implications of the study are quite clear, namely that without fundamental changes in the existing power and property relations and surplus extraction and utilisation characteristics, it is well-nigh impossible to eradicate poverty of the scale and dimensions that engulfs contemporary rural Bangladesh. However, it was found that the ingredients required to bring about such a change were lacking, and in particular, the consciousness and activities of the rural poor were as yet far removed from the idea and practice of such a change.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY

To put it explicitly, our principal concern in this study is the delineation of the processes which cause, maintain and aggravate poverty in rural Bangladesh. However, as demanded of any serious exercise in the realm of social science, it is only proper to begin by attempting to define the main parameter of our study, namely poverty, especially since it has different connotations with different social scientists. On the other hand, since aggravation of poverty (or lack of it) is also within the purview of our analysis, the problems associated with poverty measurement have also to be dealt with, even if only in passing. Also, in order to justify the appropriateness of our framework for explaining poverty, it is crucial first to review critically the existing explanations of poverty. The present chapter is, therefore, devoted to a general discussion of the three interrelated aspects of a poverty study, namely, definition, measurement and explanation. Finally, in order to bring out our point of departure in sharper relief, it is essential to scrutinise closely the poverty literature in the specific context of rural Bangladesh. This we take up in Chapter 2.

#### A. Definition of Poverty

Poverty is generally defined in the following two ways: (i) lack of "means" in relation to "needs" (i.e. "absolute poverty"), and (ii) lack of "means" in relation to "means" of others (i.e. "inequality" or "relative poverty").

#### Absolute Poverty

The most important problem in defining absolute poverty lies in identifying "needs" and quantifying them. In this

respect, two criteria are encountered in the existing poverty literature: "minimum" needs and "acceptable" needs. Thus, for example, Booth's (1899) definition is based on minimum needs. He examined one week's expenditures of 30 poor households of East London, and from these derived the average expenditure of the poor on food, rent and clothes. It was then assumed that all households with income above this figure would be able to cope (Fried and Ellman, 1969, 44). Such a poverty definition is unsatisfactory in several ways. Firstly, the sample poor families were subjectively selected; secondly, the possibility that the needs of some households may be greater than this average is ignored in this definition; and thirdly, it takes for granted that the households studied were "coping" (Holman, 1978, 8-9).

The second approach, developed mainly by UN and ILO experts, and which has now gained wide currency, defines poverty in terms of lack of "basic human needs". Thus, for example, Drewonski and Scott (1966, 44-5) draw up an hierarchically arranged list of such needs:

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Basic Physical Needs: | 1. Nutrition              |
|                          | 2. Shelter                |
|                          | 3. Health                 |
| 2. Basic Cultural Needs: | 4. Education              |
|                          | 5. Leisure and recreation |
|                          | 6. Security               |
| 3. Higher Needs:         | 7. Surplus income.        |

Curiously, clothing is excluded from this list of basic physical needs, although this is of utmost importance in most Third World countries.

Jackson (1972, 13-5) distinguishes two features of poverty: "want" and "deprivation". These are defined respectively as failure of "flows" and failure of "stocks". According to him "stocks" are services derived from material goods and "human capital" (e.g. education, housing, security, etc.), whereas "flows" are simply immediate consumption goods (e.g. food). "Stocks" are thus unimportant only in primitive societies, but in advanced societies there is no point distinguishing between "want" and "deprivation" since "stocks" and "flows" are dynamically related to one another. As may be clearly seen, such an approach does not constitute any improvement upon Drewonski and Scott, except that it classifies needs into services and immediate consumption goods. The inadequacy of the hierarchy approach lies elsewhere: anyone who has inadequate food will be termed poor even if he is well clothed and housed, or conversely, if he is well fed, then he is termed poor only if he has inadequate clothing, etc. (Srinivasan, 1977, 11). An alternative to the hierarchy approach is to define a bundle of basic goods, and then quantify the acceptable requirement for each of these. Thus, for Bangladesh, Khan (1977, 80) lists the following as "core basic needs": food, clothing, shelter, health, education, drinking water and contraception, and for each of these quantifies independently the "acceptable" per capita requirement. Thus, the cost of the "acceptable" bundle of these basic needs constitutes the poverty line, and persons with incomes inadequate to meet the cost of this bundle are regarded as poor.

However, as Srinivasan (1977, 11) points out, the quantification of basic needs, if feasible at all, should be in terms of a bundle of things together, rather than specific requirements independently derived from the elements constituting such a bundle, because of their complementarity and substitution possibilities. Finally, poverty is also defined in relation to only nutritional norms, such as the "acceptable" intake of calories and proteins, to the exclusion of other basic needs. Two considerations seem to have influenced this choice, namely that food is the most basic of human needs, and that thanks to advances in nutritional science, acceptable standards for calorie and protein intakes are now measurable region- and countrywise. However, the usual estimates are based on a comparison, for the population as a whole, of the actual consumption with the single number estimate of the calorie requirement for the population as a whole. There are two problems with such an approach. Firstly, it does not take into account intra-household variations in actual intakes (household survey-based data generally provide per capita calorie consumption of each household, thus averaging out intra-household variations). Secondly, and more importantly, calorie norms vary from person to person depending on age, sex, normal activity, etc., so that the average norm may not reflect the deficiency/sufficiency of calorie intakes in a population. In some studies, it has been observed that calorie intake-based estimates of the proportion of population in poverty can be substantially different from the proportion obtained when malnourishment is defined in terms of body

weight in relation to some suitable standard. All this suggests that perhaps the most reliable way of estimating the extent of malnourishment-based poverty is anthropometric measurement, and only recently this has come to be extensively adopted in poor countries (Srinivasan, 1977, 10). Finally, as suggested by Townsend (1962; 1970, 6) and Franklin (1967) it is difficult to define nutritional needs without taking account of the kinds and demands of occupations and leisure time pursuits in a society. On the other hand, the official Indian poverty norm (i.e. Rs.20 per month per capita at 1960-61 prices) included only, food, shelter and clothing, but explicitly excluded education, health care and services that were sought to be provided through the public budget (Pant, 1974, 13).

### Relative Poverty

Relative poverty is concerned with the relative position of income groups to one another (with money income generally taken as the proxy for all "means" in this concept). The argument here is that poverty cannot be understood by isolating the poor and treating them as a special group. Society is seen as a series of stratified income groups and poverty is concerned with how the bottom layers fare relative to the rest of the society. In other words, this concept looks at poverty in the context of the society as a whole. The study of the poor then depends on an understanding of the level of living of the rich, implying that to understand the poor, the affluent must be equally studied.

### Evaluation of Absolute and Relative Poverty Concepts

In the absolute concept, a value judgment necessarily enters into the choice of a poverty cut-off line (or lines), for there

can be no single international norm for either nutrition or other basic needs. In effect, despite the objective basis claimed for even nutritional requirements, all these are ultimately culturally determined in terms of not only some notional subsistence minimum, but also expenditures and small luxuries that are part of a culturally determined way of life (Beutel, 1977, 47). Even within a culturally homogeneous region, notions on at least some of basic needs will vary over time, so that intertemporal poverty comparisons, based on the absolute concept of needs, may not be all that realistic. Also, there is a further problem that prices for the same set of commodities vary depending on the location of transaction (rural, urban, metropolitan, etc.), time of year, and, more importantly, on the economic status of the buyer. Thus, it is often the case that the poor pay more than the rich and get an inferior variety or brand of the same commodity. These issues become extremely important if one makes comparisons over time or space of the proportion of the poor in a population (Srinivasan and Bardhan, 1974, 121-25). More important, in such a concept, there is no attempt to relate poverty with non-poor segments of the society. In other words, it treats the poor in isolation from the rest of the society, thereby precluding the possibility that the genesis of poverty may lie well outside the purview of the poor themselves. Obviously such a concept is convenient for anti-poverty policy measures, which consider the poor as a special group and which are not directed towards any fundamental changes in society. However, this concept is not without merit, in so far as it is able to highlight the deprivation of a vast number of people with

respect to certain basic necessities of life, in the context of growing disparities in levels of living within and among nations. Also, it has been argued that in so far as minimum requirements in the absolute poverty concept can be and are determined in relation to the general standard of living in the society as a whole, the inequality concept of poverty is not entirely avoided in the absolute concept (Osmani, 1978, 177).

Inasmuch as it places poverty in the context of affluence, the relative concept is certainly more appropriate than the absolute concept. However, it is not without its shortcomings. Firstly, it cannot tell us whether even the most basic needs (such as freedom from hunger, safety from exposure to nature, etc.) are being fulfilled in a society, and this inadequacy would appear magnified for countries where the vast majority of the population are known to be denied these. Thus, it may be argued that in some cases at least, greater equality may simply mean a more equal distribution of poverty, and that, on the contrary, it is possible to obtain two societies (or the same society at two different points in time) with similar degrees of inequality and yet differing degrees in the fulfilment of basic human needs, the latter depending on the nature of resource utilisation by those who own and control resources. In other words, while degree of inequality in income (and assets) may be a very crucial symptom of poverty, it is inequality in (and the nature of) total socio-economic relations that needs to be incorporated into the definition of poverty in order to make it more meaningful. Secondly, in this concept there is no objective way of determining the

cut-off point which separates poor from the non-poor. Generally, this is done by defining the poverty line as the median, or some other percentile, of the overall income distribution. (As an example of this approach, see Bressler, 1969.) This is obviously bound to be an arbitrary exercise. Thirdly, income is a derivative of wages, profits, rents, etc., and in the last analysis stems from ownership and control of the means of production, exchange and distribution. Also, income alone may not adequately reflect the access to non-economic conditions, like security, power, etc., so that income inequality as an index of poverty may be no more than the tip of the iceberg. Finally, since most inequality measures are concerned only with money incomes, certain problems cannot be avoided. We may identify these. The first is that while it is correct to assert that money incomes should not be the basis of inequality measurements, a suitable price index for converting money incomes into "real" incomes is difficult to arrive at (Osmani, 1978, 123-4); the second that since poor people generally pay higher prices for the same commodities than the rich, a single price index may not be at all suitable in this regard; and the third that in societies where the economy is not sufficiently monetised, money incomes fail to reflect the reality adequately.

#### Subjective Poverty

Anybody can express judgment on whether he considers his needs to be satisfied to a sufficient or insufficient degree. He may be considered poor or not poor, depending on that judgment (Jan Drewonski, 1977). The difficulty with this concept is that such judgment at times may have little correspondence with the objective reality of the person expressing the judgment.

### Other Concepts of Poverty

We may consider the following.

#### Externality

This concept is concerned with the social consequences of poverty for the rest of the society, rather than the needs of the poor. According to this concept, the poverty line should serve as an index of the disutility to the rest of the community of the persistence of poverty; people must not be allowed to become so poor that they offend or are hurtful of the society. It is not so much the misery and plight of the poor, but the discomfort and problems caused to the rich as a consequence of poverty that is at the core of this concept (Smolenski, 1966; Rein, 1971). In this view, improving the living of the poor without reducing the disutility to the rest of the community is insufficient. This is, then, looking at poverty from the point of view of the affluent without the slightest pretence: by implication, it not only absolves the rich of any responsibility for causing poverty, but also holds the poor responsible for causing disutility to the rich, and thereby provides the basis for taking steps against the poor rather than poverty.

#### Natural Poverty versus Artificial Poverty

P.C. Joshi (1979) draws a distinction between "natural poverty" associated with underdeveloped productive forces, and "artificial poverty", associated with man's growing control over nature. This distinction is important in that it implies that modern-day poverty may be the outcome of the socio-economic system.

### Mass Poverty versus Minority Poverty

Galbraith (1979) and Tussing (1975, 1) distinguish between poverty afflicting the minority in some societies (such as in the Western world) and poverty afflicting the vast majority in other societies (such as in the Third World). This is a useful distinction in so far as it highlights the condition of the Third World poor in absolute terms. However, in terms of the relative poverty concept, the majority of both kinds of society could be considered as poor. Moreover, comparison between the poor of two widely different societies may not be legitimate on the argument that the poor of individual societies can and should be compared only with their respective affluent classes.

### Moral Poverty

This places poverty in the value system of a society or of its subgroups and institutions; that is, it defines whether poverty is morally acceptable, and what status it confers or prevents the poor man from enjoying. In stratified societies, several values of poverty will normally co-exist; for example, it may confer "shame", or be regarded as a punishment for sin for some, a cause of pride for others, or both at the same time (Hobsbawm, 1977, 399).

### Poverty as Inequalities in other (than income) economic and non-economic Endowments

Townsend (1970, 24-5) defines poverty as inequities in the distribution of five resources, including cash income, capital assets, occupational fringe benefits, current public

services\* and private income in kind.\*\* This is then an attempt to include assets and less tangible incomes along with tangible incomes. Going a step further, it has also been suggested that inequalities in "economic power" rather than inequalities in income and assets is a more appropriate definition of poverty.\*\*\* Srinivasan (1977,2) also argues on the same lines, "One should be concerned not with observed inequalities in income and wealth distributions, but whether institutional structure provides equality of 'access'.... and not necessarily with the equality of 'success', i.e. what different individuals make of the opportunities as long as the system is 'fair'....If this view is accepted, one would want to measure the degree to which equality of 'access' and fairness of the operation of the system is observed rather than the extent of inequality in the end results". Tussing (1975, 2) goes beyond the economic concept of poverty and associates poverty not only with "moneylessness", but also dependency, helplessness and lack of political influence, though admitting that this type of poverty is less easily measurable. He attributes this poverty to powerlessness. He expounds his concept thus: "We are talking about power not in the sense of authority over others, but in the sense of freedom, the ability to make choices vitally affecting one's own life....the concept

- 
- \* I.e. government subsidies and services in health, education, housing, etc.
- \*\* I.e. home production, gifts, value of personal supporting services, etc.
- \*\*\* Memorandum of dissent by a minority of the Royal Commission on Taxation, Report of the Royal Commission on Taxation, Cmnd. 9474, 1955, p.8.

of poverty as powerlessness underlies the importance of economic vulnerability. The poor are separated from the non-poor not only by their current standard of living, but by their greater vulnerability to economic catastrophe, a vulnerability that limits their choices and hence their freedom" (p.4-5). Similarly, Hobsbawm (1977) distinguishes non-material poverty from material poverty. He considers inferiority of rights, opportunities and status of the poor, their sense of such inferiorities and the entire syndrome of their frustration, resentment and underprivilege as some of the important non-material aspects of poverty.

To sum up, these alternative concepts of poverty bring out the shortcomings of absolute and income inequality approaches to poverty, and attempt to reflect the genesis and non-economic dimensions of poverty in its definition. In the words of Coates and Silburn (1970, 45), "Poverty has many dimensions, each of which must be studied separately, but which, in reality constitutes an interrelated network of deprivations". As pointed out earlier, it is our contention that this network of deprivations can be understood only in the context of inequality in (and specificities of) the sum total of economic and extra-economic relations in the society in an historical perspective, i.e. what are described as class relations in the Marxist approach. In the subsequent chapters, it is in the light of the above conceptualisation of poverty that we intend to explore its determinants in the concrete conditions of rural Bangladesh. However, despite the innumerable measurement problems (as will be outlined in a later section) the absolute and income inequality approaches to poverty are more easily measurable than the other concepts, and together these can serve a useful purpose so long as their shortcomings are borne in mind.

## B. Measurement of Poverty

### Indices of Absolute Poverty

As has been pointed out in the previous section, there are serious conceptual difficulties in identifying either a nutritional norm or a bundle of basic needs. However, even if these issues are settled and a "poverty level" is arrived at, the problem of determining an appropriate poverty index remains. Most studies use the proportion of people below the poverty line as the index of poverty.\* Called the Headcount Ratio, it is expressed mathematically as follows:

$$H = \frac{q^*}{n} = q \dots\dots\dots (i)$$

where  $q^*$  = number of persons (households below the poverty line

$z$  = poverty line

$n$  = total number of persons (households)

In particular, as Sen (1976) has pointed out, it violates two principles of rather general appeal. One is the so-called Monotonicity axiom which states that, given other things, the measure of poverty should go up if a poor person becomes poorer. The other principle akin to the Pigou/Dalton condition of transfer (see later), requires that, other things remaining the same, a pure transfer from the poorer to the less poor, should increase the degree of poverty. If the first axiom is violated, poverty cannot be said to have increased even if all the poor become poorer. This is surely unacceptable. The second axiom requires the index to be sensitive to redistribution among the poor. It does not clearly meet this requirement, in fact, its rise in practice may even be perversely

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\* See, for instance, Rowntree (1901), Minhas (1971), Dandekar and Rath (1971), and Orshanski (1968).

responsive. In their eagerness to impart respectability to the poverty index, planners may feel more inclined to rescue those immediately below the poverty line rather than those further below, simply because the former are relatively easier to salvage.

One way of overcoming the above difficulty is to construct two or more poverty lines. Thus Khan (1976) identifies two poverty lines, the line of "absolute poverty" and the line of "extreme poverty", for Bangladesh. Similarly, the Indian Institute of Public Opinion (1978) draws five lines (i.e. first, second, third, fourth degrees of destitution, poor but not destitute, etc.) in measuring poverty for South Asian countries. Thus, in a rough and ready manner, these improvisations attempt to differentiate the various layers among the poor.

Another measure that has sometimes been used is the so-called poverty gap. It measures the degree of poverty by the short-fall of all the poor's incomes from a poverty line

$$I = \sum_{i=1}^{q^*} (z - y_i) \quad \dots\dots (ii)$$

where  $y_i$  = income of the  $i$  th poor  
 ( $i = 1, \dots\dots q^*$ )

It satisfies the monotonicity axiom, but violates the principle of transfer.

On the other hand, Sen (1976) suggests a measure which is sensitive to the gaps in the incomes of the poor, and which also gives more weight per unit to lower incomes: expressed

mathematically, Sen's measure is given by

$$P_s = \frac{2}{(q^*+1)nz} \sum_{i=1}^{q^*} (z - y_i) (q^*+1 - i) \dots\dots\dots (iii)$$

Sen (1976) also shows that for large numbers of the poor,  $P_s$  can be approximated as follows:

$$P_s = H[I + G(1-I)] \dots\dots\dots (iv)$$

where  $I = \sum_{i=1}^q (z - y_i) / q^*z \dots\dots\dots (v)$

$G$  = Gini coefficient of income distribution below the poverty line.

From (v)  $I = q^* \frac{z - \bar{y}}{q^*z} = 1 - \bar{y}/z \dots\dots\dots (vi)$

where  $\bar{y}$  = mean income of the poor

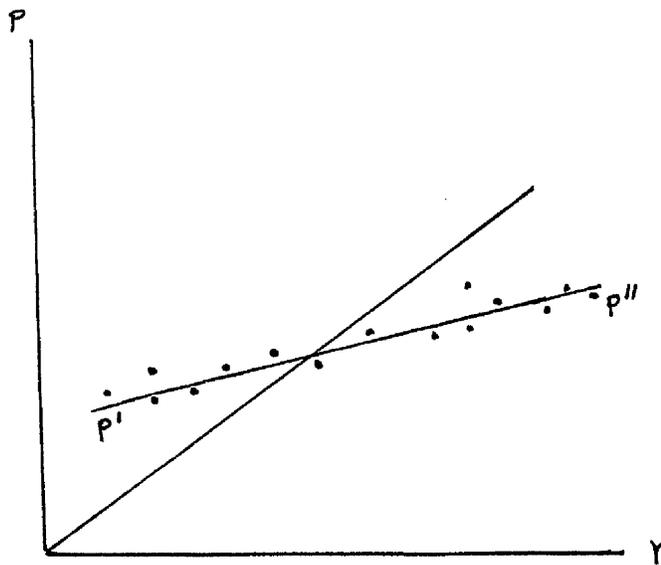
Substituting (i) and (vi) in (iii)

$$P_s = q \left( 1 - \frac{\bar{y}}{z} + \frac{\bar{y}}{z} G \right)$$

Thus the dependence of  $P_s$  on  $q$ ,  $\bar{y}$  and  $G$  is quite evident. In other words,  $P_s$  is a composite measure of poverty based on the recognition that the extent of poverty depends on a number of factors, namely the proportion of the poor, their income gaps and the relative distribution of their incomes.

#### Measures for Subjective Poverty

Measurement of subjective poverty may be done in two ways (Drewonski, 1977). The first is a measurement of the degree of satisfaction of needs as declared by the subject in question. He may describe his position as being poor, satisfactory, well off, etc. The essence of the approach may be illustrated by a diagram:



where  $Y$  = actual income

$P$  = poverty measures in terms of income

$p'$  $p''$  = poverty line

Poverty depth (in terms of income) is measured along the ordinates of points which constitute  $p'$   $p''$ . People at various levels of income are asked to state their poverty point (i.e. minimum income for not feeling poor). A poverty line is then plotted representing their replies. This method of assessing poverty by the declaration of the concerned raises serious misgivings. Firstly, the veracity of such declarations cannot always be beyond question. Secondly, their declarations refer to hypothetical situations and not to positions in which respondents find themselves here and now. Answers to such questions may reflect their mentality, but may be hardly relevant for assessment of their actual situation. The second measurement approach tackles the problem by observing behaviour of individuals rather than obtaining their responses. However, this may not be a very practicable method. Moreover, observed

behaviour, unless explained properly (for which further investigation would be necessary), may at times be very misleading.

### Relative Poverty (Inequality) Measures

There are two types of inequality measures: positive measures which make no explicit use of any concept of social welfare; and normative measures, which are based on an explicit formulation of social welfare and the loss incurred from unequal distribution. There are two principles against which evaluation of the various inequality measures will be done. The first is the Pigou-Dalton condition of transfer, according to which any transfer from a poorer to a richer person, other things remaining the same, must increase the degree of inequality. The second is the principle of regressive sensitivity to transfer, which states that mere sensitivity to transfer is not sufficient. A transfer of the same magnitude should be given different weights at different positions of the income scale. More specifically, a transfer from a poorer to richer person deserves more weight at the lower end of the income scale than at the upper one, because the loser at the lower end is poorer than the loser at the upper end, although both losers are poorer relative to their respective gainers.

Positive Measures:\* Let  $y_i$  = income of the  $i$ th individual where  $i = 1, \dots, n$ .

$\mu$  = mean income

- 1) Range  

$$E = \frac{\text{Maxi } Y_i - \text{Mini } Y_i}{\mu}$$
- 2) Relative Mean Deviation  

$$M = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n |\mu - y_i|}{n\mu}$$

---

\* See Sen (1973, 24-35) for details.

3) Variance

$$VR = \sum_{i=1}^n (\mu - y_i)^2 / n$$

4) Coefficient of Variation

$$CV = \frac{VR^{\frac{1}{2}}}{\mu}$$

5) Standard Deviation of Logarithms

$$H = \left[ \sum_{i=1}^n (\log \mu - \log y_i)^2 / n \right]^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

6) Gini Coefficient

$$G = \left( \frac{1}{2} n^2 \mu \right) \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n |y_i - y_j| = 1 - \left( \frac{1}{n^2} \mu \right) \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n \text{Min}(y_i, y_j)$$

$$= 1 + \frac{1}{n} - \left( \frac{2}{n^2} \mu \right) [y_1 + 2y_2 + \dots + ny_n]$$

7) Theil's Entropy Measure

$$T = \log n - H(x) = \sum_{i=1}^n x_i \log n x_i$$

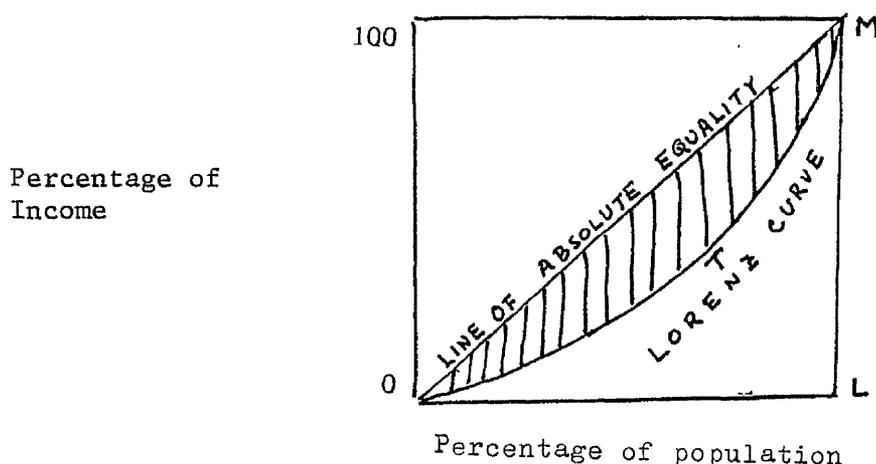
where

$x_i$  = share of income going <sup>to</sup> ith person.

The Range does not satisfy even the Pigou-Dalton condition. It is obviously a very crude measure. Relative Mean Deviation satisfies the Pigou-Dalton condition only so long as the transfer takes place between two sides of the mean. However, it does not at all satisfy the second condition. Both Variance and Coefficient of Variation satisfy the Pigou-Dalton condition over the entire income scale. This is so because by squaring the deviations from the mean, they ensure the crucial property of concavity. Coefficient of variation is sometimes preferred between the two, as variance is positively related to mean, so that even if two distributions have some relative interpersonal distribution, variance will be higher for the one with higher mean. Neither of them, however, satisfies the second principle of transfer.

Standard Deviation of Logarithms satisfies the stronger second condition. However, at very high levels in the income scale, it gives almost no weight to transfers.

The Gini coefficient is the most widely used measure of inequality. One reason for this perhaps is that it has a very close relationship with the Lorenz curve, which is a particularly expressive diagrammatic representation of income distribution:



Percentages of the population arranged from the poorest to the richest are represented on the horizontal axis and the percentages of income enjoyed by the bottom ~~50~~ per cent of the population is shown on the vertical axis. Obviously, 0 per cent of the population enjoys 0 per cent of the total income, and 100 per cent of the population enjoys all the income. If everyone has the same income, the Lorenz curve will simply be the diagonal. But in the absence of perfect equality, the bottom income groups will enjoy a proportionately lower share of income. It is obvious, therefore, that any Lorenz curve must lie below the diagonal (except the one of complete equality, which would be the diagonal), and its slope will increasingly rise - at any rate not fall, as we move to richer and richer sections of the population. In the above diagram, Gini

coefficient is given as follows:

$$G = \frac{\text{Shaded area in the Diagram}}{\text{Triangular region underneath the Diagonal}}$$

Another reason why G is widely used is that it measures inequality by taking note of the difference of everybody's income from everybody else's income, rather than from the mean which may be nobody's income, and as such corresponds to a more natural meaning of equality. G satisfies the Pigou-Dalton condition, but does not satisfy the principle of regressive sensitivity to transfer. It attaches more weight to transfers in the middle range (Atkinson, 1970).

Theil's Entropy measure is derived from the concept of entropy in the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It satisfies the Pigou-Dalton condition, but it is basically an arbitrary formula and has not gained much currency so far.

#### Normative Measures

Dalton's Measure: Dalton's (1920) basic premises were:

- a) social welfare is an unweighted sum of individual utilities, and
- b) social welfare is maximised when total income is equally divided. Accordingly, he defined the following index of equality:

$$D = \left[ \sum_{i=1}^n u(y_i) \right] / n u(\mu)$$

Atkinson's Measure: Atkinson (1970) defines what he calls "the equally distributed equivalent income" of a given distribution of a total income as that level of per capita income which if enjoyed by everybody, would make total welfare

exactly equal to the total welfare generated by the actual income distribution. Putting  $Y_e$  as the "equally distributed equivalent income", we see that

$$Y_e = Y \left[ n u(Y) = \sum_{i=1}^n u(y_i) \right]$$

Atkinson's measure of inequality is given by

$$A = 1 - (Y_e/\mu)$$

Thus, if income is equally distributed, then  $Y_e$  is equal to  $\mu$  and  $A$  will be 0. For any distribution the value of  $A$  must lie between 0 and 1.

In both the Atkinson and Dalton measures, the utilitarian framework is unnecessarily restrictive. But both can be generalised by using a more general welfare function. Thus, Aigner and Heins (1967) have generalised the Dalton Index and Sen (1973) suggests similar improvements for the Atkinson Index.

#### Combined Indices of Absolute and Relative Poverty

a) Alamgir (1975) took Sen's  $P_s$  as a welfare index of the poor and Gini coefficient ( $G$ ) as a welfare index for the entire society, and argued that overall social preference be judged by the composite index IIP.

$$IIP = \frac{P_s + G}{2}$$

The difficulty of this index is that it performs a ratio scale operation to ordinal magnitudes. Thus, if the values of  $P_s$  and  $G$  change by the same amount, but in opposite directions, then the IIP value remains unchanged, and so does the overall ranking of two social states. But since in view of ordinality, equal change in values of  $P_s$  and  $G$  cannot be interpreted as equal change in the

welfare of the two groups, unchanged social preference cannot really be deduced, even if we wish to give equal weights to component groups, as has been done above.

The IIP index, therefore, has no conceivable correspondence with overall social preference.

- b) Bhattya (1974) uses the same  $P_s$  and  $G$ , but in recognition of their ordinal nature has relied on their direction of change rather than the amount by which they change. The central idea of this strategy is that a fall in  $P_s$  will be valued more if it is accompanied by a reduction in  $G$ . Accordingly, society's preference among different types of change can be expressed by the following ordering:

- 1) Decline in  $P_s$  with a decline in  $G$
- 2) Decline in  $P_s$  with no change in  $G$
- 3) Decline in  $P_s$  with rise in  $G$ .

The trouble with this strategy is that it is not possible to impart to it relative weighting of the two components

- c) Sen (1976) suggests transformation of his  $P_s$  into a relative poverty measure in the following way (see also Anand, 1977)

$$P^* = P_s z/\mu$$

$$= \frac{2}{(q^*+1)n\mu} \sum_{i=1}^{q^*} (z - y_i) (q^* + 1 - i)$$

If the income of a person above the poverty line falls without taking him below the poverty line, and if everything remains the same, the value of  $P^*$  will rise, through a reduction in the value of  $\mu$ . The modified poverty index thus reflects the wellbeing of the non-poor.

In the light of the above discussion, the following general comments may be offered in regard to the various poverty measures. Firstly, despite the apparent sophistication of some of the poverty measures, their sensitivity may be rendered meaningless by the poor quantity and quality of the income-expenditure data available (or what can be made available) in most Third World countries.\* It thus seems that only two measures, namely the Gini coefficient from relative poverty measures and the poverty line-head count ratio from absolute poverty measures, are of any practical relevance to our purpose. Secondly, and more important, these measures carry with them the shortcomings of the poverty concepts on which they are based. Thus, they are capable of measuring deprivations in certain limited aspects only, for example, nutrition, income, assets, etc. But they are unable to capture the entire network of deprivations, both economic and non-economic, i.e. what we have earlier defined as poverty. It is our contention that it is this shortcoming which calls for a fundamentally different exercise, namely class analysis of the society in an historical perspective, an exercise which attempts to combine poverty measurement with the genesis of poverty. We elaborate this alternative approach in Chapter 3 and present it comprehensively in Chapter 5 in the concrete conditions of rural Bangladesh. However, shortcomings notwithstanding, some of the poverty measurements discussed above can serve a useful purpose when combined with class analysis, for example, as in Chapter 6, the combination brings out the correspondence between consumption pattern (i.e. what we have earlier defined as symptoms of poverty) and class position.

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\* See Chapter 2 for the validity of this point in the context of Bangladesh.

C. Explanations of Poverty

Explanations of poverty in bourgeois social science may be divided as follows:

- a) explanations in terms of individual attributes;
- b) cultural explanations, and
- c) explanations in terms of the role of public social services.

Before proposing our own framework of poverty explanation, it is important that we first critically review these.

General Explanations

1. Explanations emphasising the relationship between individuals and poverty regard poverty as stemming from limitations, maladjustments and deficiencies of individuals, and look at poverty in terms of their biological endowments, economic capacities and psychological qualities. Explanations attributing poverty to biological endowments are distinguished generally by one or more of the following features. Firstly, some inadequacy or "pauper syndrome" is biologically transmitted through genes of one person to another (Meade and Parkes, 1965, 112). Secondly, intelligence determines income, and intelligence is largely an inherited attribute (Herrnstein, 1973, 129). Thirdly, mental illness or unstable temperament are inherited capacities, and these precipitate individuals towards social deprivation (Rutter and Madge, 1976, 202-3). There is certainly a genetic element in intelligence and some mental disorders, but for three main reasons this does not constitute an explanation of poverty. Firstly, biological mechanisms promote differences as well as similarities. Secondly, even if genetics do predispose individuals towards poverty, they do not explain why poverty is tolerated by

society. Thus Eysenck (1973, Ch.6) who leans heavily towards biological accounts, discusses a range of social interventions designed to save from poverty those whose limitations propel them towards it; and yet society has not made such interventions. Moreover, as Holman (1978, 56, 66) has pointed out, there is no justification for regarding "pauper syndrome" conditions approximating to any specific gene. Thirdly, genetics alone cannot wholly explain intelligence and psychiatric disorders. They are also moulded by outside pressures. Thoday (1965) points out that every human characteristic depends initially on having the necessary genetic endowment and on the environmental stimulus to develop it or allow it to function. Understanding of poverty must, therefore, be pursued by asking why the stimuli are provided for some sections of the society, but not others.

An influential contribution to poverty explanation derives from a school of writers who emphasise the role of individuals in a "free market" economy. Such an economy is considered to be distinguished by:

- a) free competition in the market place between various sellers and buyers, thereby stimulating further specialisation in manufacture and distribution in order to improve efficiency in the struggle for success;
- b) existence of the cash nexus as the means through which competitors are related to each other and the market, and
- c) acceptance of the laws of demand and supply as determining not only prices of goods, but also the supply of land, labour and capital.

The forces of such a free market economy are considered to allocate monetary rewards to those with talent, initiative and effort, and those who fall into poverty have only their own moral and physical limitations to blame. Poverty is thus chiefly attributable to individual laziness. R. Bremmer (1974, 64) summarises this outlook as follows: "Indigence was simply the punishment meted out to the improvident by their own lack of industry and efficiency. Far from being a blessed state, poverty was the obvious consequence of sloth and sinfulness". Such opinions, as Bremmer shows, were typical in the Victorian era. But these still persist today. Thus Page (1971) blames the unemployment of some on their dislike of work and their willingness to live off the state and "leisure preference". Similarly, according to Friedman (1963, 188), some people choose not to save and must thus be individually responsible for their "penurious old age". Implicit in this explanation is that the rich are thrifty, talented, hard-working, etc. But as Holman (1978, 79) points out, in the context of the UK, "...amongst the rich and powerful in the 19th century (i.e. in the peak period of free market economy) were some who appeared lazy, feckless, immoral and lacking talents. But market forces did not necessarily bring them to poverty any more than take Booth's hard workers out of it".

If this connection between poverty on the one hand, and thriftiness and hard work on the other, is tenuous in Western society with a highly developed market economy, then its prospects of holding good in the weakly developed market economy

of Third World countries must be even bleaker. Indeed, the usual picture emerging from such societies is one in which the poor toil relentlessly while the rich are given to a life style consisting of leisure, wasteful consumption and general divorce from the risk and responsibility of production. Secondly, as brought out vividly by Engels (1844) in his classic work The Condition of the Working Class in England, it was precisely during the heyday of the free market economy that widespread poverty made its impact on public notice in England. Thirdly, in most Third World countries the market economy is yet highly undeveloped, and in any case its course has been quite different from that of the Western experience. However, even in Western societies, the theory of the free market, of the perfect balance between demand and supply, of the appropriate rewards for effort, is based on a hypothetical situation because of a number of external factors. Thus, Atkinson (1974) shows how crucial is the part played by inherited resources. Its possessors not only have an immediate economic advantage over others, but they are also able to avoid poverty even if they do not wish to be thrifty and hard-working. Similarly, education and training are unequally distributed, and this distribution has little relationship to ability. Consequently, some persons are unable to develop their talents so as to offer them to the market. Since use of the market both in regard to obtaining work and purchasing the cheapest and best goods requires information, the less-educated are always at a disadvantage, regardless of their hard work, thrift and willingness to work. More important, there are the large-scale economic and social trends like international and national trade recessions, uneven capital

development, growth of monopoly capital, etc., dictating prices, level of employment, wages, location of industries, etc., against which individuals have no control over as individuals, however thrifty and hard working they may be. Therefore, the freedom in the developed market economy is no more than a myth for the vast majority of the population with little or no ownership and control over the means of production.

Explanation of poverty in terms of the individual's psyche was quite popular in the UK and Western countries in the 1950s and 1960s. This rested on three premises: (a) poverty is not necessary in a welfare state; (b) those who are poor tend to be individuals or families with multiple problems, and (c) the reason for their problems tends to be psychological. However, subsequent empirical evidence has completely exploded such explanation. Thus, Rutter and Madge (1976, 249-51) show that the poor are not the only ones to have a multitude of overlapping personal problems; the rich are also equally afflicted with problems of delinquency, child behaviour, drunkenness and marital disharmony. Similarly, Rein (1970, 347) shows that amongst slum residents of Detroit and New York, 85 per cent had no emotional, personal or behavioural problems that inhibited their ability to make the transition into decent physical accommodations. On the contrary, their greatest need was adequate housing and income rather than therapy, thus dismissing the thesis that poverty was another personal problem. Moreover, even in the UK with extensive welfare services, certain studies put the figure of persons in poverty between

7 and 13 million (Holman, 1978, 96). To explain the plight of such a large number of persons as a consequence of psychological deficiencies would indeed sound nonsensical. And any attempt to extend such explanation to Third World countries, where the scale of poverty is far more staggering; would no doubt lend psychic distortion to the reputation of their exponents!

2. Cultural Explanation

The most important among the cultural explanations of poverty is the "culture of poverty" thesis due to Oscar Lewis' (1959, 49-53) work on Mexican and Puerto Rican families. Its salient features are as follows. Firstly, the poor are characterised by a lack of participation and integration into the major institutions of the large society, such as trade unions, voluntary societies, hospitals, departmental stores, etc. They bear hatred and mistrust for the police, the government and the church, and refuse to share the values of the larger society. Secondly, the poor are marked by a minimum of organisation beyond the level of the nuclear and extended family. Thirdly, among the poor, family and sexual practices are at variance with outside culture: for example, short and unprotected childhood, early initiation into sex, free unions or consensual marriages, a relatively high incidence of wife and children abandonment, etc. Fourthly, the poor are characterised by helplessness, dependence, inferiority, resignation, fatalism, little motivation for work and advancement, a strong here-and-now orientation, little desire or ability to plan for the future, etc. Fifthly, as a consequence of these characteristics, poverty becomes inevitable.

Unmotivated and helpless people do not work their way out of poverty. Those unwilling to postpone pleasures do not save. Change will never come if they are unwilling to organise. Resignation and fatalism enable them to live with their plight. Finally, these characteristics are also transmitted to succeeding generations through family norms, especially their child-rearing and socialisation practices.

The Lewis study was also echoed by those of Reissman (1962, 26-7), Moynihan and Glazer (1963) and Matza (1966, 317). However, their findings may be challenged on several grounds. Firstly, these studies suffered from imprecise definitions of the poor, dubious methodology and quality of the material collected (Roach and Gurslin, 1967; Valentine, 1968, 5; Allen, 1970, 373). Secondly, alternative empirical evidence suggests (Goodwin, 1972; Davidson and Gaitz, 1974) that the poor are not, after all, as different from the non-poor as it is portrayed by Lewis and his supporters, in matters of work attitude, motivation, values, language and skills, and that, on the contrary, they are quite akin to non-poor and that they are distinguished mainly by their poverty and social deprivations. Some poor persons may show some variations, but the differences are of degree rather than kind. In short, the poor are not participants in a separate culture, nor are they behind the attitudes and morals of the larger society. Thirdly, investigations by Rossi and Blum (1968) revealed that there was no support for the claim that poverty is passed from generation to generation by cultural processes. Finally, even if some of the characteristics as described by Lewis and others, are

particularly true of the poor, these do not at all explain what causes poverty in the first place; what it explains at most is that once poverty appears, there is a strong tendency for it to be perpetuated/augmented through the peculiar culture it gives birth to.

3. Explanation in Terms of the Role of Government Social Services

There are two diametrically opposite views on governmental anti-poverty measures in relation to their implications for poverty explanation and alleviation. The first holds that if only (a) technical inefficiencies within certain anti-poverty agencies were removed; (b) there existed proper co-ordination and co-operation among different anti-poverty services, and (c) the key anti-poverty service could function properly, poverty and deprivation could be banished from society (McCashin, 1976, 4). In other words, society already possesses a framework of welfare services capable of combating poverty, so that poverty exists only because this framework is not fully operational owing to certain technical constraints. However, as Holman (1978, 183) lucidly points out, such an explanation ignores the following: (a) the causes of poverty and the profundity of reforms that can be attained to benefit the poor; (b) the external forces which are outside of the social services, but which influence the distribution of resources, and (c) the conflicts between different sections of society, some of whom may benefit from others being in poverty. Moreover, the extent of governmental anti-poverty measures in the Third World being far less than what exists in some of the Western countries, the assumption that society already possesses an adequate framework for social services appears grossly unrealistic for the former countries.

A very different view is held on government anti-poverty measures by the advocates of the free market economy. They argue that large-scale state involvement in social services has adverse implications for accentuating poverty in a number of ways. Firstly, the poor become content to enjoy the free benefits of social services rather than work hard, so that neither can they escape poverty individually, nor are they able to increase the resources of society. Secondly, the welfare state holds back both individual and social progress by weakening the family, the basic economic unit of society. Thus Kristol (1974, 242) argues that social services promote family breakdowns and work ethic rejection, which in turn leads to social deprivation. Similarly, according to M. Bremmer (1966, 11), social services render families dependent not upon their members, but on the state, and this dependency takes away the qualities of drive and initiative necessary to increase both the family's lot as well as national resources. Also, such dependency can create family traits of aggression and apathy, which, in turn, render family members unsuitable for employment and cause family breakups, thereby accentuating poverty. Thirdly, extensive social services raise income tax, dampen private enterprise and lower efficiency (the assumption being that private enterprise is more efficient than public enterprise). In other words, public services not only imperil the individual and family motivations to work their way out of poverty, but also simultaneously harm national economic powers which could have been used for the benefit of all income groups.

The above view of governmental social services may be criticised on a number of points. Firstly, extensive research among the poor and the unemployed by Goodwin (1972), Daniel (1974) and Hill (1973) clearly show that the talk of modern social services destroying work motive, initiative and moral fibre has little basis. Secondly, the Kristol thesis does not stand up to statistics. Thus, there is no relationship between divorce rates and the degree of state involvement in welfare. In fact, divorce rate in the USA is higher than that in Sweden, although state social services are more extensive in the latter. Similarly, there is no substantial evidence to show that marriage and the family unit are declining with the growth of the welfare state (Fletcher, 1966). Thirdly, the Bremmer thesis has not only methodological flaws, but also its findings can also be strongly questioned. As argued by Titmus (1971) and Townsend (1968), social services promote healthy family life and prevent family breakups by alleviating gross social deprivations. Other studies (Middleton, 1971, 30; Wilmont and Young, 1960) confirmed such findings. M. Bremmer used Haggerstorm's (1964) work to argue that social services lead to dependency and hence poverty. A closer look at Haggerstorm's work shows that he in fact argued the opposite, namely that it was poverty that promoted dependency and the poor can break out of their dependency only by pressing for social reforms. Fourthly, Titmus (1971) and Townsend (1968) provide a number of arguments and evidence in favour of public social services:

- 1) a combination of private welfare for the affluent and public welfare just for low income persons usually entails low status and inferior services for the latter, and so reinforces their functioning at the bottom of society;
- 2) extensive public services such as health and education offer a more evenly spread resource to all the nation, and
- 3) state services are not necessarily less efficient than private services.

Finally, especially in many Third World countries, the distinction between private and public enterprise may be a false one, in that despite the higher costs and inefficiency of the public services, these may be preferred because while actually benefiting the rich in society, these provide an impression of public ownership and control.

To sum up, the available bourgeois explanations of poverty are inadequate for a number of reasons. Firstly, some of these have no scientific basis at all. In fact, these could be accused of serving as ideology for perpetuating poverty and inequality. For example, apportioning blame on the poor for their state of affairs easily justifies (a) the simultaneous existence of wealth and poverty, and (b) study of poverty in complete abstraction from affluence. Secondly, some of the explanations are merely detailed descriptions of poverty and poor peoples' behavioural pattern, but as explanations, these have very little to offer. Thirdly, most explanations avoid the fundamental causes of poverty and instead concentrate on the causes which perpetuate poverty once it already exists. Finally, these are specific to Western experience, where there

is relative poverty but little of the absolute poverty known in Third World countries. In the light of the above, it is essential to propose an alternative analytic framework. This we take up in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE STATE OF POVERTY STUDIES IN BANGLADESH

In Chapter 1 we examined three aspects of poverty (i.e. definition, measurement, and explanation) in general. In this chapter we propose critically to evaluate poverty studies in the specific context of Bangladesh. In so doing, three periods are covered, namely the colonial period ending in 1947, the Pakistan period between 1947 and 1971, and the post-independence period commencing from 1972.

#### I. Poverty Studies during the Colonial Period

##### i) Measurement of Poverty

For the colonial period, a major source of empirical evidence on the incidence of poverty in Bangladesh are the various government documents, such as District and Imperial Gazetteers, Annual Administration Reports, Decennial Census Reports, District Settlement Reports, Famine Commission Reports, etc. These were the outcome of official surveys, tour reports, and personal impressions of colonial officials and deliberation of Government-constituted commissions. The official surveys were conducted mainly in connection with decennial censuses and the preparation of Gazetteers and Annual Administrative Reports. Often, surveys on socio-economic conditions were combined with Settlement Operations (i.e. preparation of a record-of-rights relating to land, through plot-by-plot survey). The actual data collection was done by junior officials of the Revenue Department (but during censuses the village police and gentry were also involved), while overall supervision, compilation and report writing were the responsibilities of the District

Officers/Settlement Officers, often members of the Indian Civil Service. There were a number of compulsions behind all statistical exercises during the colonial period. Firstly, for a region as vast as India, effective administration could be carried out by a small minority of Europeans only if the essential characteristics of the subject people were known with some degree of accuracy. Secondly, as Choudhury, S.B. (1964, 172) suggests, a feeling of confidence had to be inspired and a certain degree of knowledge of the Indian scene had to be diffused before British capital could flow and operate in India. Thirdly, as the nationalist stance of <sup>"un-"</sup>British rule gained ground, it became necessary to counter statistics with statistics. Thus Jack (1916, 6) wrote: "That (i.e. British) rule has been much attacked of late on the economic side.... This book will not be written in vain if it proves that, in one corner of india at least, no such charge can be laid against the British Empire". Finally, the civilians of British India were perhaps some of the best-educated people available at that time. They had at their disposal adequate spare time, given the prevailing slow pace of administration. These, combined with their commitment to the "glory of the Empire" and "civilising mission" in India, detachment and enormous power and prestige, produced the perfect conditions for undertaking such work. (For details on the mental make-up and life-style of British civilians in India, see Woodruff, 1954.)

Despite their methodological crudeness (in comparison with the sophisticated techniques of more recent times, which we have presented in the opening chapter), poor theoretical underpinnings, and

sometimes openly propagandist stance,\* these official reports and statistics nevertheless constitute the only available basis for an understanding on the inter-temporal changes in the poverty situation in the country during the colonial period.\*\*

As an example of what these are worth, the poverty profile for Jessore (i.e. the District in which our study village is located) between the last part of the nineteenth and first quarter of the twentieth century is drawn below <sup>on</sup> the basis of these materials.

As may be seen from the above tables, the rural population in each case has been divided into four categories of economic condition. Comparisons are difficult because these are subjectively derived. However, in the case of Jessore (Tables 1 and 3) these subjective categories are combined with

\*. For example (a) in 1888, the Commissioner of Dacca reported, "Looking at their needs, the peasantry in East Bengal are the most prosperous in the world" (GOB, 1888, 91); (b) The Bengal Report on the Material Condition of the People 1890-91 concluded: "Judged from their own standpoint, the peasantry of Bengal are happy and prosperous" (GOI, 1894a, 9); (c) The Third Decennial Moral and Material Progress Report (1891-92) asserted: "Conditions of the peasantry from a material standpoint is one of sufficiency, according to a standard that is gradually and continuously rising" (GOI, 1894b, 427).

\*\* During this period no effort was made in political and academic circles to carry out any independent inquiry based on actual surveys to determine the level of poverty and inequality for any region of the province. In fact, only one village study (conducted between 1942 and 1946) was produced during such a long period (Mukherjee, 1971). However, this was a general study and not particularly focused on rural poverty. Thus where increasing and acute poverty in the countryside was postulated, the proof rested on one or more of the following: (a) quotations from "dissident" civilians, i.e. those officials disagreeing with the propaganda stance; (b) time series on average per capita income, calculated from official statistics on population and national income; (c) comparison of average per capita income with estimated expenditures of the lower classes and actual per capita jail expenditures; (d) indebted <sup>ness</sup> statistics quoted in official documents (for example, Azizul Haque, 1938); (e) frequent occurrence of famine. Thus such "unofficial" poverty estimates did not constitute any basic improvement over the official ones.

TABLE 1 : Classification of Jessore Rural Households, 1921\*

Category of economic condition	Average per capita annual net income and debt in rupees	Occupational category	Number of households	Percentage of households
In comfort	80.00: no debt	Large land owners/money lenders/big merchants	235	15
Below comfort	58.00: 8.00 as debt	Medium landowners, weavers, fishermen	552	32
Living from hand-to-mouth	50.00: 12.00 as debt	Small landowners, other non-agricultural occupations	555	33
Starving	35.00: 30.00 as debt	Landless agricultural labourers, beggars, etc.	331	20
All categories	54.00: 15.00 as debt	All categories	1643	100

\*Source: Momen (1925, 72), based on a sample of 58 villages comprising 1643 households and 10,019 persons, and spread over all the 19 thanas of Jessore District.

TABLE 2 : Classification of Faridpur\* Rural Households, 1906

Class	Category of economic condition	Annual per capita net income (Rs)	Percentage of households
Class I	In comfort	60	49.5
Class II	Below comfort	43	28.5
Class III	Above want	34	18.0
Class IV	In want	27	4.0
All classes			100.00

Source: J.C. Jack (1916, 93)

\*Faridpur is the district adjacent to Jessore.

TABLE 3 : Classification of Rural Households of Jessore, 1888\*

Class	Category of economic condition	Occupation	Number of households	Percentage of households
Class I	Extremely well off	Large landowners (gantidars/lakhi rajdars)	155	19.42
Class II	Fairly well off	Small and medium landowners, but engaged in agricultural wage labour, weavers, fishermen, etc.	232	29.01
Class III	Well off	Agricultural wage labourers, other agricultural occupations, e.g. cobblers, potters, etc.	365	45.19
Class IV	Indigent	Beggars, disabled	46	5.16
All classes		All occupations	798	100.00

\*Source: Enquiry into the condition of the Lower Classes of People in Bengal, 1888, as quoted in O'Malley (1912, 856), based on statistics obtained under the personal supervision of Collector, Jessore District from nine large villages situated in different parts of the District.

occupational and asset ownership characteristics, which make them more meaningful than the data in Table 2. The income data in the three tables are of little use for comparisons and understanding of poverty firstly because relevant price figures are not known, and secondly because these describe the income situations of households whose economic condition have been, a priori, determined subjectively. It may also be noted that the Faridpur figures show an exceptionally low level of poverty. Whether this is the real picture, or is due to abnormally good harvests of the year of data collection, or because of extreme subjectivism, is difficult to discern. Keeping these reservations in mind, the following tentative inferences may be drawn from the above tables:

- a) the material condition of all categories except perhaps the top one, declined between 1888 and 1921;
- b) the worst hit category, i.e. Class IV, swelled over the years from 5.16 per cent of rural households in 1888 to 20 per cent of the rural households in 1921;
- c) compared to Faridpur, the material condition of the rural people in Jessore was far worse in the first quarter of the 20th century. It may be mentioned here that this was despite the fact that per capita food availability in Jessore for the year 1921 was 10.17 maunds,\* i.e. 0.42 maunds above the year per capita requirement of 9.75 maunds, considered as normal and desirable by the Famine Commission of 1901.

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\* 1 maund = 80 lb (approx.)

2. Extent of Indebtedness in Jessore

The 1888 Report on the Material Condition of Lower Classes in Bengal mentions very little about rural indebtedness in Jessore. However, Momen (1925) provides the following information on rural indebtedness in this district:

- a) per capita debt and annual interest rate for borrowings in this district for 1921 were, respectively, Rupees 15 and 25 per cent, and this placed Jessore among the most indebted districts in Bengal at that time. The very heavy burden of such indebtedness becomes apparent from the fact that this accounted for about one quarter of per capita net income and about one-sixth of per capita agricultural assets (i.e. 1.5 acres of land, and 0.40th of a plough/beast valued at Rupees 100.00) at that time;
- b) in 1921, as much as 15.4 per cent of the total land was transferred. Of this 14 per cent was due to extension of permanent leases, 1.02 per cent through voluntary sales and 0.38 per cent through compulsory sales by order of the civil courts;
- c) between 1890 and 1921, land mortgages doubled, sales increased by 40 per cent, and perpetual leases increased by 600 per cent;
- d) indebtedness was the most important mechanism for differentiation: "Having no spare capital, the cultivator finds himself stranded whenever there is a crop failure or a cattle epidemic. He is, therefore, forced to borrow at high interest rates from the professional moneylenders. And once in debt, he can never extricate himself, and finally becomes a landless labourer" (p.73).

TABLE 4 : Agricultural Wages, 1909-1921

Year	Money Wages* (rupees per day)	Price of Paddy (rupees per maund)	Paddy Equivalent of money wages in maunds and pounds
1909-10	0.50**	2.42	0.206 (16.5)
1921	0.466***	2.875	0.162 (13.0)

\* Generally included two meals over and above the money wages.

\*\* The wages of an "adult male coolie" have been taken as the equivalent of agricultural wages since the latter were paid mostly in kind (i.e. one bundle of paddy for every 20 bundles cut).

\*\*\* The great majority of them got employment for only six months in a year. The wage indicated above represents what they got daily during this period.

Source: O'Malley (1912, 83) and Momen (1925, 75).

TABLE 5 : Per Capita Annual Income of the Jessore  
Agriculturist in 1921

<u>Gross Income</u>	<u>Rupees</u>	<u>Annas</u>	<u>Pies</u>	
Crop cultivation	61	12	11*)	) Rupees 70**
Fruits and vegetables	4	15	-	
Poultry and dairy	5	0	-	
Home industries	2	0	-	
<u>Total Gross Income</u>				
<u>Expenses</u>				
Rents and cesses	7	5	9	
Labour wages	5	9	3	
Seed and manure	4	14	11	
Cattle and implements	5	4	0	
<u>Total expenses</u>	23	1	11	
Net income	50	10	0	
	(53-	14-	1)	

\* Calculated on the basis of enquiries into 58 villages of the district (covering 19 thanas) with a population of 10,019 persons.

\*\* Based on per capita value of crop production for 1921.

Source: Momen (1925, 69).

Even if the second estimate (i.e. based on per capita value of crop production) is taken as more accurate, the per capita net income of the Jessore cultivator in 1921 was no more than Rupees 54. In the same year, the average expenditures incurred by the government for a convict were, respectively, Rupees 51 for food and Rupees 9 for clothing and bedding, as against Rupees 40.75 and Rupees 6, respectively, in the above budget; in other words, the average cultivator's economic condition was perhaps no better than <sup>that</sup> than of a prisoner in the gaol.

In 1872, the per capita net income and per capita expenditure of an agriculturist (calculated in the same manner as for 1921 presented above) were, respectively, Rupees 12 and Rupees 10.8. However, in calculating the per capita net income for 1872, the yield/acre of various crops was considered as the same for both years. But according to J. Westland (1874, viii), the yield/acre for paddy in 1872 was 27 maunds, as against 14 maunds in 1921. As such, it can be safely concluded that in 1872, the average cultivator was far better off than he was in 1921. The budget does not include the annual interest on debt of Rupees 3 per head. That included, the annual per capita expenditure comes to Rupees 53.18, which is only Rupees 0.82 less than the per capita net income of Rupees 54. In real terms, this is a precarious situation, since the budget provides for only the barest minimum, and during a year of poor harvests (owing to flood, drought, etc.) even this budget would have to be further curtailed. Momen concludes: "It is evident that the ryot was quite affluent half a century ago, although his income is readily increasing...But it is his gross income which has increased and not net income, and the increase is more than

TABLE 6 : Average Annual Budget of an Agricultural Family  
(3 adults and 2 children), 1921

	<u>Rupees</u>	<u>Annas</u>
Paddy*	147	2
Salt	3	8
Fish, dal, vegetables	24	0
Tobacco**	6	0
Spices	5	0
Oil**	12	0
Gur (molasses)	6	0
Kerosene oil	6	0
Clothes***	28	0
Bedding	2	0
Utensils	2	0
Dwelling house	4	9
Births/deaths/marriages	4	8
Children tax	0	12
<hr/>		
Total	250	14 (i.e. Rupees 50.18 per head)

\* Paddy consumed by an individual has been taken to be 1.125 seers per day, which is what was recommended by the Famine Commission, as the minimum amount required to keep a member of an agricultural family physically fit. The price of paddy has been taken to be Rupees 2.875 per maund.

\*\* In this district this was essential as a prophylactic against malaria. Note also that nothing on account of medicines has been included.

\*\*\* Does not include winter clothes.

Source: Momen (1925, 66).

counterbalanced by increase in the cost of living, increase in the cost of cultivation, decrease in productive power of the land and decrease in the area of land now available for cultivation by each family....The vast majority who live from hand to mouth are hardly benefited by rise in the prices of food crops, as the benefit derived by selling a small quantity of crops at higher prices is more than compensated by general rise in the cost of living" (p.69-70).

TABLE 7 : Population of Jessore, 1872-1921

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total population</u>
1872	1,451,507
1881	1,939,375
1891	1,888,827
1901	1,813,155
1911	1,743,371
1921	1,722,219

Source: Various Census Reports, GOB.

The above figures show that following considerable population increase between 1872 and 1881, a steady decline set in between 1881 and 1921. However, official documents explain this trend in terms of the extremely unhealthy climate and physical conditions of Jessore resulting in a preponderance of malarial deaths (in 1921, 80 per cent of the deaths in the district were caused by malaria) and high female mortality at childbirth, rather than as a direct outcome of poverty.

### 3) Explanation of Poverty

#### a) Official Explanation

There is considerable divergence in official documents over the explanation of rural poverty during the colonial era. Thus extravagance, lethargy, litigation mania among cultivators, and unhealthy natural conditions of Jessore resulting in the preponderance of malaria are considered as the main reasons for the cultivators' poverty in some of the official documents (for example, O'Malley, 1912, 86-7). On the other hand, Momen (1925) strongly challenges these explanations: "He (the cultivator) is unfortunate, but not extravagant. Possibly, when the crops are good and he gets some ready money in hand, he is inclined to spend some money on an umbrella, a lantern, a coat, a good sari for his wife and some fish. This, however, we can hardly call extravagance. An umbrella is necessary to keep him comfortable during the rainy season, the lantern protects him from snake bite, and the sari brings a smile to the face of the hard-worked wife, which even a cultivator may be excused to long for and love to see. Nor is the cultivator litigious. He never goes to the court willingly unless he is driven to do so for the redress of some grievance....or to defend himself against the oppression of his landlord, when it becomes unbearable. It is only the half-educated upper class among the cultivators and the middlemen tenure holders who frequent the law courts" (p.70). According to Momen, the people were not innately lazy either, but "...stricken by malaria, have lost their physical vigour and energy and are incapable of hard work in the field or at home. Under normal conditions,

the district could produce double as much crops as it now produces. During the malarial season, there is such an epidemic of the disease among the people that it is a wonder how the cultivators at all manage to get their lands cultivated and sown. There is a dearth of labour everywhere, and the lands do not get proper treatment. A lot of land lies fallow, and those that are cultivated do not yield full crops" (p.21). However, Momen did not consider malaria as the primary cause of poverty: "I have heard officers and others who came to the district blame the poor villagers for being lazy and not making their surroundings sanitary by clearing jungle and digging wells to supply good water. They, however, forget that owing to poverty and disease these villagers are reduced to a state of callous inactivity, which renders them incapable of even nominal exertion" (p.20). And elsewhere: "...Namasudras and others who cultivate lands in the beels get bumper crops, are well fed and have greater resisting power against attacks of malaria...In the course of settlement operations, not a single officer of the Settlement Department and very few Kanungos suffered from repeated attacks of malaria, whereas among the menials very few escaped. In the town of Jessore, very few adult Bhadrals have got enlargement of the spleen and liver, whereas, among the poor classes it is an exception to find a man without an enlarged liver and spleen. Malaria has been causing havoc because of the poverty of the people. But for their poverty, the people could easily resist the germs of malaria from working into their system" (pp.20-1). However, although Momen was able to dispel some of the "colonial"

explanations of poverty, he failed to offer any alternative thesis for the growing poverty trend in the District over time which he so clearly brought out in his report.

Another important official explanation was due to F.L. Brayne (1931). According to him, rural poverty in India was because of (a) "ignorance", and (b) "bad habits" of the villagers. He, in fact, identified 50 "ignorances" and 50 "bad habits" of Indian villagers to prove his point. Other explanations offered by the colonial bureaucracy were over-population, an enervating and unpredictable climate, fatalism, usurious money lending, etc. (Curzon, 1904, 149 and 160; Dufferin, 1899, 240). Some of these were also echoed by Indian academics (for example, Vakil, 1933, 21-2). As was argued in Chapter 1, some of the factors identified in these "explanations" were merely manifestations of poverty. More importantly, since these explanations were devoid of any reference to the existing property relations internally and colonial relations externally, despite their limited validity, these served more as "ideology" in the service of colonial rule than as concrete explanation of Bengal's rural poverty. Also, these were not back<sup>ed</sup> up by any serious empirical work, so that their value was no more than that of "common sense" and impressions gathered in the course of limited and uninvolved contact with Bengal's countryside. Finally, these could not explain the relative poverty among the Indian people.

b) Nationalist Explanation

The nationalists obviously contested the colonial explanations (for details, see Chandra, 1966, Ch.1). However, like the officials, they rarely backed up their rebuttals by independent and concrete investigations. In their opinion, the main cause of India's poverty was the systematic and unilateral transfer of resources from India to Britain through various mechanisms. Propounded first by Naoroji in 1867 (Naoroji, 1887, 1901) this came to be known as the "Drain Theory". The main theme of this thesis was that as a consequence of the drain, not only did capital accumulation face formidable obstacles in India, but also India became an easy prey to foreign capital. This position was soon to be adopted by the nationalist movement. Thus, writing in Young India in 1928, Gandhi asserted: "The trade, the military, the currency, the railway and the revenue policy of the foreign government are directed deliberately to promote an exploitation such as the world has never witnessed. Poverty of India will never be removed so long as this exploitation continues unabated. He, therefore, who would explore the remedies for removing poverty, has to tackle first the question of stopping the continuous drain" (quoted in Vakil, 1933, 23). While such an explanation was well argued and documented, it was inadequate in several ways. Firstly, it generally avoided the manner in which foreign drain was inextricably linked with internal urban and rural class interests. Thus, R.C. Dutt (1901, iv) duly recognised the deleterious effects of the drain, but failed to link the

Zemindari system in Bengal with foreign drain. Secondly, the drain mechanisms were not fully identified: they generally restricted themselves to visible mechanisms and did not raise, for example, the question of "unequal exchange". Thirdly, they failed to locate the economic compulsions in the mother country and the world economy in favour of the drain. These issues are particularly important because the implication of the nationalist explanation was that once India attained political independence, such drain would cease and hence the poverty caused by it would be eradicated. But subsequent evidence has shown that poverty has continued to increase in the entire South Asian region, despite the political independence granted in India and Pakistan in 1947.

It is in the context of such inadequacies that R.P. Dutt's work, India Today (1947) deserves particular mention. Drawing upon Lenin's Imperialism (1970), Dutt showed clearly (a) the varying mechanisms of India's drain as commercial capital in Britain was transformed into industrial and finance capital, and (b) how such drain helped and was being helped by indigenous urban and rural propertied classes. The implication was clear: unless the present correlation of power and property was drastically reorganised, the drain could continue even after formal political independence.

However, the Dutt analysis is not without its weaknesses. Firstly, he did not take into account, dealing as he was with the sub-continent as one entity, uneven development before and under British rule, and hence the consequences and

possibilities of one region's development at the expense of the other. East Bengal, later to be known as East Pakistan between 1947 and 1971 and Bangladesh since 1972, is a case in point in this regard. Thus, apart from external drain, this region suffered from its hinterland position vis-a-vis Calcutta-based commercial and industrial development throughout British rule. Also, owing to expediencies of colonial rule, Bengal as a whole was economically and administratively discriminated against, whereas the opposite was true for certain provinces (for example, the Punjab) (Yunus, 1976). Secondly, like the nationalists, Dutt's substantiation is based entirely on secondary source materials. It is, no doubt, a Marxist analysis of India's economy in general and her poverty in particular, but devoid of any concrete class analysis of Indian society! Thirdly, he may have displayed a certain amount of economic determinism in that he avoided any discussion of the specific impacts of religion, caste, and other superstructural factors on Indian poverty. In short, Dutt's work, despite its significant contribution, suffers from the shortcomings of over-generalisations obtained through piecing together available secondary evidence. It was not, therefore, particularly helpful in explaining the specificities of Bengal's rural poverty. It is hoped that the present study identifies such specificities and contributes to their explanation.

## II. Poverty Study During the Pakistan Period

### 1. Measurement of Poverty

During this period, the quality of traditional government

documents on rural Bangladesh sharply declined. Thus, for example, the District Gazetteers brought out by the East Pakistan Government in the 1950s and 1960s generally lacked rigour and in some cases, were no more than banal plagiarism of Gazetteers produced during the colonial period. Similarly, owing to the slow pace of the revisional land settlement survey operations, very few settlement reports were compiled after 1947, and in any case these, unlike the colonial reports, have little to offer on rural poverty. As such, these were of no use in estimating the extent of poverty in rural Bangladesh during the period under study.

However, beginning in 1959, the Central Statistical Office of Pakistan started household income-expenditure surveys in Bangladesh. Called National Sample Surveys, these were discontinued in 1961. They were confined to rural areas and only a tiny fraction of the rural population was covered in the sample.

As a result, although these surveys paved the way for future attempts, no confidence can be placed in their results. The next round of surveys began in 1963-64, when several breaks were made with the past. First, both rural and urban areas were included in the survey; second, the relative sample sizes of rural and urban areas were to be chosen in such a manner that the combined figures for the country as a whole were to be self-weighted. Thirdly, the sampling fraction was much larger than in the earlier rounds of NSS. The sample chosen for each year was to be divided into four groups, one group to be covered

fully in each quarter of the year. Accordingly, these were called Quarterly Surveys of Current Economic Conditions (QSOCEC). There were no complete surveys for 1965-66. From 1966-67 up to the break-up of Pakistan in 1971, surveys were carried out for every single year. But full results of the survey for the area now called Bangladesh were published for only 1966-67. Thus, for the Pakistan period, complete income-expenditure data for Bangladesh are available for only two years, 1963-64 and 1966-67. As Bergan (1967) pointed out, the 1963-64 data had a number of serious shortcomings. The 1966-67 data were slightly better, in the sense that non-response bias was minimal and also definition of income was revised to bring it into close conformity with the theoretical concept. On the whole, the expenditure data were more reliable than the income data (see Osmani, 1978 for details). However, except for Bergan (1967), no one used these data during the Pakistan period in order to determine the level of inequality and poverty in Bangladesh. But even the Bergan study was confined to only one year, i.e. 1963-64. As such, it was of use only for inter-sectoral, but not inter-temporal comparisons. Thus, despite the surveys during the Pakistan period, very little progress was made at that time in the direction of poverty measurement based on these survey data.

Besides Bergan's inequality measurement for 1963-64, only three more studies relating to poverty measurement may be cited for this period: Khadija Huq (1965), Khan (1967), and Bose (1968). Khadija Huq examined the income distribution of only that section of the urban population which was liable to pay income

tax. The limitation of this study is obvious, since in Bangladesh the only people who are liable to pay direct taxes are the upper and middle income groups. Khan's study was partial in that he restricted his investigation to movement in real income of only industrial workers. The main focus of Bose's study was the level of living of the poorest section of rural Bangladesh (i.e. agricultural wage labourers) for the period 1949/50-1963/64. But in the process he also analysed the movement in the per capita income of rural and urban sectors as well as of Bangladesh as a whole for the same period. According to Bose's study, (a) real agricultural wages remained below the 1949 level through the 1950s and rose above the 1949 level for only a few years during the 1960s, and (b) per capita rural income declined, but per capita urban income steadily increased during this period, clearly indicating widening urban-rural disparity. Khan, on the other hand, found that during the period 1954-63, real wages of industrial workers fell sharply at the beginning, and although they picked up subsequently, they were still below the 1954 level at the end of the period. The main trend emerging from these two studies, i.e. declining economic wellbeing of urban and rural poor, as we shall soon see, fits in very well with the findings of poverty studies on this period carried out after Bangladesh's independence.

## 2) Explanation of Poverty

As in the area of poverty measurement, this period witnessed very little organised study on the explanation of poverty in Bangladesh. However, at different times, government documents as well as independent academic work tried to locate the causes behind the poor economic performance of Bangladesh as a whole.

The more important among these are (a) natural disasters like floods and cyclones; (b) transfer of resources to India through smuggling and other illegal means, and to West Pakistan through various deliberate discriminating policies of the Central Government, and (c) high population growth rate. Below we examine the validity of the first two explanations, since these are specific to Bangladesh and were not covered in Chapter 1. We shall take up the issue of high population growth rate in a subsequent chapter.

#### Natural Disasters

A 1954 government document commented: "...the above picture gives us some idea of the precarious and hand-to-mouth life of about 96 per cent of the people of the Province. The grimness of the life of these people is further aggravated by the incidence of storms and floods which frequently visit the Province" (GOEB, 1954, 2). This kind of official explanation continued throughout the Pakistan period, and one has only to go through official reports (for example, GOEP, 1969, 2 and GOEP, 1970, 1) and parliamentary records of the relevant period for numerous instances of such explanation being handed out by the government of the day whenever Bangladesh's poor economic condition had to be accounted for. However, this particular explanation did not cease with Bangladesh's independence. Thus the Awami League government blamed floods exclusively for the 1974 famine. Similarly, the Bangladesh Government's recent Two-Year Plan described Bangladesh as a "disaster prone economy" (GOBD, 1978, 9). Generally, the aid-giving agencies

also take a similar view. A 1974 USAID report commented: "Natural disasters make it extremely difficult for both government and donors to move from relief to a development strategy" (USAID, 1974, 15).

Between 1960 and 1971, there were nine major cyclones and tornadoes and six major floods in Bangladesh, causing about 250,000 deaths and loss of crops worth Tk.2,530 million (this excludes crop losses due to 1970 cyclones for which no figures are available) (Faruque, 1974, 27). Therefore, apparently, there is considerable empirical support behind the "natural disaster" hypothesis. However, such a hypothesis needs to be treated with the greatest of care. Firstly, natural disasters are not phenomena beyond human control and manipulation. Thus, as early as 1956, the Krugg Commission set up by the United Front Government in East Pakistan reported that floods in the Province could easily be controlled through carefully planned dredging, water conservancy and dam constructions (Saralananda Sen, 1971, 75). Also, the Chinese experience in flood control clearly demonstrates that it is quite feasible to tame rivers in the delta region through mainly labour-intensive technology. Therefore, the pertinent question to raise is: Under what socio-economic and socio-political conditions does a population successfully cope/fail to handle natural disasters, rather than taking these as given and uncontrollable? Secondly, natural disasters can, at the most, explain an extreme situation in a particular region at a given point in time, but not the overall secular trends in the economy. This is well illustrated

by the fact that there are marked differences in the capacities of various classes in the society to cope with natural disasters. However, given a poverty situation, natural disasters can and do aggravate it in several ways. Finally, according to Griffin's (1979) estimation, cyclical instability in food supplies owing to natural disasters is only 6.5 per cent for Bangladesh, and this is lower than the corresponding figures of several Asian countries. As such, the harmful effect of natural disasters on the Bangladesh economy may not be as high as it might appear at first sight.

#### Unilateral Transfer of Resources

The 1954 government report cited above has the following to note on resource transfer to India after the 1947 Partition: "They (i.e. Hindu merchants) had monopolised the wholesale and retail distribution of consumer goods and were solely operating the primary and assembling markets of agricultural produce. The community of merchants has continued to smuggle its capital from the Province into India by illegal means, and has therefore also created a very high demand for Indian currency, upsetting the ratio of foreign exchange, to the great detriment of the economy of the country" (p.5). And elsewhere: "The prices in East Bengal have, however, remained obstinately high, particularly for goods of Indian origin. One of the contributory causes of this has been the control of a large amount of Pakistani currency by local Hindu merchants, which they want to convert into Indian currency at any cost. The goods thus obtained from India are highly over-invoiced and upset the price mechanics of the Province basically" (p.5). According to a detailed study by A. Sadeque (1954, 23-4 and 31), the main sources of

Hindu evacuee capital were income of Hindu (especially jute) traders, sale proceeds of Hindu real estate property and Hindu zeminders' rent and lease values. He estimated that on average, such transfers amounted to Tk.380 million per year between 1948/49 and 1952/53, and which meant about 6 per cent of the yearly Provincial GNP during that period.

As Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan) moved into the 1960s, resource transfer to West Pakistan (as distinct from resource <sup>transfer</sup> to India) became the main theme around which Bangladesh's poor economic performance vis-a-vis that of West Pakistan began to be explained. Initially, the Central Government was reluctant to admit even the existence of inter-wing disparity. However, as the autonomy movement gathered momentum in East Pakistan, and findings of noted foreign and Bengali economists found their way into the popular press, the "disparity thesis" could no longer be ignored by the government, and ultimately found its place in the Pakistan Fourth Five-Year Plan (1970-75) document (GOP, 1970). The disparity literature is quite impressive in volume, especially when newspaper articles, booklets and pamphlets brought out before and during the 1971 liberation war, are also taken into account. Of these, the more noted ones are: Ansur Rahman (1968), Rehman Sobhan (1969), Mahbubul Haq (1963), Akhlaqur Rahman (1970), Arjun Sengupta (1971), Papanek (1967), Auspitz, Marglin and Papanek (1971), Lewis (1970), Power (1963), and Desai (1971).

Basically three main elements emerge out of the disparity literature quoted above. First, over the years, economic

disparity between East and West Pakistan, as expressed through real wages, per capita income, growth rate in GDP, performance of individual sectors of the economy, etc., widened sharply. Second, this became possible mainly because of deliberate discriminatory policies pursued by the Central Government in respect of allocation of development expenditure, foreign exchange and foreign aid, distribution of import licences, location of industrial investment, etc., and through underpricing of East Pakistan's agricultural products. Thirdly, as a consequence, trade, industry and governmental power became monopolised by West Pakistan, and Bangladesh became an "internal" colony, that is supplying cheap raw materials and foreign exchange for West Pakistan-based development and acting as a captive market, absorbing products of West Pakistani industries at prices several times higher than world market prices. According to one estimate (Desai, 1971), transfer of resources from East Bengal to West Pakistan during the period 1950/51-1964/65 was as follows.

TABLE 8 : Transfer of Resources from East Bengal to West Pakistan  
1950/51-1964/65

	in million Rupees		
	1950/51 1954/55	1955/56 1959/60	1960/61 1964/65
<u>Income on:</u>			
Exchange earning	636	533	62
Inter-wing trade surplus	81	142	212
Industrial investment	16	31	73
Total	733	706	437
Proportion of East Bengal's GNP (per cent)	7.3	5.4	1.9

Source: Desai (1971, 1038).

However, the above table excludes (i) debt services borne by East Bengal for foreign aid spent in West Pakistan, and (ii) Central Government expenditure in West Pakistan out of revenues raised in East Bengal. The actual size of the drain must, therefore, have been considerably larger.

In the light of the above, the reality of massive resource drain from Bangladesh to India, especially during the post-Partition period, and to Pakistan throughout the period 1947-71, cannot possibly be disputed. As such, external drain as an important cause of Bangladesh's continued poverty also appears as legitimate. However, the manner in which external resource transfer was analysed more or less repeated the "drain theory" used by the Indian nationalists during the pre-1947 independence struggle. Thus, as in the past, there was little effort in either political or academic circles to link external drain with "internal drain" caused by the existing socio-economic and socio-political structures in East Bengal's urban and rural sectors. In fact, during the entire Pakistan period, only three village studies were produced in Bangladesh (Beech, 1966; Bertocci, 1970, and Quadir, 1969), and none of these focused any attention on the poverty-perpetuating and -producing mechanisms in village society, and their urban and external prospects. Consequently, the entire disparity/drain thesis degenerated into an "ideology" in the service of first the Pakistani ruling class to hide its own resource transfer tentacles during the early years of Pakistani rule, and later of the Bengali rising bourgeoisie for its quick ascendancy to state power during the independence struggle.

### III. Poverty Study after Bangladesh's Independence

#### 1. Measurement of Poverty

In this regard only four studies have so far been reported, by Khan (1976), Burki and Streeten (1978) based on Khan (1977), Osmani (1978) and by Alamgir (1978). The latter study also attempts to explain poverty, and will, therefore, be reviewed in a separate section. The main findings of Khan are presented in the table below.

TABLE 9: Incidence of Rural Poverty in Bangladesh, 1963/64-75  
(percentages)

Year	Absolutely Poor*		Extremely Poor**	
	HH	Persons	HH	Persons
1963/64	51.7	40.2	9.8	5.2
1968/69	84.1	76.0	34.6	25.1
1975 (first quarter)	70.3	61.8	50.5	41.0

Source: Khan (1976, 15)

As may be seen from this table, (a) the proportion of extremely poor increased sharply and steadily throughout the period (five times between 1963/64 and 1975, he found this trend quite consistent with the movement of real agricultural wages during this period), and (b) the proportion of absolute poor increased by more than a third between 1963/64 and 1975, although between 1968/69 and 1975, this proportion declined. However, as the author admits

\* Per capita monthly income of Tk.23.61, corresponding to per capita calorie intake by the family of 1935 K.cals, i.e. 90 per cent of recommended intake.

\*\* Per capita monthly income of Tk.17.02, corresponding to per capita calorie intake by the family of 1720 K.cals, i.e. 80 per cent of the recommended intake.

the 1975 estimate is based on Household Expenditure Survey (HES) of only one quarter of 1975, and as such, "There is no way we can ascertain the possible direction of bias due to this factor". It is, therefore, quite possible to relate the observed decline in the proportion of absolute poor between 1968/69 and 1975 with this shortcoming. Also, there is contradiction between his 1977 "basic needs" exercise (Khan, 1977) and his 1976 estimate of poverty in rural Bangladesh. In the 1977 paper he argued: "The FAO estimate of calorie requirement for an average person in Bangladesh (based on weight, age and environmental temperature) is about 2150 per day. The requirement is much greater for households engaged in heavy physical labour. Typically, such families are located in the lower range of the income scale. To determine the basic need level of calorie intake, we must estimate the requirements of the lowest income groups" (p.82). Accordingly, he took per capita calorie consumption of 2500 per day as the basic need for Bangladesh. On the other hand, in the 1976 paper, he defined his poverty lines in relation to the above-mentioned FAO recommended minimum calorie need for Bangladesh. The poverty profile presented in the above table may, therefore, have failed to capture that section of the poor working people with calorie intake between 2150 and 2500. To the extent that among the rural poor there are far more working than non-working people (especially given the widespread use of female and child labour in poor families), Table 6 figures may also have underestimated the actual poverty situation.

Based largely on Khan's basic needs quantification exercise, Streeten and Burki came up with the following rough estimate of the "short fall population" in Bangladesh in relation to "core" basic needs.

TABLE 10 : Estimate of Short Fall Population (i.e. in Poverty) in Bangladesh

Item	Short Fall Population (percentage)
Food:	
Calorie	>50
Protein	>60
Clothing	20-25
Safe drinking water	40-45
Shelter	>50

Source: Streeten and Burki (1978, 419)

They concluded as follows: "If the basic needs targets were to be met in the next ten years, within the present structures, this would imply an 8 per cent rate of real growth in the average incomes of the absolute poor. Meeting the target over a period of 25 years implies a real growth in personal incomes of the absolute poor at the rate of 3.1 per cent per annum. Such high rates of growth in incomes do not seem possible without a fundamental change in development policies" (p.419). However, they failed to explain how fundamental changes were to be brought about in development policies within the present structures!

Osmani's study is confined to only the first two years, i.e. 1963/64 and 1968/69 and is also based on the government income-expenditure survey data used by Khan. In addition to constructing several poverty lines and estimating therefrom the

proportion in poverty, he also calculated the degree of inequality for the two years, and covered both rural and urban sectors. Although he developed more sophisticated estimation methods,\* his conclusion was similar to that of Khan, i.e. increasing rural poverty and inequality between 1963/64 and 1968/69. Neither Khan nor Osmani made any attempt at explaining the poverty trends they obtained, although in a later article with Griffin (1978), Khan wrote in the context of Third World poverty: "Our empirical work has demonstrated that poverty is associated with particular classes or groups in the community, e.g. landless agricultural labourers, village artisans, plantation workers, etc.....We do not believe it is possible to get very far in understanding the problems of the Third World until it is more widely accepted that there are classes in society and that the interests of the various classes often are in conflict" (p.302). And elsewhere: "Perhaps it would be better, however, to work with a structural definition of poverty, in which poverty is regarded as a product of a social system and reflects differences in access of various groups to sources of economic and political power" (p.303).

b) Explanation of Poverty

The only three studies in this direction are due to Alamgir (1978), Griffin (1979), and Arens and Beurden (1977). Published under the title, Bangladesh: A Case of Below Poverty Equilibrium Trap,

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\* He measures inequality through the use of modified Gini coefficients in order to be sensitive to price variations. His poverty line is defined as the minimum income at which a person does rather than can satisfy the minimum nutritional requirements.

Alamgir's book is divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter he expounds his main thesis: the majority in Bangladesh are caught up in a below-poverty equilibrium trap, which lies between the poverty and the famine lines, and that although this state of affairs is caused by the dominant groups in the society, they and their international backers are quite sensitive to any significant fall-out beyond the famine line, owing to fear of violent reaction from the affected majority. In Chapters II and III he presents empirical evidence on real per capita income, real wages, extent of inequality, polarisation and pauperisation. His figures for 1973/74 are derived from BIDS survey data, while those for the 1960s are estimates from the government income-expenditure data used by Khan and Osmani. The main trends emerging from his estimates are (a) the proportion below the poverty line declined between the early and the late sixties, but (b) between the late 1960s and 1973/74, there was a clear decline in the wellbeing of the majority of people. A number of issues need to be raised at this point. Firstly, as Osmani (1978, 135) correctly points out, the poverty indices proposed by him (i.e. GI and IIP) are illegitimate in that in developing these hybrid measures, he performed ratio scale operations on ordinate measures (i.e. Gini coefficient, Sen's Poverty Index, etc.), which are appropriate only for specific contexts, so that when combined with other indices these are rendered meaningless. Secondly, his finding that poverty in Bangladesh declined between the early and late 1960s is hardly acceptable in view of the exactly opposite findings by Khan (1976), Mujahid (1977) and Osmani (1978). As Mujahid and Osmani point out, Alamgir's

unique finding may have stemmed from one or more of the following:

- a) he did not adjust inter-household income distribution with household size;
- b) the optimal pattern of nutrients intake defined by Alamgir deviated much more severely in 1968/69 than in 1963/64, and
- c) Alamgir's price index was narrowly based: the consumption pattern of only agricultural labourers was taken into account and also the commodity list covered only a few items.

More important, his finding that poverty declined between 1963/64 and 1968/69 falls flat on his central thesis that dominant groups are constantly pushing more and more people below the poverty line. In fact, throughout the book, he provides no explanation for this serious contradiction. Thirdly, incredible as it might sound, the entire evidence on polarisation and pauperisation refer to a single point in time, namely 1973/74, and are not based on inter-temporal comparisons.

His weakest chapters are IV and V, i.e. where he attempts to explain Bangladesh's poverty. The main theme of Chapter IV is as follows: (a) there have been so far four dominant modes of production, i.e. primitive communal, feudal, feudal-colonial and semi-feudal semi-colonial; (b) under each of these society was divided into three classes, A, B and C. Members of A experienced increasing welfare in each epoch, members of B suffered decreasing welfare, and those in C did not undergo any consistent upward or downward movement, and (c) these social

groupings were caused by "internal dialectics" of class configuration (p.43). As is evident, his modes are too general and neat (as if taken out of an introductory Marxist political economy text) and hardly situated in the concrete conditions of South Asia, and least of all related to Bengal. Thus, there are no explanations or specific evidence on the following:

- i) the transition of primitive-communal mode to feudalism, by-passing slavery;
- ii) the specificities of Indian feudalism (thus, there is not even a passing reference to the Asiatic mode), and
- iii) the actual mechanisms of production, distribution and exchange, within a given mode, and of transition from one mode to another, and their implications for poverty (his "internal dialectics" argument for explaining the three classes is no more than tautology, because dialectics can generate more than one outcome, so that unless specified, any historical set of facts could refute or confirm this "theoretical construct").

In fact, at the existing level of knowledge of South Asia's economic history, especially beyond the British period, Alamgir's innumerable "authoritative" but unsubstantiated assertions throughout the chapter appear highly embarrassing. Unfortunately, he continues with this practice, even when discussing presentday Bangladesh society and economy. To give one typical example, at p.84 he suddenly comes up with a remarkable (but none the less key) assertion that in Bangladesh, the comprador and the national bourgeoisie are represented in the state machinery by the civil and the military bureaucracy respectively, but does

not back it up by any empirical evidence. Indeed, such substitution of empirical work by wholesale hypothesising has greatly devalued the academic content of this book. There are also serious lapses and confusions in Chapter IV. Thus he leaves out, for whatever unknown reasons, middle and rich peasants from his analysis of the presentday Bangladesh society! He does not either seem sure whether to accept Mao or A.G. Frank on the concept of the "national bourgeoisie")

His Chapter V is entitled "Laws of Motion in the Bangladesh Society", but as one quickly finds out, what he actually discusses are mostly no more than manifestations of poverty, and as such could have been easily fitted into Chapter III. But once again, since based on the data of a single year (i.e. 1973/74) these are quite meaningless even as manifestations of increasing poverty. In the section on urban domination, he displays grave inconsistency in that he completely breaks with his earlier zealous involvement with "class" and settles for urban-rural disparity, transcending its underlying class dimension, in explaining the growing rural poverty in Bangladesh.

In Chapter VI he provides an evaluation of state economic goals and specific attempts since 1972, and clearly brings out their anti-poor bias. However, in so far as he recognises that poverty and inequality in Bangladesh are structural issues, his prescriptions to the government of the day for taking up certain measures again appear as highly contradictory. To sum up, Alamgir's poverty study is a case of dubious methodology, inconsistent findings and poor explanations. It is also an application of Marxist framework of analysis with a free

interpretation of basic Marxist categories, so that in the process he ends up with no more than a few unsubstantiated "radical" statements on Bangladesh's poverty.

Griffin's article is basically an appraisal of the recent ILO poverty studies on a number of Asian countries (ILO, 1977), including Bangladesh. Through trend analysis of empirical evidence contained in these studies, he not only repudiates the earlier Ahluwalia (1978) finding that growth tends to reduce poverty (which, by implication, strengthens the "trickle down" hypothesis) but also effectively demonstrates that in general, growth and increased poverty go hand-in-hand in Asian countries. According to Griffin, there were three main causes behind this phenomenon (i.e. what he also calls "immiserisation growth"): concentration of productive wealth, especially land, in a few hands, high degree of inequality in income distribution as a consequence, and control by a small segment of the population instruments of the state and the use of these to further their own economic interests.

While there is little to disagree with in such an explanation, it needs to be pointed out that it is not specific enough. As Griffin himself showed, not all Asian countries studied fell under the category "growth-cum-inequality". Thus, Bangladesh was one clear case of "stagnation combined with increasing inequality". On the other hand, Taiwan and South Korea seemed to manage growth and reduction of income inequality simultaneously. As such, inequality in economic and political power were a necessary but not a sufficient condition for accentuating poverty in a country. For this to be a sufficient

condition, it has also to be combined with a particularly perverse pattern of appropriation and on utilisation of the economic surplus (i.e. actual income minus minimum subsistence requirements) by the predominant owners of productive wealth. On the other hand, there is a need to delineate the specific pattern of surplus appropriation and utilisation whereby even with significant inequalities in ownership of productive wealth and access to political power, a relatively better balance is achieved between income distribution and growth in some countries. Also, it is necessary to have a hard look at the actual structure of per capita growth claimed for most of the Asian countries studied, in view of the many methodological/data collection gaps under Third World conditions. Thus, unless the specific appropriation and utilisation processes are clearly brought out, the sheer "inequality in productive assets" argument may not stand up to the counter-argument that redistribution of productive assets may amount to no more than "equal sharing of poverty". Finally, although Griffin correctly locates the special role of political power (i.e. state) in the analysis of poverty, he does not link it up, by way of concrete analysis (i.e. based on empirical evidence) with either the underlying socio-economic structure or the international economic and political systems. Thus, for example, one cannot possibly explain the Taiwan and the South Korea phenomena without going into the cold war political environment of the 1950s and the particularly involved participation of the United States, in their economic and political development.

Jhagrapur (Arens and Burden, 1977) is perhaps the first village study in Bangladesh from an explicitly Marxist framework, and its focus is basically on the processes within the village society which cause and maintain poverty in rural Bangladesh. However, as a comprehensive poverty study, it suffers from a number of shortcomings. Firstly, owing to its heavy anthropological bias (and hence reliance mainly on participation-observation method), its quantitative analysis is very weak. Secondly, the authors do not specify the criteria for selecting their village. This is extremely important because for generalisations drawn from a single village study to be valid, the typicality of the selected village has necessarily to be ensured. Thirdly, it lacks historical perspective, a prime requisite for proper application of Marxist categories. On most issues, the study is confined to still shots of here and now, and its treatment of the transition process in rural society appears inadequate. For example, the authors are unable to bring out the changes over time in crucial aspects like productive forces, production relations and differentiation among the peasantry, etc. There is, of course, no doubt that given the general lack of any benchmark data, reconstruction of the past rural society is now a difficult proposition. And yet, it could be argued that since the authors stayed in the village for more than a year, they could have generated a wealth of relevant data through memory recall and cross-examination of carefully selected informants. Since this is not a very satisfactory method, information obtained through this method could be checked against official documents like Settlement Reports,

Thak Survey and Revenue Survey village maps, rent rolls, village co-operative records, etc. Finally, the authors fail to link the unit under study (i.e. the village Jhagrapur) with the external world. In Chapter 19 they list large land-owners, big merchants, high government officials, members of the Awami League, etc., as the forces responsible for the poverty of the Bangladesh peasantry during Sheikh Mujib's rule. However, throughout the book, there is not even a fleeting mention of how these internal forces are linked with interests originating outside the formal national boundaries. Given the continued colonial and neo-colonial relationship of Bangladesh vis-a-vis not only old and new metropolises, but also regional powers, it is crucially important to evaluate the contribution of external forces in shaping her internal class structure and resource mobilisation. One would have expected, therefore, from this study an analysis of the implications of foreign aid, foreign trade (including smuggling), private foreign investment, and other overt and covert external economic and political relations, for the Bangladeshi peasantry in general, even if it could not be pinpointed in the specific context of Jhagrapur. On foreign aid, the stand taken by the authors seems to be: "Do not give aid to Bangladesh because it does not reach the rural poor". The point is to understand why, despite this, aid is given and will continue to be given to Bangladesh under the existing correlation of internal forces. However, despite these weaknesses, Jhagrapur stands out as a significant contribution to the understanding of rural poverty in Bangladesh.

From the foregoing discussion on the state of poverty studies in Bangladesh, the following may be summed up. Firstly, in general, so far poverty research efforts have been directed more towards measurement than explanation of poverty. Secondly, these measurement exercises generally indicate an accentuation of poverty and inequality in Bangladesh over time, although there are considerable differences among these over magnitudes of poverty and inequality at different points in time, as also over poverty trend between the early and the late 1960s. These differences are attributable to differences in estimation techniques, choice of data, and assumptions made in the process of applying the estimation techniques. By themselves, these studies serve little purpose, because they are not only silent on the "whys" of poverty, but also on "who's who" among the poor. Thirdly, the explanatory studies are characterised by unsound theoretical framework, weak empirical support, lack of emphasis on the historical perspective, failure to delineate the various levels of analysis, etc.

CHAPTER THREE  
THE SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF  
THE PRESENT STUDY

As mentioned earlier, the main focus of this study is on explanation of the processes which cause, aggravate and main<sup>tain</sup> rural poverty in Bangladesh. We noted in Chapter I that bourgeois explanations of poverty are grossly inadequate, and as such there is a need to postulate and test an alternative framework for analysing rural poverty in Bangladesh. In Chapter II, the following were observed: (a) in recent years, the major emphasis has been on measurement of poverty in Bangladesh. Not that this is unimportant. But a country which is derided as an "international basket case" (Henry Kissinger, 1971, quoted in Gurtov, 1974, 186), "Malthusia" (Austin Robinson, 1974, 647), "test case for development" (Faaland and Parkinson, 1976), etc., or where stark poverty on a mass scale is apparent even to the naked eye, the need for explanation obviously takes precedence over the need for measurement. In any case, most of these measurement studies are based on extrapolation of government data and not on direct surveys carried out by the authors themselves. However, the following two trends are apparent from these studies and other national level statistics (see Appendix E). Firstly, according to both relative and absolute poverty measures, there has been a clear increase in poverty in rural Bangladesh over time. Secondly, poverty has been increasing within the context of general stagnation in the economy as expressed through movement of indices like per capita GDP, per capita food availability, per capita industrial production, etc. over time (see also Griffin and Khan, 1973). (b) In general, this phenomenon has been left largely unexplained, or where explanation has been attempted, a number of inadequacies were apparent. Firstly, fundamental causes were left unexplored. Secondly, the levels of explanation and their inter-

connection were not identified and delineated properly. Thirdly, empirical evidence was not marshalled in support of explanation, i.e., theory was based on abstractions and not tested against empirical evidence. Finally, most explanations lacked any historical perspective.

In this study, an attempt will be made to explain rural poverty in Bangladesh at three distinct levels:

- a) forces within the rural society responsible for rural poverty;
- b) forces within the urban sector responsible for rural poverty;
- c) international dimensions of rural poverty in Bangladesh.

In delineating the forces within the rural society, the Marxist concepts of "mode of production" and "socio-economic formation" have been employed. A mode of production is an articulated combination of "relations of production" and "forces of production", structured generally by the domination of the former. The relations of production define the specific relations people enter into with one another in the course of production, distribution and exchange. In more concrete terms, these relate to (a) social distribution of the means of production; (b) surplus value\* appropriation; (c) utilisation of surplus value. It is according to one's position vis a vis these three aspects that one's objective class position is determined in the society. In other words, it is on the basis of the above that the society is stratified into various classes, with distinct and conflicting interests.

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\* Marx (1967a, Vol.I, 171) defined surplus as the difference between current output and necessary product, the latter being the amount required for reproduction of labour power, but keeping in view the existing social norms. Baran (1967, 42) on the other hand, defined actual surplus as the difference between actual current output and actual current consumption. It is thus smaller than Marx's surplus and consists of that part of Marx's surplus which is being accumulated actually and does not include consumption by the rich, government spending on administration, military establishments, etc. Thus it is identical to conventional (Keynesian) saving. Unless otherwise specified, we have used Marx's concept of surplus throughout the text.

The forces of production refer to the mode of appropriating Nature, that is, to the labour processes, in which a determinate raw material is transformed into a determinate product. The elementary factors of labour processes are (a) objects of work (e.g. land, forests, mines, etc.); (b) tools of work (e.g. plough, tractor, fertilisers, etc.), and (c) the personal activity of man, i.e. work itself (e.g. production knowledge, labour productivity, organisation of labour, etc.). At a given point in time, a number of modes of production may be identified within a society, but then there is always a dominant mode of production.

A mode of production also gives rise to an appropriate superstructure, consisting of a combination of definite values and institutions in the religious, social, cultural, juridical and political spheres. Once formed the superstructure, in a limited sense, may attain some degree of autonomy and also reinforce the mode of production responsible for its creation. In this regard, the role of the state deserves special mention. The mode(s) of production together with the superstructure constitute the overall socio-economic formation.

The productive forces are the most mobile elements in the mode of production; these are continually changing since people are constantly improving the instruments of labour and accumulating production experience. So long as the relations of production correspond to the level of the productive forces, the latter develop uninterruptedly. However, relations of production change at a much slower pace, and these after a time inevitably become a fetter on the further growth of production and productive forces, resulting in anarchy and stagnation in the economy. At the political level, this contradiction between productive forces and production relations manifests itself in antagonistic class relations, culminating in more naked interventions by the state to maintain the

status quo in production relations. In other words, in such situations, the state, in the service of the ruling classes, may attempt changes in productive forces, but little or no change in production relations.

To sum up, delineation of the forces within the rural society responsible for rural poverty will consist in the examination of changes in (a) productive forces, (b) production relations, and (c) super-structure in the rural society over a period of time, and their implications for (i) social production in the various sectors, and (ii) distribution of the social product among various classes in the society. The essential assumption here is that reduction of poverty is directly related to greater production and more equitable distribution of the social product. For this purpose, data obtained from an intensive study of a village have been used. The justification for a single village study, the criteria used for selecting the particular village (along with its location, extent and lay-out) and the methodology adopted for data collection have been detailed in a later section of this chapter.

Examination of the forces within the urban sector responsible for rural poverty will consist essentially in testing the validity of the following two diametrically opposite hypotheses:

- a) There is a definite "urban bias" in the overall economic policies being pursued in Third World countries, and this constitutes the main cause for rural poor staying poor; this "urban bias" is the result of an alliance between the urban poor and urban rich against the entire rural sector (Lipton, 1977).

- b) Urban bias is a myth. The beneficiaries of state economic policies in the Third World are the urban and the rural rich, with urban and rural poor being generally excluded from the benefits of these policies. As such, what is paramount in state economic policies is "class bias" (Byres, 1979, 210-44).

Examination of international dimensions of rural poverty in Bangladesh will test the validity of the following hypothesis:

- a) There has been a net outward flow of real resources from the country through various legal (e.g. debt servicing, unequal foreign trade, devaluation, brain drain, repatriation of super-profits of private foreign investments, etc.), and illegal (smuggling, currency rackets<sup>e</sup>, invoice manipulation etc.) means. Consequently, there has not only been loss of resources, but also capital could not fructify within the national boundaries, thus adversely affecting production.
- b) The inflow of resources in the shape of foreign aid, private foreign investment, remittances from abroad, foreign exchange earning through international trade, etc., have generally found their way into unproductive channels and benefited only the urban and rural rich.

In testing the hypotheses listed under urban and international dimensions of poverty, mostly secondary data have been used.

#### Methodology and Field Work Problems in Collecting Primary Data

##### 1. Village Selection and Data Collection

The emphasis of this study is on processes which cause and maintain poverty rather than measurement of poverty. As such, as long as (a) historical perspective is maintained, and (b) the village selected is typical of the majority of Bangladeshi villages, one village study is sufficient to yield the relevant data. As a

popular rural Bengali saying goes: "One needs to press only one grain to find out if all the rice in the pot has been boiled". In any case, cost and other subjective factors would not permit intensive study of a number of villages. While there are recognised regional variations in rural Bangladesh in soil, climate, natural vegetation, elevation, etc., these are not as pronounced as those in a big country like India. Also, in contrast to India, Bangladesh is characterised by a unique religious and linguistic homogeneity (of the total population 80 per cent and 95 per cent are Muslims and speak Bengali as their mother tongue, respectively).

The village selected (Magura) had the following characteristics which made it representative of the majority of the 68,000 Bangladesh villages:

- 1) It was not a peri-urban village. The nearest township of Narail was about 11 miles away, and Narail itself came to have a town committee only in the 1960s.
- 2) It was not a recently inhabited village. As the Thak survey and Revenue Survey maps (see Appendices C and B) show, this village existed before 1856.
- 3) It was not inhabited exclusively by either the poor or the rich, as with some villages.
- 4) It was not a "hot house" village, i.e. falling under various experiments, action programmes, development schemes undertaken by the BARD, World Bank, USAID, DANIDA, SIDA, Dutch Government, etc. On the other hand, it was not either completely out of the purview of governmental development efforts.

- 5) It was not an off-shore, coastal, mountainous or tribal village.
- 6) It did not fall into one of the known acutely poverty-stricken regions of the country (such as Rangpur, which has been affected by famine twice since 1972).
- 7) Hindu-Muslim proportions in this village were not too widely off the national proportions.

In addition, the selected village had two additional characteristics:

- a) the Hindu population was composed of various castes;
- b) a number of non-agricultural occupations co-existed along with agriculture.

The selected village was about 3 miles from the residential quarters\* of the study team. This provided the necessary detachment to undertake the work. On the other hand, the distance made the investigation tedious and time consuming. The data were collected over a period of about one year, from February 1977 to March 1978. In June-July 1978, all suspected data (which comprised about 5 per cent of the total data) were rechecked and corrected. Five research assistants (three male and two female)\*\* were deputed for the study, and between them and the author, they covered all the data collection. It needs to be mentioned here that crucial aspects of

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\* The residential quarters were built before commencing data collection. This was necessary for two reasons. Firstly, female investigators could not be persuaded to come to the village unless assured of minimum privacy. Secondly, and more important, in the absence of separate quarters, the hospitality of the rural rich would have become almost unavoidable, and this would have meant the loss of the independence and neutrality required for conducting the research.

\*\* Female investigators had to be employed in order to interview village women, most of whom would not even appear before, let alone speak to male strangers.

field work, namely, village selection, recruitment and training of research assistants, formulation of the general framework of investigation, preparation and testing of questionnaires, work schedules and all other investigation materials and selection of research methods (and personnel) to be used for different aspects of the study were performed exclusively by the author. Of the actual data collection work, about 30 per cent was completed by the author personally, but the remainder was carried out under his close supervision and direction. In fact, during the field work period, which in all lasted about one-and-a-half years, the author spent, on an average, about 25 days in a month in the study area. In June-July 1978, the author personally rechecked all suspect data. In other words, the entire responsibility for the field work lies with the author alone.

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## 2. Methodology

In obtaining the data, various methods were employed: community, survey, complete household census, interviews, observations, biographies, perusal of official and private records and maps, and continuous cross-examination sessions with selected informants. The latter were carefully chosen from among knowledgeable villagers with a high sense of integrity and objectivity. The group composition varied according to the topic, and at times groups/persons were separately cross-examined on the same topic. The sessions were held mostly in the afternoons, either in the village or at the study team's residential quarters at Maizpara. When held at the latter venue, it was usually on days when informants came to Maizpara Hat for shopping

on their own. There were no monetary incentives as such, but they were generally looked after whenever they got into any serious difficulty; also they were always entertained with light refreshments during the discussion sessions. One community survey and two household censuses (one devoted specifically to income and expenditure) were carried out through administration of detailed questionnaires lasting for about four months.\* Survey questionnaires were administered according to the respondents' convenience with respect to time, duration and place. Cross-examination sessions with selected informants and other investigations followed these two surveys, that is, well after the investigators, in the process of the surveys, became sufficiently acquainted with the salient characteristics of the village.

It will be noticed that data for 1951 and 1961 are mostly in round figures. This was because in arriving at these data, selected informants were asked to provide approximate answers (and if that were not possible, at least indicate the trend over time) for these years on the basis of 1977 data, obtained through straight household census. Wherever possible, this procedure was also followed during the household census. The main difficulty in the latter respect was that many households of today have no continuity with the past owing to in-and-out migrations, partition, extinction, etc. In order to facilitate recall, only those dates which people remembered clearly were chosen (thus 1951 and 1961 were the years of land reform legislation). In reconstructing the past rural scene, extensive use was made of official and private records. However, it was found that official data were mostly less accurate than the "intelligent guesstimates" of the villagers which were, at times, no doubt blurred by lapses in memory recall.

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\* See Appendix F

### 3. Field Work Problems

There was no overt opposition to field work at Magura, owing to past familiarity with the area, strong administrative backing and rapport with a section of the rural power structure at the personal level.\* However, there was all along a strong tendency among the rural rich to hide information on their assets, and their various economic and extra-economic relations with the poor people all for very understandable reasons. In the beginning, the poor people also tried to inflate the extent of their poverty, in the belief that this would attract government relief. At times, the poor villagers refused to part with information, for example on money lending, owing to fear of reprisals. But once the purely academic purpose of the study was explained through several public meetings and personal contacts, they extended full co-operation. However, this was not so with the richer people, so that information volunteered by them was especially checked against official records and information obtained through selected informants.

A posture of strict neutrality, respect for the social, religious and cultural milieu of the rural society and generally helpful attitude towards all sections of the local people were also extremely important in ensuring the collection of quality data. In this regard, some of the concrete measures taken were:

- a) voluntary part-time teaching in the local high school by the research investigators;
- b) distribution of free medicines for common ailments;
- c) pleading with local officials for redressing individual and community grievances;

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\* The author was Sub-Divisional Officer of Narail in 1970-71, <sup>as</sup> a member of the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP).

- d) generally low profile life style (this meant, among other things, simple living, inoffensive public appearance, especially by female investigators, strict formality in the relationship between male and female investigators, etc.);
- e) non-interference in local groupings, disputes and rivalries, and
- f) above-board behaviour in financial and personal dealings with the local people.

4. Location, Extent and Lay-out of the Selected Village

Magura village is located in the south-western district of Jessore (sub-division: Narail, Thana: Narail, Union: Maizpara). The journey to this village from Dacca is relatively easy: by air to Jessore (160 miles), then by bus/autorickshaw/jeep to Narail (21 miles), and finally to Magura by boat (15 miles), during the rainy season, or rickshaw van (11 miles) during the winter months.

The present village is bounded on the west by the village of Kalukhali, on the south by the villages of Poradanga and Loknathpur, on the south by the village of Kathalbaria, on the east by Tarashi village, and on the north by Dariaghata village. The extent of the village has been defined according to villagers' perception of the same, which is a socio-economic one, that is, villagers see their village as not simply a cluster of residential quarters, but comprising also agricultural lands, water bodies, jungle, waste land, places of worship, educational institutions, playgrounds, graveyards, etc. Magura is part of the Khatour Magura Mouza, the latter being the revenue village. According to the Revenue Survey of 1856-7, the total area of this revenue village was 1,656.8 acres, i.e., more

than three times the area of the present village. It is quite possible that the original village conformed to the boundaries of this revenue village, but we could not ascertain when this split into three distinct villages, namely, Magura, Kalukhali and Dariaghata came about. The residential part of the village is divided into eight neighbourhoods (Paras). <sup>of?</sup> One ~~these~~, five (Dai Para, Molla Para, Purba Para, Madhya Para and Bagh Para) are inhabited by Muslims, while the remaining three (Kayestho-Brahmin Para, Tanti Para and Malo Para) are exclusively Hindu neighbourhoods. The salient characteristics of the village are shown on the village map in Appendix D.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTIVE FORCES

In order to live, people must have food, clothing, housing, and other material means. People must work and produce, if these are to be acquired. In fact, a society will collapse if it ceases to produce material wealth. It can, therefore, be also argued that if a particular society's level of production is very low, the amount of material wealth that can be made available for distribution, in order to satisfy the needs of its members, will be grossly inadequate (although the converse is not necessarily true; indeed, increased production, as expressed through rising per capita production, may not ensure satisfaction of even the rudimentary needs of an increasing proportion of the population; see, for example, Keith Griffin, 1979, for empirical evidence in this regard). Other important ways in which the level of production can affect a poverty situation are through firstly price spiralling; secondly, reduction in employment (which also means a decrease in "effective demand") and most important a low investible surplus (a large investible surplus is vitally necessary for expanded reproduction). As such, at one level, it is possible to explain poverty simply in terms of a society's actual production capacity trend over a period of time (while at another level, the particular production capacity trend itself has to be accounted for).

As noted in Chapter 3, the production process includes three elements (collectively known as productive forces), namely:

- i) People as agents of production (human labour) i.e. level of production knowledge and experience as acquired through formal and informal education and training, labour productivity as expressed through various demographic characteristics (for

example, dependency ratio), general state of health and disease, intake of calories and protein, etc. and labour organisation, as expressed through degree of labour specialisation, division and socialisation.

- ii) Various objects of work (i.e. in the context of our village, land, water bodies, flora, fauna, climatic and soil characteristics, etc.).
- iii) Various tools of production (i.e. in the context of our village, all instruments, implements, accessories, materials, physical infra-structure, etc. used for agriculture, weaving, fishing, boating, etc. and exchange of goods).

It is, therefore, of crucial importance to delineate their quantitative and qualitative changes and interrelationships over time in order to capture a society's capacity and level of production, and their poverty implications. Thus, while human labour is the most important element of the productive forces, (as Engels put it, "labour created man himself"), human beings are also the consumers of all production; a population devoid of proper production knowledge, experience, and organisation will be an ineffective productive force, but since certain essential consumption requirements have to be met irrespective of productive capacity, an imbalance will have been created between production and human needs. Similarly, short term considerations of production may lead to non-regenerative depletion of the objects of labour (i.e. environmental pollution and destruction), thereby adversely affecting production and the quality of human labour, in the long run. Finally, under a given level of technology (as expressed through the quality of human labour and tools of labour), there is a definite range within which human labour can be combined with objects of labour, without lowering per capita output. In other words, when this range is exhausted, there must be improvement in technology or else stagnation

will ensue.

This chapter will be devoted to a detailed examination of the above aspects of productive forces in the context of the village of Magura over time, and their implications for production, and what is available for distribution. And at the same time an effort will be made to indicate the production potentialities of this village, so as to evaluate the extent of the gap between current production and production potential.

A People as Agents of Production

1 Population

TABLE 1(A)

Population Growth at Magura, 1856-1977\*

Year	Total No. of Households	Total Popn.	Average Size of Household	Male	Female	Hindu	Muslim
1856**	50	250	5.00	n.a.	n.a.	162	88
1951	135	940	6.96	500	440	540	400
1961	143	950	6.64	505	445	450	500
1977	156	961	6.16	482	479	278	683

\* The population figures in the Census Reports of 1921 and 1931 are Mouza (revenue village) wise and hence have not been included.

\*\* Thak Survey, 1856 (see Appendix C).

Thus, in the 95 years between 1856 and 1951, the population almost quadrupled. However, during the period 1951-77, village population remained almost stationary. This was mainly because of Hindu migration to India after 1947 (see Table IB). Also, the Muslim population registered an increase from 400 in 1951 to 683 in 1977, i.e. about 2.6% average annual growth rate. Finally, while in the period 1856-1951,

the average household size continued to increase, in the second period, 1951-77, this showed a marked decline, indicating nucleation of families rather than decline in fertility.

TABLE 1(B)

Extent of In and Out Migration, 1947-77

Type	Period	No. of Households	No. of Persons
Permanent Hindu Migration to India	1947-58	35	184
	1959-71	12	53
	1972-77	9	30
	1947-77	56	267
Migration to Other Places Within Bangladesh	1947-77	11	47
Migration to Magura from Other Places	1947-77	8	31

Apart from depressing the population growth rate, Hindu migration to India also reduced the village's total stock of production knowledge and assets. This is clearly attested by Table 2A on the inter-temporal changes in occupation structure. Thus, a decline in weaving and only a slight increase in fishing as the main occupation between 1951 and 1977 can partly be explained by permanent migration to India of a large number of experienced Hindu weavers and fishermen after 1947.

TABLE 1(C)

Distribution of Population by Age, Sex and Religion, 1977

Age Distribution (in years)	Total	Male	Female	Hindu	Muslim
0 - 5	200	86	114	50	170
6 - 10	178	87	91	37	121
11 - 15	130	64	66	38	92
16 - 20	102	54	48	33	69
21 - 30	123	74	49	40	83
31 - 40	84	37	47	27	57
41 and above	144	80	64	53	91
Total	961	482	479	278	683

The above table brings out the following important trends. Firstly, 52.7% of the village population was 15 years of age and below. Such a high proportion of youthful population meant that the effective working force was relatively small, and this had adverse implications for production. Secondly, since female labour was grossly under utilised in that they could not, in general, work outside the household (see Chapter 7), the effective working force was even smaller, and the dependency ratio (DR) calculated on the basis of the formula

$$DR = \frac{\text{Total Population} - \text{Male Adults}^*}{\text{Male Adults}}$$

works out at 2.92. According to straight survey, there were in all 278 "earning" persons in this village, and on this basis, the dependency ratio comes out to a further unfavourable figure of 3.46.

\* Male Adults = Males of age 16 and above.

There were 13 households whose "earning capability" was further jeopardised in that the household head (the main earning member in most cases) was either female or old/sick/disabled male.

## 2 Occupation

TABLE 2(A)

Occupation Structure, 1951-1977

Main Occupation*	1951		1977	
	Number of Households	Percentage of Households	Number of Households	Percentage of Households
A <u>Agricultural Sector</u>	95	70.30	111	71.15
B <u>Non-Agricultural Sector</u>				
Fishing	10	-	19	-
Weaving	10**	-	9	-
Trade and Commerce	13	-	4	-
Transport	2	-	4	-
Hired Non-Agricultural Labour	-	-	-	-
Others	5	-	9	-
Non-Agricultural Sector	40	29.70	45	28.85
Total	135	100	156	100

\* Main occupation, as perceived by household head.

\*\* In 1945 there were 60 households with weaving as either main or subsidiary occupations; decline in weaving took a sharp turn in 1947 and after, owing to large scale Hindu migration to India.

Agriculture continued to be the main occupation during the period under study, and in fact, the percentage of households with main occupation as agriculture registered a slight increase, from 70.3% in

1951 to 71.15% in 1977. It may be mentioned here that according to the Thak Survey of 1856 (see Appendix C ), the percentage of the village population, with agriculture as main occupation in that year was only 60%, showing more clearly the decline of non-agricultural occupations and increased dependence on agriculture over time. In the non-agricultural sector, weaving and trade as a main occupation declined during the period 1951-77, from 7.4% to 5.7% of the total households in the case of weaving, and from 9.7% to 2.5% of the village households in the case of trade and commerce. This high dependence on agriculture and loss of occupational diversification had obvious adverse implications for the growth of productive forces and product diversification.

#### Specialisation and Division of Labour

There are a number of obvious impediments to a rational division of labour. Firstly, in most households, there is a strict division of labour between men and women: the men work outside the homestead (cultivation, marketing, etc.) while women remain at home and take care of grain processing, child rearing, household management, etc. How strictly this is followed depends mainly on the socio-economic position of a household. Thus, better off households are able to keep their female members in strict seclusion and besides save them from physical labour by hiring other women to do the work. On the other hand, widows, divorced women and women of land poor classes are not as such restricted. The latter generally have less work to do inside the homestead as there is little or no agricultural produce brought to be processed and very little food to prepare. These women, therefore, seek outside work if they can get it. Secondly, among the Hindus, caste restricts occupational mobility considerably. All in all, such irrational sex and caste labour

divisions act as obstacles to development of productive forces and production (see also Chapter 7).

Division of labour and specialisation are generally very low: there is multiplicity in occupations as well as in the roles within the main occupation. For example, agricultural land is owned by 115 households but it is the main occupation of only 92 of these households. Of the 19 households with fishing as the main occupation, 8 own agricultural land. Of the 9 households with weaving as the main occupation, 8 own varying quantities of agricultural land.

Similarly, the role of most villagers within the main occupation is multiple; for example, 53.1% households whose main occupation is agriculture (111) has more than one role within agriculture:

TABLE 2(B)

Role Within Agriculture as Main Occupation

Role within Agriculture	Number of Households
Cultivates some of own land and share crops out rest	11
Cultivates own land plus share crops in some land	34
Does manual labour as well supervises labour	12
Share crops in as well as share crops out	2
Total number of households with more than one role	59

This low level and irrationality in the division of labour have obviously adverse implications for growth in production experience, production organisation and production.

### Extent of Social Labour

Labour in various agricultural and non-agricultural production was not socially organised. The only genuine labour cooperation in the village (despite the existence of various government sponsored cooperatives) was the 'Badli' among 4 households, i.e. in peak agricultural seasons, these got together and helped one another with the work. Thus, in the agricultural sector, the tiny plots were cultivated by one or more persons at different times, and the scope of social labour (i.e. a large number of persons working together in an interdependent manner to maximise production and reduce time and costs) was extremely limited.

### Level of Food Consumption and Labour Productivity

Before discussing the general level of food consumption at Magura, it is necessary first to present the national averages as a reference point. Two national surveys have been carried out so far (in 1962-64 and 1975-76). Comparison of the two surveys yields the following picture\*:-

a) Average caloric intake (per person/per day) decreased from 2251 to 2094 K cal, i.e. by 7%. The average intake now is 93% of the requirement<sup>2</sup> (2,248 K cal). 59% of the households were deficient.

b) Average protein intake (per person/per day) has remained the same i.e. 58.5 gm; 60% households were deficient with respect to the requirement\*\* (i.e. 43.3 gm per person per day).

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\* Nutrition Survey of Rural Bangladesh (1975-76), Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, University of Dacca, Dacca, December 1977, p. 196.

\*\* Based on the findings of FAO/WHO Expert Committee as quoted in op. cit., pp. 30-32.

c) Calcium intake has remained the same (305 mg per person per day); 81% households were deficient with respect to requirement \* (i.e. 500 mg per person per day).

d) 89% households were now deficient in vitamins (93% of the households were deficient in vitamin C).

e) 70% households were at present deficient in iron.

The nutrition survey for Magura was based on the recall method. \*\* The sample consisted of 21 households, with 3 households drawn from seven landholding categories (see Chapter 5). Two points in time were chosen, namely (i) February, that is, the harvest time and (ii) June-July, that is, the leanest period of the year. Average per person/per day intakes of two items, namely energy and protein, were computed for each of the landholding categories, and these were then used for calculating the averages for the entire village. The following results were obtained:

a) Average energy intake (i.e. per person per day) was 2,079.69 K cal, i.e. slightly below the national average.

b) Average protein intake (i.e. per person per day) was 53.66 gms i.e. again below the national average.

Although the inaccuracy associated with the recall method can hardly be disputed, the following interrelated findings confirmed the validity of the above figures:

a) All respondents thought that 50 years ago, average food consumption was decidedly better.

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\* Based on the findings of FAO/WHO Expert Committee as quoted in op. cit., pp. 30-32.

\*\* The gap between recall and consumption did not exceed 24 hours.

b) Over the years, a number of factors have combined to reduce fish availability in this region. Firstly, the river system in the region became moribund owing to natural silting and unplanned construction of bunds. Secondly, unplanned use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides adversely affected natural fish breeding. Thirdly, the village ponds and tanks were not properly maintained. Thus, given a declining per capita supply, fish prices rose rapidly; consequently fish went out of the reach of most villagers.

c) Traditionally, the Hindu population, which at one time constituted the majority in this village, were averse to protein from cattle and poultry. However, between 1972 and 1977, livestock production in this village increased by about 50% owing to the following reasons:-

- i) In 1971, there were serious livestock losses given the exigencies of war and floods; this coupled with the pressing need of some livestock varieties for agricultural production and transport (for example bullocks) provided the pressure for making up the loss.
- ii) The availability of fish, the alternative protein source, sharply declined after independence, so that this also gave pressure for increasing animal protein production.
- iii) The general price spiral since 1972 also pushed some villagers into taking greater interest in livestock rearing.
- iv) In 1971, most Hindus of this village took shelter in West Bengal where they found little prejudice among the local Hindus against poultry rearing. This experience might also have contributed towards a remoulding of their traditional attitude (in fact, since 1972, there has been a significant change among Hindus of this village in this respect).

On the other hand, despite increased production of animal protein in the village, the general level of consumption of animal protein did not increase. Firstly, given the constraints of livestock feeds, initial investment and frequent outbreaks of poultry epidemics, successful rearing was confined mostly to the wealthier households. Secondly, rearing of livestock by poorer households was mainly for sale rather than for consumption, in order to supplement their low incomes. Finally, in any case, as indicated in Table 3 below, the per-household livestock availability in this village in 1977 had not caught up with the 1970 (i.e. a normal year before the 1971 war of liberation) level. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that there has been, in general, a clear decline over time in the average intake of protein and calories in this village. Its adverse implications for labour productivity and production hardly need any treatment, especially since the general level of such intake was, to begin with, already quite low.

TABLE 3

Per-Household Livestock Availability at Magura, 1977

Description	Per Household Availability in 1977	National per Household Availability in 1970*	Per Household Availability in Jessore in 1970*
Cattle and Buffaloes	1.77	2.53	2.68
Goats and Sheep	0.96	0.91	1.52
Poultry	1.98	7.58	na

\* Source: pp. 110-1, Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh, 1975, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

State of Health, Water Use and Sanitation, and Labour Productivity

Fifty years ago, the most common diseases for Magura were malaria, kalazar, cholera, small-pox, typhoid and dysentery. Malaria was, in fact, a curse for the entire Jessore district, and Magura was no exception. Nearly 80% of villagers then suffered from it. Besides causing death on a large scale, it also had, as Momen vividly records, particularly deleterious effects on the victims' and survivors' ability to undertake physical work. Since 1958, malaria, on an epidemic scale, has stopped. After 1970, it became a rare disease. This became possible mainly because of the cheap availability of quinine and various government anti-malarial measures. In 1932, cholera took a heavy toll in Magura, and village elders still recall that year with fear. Similarly, in 1944, a large number of Magura people died from small pox. Although individual cases are sometimes reported, large scale outbreaks of these two diseases have ceased since 1970. This change was possible for two reasons. Firstly, 98% of villagers have by now switched over to tube-well from river/pond as source of drinking water. Secondly, anti-cholera injections and anti-pox vaccines are now easily available. Typhoid was another common disease in the past. Although death from it was very rare, it often led to paralysis and other severe side effects. Nowadays, the disease is under greater control owing to cheap availability of anti-biotics but its severe side effects (for example, continuous physical weakness) remain owing mostly to lack of proper diet. Similar seems to be the situation with dysentery. There was no T.B. in this village 50 years ago but now, at least five persons are visibly suffering from it (the actual number could be much larger). The two recent (i.e. ost 1972) diseases are night blindness (reported victims - 5) and gastric ulcers (reported victims - 10). The most common diseases among children now are tetanus, skin diseases, rickets, polio,

worms, etc. During the last four years, 15 children died from these diseases. The following table gives a rough idea of the changes in the nature of treatment received by villagers during the last 50 years.

TABLE 4

Type of Treatment (in order of importance)

50 years ago	At present
1 Self treatment through locally available herbs, leaves and roots	1 Self treatment through locally available herbs, leaves and roots
2 'Fakir' (Faith healing)	2 Allopathic
3 Ayurvedic (Indigenous)	3 Homoeopathic
4 Homoeopathic	4 Fakir (Faith healing)
5 Allopathic	
6 Unani (Greek system, adopted by Muslims)	

At present, there is only one homoeopath in the village. He has been practising here for the last 20 years. Although the allopathic system has gained in popularity, there are no trained allopaths either in this village or in the entire union. The nearest LMF/MBBS doctor, government dispensary, hospital, health clinic, maternity, etc. are all located at Narail town, which is about 11 miles from the village, and hence out of reach for most villagers, given the poor communication and the high expenses involved. Recently, a quack doctor has started a medicine shop at Gorer hat, about a quarter mile from the village. However, important allopathic medicines are not available even at Maispara which means that one has to travel to Narail and Jessore to

procure these. To sum up, the following trends were noticed. Firstly, while certain known diseases have been brought under control, certain other diseases, the control of which are essentially dependent upon the intake of proper diet, are becoming prominent. Secondly, while the mortality rate has certainly come down over time, in general health in this village appears to be caught in a low level equilibrium, and this has adverse consequences for labour productivity. It also seems self-evident that the general decline in health in this village cannot be separated from the general decline in the intake of protein and calorie, as discussed earlier. Thirdly, although self-treatment through local herbs, leaves and roots is still predominant, it has been losing ground over the years, especially since 1972. On the one hand, the younger generation are less aware of these than their elders, and on the other, these are becoming scarcer in the village and surrounding region. In the context of the slow and lopsided inroad of allopathic medicine, there is a need not only to reverse such a trend but also to develop the potentialities of these materials on a scientific basis, and thereby augment allopathic treatment.

Nearly 98% of villagers presently use tube-well water for drinking purposes (50 years ago, not more than 10% had access to tube-well water). The number of tubewells in this village is 8, which means that the man: tube-well ratio is 120:1. However, most of the cooking and washing (of clothes, utensils and people themselves) is still dependent upon pond and river water. Since tanks and ponds have not been well maintained and the river drainage has deteriorated over the years, pollution from these sources is very high. Fifty years ago, the only method of human waste disposal was to use jungles and open fields. At present, only one family has a proper latrine. Another five families have improvisations to serve the needs of their adult females;

so that for all practical purposes, there has been little change in the human waste disposal system. However, since population is far greater and natural drainage is on the decline, traditional waste disposal practices now constitute a more serious health hazard.

#### Formal Education and the Level of Production Knowledge

There is one primary school (i.e. covering grades I-V) and one high school (i.e. covering grades VI-X) in this village. The primary school was started in 1931 with some help from the Union Parishad. In 1941, the school had to be closed down, owing to lack of funds. The school was revived in 1947. In 1968, the government took over its management.\* The high school was started in 1972, but it was not until 1975 that the school received government recognition and financial aid. The other nearby high schools are at Maizpara and Pulum, which are respectively 3 and 2 miles from Magura. The curriculum in none of the primary and high schools places any emphasis on modern agricultural practices and for that matter on any vocation, the general orientation being towards humanities. The nearest college (which provides courses in science, commerce and humanities up to degree level) and vocational institute are located in the sub-divisional head quarters at Narail township.

The present literacy rate is 20.6% (in 1931, the literacy rate was about 11%). The female literacy rate is even lower: only 12.3% of females are literate and only 28.3% of the literates are females.

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\* This simply meant that government paid the salaries of the teachers.

In 1977, the number of Magura children in the primary school age group (5-10) was 193 and the number of children from this village actually attending primary school was 61 which is only 31.6% of the children who should have been studying in a primary school. For females, the picture was worse. Of the 100 girls who should have been in the primary school, only 16 (i.e. 16%) were actually attending primary school. Both seasonal and permanent drop outs were prominent so that the real picture must be even more depressing.

In 1977, the number of students attending the Magura High School was 110. Of them, only 38 were from Magura. About 164 children were in the high school age group (i.e. 11-16) at Magura which meant that only 22.9% of the eligible children were actually attending high school. Again, since both seasonal and permanent drop outs were high, effective high school attendance must be much lower.

At present, only one student from this village is attending college at Narail. The number of persons with a secondary school certificate and above qualification from this village is only 7. Of them only one is a female. None of them has any vocational training or has been trained in modern agronomy.

The teaching standard at both primary and high school is simply deplorable, and has certainly deteriorated during the last 50 years. Poor academic attainments of present teachers, exodus of well trained Hindu teachers to India after 1947, and pursuit of other occupations to the neglect of teaching appear to be the main reasons in this respect.

Thus, the formal education system has not only been unable to make any headway in the village, it has also failed to transmit, given its bias for humanities, advanced production knowledge related to the

occupations pursued by the villagers. Thus, the most important process of transmitting production knowledge continues to be through the pursuit of family occupation, whereby the older generation hands down, by word of mouth and through demonstration, new experiences gathered by them during their life time together with what was handed down to them by their forefathers. While this knowledge is based on direct practice and observations, it lacks systematic summing up and is repetitive, out of date, non-analytical and, hence, non-conducive to increased production. For example, most villagers are still under the influence of Khana's sayings on agricultural practices and production (Khana was a sage of ancient Bengal). Now at least 1,000 years old, these were obviously gems at a time when man had little control over Nature. However, the very fact that these still dominate the village agriculture in the last quarter of the 20th century shows the poor dissemination of modern production knowledge. The other informal sources of transmitting production knowledge are the various "nation building" government and semi-government agencies. However, their record in this respect is hardly worth mentioning. Thus, for example, only one man has so far been trained from this village as a "model farmer" by the IRDP\*, and it is highly doubtful if the "training" received by him was of any quality. There is no one in the village who has received any training in the modern methods of pisciculture. The Narail based fisheries officials have, in fact, never visited this village. The same story is true of livestock and agricultural extension officials.

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\* Integrated Rural Development Programme, run by a Government Directorate (see Chapter 8).

B Objects of WorkLandTABLE 5(A)Privately Owned Land Utilisation, 1951-77

(acres)

Land Use Category	1951	1961	1977	
Agricultural Land	445.00	435.00	405.76	
Homestead Land	47.00	43.00	40.93	
Water Bodies			9.57	
Garden Land	47.00	37.00	20.02	33.68
Waste Land				
Others			4.09	

TABLE 5(B)Privately Owned Land-Man Ratio, 1951-77

(acres)

Year	Man-Total Land Ratio	Man-Agriculture Land Ratio	Man-Homestead Land Ratio
1951	0.57	0.47	0.050
1961	0.54	0.46	0.045
1977	0.50	0.42	0.040

The decrease in all categories of private land (Table 5B) was mostly because of sale of land to residents of other villages and declaration of about 58.15 acres of land as "enemy" property after the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War and of 10.26 acres of land as government (Khas) land after the legislation of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act in 1951. However, a substantial amount of both categories was being enjoyed by some of the villagers, legally or illegally. It was also quite possible that in reporting their own property, they might have included some of these.

Eight households of this village own 7.47 acres of land in the villages of Tarashi, Bamankhali and Antaikhola. On the other hand, households of outside villages (Kalukhali, Andal Baria, Poradanga and Kathalbaria) own 9.40 acres of land in Magura. Considering that these nearly cancelled each other out, the amount of privately owned village land might be taken as 480.37 acres. If we also consider that reported "enemy" property and "Khas" (government) land have not been included in the privately owned land, then the village land amounts to 548.78 acres. Finally, after adding various communally owned land, total village land totals 556.94 acres, the breakdown of which by use, is as follows:

TABLE 5(C)

Village Land Use, 1977

Land Use Type	Amount (in acres)
Agricultural Land	445.92
Garden Land	24.08
Homestead Land	59.32
Water Bodies	9.57
Grazing Ground	3.80
Football Ground	1.92
Educational Institution Land	3.50
Religious Land	1.74
Road	3.00
Waste Land	4.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>556.94</b>

Calculated on the basis of the above data, the man-total land ratio, man-agricultural land ratio and man-homestead land ratio, for 1977 work out at 0.67, 0.46 and 0.06 respectively. Compared with 1951, these represent a static picture while the data for 1977 presented at Table 5B indicates a clear deteriorating trend. Given an almost static population in the village between 1951 and 1977, in the face of considerable net out-migration, land-man ratios appear to be somewhere in between these two sets of data, i.e. on a slight decline. However, since the scope of out-migration has almost been exhausted, land-man ratios are likely to be more adverse in the future, with more agricultural land being taken up by homesteads and other non-productive uses and increased pressure of man on a decreasing

amount of agricultural land.

### Agricultural Land

#### Extent of Fragmentation and Sub-Division

In 1977, the total agricultural land in the village was divided into 1,845 plots, so that the average area of a plot stood at only 0.219 acres. Between 1951 and 1977, the total land owned by all households underwent at least two divisions, increasing, according to our estimate, the plots by about 30 per cent. On this basis, in 1951 there were 1,292 agricultural plots, and the average area of a plot was 0.359 acres.

The number of farms increased from 87 in 1951 to 115 in 1977. In 1977, only 2 farms had no fragments, 20 per cent had 2-3 fragments, 22.5 per cent had 4-5 fragments, 40.7 per cent had 6-9 fragments, and 15.8 per cent of the farms had 10 or more fragments. In 1977, in over 80 per cent of the farms, plots were scattered and disparately located.

The continuous fragmentation and sub-division of land into numerous tiny plots, together with their scattered location were disadvantageous to agriculture in several ways. It meant loss of valuable land through boundary lines, inconvenience and increased cost of cultivation, the precluding of economies of scale, and a formidable obstacle to the introduction of modern productive forces.

TABLE 6

Climatic and Soil Characteristics at Magura, 1977

Characteristics	Findings	Remarks
<b>A <u>Climatic Characteristics</u></b>		
i Maximum Temp ( $^{\circ}$ F)	108	dry,
ii Minimum Temp ( $^{\circ}$ F)	41	needs irrigation
iii Annual Rainfall (inches)	64.11	in the winter (dry)
Annual Evaporation (inches)	45.95	months
<b>B <u>Surface Soil (0"-6") Characteristics</u></b>		
i Soil Texture	Sand 23%, Silt 49% and Clay 28%	Clay loam; potential use brick and pottery
ii Nitrogen content	0.038	Low; undesirable
iii Carbon to nitrogen ratio	27.1	High; undesirable for Nitrogen availability
iv $P_H$ (-log of hydrogen ion concentration)	6.9	High; undesirable for Phosphorous availability
v Calcium, Magnesium and Potassium content	High, owing to weathering of readily weatherable minerals like felspars & biotite; also available in exchangeable form (high "base saturation")	Natural fertility high.
vi Electrical conductivity (E.C. 10mm ho/cm)	0.34	Very low salinity; desirable for crops
vii Plough pan	Not compact, consequently capillary moisture is usually hindered	Supports short term dry land 'Rabi' crops (pulses, oil seeds) requiring little moisture
viii Elevation	Undulating in parts	Irrigation rendered difficult; land development necessary
ix Land capability	Good land with moderate limitations during dry season owing to droughtiness	Irrigation required during dry months

At present, the soil in Magura is used exclusively for agriculture, although some pottery and brick making could be developed here, given the considerable availability of clay and loam in the soil. As may be seen from Table 6, the soil here is characterised by a low content of Nitrogen and Phosphorous, a high Carbon to Nitrogen ratio and a high  $P_H$ , all of which are undesirable, but on the other hand, natural fertility (as expressed through Calcium, Magnesium and Potassium content) is high and salinity is low.

In general, soil productivity has been on a sharp decline since the late 1960s. As pointed out earlier, this is partly owing to lack of natural flood silting by the rivers (whose flow decreased as a result of dam construction upstream). Thus, the use of chemical fertilizers here is necessary not so much to increase soil productivity as to arrest its deterioration. The underground water level in winter is about 18 feet below the top soil. Also, given the tendency to drought, irrigation is a must during the winter months for successfully raising another crop. However, the undulation in parts makes irrigation a difficult proposition. There is, therefore, considerable need for land development in this village before introducing modern irrigation. Single cropping is followed in low-lying areas where owing to water-logging after paddy harvest, no other crop can be grown. Double cropping is practised in the uplands, where a third crop cannot be raised due to lack of water between February and April. A third crop is grown only in those lands which are neither too low nor too high and as such immune from both water-logging as well as drought.

The main crops are paddy, jute, oil seeds and lentils. The following is a break-down of agricultural land by various crops:

TABLE 7

Cropping Intensity at Magura, 1977

Total Land Under Culti- vation	Land Under Different Crops							Cropping Intensity*	
	Aus	Aman	Boro	Jute	Veg.	Oil Seeds	Others		
445.92	275	330	0	100	20	200.00	100.00	50.0	238.4

$$* \text{Cropping intensity} = \frac{\text{Total cropped area}}{\text{Total cultivated land}} \times 100$$

In general, of the total agricultural land, 25% is cropped once, 45% twice and 30% thrice a year. Fifty years ago, the cropping choice was more or less where it stands today. The cropping intensity appears to have increased but now the soil productivity is decidedly lower. The average yields per acre have also declined (Aman paddy: 1,280 lbs/acre in 1951 and 960 lbs/acre in 1977; Jute : 1,040 lbs/acre in 1951 and 800 lbs/acre in 1977).

Water BodiesThe River System at Magura

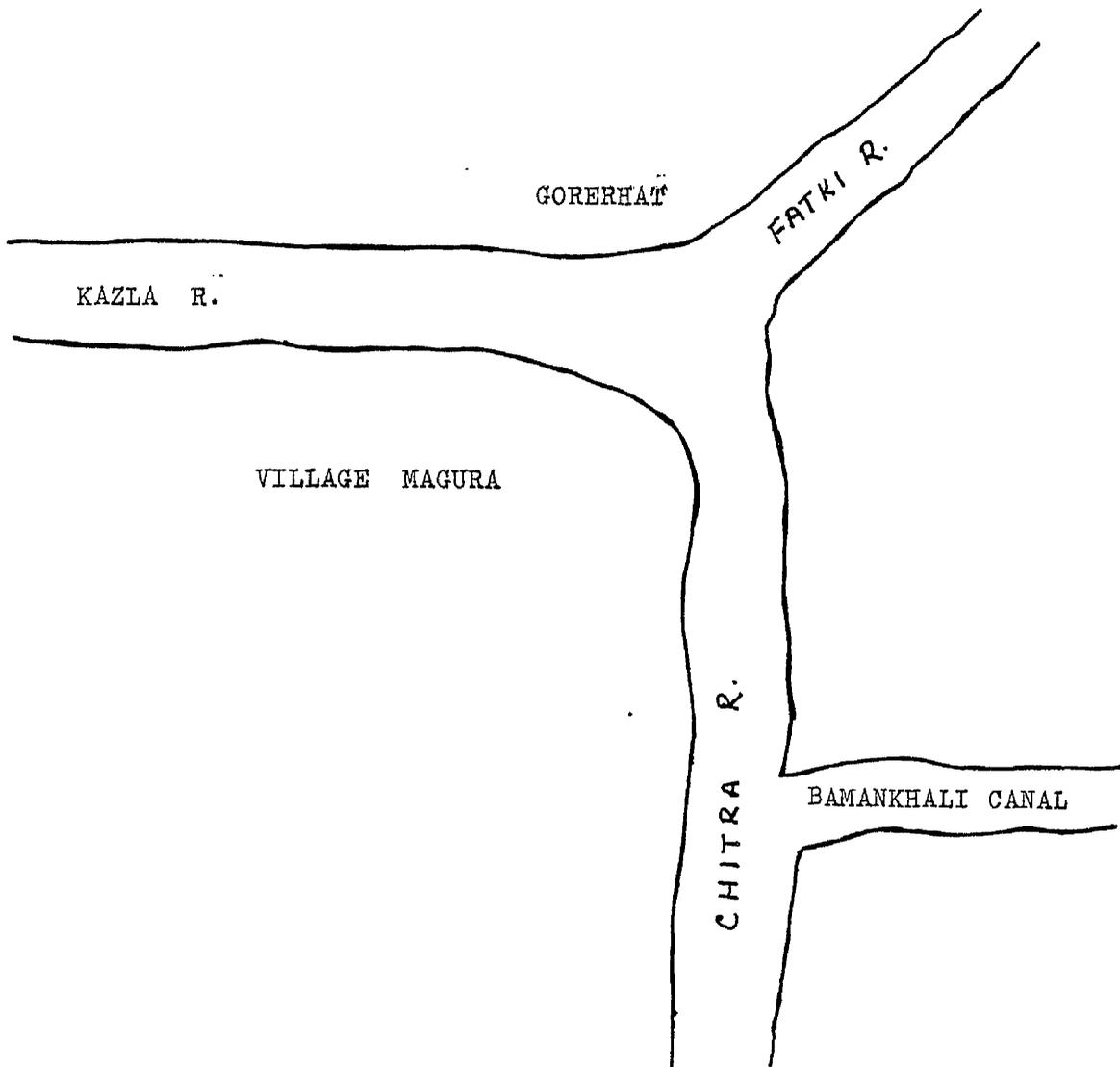
Two rivers, the Chitra and the Kazla, account for about one and a quarter miles of the village boundary (Chitra, one mile on the northern boundary, and Kazla, one quarter mile on the Western boundary). The confluence of the Fatki and these two rivers is the north western point opposite the periodical market place known as Gorer Hat. The Chitra is 150 feet wide and 9 feet deep in the dry season. The Kazla would be about double these measurements. Both rivers swell slightly during the Monsoons. Fifty years ago, the river system in and around Magura was navigable throughout the year and as such played an important role

in a flourishing internal trade and commerce in and around this region. Also, until very recently, the road communication of Magura with the sub-divisional and thana headquarters at Narail was very poor, and as such boating through the Chitra was the only way of reaching Narail.

The rivers in and around Magura were at that time an important source of livelihood for the fishing community of Magura and the neighbourhood. Fishing was possible throughout the year and the catch was sufficient to meet both internal consumption requirements as well as external demands. At present, the main fishing grounds for the fishing community of Magura are (i) 2 miles in the Chitra, 2 miles in the Kazla, 2 miles in the Fatki and 2 miles in the Bamunkhali canal; (ii) the beels, ponds and canals in and around the village. However, owing to the decline of the river system and drying up of the local canals and beels, the present fish catch is very low and the fishermen now have to reach out to distant water bodies like the Nabaganga and Bara Chitra rivers and Nahata beel in the neighbouring sub-division. Finally, in the wake of annual flooding, the rivers brought to the agricultural land fresh deposits of silt and in the process more than made up for the natural soil exhaustion.

The present condition of the rivers is as follows. Firstly, the river bed has risen substantially owing to silt deposits, while the extent of annual flooding has considerably decreased due to the construction of a barrage across the river twenty-five miles up stream, under the Ganges-Kobadak Project. Planned by bureaucrats and engineers at Dacca, such constructions were not preceded by consultation with the local people and failed to take note of adverse side effects. Secondly, water hyacinth and under water foliage have increased over the years and there has been no attempt at clearing these obstructions.

Sketch of Main Fishing Grounds for  
the Magura Fishing Community, 1977



Thirdly, increased use of the river water by human beings and livestock, together with the effects of organic waste including human and animal excreta\*, chemical fertilizers and insecticides, under-water jute processing, etc. have all contributed to raising the pollution level of the river water, given that the total flow of these rivers is definitely on the decline.

As a consequence, fishing and navigation on these rivers have decreased considerably. The big boats, carrying various merchandise, can now negotiate these only during the full Monsoons. Fishing is again limited to the rainy season and annual silting by the rivers has almost stopped. Of course, the decline of the river system is not peculiar to Magura. As has been pointed out by both A. Momen (1925, 7-9) and J. Westland (1874, 4-II) this phenomenon of rivers changing course and becoming moribund has been occurring in various parts of Jessore throughout the last hundred years. However, what is striking is that neither in Magura nor elsewhere in the district, has any appreciable human effort so far been consciously planned and channelled towards combating Nature's vagaries. On the other hand, it is quite evident that given planned and conscious effort, it is not only possible to make the rivers serve the villagers as these did in the past, but also to extract the extremely necessary irrigation water from these rivers for raising winter crops.

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\* As discussed elsewhere in this Chapter, these could have been used as fertilisers if systematically collected and properly processed, thus turning their present negative effect into a positive one.

### Tanks and Ponds\*

There are 21 tanks (and 4 ponds) in Magura, covering an area of 9.57 acres. In 1924, the number of tanks per acre in Narail thana was .0139\*\*whereas for Magura in 1977, this was 0.038, which means an approximately three-fold increase. However, this increase must be placed in the context of increasing population and a declining river system at Magura. At present, only 12 tanks are usable (for water) and suitable for pisciculture. The rest require to be re-excavated if any use is to be made of these on this line. The 12 tanks referred to above are now mainly used for bathing, washing of clothes, utensils, livestock, etc., cooking water and fishing.

However, pisciculture is not carried out on any scientific basis, and only about 5% of the potential of the 12 tanks has been exploited, although given soaring fish prices, limited fish supply and excellent natural breeding conditions, its pursuance on a commercial scale could be highly profitable. On the average, about 10-15 thousand young fish are annually added to the 12 tanks, yielding about 50-60 mds. of fish in a year (10-15 mds. are marketed). If all the tanks were re-excavated, and pisciculture was carried out on a scientific basis, it would have been possible to catch 2/2.5 thousand maunds of fish every year. According to our estimate, the annual expenses incurred for re-excavation and modern pisciculture would be about Tk. 50,000/- for all the tanks, and the annual net profit could have been Tk. 0.5 million. Even if modern pisciculture was limited to the 12 tanks in more or less proper condition the annual catch would have been

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\* At present, the country has about 0.6 m acres of tank water (Mazumdar, 1978, 1).

\*\* Momen (1925, Appendices E and F).

a thousand maunds. These tanks also offer excellent prospects for duck farming. Finally, the banks of the tanks could be used for horticulture and vegetable growing. Needless to mention, none of these potentialities have been exploited to any appreciable degree.

#### Flora (Vegetation)

As clearly indicated in the Revenue Survey Map of 1856 for Khatur Magura Mauza (See Appendix B ), this village at that time was covered by considerable natural vegetation, especially along the river banks. Old villagers still recall the dense forests and the wild life in and around Magura fifty years ago. Now all that is gone, and it seems that defoliation on an extensive scale took place particularly during the last fifty years in order to extend land for human habitation and agriculture. Similar seems to be the fate of garden trees, i.e. new plants have not been able to keep pace with destruction of the old ones. Thus, for example, whereas in 1921, there were 1.209 date palm trees per acre in Narail thana\*, the number of date palm trees per acre in this village in 1977 (i.e. 52 years later) was only 1.077. To some extent, this phenomenon is associated with the large-scale Hindu migration to India after 1947. Not only were trees felled and sold out hurriedly before the migration from the village, but also those remaining did not take care to plant new trees because they were not sure if they too, would migrate at a later date. Other factors were the demand for construction materials and the need for firewood. In fact, there is now an acute scarcity in the village of both these items. The present extent of garden trees is as follows:

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\* Momen (1925, 41).

TABLE 8Extent of Garden Trees at Magura, 1977

Type of trees	No. of Adult/Fruit Bearing Trees
Coconut	250
Date Palm	600
Plantain	50
Bamboo	8,000
Jack Fruit	80
Mango	200

These trees have either fruit value or wood value or both. This village is highly suitable (as most of Jessore district is) for coconut, bamboo, date palm and jack fruit, planned planting of which could open up considerable economic opportunities for the villagers. The low lying areas in the village, especially along river slopes and canal banks, are highly suitable for growing a particular grass used for mat making. However, so far no one has exploited this potential on any considerable scale.

C Tools of Work

Tools of Work in the Agricultural Sector

Agriculture, or to be more precise cultivation of crops, in 1977 was the main occupation for 71.15% of households of Magura (in 1951, the figure was 70.3%). However, the actual involvement of the Magura households in the agricultural sector is much greater. Forty-one households in Magura do not own any agricultural land, so that the

remaining 115 households are associated with agriculture in one way or the other (whether as main or subsidiary occupation). Of the 41 landless households, the main occupation of 19 households is agriculture so that 134 households are clearly linked with agriculture. Since half of the remaining 22 landless households are engaged in agriculture as a subsidiary occupation, the number of households associated with agriculture comes to 145, which is 92.94% of the total households in Magura. Thus, the agricultural sector by far outstrips all other economic activities in the village.

There has been no change in the traditional method of ploughing developed thousands of years ago, and 100% of the land continues to be ploughed by wooden ploughs\* driven by bullocks. In Magura, there are 108 cultivation bullocks, which means 0.69 bullock per household. Only 46 households have one pair of bullocks, which is what is necessary for one plough. In other words, only 24.98% of households have the minimum required number of bullocks. 22 households, i.e. 14.1% of the total households have only one bullock. Only 69 households (i.e. 44.2% of the total households) have one or more ploughs. In 1977, the total number of ploughs was 85, i.e. for every 4.77 acres of

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\* The Bangladesh plough is a variant of the Biblical bar-point plough. It has a long, massive sole, the front of which ends in a metal capped point. It penetrates some 3"-4", smoothing the level on which it travels. The layers are shattered and stirred by the shank. It is an ideal rice implement; forming a plan below the surface that slows down markedly the early penetration of water and is a powerful means of extending rice cultivation over the greatest possible area. But this very feature renders it the worst possible implement to prepare land for crops other than rice in all but the easiest soil conditions, and may well be one of the basic reasons why other crops yield so poorly. Also, with this implement, as many as 4-6 ploughings are necessary for preparing one acre of land, as compared to 1-2 ploughings with an improved version of this plough driven by a single animal. As such, with the present plough, not only more animal power is required but also, man and beast have to work harder. (IBRD, Bangladesh Land and Water Resources Sector Study, vol. 5, Technical Report, 16, 1972, p. 3 and GOBD & FAO/UNDP Agricultural Mission Report, Working Report 5, 1977, p. 11).

agricultural land, there was one plough. In 1921, for the entire Narail thana, there was one plough for every 12.84 acres of agricultural land.\* On the other hand, the present bullock/plough ratio is 1.27, i.e. 0.73 less than the minimum requirement and 1.96 short of this ratio for the Narail thana in 1921.\* Also, in 1921, for this thana, the number of bullocks per household was 0.96\*, i.e. 0.27 more than what it was in Magura in 1977. Similarly, the amount of agricultural land per bullock increased from 3.97 acres for Narail thana in 1921\* to 4.12 acres for Magura in 1977. The villagers also overwhelmingly confirmed the deterioration in the agricultural implements situation in the village over time. The quality of the plough has at best remained unchanged; many cultivators, in fact, complained that owing to non-availability of proper metal, the quality of the metal cap in the plough has deteriorated over the years. The quality of bullocks has certainly deteriorated over the years, there being no facilities for artificial insemination for cross-breeding the local stock with improved imported varieties. Most bullocks are rickety and suffer from one disease or the other; local herbs are generally used for treatment, modern treatment being limited to bullocks of only a few households. There is a livestock office at Narail township but given the distance and the high expenses (including bribes), the question of taking advantage of this facility does not arise for most households. The deterioration in the quality of the bullocks is clearly linked with shortage of animal fodder. Owing to increasing population pressure in the region, most grass lands have been converted into crop fields so that grass, the main feed for the bullocks, has now become scarcer. Those who do not have the required number of

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\* Momen (1925, Appendices E & H).

bullocks/ploughs resort to what is locally known as 'Anguri' cultivation, i.e. they rent in these implements on the condition of ploughing the owner's land for two days in exchange for ploughing their own land for one day with these implements.

The other implements commonly used for cultivation are the Moi, the Achra, the Nirani, and the Kastey. The Moi ("ladder") generally made of bamboo, is used as a land leveller. It is too light, and even two operators crouching on it at work do not increase its efficiency to any great extent. The Achra (comb harrow), made of iron and wood, is used for sparsing crop plants, weeding and aeration. The Nirani, a small hand trowel, is used for clearing weeds. The Kastey is the harvesting sickle made of iron. These implements have been known from time immemorial. There is no evidence of their quality having been improved nor of any innovation being brought about with respect to these agricultural operations.

The use of chemical fertiliser is a recent phenomenon in this village. Fifty years ago, the villagers used neither chemical fertilisers nor cow dung. As a matter of fact, such use was considered unnecessary at that time, owing to the high soil fertility caused by silt deposits through the annual floods. Such floods were regular up to 1970; since 1970, floods have been few and far between so that soil fertility sharply declined. In the early sixties, villagers started using cow dung as fertiliser, and before 1971, only 20-30% of the households were using chemical fertilisers. The latter development had perhaps something to do with the massive propaganda launched by the Ayub Government in favour of using chemical fertiliser. At this time, a fertiliser factory was also built at Fenchuganj with Japanese collaboration. However, after 1970, chemical fertiliser use rapidly

increased owing to a sharp decline in soil fertility, as discussed above, and increased alternative use of cow dung as a fuel\*, given the lack of firewood in this village. At present about 90% of cultivating households use chemical fertilisers, however, the intensity of fertiliser use varied widely, the average being about 42 pounds of fertiliser per acre of cropped land. Although the figure compares favourably with 38 lbs/acre for entire Bangladesh in 1976-77 and 27 lbs/acre for Narail thana in 1975-76, this is not very high in view of the poor soil fertility of this village. Interestingly, against a background of increased chemical fertiliser use, there are in this village, besides cow dung (whose increased supply is, of course, tied to livestock breeding), two completely untapped sources of organic manure, namely human excreta and humus from decaying leaves and water hyacinth. Although there is a cultural barrier against the use of human excreta, most villagers recognised its effectiveness, especially in growing vegetables. However, the critical input for effectively using these manures, namely a group effort in collecting and processing these materials, did not exist in the village.

The use of chemical insecticides has now completely stopped. In 1963, for the first time, chemical insecticide was used in this village for paddy cultivation. The supply was ensured by government, free of cost. Similarly, in 1968-69, 95% of the cultivators used free insecticides for jute. In 1970, the government carried out aerial spraying of insecticides over paddy fields. In 1974, only 3 rich

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\* About 28 m tons of dry dung is produced in the country annually. Of this total, 11 m tons are either burnt as fuel or left uncollected. This is equivalent to about 220,740 metric tons of chemical fertiliser, which if applied to agricultural crops, could result in output increase of 1.4 to 1.7 m tons of food grain annually, enough to meet the annual deficits in food grain production (GOBD and FAO/UNDP Agricultural Mission Report, 1977, Working Paper 5, p. 6).

households used insecticides for jute. At present, nobody is using insecticides owing to (a) non-availability of the insecticides (one has to procure these from the black market at exorbitant prices), (b) discontinuation of government policy of supplying spraying machines free of cost. Also, last year, these machines were officially 'out of stock' so that even if one could pay the price, it was impossible to buy them, except on the black market. In 1977, about 20% of paddy and about 30% of jute were damaged owing to pest attacks.

The cultivators here do not practise either the modern (power pump, shallow and deep tube-well, etc.) or the traditional system of irrigation ('DUN'). Between 1973 and 1975, a 2 cusec power pump was brought through the cooperative. The area actually irrigated in these years was 10.35 and 13 acres respectively. After 1975, irrigation through the power pump was abandoned. On the other hand, the potential for irrigation here is considerable, even with the traditional method, given the easy access to the river Chitra, provided necessary land development was also undertaken simultaneously. In that case, the cultivators here could easily raise a third crop on all agricultural lands during the winter season. The villagers are aware of the increased productivity of the HYV\*, but at present only two villagers are using it, and that too not as a general practice. Five years ago, some villagers tried the Jute HYV but gave it up after obtaining disappointing results. Irri cultivation was started in 1973 by the agricultural cooperative. This was discontinued after 1975 (see Report on Agricultural Cooperatives, Chapter 8).

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\* With irrigation, production per acre of HYV paddy could easily be 3,200 lbs, i.e. almost 4 times the present per acre production.

### Methods of Cultivation

At least four ploughings are necessary for any one of the major crops grown in this village (i.e. Aus, Aman, Jute, etc.). The first and second rounds of ploughing are followed by levelling land and breaking up of large pieces of soil through the use of the Moi. After the land becomes ready for sowing, the cultivators wait for rain; after a heavy shower, the third round of ploughing is completed. Ploughing over, phosphate and potash, in a mixture, are applied (highest rate: 80 lbs of phosphate and 28 lbs of potash/acre).\* The Moi is again used to level the land. After the fourth and final rounds of ploughing, the seeds are sown by broadcasting. The Moi is again used after sowing in order that seeds are well pressed against the soil. When plants attain a height of 5"-6", Achra is used to make the plants denser and the weeds sparser. This is followed by regular Nirani, i.e. weeding. When plants attain a height of about 1 foot, urea is used (highest rate: 32 lbs per acre).\* Urea is again used before the seeds mature. This arrangement in fertiliser use is valid only for Aus. For mixed Aman (Aus and Aman together) and Joli Aman (Aman grown in low lying lands), fertiliser use is somewhat different. In case of mixed Aman, two additional doses of urea are applied after Aus harvest (highest rate: 32 lbs an acre per dose).\* In 1977, 90% of cultivators used four doses of urea for mixed Aman and only 2 households used 5 doses of urea for mixed Aman. Only phosphate and potash are used in Joli Aman land, and the highest rate of application is the same as stated above. No urea is generally used for this crop. In 1977,

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\* These refer to the highest amounts applied in 1977. However, actual amounts applied varied widely and depended on land quality and the individual cultivator's access to fertiliser and his perception about fertiliser use. For example, some cultivators thought that higher amounts could damage soil fertility.

only one household used urea for Joli Aman. Only 30% of the cultivators used chemical fertilisers for Joli Aman.

For jute cultivation, ploughing and sowing methods are the same as those for paddy. Only phosphate and potash are used just before sowing. In 1977, only 3 households used urea for jute. 40% of the households use phosphate and potash for jute.

For winter crops, the number of ploughings is the same as for paddy but in the case of the former, cultivators do not wait for rain before sowing. After the third ploughing, urea, phosphate and potash are used in a mixed form, the highest rate being 32 lbs, 80 lbs and 28 lbs per acre respectively. This is followed by the fourth ploughing and sowing. 50% of the cultivators generally use fertiliser in this method. The remaining 50% use phosphate and potash only. Thus, except that fertilisers are now in use, there has been no mentionable change in the cultivation methods over the last fifty years. The implications for production need hardly be spelt out.

#### Tools of Work: Fishing

Fishing is the main occupation of 10.9% households of Magura. Fifty years ago, only 13 households were engaged in fishing. In 1977, 21 households were involved. During these fifty years, there has been practically no change in either the quality of implements or the methods of fishing. The main implements and accessories required for traditional fishing are a country boat, which is manually operated; various types and sizes of nets, again manually handled (local names of the more prominent ones are Ber Jal, Kheo Jal, Eheshal, Dharmajal, etc.); and Daria, the domesticated otter, which chases fish into the

net (average price of one such animal is now about Tk. 1,000.00).

Fifty years ago, all fishing households had these basic means for catching fish. At present, only 2 households can claim ownership of the necessary fishing equipment. Seven households have no fishing assets at all and the remaining 12 households are insufficiently equipped for catching fish. Government supplies in respect of fishing net thread have so far been grossly inadequate in relation to requirements (see Chapter 8).

#### Tools of Work: Weaving

In 1977, weaving was the main occupation of 9 households, compared to 10 households in 1951. In 1945, about 60 households were engaged in weaving. This drop is mainly due to the large scale Hindu migration from this village after 1947. The implements and methods of weaving have not undergone any change over the last 50 years. All of the weavers still use manually operated wooden looms, spinners and spindle. The following table shows the extent of loom availability over the years. They are now generally employed on a daily basis, although a piece rate system is also prevalent.

TABLE 9

#### Weaving Loom Availability at Magura, 1945-77

Year	Total Number of Looms	Number of Operational Looms
1945	85	85
1951	65	65
1961	60	50
1977	41	21

Yarn is the most important ingredient for weaving. Its availability sharply declined after independence. Government supplies were far too short in relation to requirements, even though demand also fell owing to migration of weavers to India (see Chapter 8).

#### Carpentry

Fifty years ago, there was no carpenter in this village. At present, one household's main occupation is carpentry. However, the implements available to the household are very few, and as such it can undertake only minor work requiring rough finishing, such as the making of a cart, a bench, a bedstead (chowki), a plough, etc.

#### House Repairing/Construction

4-5 households are at present engaged in the construction/repair of straw houses. The number was the same fifty years ago. The implements used are the Dao (a curved knife) and the Sulai (made of bamboo with a small hole at one end).

#### Molasses Making

Forty households (7 as second main occupation) are now engaged in molasses making from date palm juice as compared to 30 households (5 as second main occupation) fifty years ago. The method and implements of production are crude and have not changed over the last fifty years.

#### Miscellaneous Trades

Over the last fifty years, no one from this village has taken up black smith power pump driving, mechanical fitting, boat making, etc. since increase in demand in the relevant fields has been negligible and

could be met by people already in these occupations in this region. Fifty years ago, 2 households in Magura processed milk into various products (butter, butter oil, yogurt, sweet-meats, etc.) as a side line. One of them has migrated to India. The other is still in the village and continues with this activity. However, there has been no improvement in the method and implements of production. In fact, the quality of products has deteriorated because of the lack of quality raw material, i.e. pure milk. There was one oil press in this village around 1950. It was dismantled in the face of unequal competition, soon after the arrival of a power driven oil press-cum-flour mill at Maizpara and Gorer hat market places in the 1960s.

#### Means of Transport and Communication

Over the last fifty years, the only important road built in this area has been the Magura - Narail road via Maizpara. However, the road is still very narrow (two motor vehicles cannot pass) and unmetalled so that it is completely unnegotiable during the rainy season, when even walking becomes difficult in parts owing to accumulation of thick mud. In the winter/dry months it is negotiable by rickshaw, cycle, rickshaw van, bullock cart, jeep, etc. Repair work limited to filling in ditches on the road with earth has been undertaken several times. Another "road" connecting Magura with Kalukhali was built under the Rural Works Programme (see Chapter 8). However, it is fit mainly for walking, and for a rickshaw van only occasionally; as such it has had practically no effect on goods transportation.

As pointed out earlier, the effectiveness of the river system has been greatly reduced owing to silting, decreased flow of water in the off season and preponderance of water hyacinth and mossy growth. In the rainy season, however, the river becomes suitable for traffic,

and fairly large boats carrying merchandise can move about. Thus, in the field of physical communication, the situation is a stagnant one, with a road opened up on the one hand, and a declining river transport on the other.

Magura's links with outside villages, i.e. through land ownership, shalish (dispute adjudication), hiring of share croppers/wage labourers, visits to relatives, market places, Melas (fairs), Union Parishad, etc., are confined within a radius of about 5 miles. The urban/semi-urban centres relevant for Magura are, in order of importance, Narail, Jessore, Lohagora, Daulatpur and Khulna. About 75% of journeys to other villages, including those involving merchandise transportation, are on foot and the remainder are on boat, bullock cart and rickshaw van. In 1977, there were 31 bullock carts in this village, i.e. 0.198 cart per household. This compares very unfavourably with 0.56 cart/household for the entire Narail thana in 1921\*, especially when one considers that road mileage is now much higher. There were 17 boats in this village in 1977 which works out at 0.108 boat per household. In 1921, for Narail thana, there was 0.103 boat per household.\*\* Considering that there is a fishing community at Magura, it is most likely that boat availability in this village actually declined over time. Narail is the only sub-urban/urban centre to which some goods in bulk are carried from this village; generally the goods go only up to the nearby rural market place.

Among the means of transport, the only new local innovation over the last fifty years has been the rickshaw van (which is found now only

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\* Momen (1925, Appendix H).

\*\* Ibid.

in Jessore and Kushtia districts). It is a cycle rickshaw with an open plate on 2 wheels (there being one more wheel at the front) and can easily carry passengers and goods weighing upto half a ton. Fifty years ago, no one in this village used a bicycle. In 1977, there were 5 bicycles in the village. One villager has also picked up repairing of bicycles, rickshaws and rickshaw vans and has taken this up as a side profession. Thus, as is the case with physical communication, the growth in the means of transport in Magura and the surrounding region has been very slow and halting.

#### Means of Exchange

The two most important market places for Magura are (i) Gorer hat, (ii) Maizpara-Urani hat and bazaar. The former, located just outside the village on the other side of the river Chitra, was started in 1963 at the present site as a private bi-weekly market place; this situation continues despite several attempts to raise it to the level of a hat and a bazaar, i.e. combining bi-weekly market activities with a daily market. The latter, 3 miles from Magura, is about 150 years old. It started as a market place owned by the Narail Zemindars. Later, it was taken over by the Government, who in turn leased it out to the highest bidder on a year to year basis. For a while, the ownership and bidding rights were with the Union Parishad instead of the Central Government.

In 1977, the level of marketing facilities and exchange at these two market places was as follows:

TABLE 10

Level of Marketing Facilities and Exchange at Goror Hat and Maizpara-Urani Hat and Bazaar, 1977

Indices of Marketing Facilities	Goror Hat	Maizpara-Urani Hat and Bazaar
1 Year of establishment	1963	Approximately 150 years ago
2 Days in the week the market place meets	2 days (Sunday and Thursday) - conflicts with the schedule followed by Pulum market place; no bazaar (i.e. daily market place)	2 days (Tuesday and Friday) the bazaar i.e. the daily market meets between 8 am and 12 noon; the hat schedule does not conflict with those of nearby market places.
3 Extent of the area served	About 90 per cent of the buyers and sellers are from a radius of one mile only	About 90 per cent of the buyers and sellers are from a radius of 2 miles
4 Area of the market place (in acres)	1.74	2.58
5 Number of permanent shops	8 (5 grocers, 1 firewood, 1 cycle repair, 1 doctor-cum-medicine)	60 (13 grocers, 5 clothes and tailoring, 4 sweetmeats, 6 dispensary and medicine, 3 goldsmiths, 5 cycle repairs, 5 blacksmiths, 1 utensils, 3 hair cutting, 7 fertiliser and insecticide, and 8 ration goods)
6 Number of temporary shops*	500 (350)	1,200 (550)
7 Other permanent structures	1 mosque, 1 rice mill (out of order since 1975), 12 gadis** and godowns	1 mosque, 1 temple, 2 rice mills, 1 oil press, 32 gadis** and godowns, 2 cemented landings on the river

\* The figures in and outside the parentheses indicate respectively the numbers in normal and peak seasons.

\*\* The place from where the money lenders (Mahajons) operate.

TABLE 10 (Continued)

Indices of Marketing Facilities	Gorer Hat	Maizpara-Urani Hat and Bazaar
8 Storage facilities	72,791 cu.ft. of kaccha* and 4,070 cu.ft. of half pucca** storage capacity in the godowns	2,700 cu.ft. or kaccha, 172,749 cu.ft. of half pucca and 22,012 cu.ft. of storage capacity in the godowns
9 Sanitation, waste disposal, security arrangements, etc.	1 thatched latrine, 1 tube-well (both generally unusable) no permanent sweeper, and as such extremely unhygienic conditions. Night watchman employed only during the jute season.	1 thatched latrine (unusable), 1 tube-well, no drains***; one permanent sweeper, generally very unhygienic conditions; has provision for regular night guards.
10 Means of transportation for goods entering the market place	Of the total volume of goods entering on a market day, 58% by boat, 36% on head load and only 6% by bullock cart. This is a riverine area; in the rainy season, 95% of the goods are carried by boat.	In the dry season 75% as head load, 15% by cart and 10% by boat. During the monsoons, 45% as head load and 55% by boat. Use of rickshaw van as a goods carrier has not as yet assumed significant proportions.
11 Type of goods exchanged (in order of importance)	a) Agricultural products (paddy/rice, jute, pulses, edible oils, vegetables, betel leaf, betel nut, coconut, fish, livestock and livestock products, molasses, etc.). b) Cloth, about half of which is of rural origin (i.e. handloom products). c) Medicine, Kerosene, salt, etc. d) Pottery	a) Agricultural products (items as in col. 2). b) Cloth (about 40% of rural origin). c) Medicine, kerosene, salt (100% from cities/ports). d) Flour (100% from cities/ports). e) Pottery (100% of rural origin).

\* Non-cemented floor, tin roof, thatched walls.

\*\* Cemented floor, tin roof, tin walls.

\*\*\*A cemented drain was being constructed in 1977 out of government funds.

TABLE 10 (Continued)

Indices of Marketing Facilities	Gorer Hat	Maizpara-Urani Hat and Bazaar
12 Volume of goods exchanged on a market* day	Paddy/rice: 200 mds. (50) Jute: 250 mds. (20) Pulses and oil seeds: 75 mds. (50) Veggies: 50 mds. (30) Flour: 50 mds. (20) Fish: 50 baskets (40) Betel leaf: 3,200 pieces (2,400) Betel nut: 2 mds. (1) Tobacco: 0.4 mds. (0.25) Molasses: 35 mds. (15) Poultry: 100 no. (60) Coconut: 300 pieces (200) Cloth: 1,000 yds. (700) Pottery: 40 mds. (20)	500 (200) 800 (100) 300 (125) 150 (50) 100 (30) 60 (40) 100,000 (75,000) 4 (2) 4 (3) 45 (18) 150 (120) 350 (300) 15,000 (8,000) 50 (30)
13 Weights and measures	The metric system has not been introduced nationally. Weights are by maunds, seers, poas and chattaks.** Although there is a national standard for these units, weight pieces for these units vary not only with the corresponding national standards, but also among the shops. For many items such as poultry, fish, certain vegetables and fruit, no weighing is done, and these are sold on the basis of subjective and customary (and hence non-standardised) measures.	

\* The figures in and outside the parentheses indicate respectively the amounts exchanged in normal and peak seasons.

\*\* One standard maund is roughly 1/27th of a ton; 40 seers equal a maund and 1 seer is roughly 2 lbs; 4 poas equal a seer and 4 chattaks equal one poa.

TABLE 10 (Continued)

Indices of Marketing Facilities	Gorer Hat	Maizpara-Urani Hat and Bazaar
14 Type and number of traders*	Producer/seller 500 (200)	1,050 (400)
	Broker 10 (7)	8 (6)
	Itinerant trader (faria)/Shopkeeper (bepari) 39 (31)	195 (175)
	Stockist (aratdar) 7 (5)	2 (2)
	Stockist-cum-Mahajon** 10 (10)	9 (9)
	Mahajon 5 (5)	20 (20)
Total:	561 (258)	1,284 (512)

\* The figures in and outside the parentheses indicate respectively the number in normal and peak seasons.

\*\* Money lender cum trade financier.

As is apparent from the above chart, there is no qualitative difference between the two market places, in that both are primary exchange centres dealing with essentially agricultural products and other goods of rural origin under highly underdeveloped conditions of sanitation, shopping, storage, transport, weights and measures, etc. On the other hand, the quantitative differences between the two (for example in area served, volume of goods handled, number of traders, extent of shopping and storage facilities, etc.) can easily be explained by their differences in age and location (lines of communication, conflict with the marketing schedules followed by other market places, etc.).

Gorer Hat was started at the present site in 1963. Before that it existed near the present high school at Magura at a more modest level. However, development of marketing facilities at Gorer Hat

appears to have reached its peak by 1970. Since then it has been a story of slow but clear decline. Attempts at starting a daily market here failed. A college was to have been established nearby. This never materialised. A number of traders and notables who were at one time the moving spirits behind this market place have either migrated, or have turned to other market places. The rice mill set up here has been out of order for the last 3 years. Then, there is also the conflict with the market day schedule of Pulum Hat which is only a mile away. Our selected informants also confirmed that in terms of both volume of goods entering and the number of buyers and sellers visiting this market place, there has been a steady decline since 1970.

The situation at Maizpara-Urani market place is slightly different. Lengthy cross examinations of selected informants yielded the following trend for this market place. Firstly, around 1950, apart from head load carriage, boats were the principal means of goods transportation to and from this market place. Now rickshaw/rickshaw van, ox and horse-carts, etc., have come into use. On the other hand, there has been a sharp decline in the use of water transport, owing to silting and mossy undergrowth in the river Chitra. Secondly, the number of permanent and temporary shops at this market place increased by respectively 3 and 2.5 times between 1950 and 1977. On the other hand, the number of people visiting the market place (as both sellers and buyers) increased by about 4 times during the same period. As such, per capita shopping facilities have slightly declined. Thirdly, there has been no change in respect of weights and measures since 1950. Since the market area did not increase and there has been no substantial improvement in drainage and cleaning facilities since 1950, sanitary conditions inside the market place have actually deteriorated,

especially because the number of people using the market registered a substantial increase during this period. Fourthly, as in 1950, agricultural and rural handicraft products still dominate the market place, although in absolute terms the amount of goods from the urban sector has registered a considerable increase during this period (in particular, modern medicine, fertilisers/insecticides, imported food, cloth, kerosene, oil and salt). Finally, between 1950 and 1977, rice/paddy availability in this market place increased by about 4 times, while for cloth and oil seeds and pulses, increases have been respectively to the tune of 2 and 4 times. On the other hand, jute availability increased, if at all, only marginally and there has been a sharp decline in <sup>fish</sup> availability (at least by 2 times). However, while in 1950, 90 per cent of buyers and sellers at this market place originated from within a radius of 1.5 miles only, in 1977, 90 per cent of buyers and sellers came from a radius of 2 miles. Thus, while market activity and marketing facilities have been increasing in absolute terms between 1950 and 1977, this market place may at best be considered to be in a state of stagnation, especially when the population growth in the hinterland of the market place is compared against some new developments that have actually taken place during this period.

#### Effect on Production

We have so far discussed the changes in and interrelationships among various aspects of productive forces in the context of Magura over time. Let us now see how these have affected the level of agricultural and non-agricultural production in the village.

### Agricultural Production

In 1977, total production of paddy and jute in this village were respectively about 7,500 and 1,660 maunds, i.e. per capita production of 7.8 maunds of paddy and 1.72 maunds of jute. In 1927, these were respectively 14.55 maunds of paddy and 1.90 maunds of jute for the entire Narail thana.\* The declining per capita agricultural production is also borne out by the following evidence:

- 1) privately owned agricultural land has declined, though agricultural land under control of the villagers may have at best remained static;
- 2) in both quality and quantity, traditional agricultural implements and ingredients have declined;
- 3) yield/acre has declined, owing to deterioration in soil fertility, and lack of efforts to combat it;
- 4) population has slightly increased, but now that Hindu migration to India is almost over, the present trend is towards a high population growth rate.

The only positive factors in favour of increased production have been increase in cropping intensity and use of chemical fertiliser. However, for reasons stated earlier, these could not have offset the negative factors working against agricultural production. The villagers' own impression also confirmed the downward trend in agricultural production.

### Non-Agricultural Production

As discussed earlier, fishing implements as well as sources of fish have become scarcer over the last fifty years. On the other

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\* Momen (1925, Appendix G and '55).

hand, the number of households involved in fishing has increased. According to our informants, the present fish catch could be no more than 10% of what was caught fifty years ago. In the weaving sector, the total yearly production fell from about 28,000 pieces in 1945 to 4,320 pieces in 1977. In other words, production per weaving household fell from 466 pieces in 1945 to 210 pieces in 1977, and per loom fell from 329 pieces in 1945 to 205 pieces in 1977.

The following trend emerges from the above discussion on the growth of productive forces in Magura over the last fifty years. Firstly, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively, the development of productive forces has been, in general, at best extremely slow or stagnant, and in some areas, clearly declining. Modern technology has simply failed to make any appreciable impact on village production, exchange and distribution. Similarly, although population increased, quantity and quality of effective human labour did not. The available natural resources (i.e. the objects of work) also appear to have been depleted over time owing to faulty governmental policies (for example, the WAPDA\* barrage on the river upstream) and lack of conscious efforts by the villagers to control and manipulate Nature to their own advantage. In fact, the general tendency has been one of passive adjustments to the vagaries of Nature. Consequently, given the population increase, the balance between natural resources and population became adverse over the years. Secondly, and as is to be expected, per capita production in certain sectors, and even absolute production in certain others, declined over time. At this stage, we may explain poverty at Magura simply in terms of this stagnation/decline

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\* Water and Power Development Authority - a semi government organisation set up in the '60s.

in the productive forces and production over time. Thirdly, by all indications, it is apparent that even at the existing low level of technology and production knowledge, a proper organisation of human (physical) labour, based on willing participation of the labouring masses can, alone ensure, from the available resources (i.e. objects of work), a much higher level of production, consumption and investible surplus; and by no means can it be asserted that the potentialities of the available resources at Magura have been fully exploited. There is thus a wide gap between current production and production possibilities. In order to understand the determinants of poverty at Magura fully, it is of crucial importance to explain this gap, since mere proof of the existence of the gap constitutes only a partial explanation of poverty. We devote the next chapter to this issue.

CHAPTER FIVERELATIONS OF PRODUCTION AND EXCHANGE1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, it was observed that there has been either decline or, at best, stagnation of productive forces and production in this village during the last fifty years. In this chapter we examine the evolution of the important aspects of production relations in this village: i.e. (a) ownership of the various means of production (and exchange), (b) the forms and extent of appropriation and utilisation of surplus value arising therefrom. We then see how these have affected the development of productive forces and production, as outlined in Chapter 4, and the distribution of the social product. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the assumption here is that poverty is caused and perpetuated by stagnation/decrease in production and inequitable distribution of the social product. Finally, we also consider in this context, whether the conventional neo-classical argument that inequality in income distribution is essential for greater savings and productive investments holds true in the context of Magura.\* If the opposite

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\* The assumption here is that it is the rich who are able to save and invest significant proportions of their incomes while the poor spend all their incomes on consumption goods, and GNP growth rates are directly related to the proportion of national income which is saved. This means that an economy characterised by highly unequal distributions of income would save more and grow faster than one with a more equitable distribution of income. It also follows that national and per capita incomes would be high enough to make possible sizeable redistributions of income through tax and subsidy programmes, but until such a time is reached, any attempt to redistribute incomes significantly would only serve to lower growth rates and delay the time when a larger income pie could be cut into bigger slices for all population groups. One of the earliest and best known defences of this position was by W. Galenson and H. Liebenstein (1955). Also see Kurihara (1959, 122-9) for a critical appraisal of this position. For the formal neo-classical growth model most often used to justify this argument, see Todaro (1977, Appendix 5.I).

holds good, it will only lend support to the hypothesis that inequality in Magura increases poverty also through adverse effect on production. In this regard, the main arguments are as follows. Firstly, unlike the historical experience of the now developed countries, the rich in contemporary Third World countries are not noted for their frugality, nor for their desire to save and invest and are, on the contrary, given to anti-productive surplus extraction methods. Consequently, a growth strategy based on sizeable and growing inequality may, in reality, be nothing more than an opportunistic myth designed to perpetuate their vested interests and to maintain the status quo in the society.

Secondly, the low incomes and low levels of living for the poor which are manifested in poor health, nutrition and education can lower their economic productivity and, thereby, lead directly and indirectly to a slower growing economy. Thus, strategies aiming at raising the income levels of the poor would contribute not only to their material well-being but also to the productivity and income of the economy as a whole.

Thirdly, raising the income levels of the poor will stimulate an overall increase in the demand for locally produced necessity products like food and clothing. On the other hand, the rich tend to spend more of their additional incomes in luxury goods, often of foreign origin. Raising demand for local necessity goods provides a greater stimulus to local production, local employment and local investment. It thus creates the conditions for rapid economic growth and a broad popular participation in that growth.

Finally, a more equitable income distribution can stimulate

healthy expansion by acting as a powerful material and psychological incentive to widespread public participation in the development process. On the other hand, wide income disparities can produce exactly the opposite effect.

## 2 A Tentative Class Analysis Scheme

As discussed in the previous chapter, there are various types of objects and subjects of labour in Magura. However, the most important is decidedly agricultural land. This may not become apparent from the distribution of households by main occupation, as presented in the table below, since agriculture is the main occupation of only 71.15 per cent households:

TABLE 1

Household's Main Occupation according to Household Head's Main Occupation as perceived by him

Sector	Number of HH	Percentage
<u>Agriculture</u>	111	71.15
<u>Non-Agriculture:</u>	45	28.85
Fishing	19	
Weaving	9	
Boating	4	
Trade and Commerce	4	
House Servant	1	
Teacher	2 (both RPI)	
Doctor	1	
Priest	1	
Carpenter	1	
Other non-agricultural activities	3	
<b>Total:</b>	156	100.00

On the other hand, as shown in Table 2 below, 115 households owned some agricultural land. And of the 41 landless households, respectively 19 and 14 were engaged in agriculture (wage labourers/share croppers) as main and second main occupation. This meant (a) 94.87 per cent (148) of all Magura households were involved with the agricultural sector one way or the other; (b) many households whose main occupation was not agriculture, nevertheless owned agricultural land. Also, as shown in Table 2(A) Chapter 4, dependence on agriculture was on the increase between 1951 and 1977. Finally, in Magura, land, and particularly agricultural land, could not be valued by merely its market price; it was something around which the entire range of the villagers' economic and political aspirations revolved.

TABLE 2

A Tentative Class Analysis for Magura, 1977

Class of Household	Agricultural Land by Household (in acres)	Number of Households
i) Landless household (LLH)	0	41
ii) Poor Household (PH)	0.1 - 1.00	29
iii) Lower middle Household (LMH)	1.01 - 2.50	34
iv) Middle Household (MH)	2.51 - 4.50	26
v) Upper Middle Household (UMH)	4.51 - 7.50	11
vi) Rich Household I (RH I)	7.51 - 12.50	10
vii) Rich Household II (RH II)	12.51 and above	5

Given this overriding importance, agricultural land was taken as a "proxy" for other subjects and objects of work, and the 156 households

of Magura were divided into seven classes according to the amount of agricultural land these households actually owned and controlled (Table 2 above).

The above was only a "tentative" class analysis because it did not, at least at that stage (a) take into account ownership of other means of production, family size and structure, soil fertility, etc., and (b) correlate ownership of the means of production (in the above, only agricultural land) with the form and extent of surplus value appropriation and utilisation.

It was precisely for the second reason that as many as seven, instead of three (i.e. poor, middle, and rich) classes were chosen in the above schema so that at the time of examining surplus appropriation and utilisation later, it became possible to trace accurately the transition across these classes (i) from appropriation of surplus to being appropriated and (ii) from consumption for bare existence to socially productive investment and socially unproductive and wasteful consumption.

In deciding the landholding range of these seven classes, we depended for the most part on our evaluation of the villagers' perception. The villagers' perception in this regard was quite explicit (and hence very valuable) because for most of these categories (i.e. landless, poor, lower middle, middle, upper middle, rich, etc.), there were not only standard Bengali equivalents, but also local colloquial expressions.\* As such, there was little difference among our selected informants on the landholding range of these seven classes.

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\* For example, Bhumi Hin Chashi (landless peasant), Kishen (landless agricultural labourer), Garib Chashi (poor peasant), Madhobitto (middle class), Mahat (rich peasant), Jotedar (big land owner), etc.

3 Ownership of the Means of Production and Transport, and  
Trading Capital:

Ownership of Land:

TABLE 3

Village Land According to Various Types of Ownership, 1977, in acres

1	<u>Government (Khas) Land</u>	
	Agricultural land	4.13
	Grazing ground	3.80
	Homestead land	0.33
	Road	2.00
	<u>Sub-Total of Khas Land</u>	<u>10.26</u>
2	<u>Government "Enemy Property"</u>	
	(A) <u>Reported "Enemy Property"</u>	
	Homestead land	18.06
	Garden land	4.06
	Agricultural land	36.03
	<u>Sub-Total of Reported "Enemy Property"</u>	<u>58.15</u>
	(B) <u>Unreported "Enemy Property"</u>	
	Homestead land	5.11
	Agricultural land	4.07
	<u>Sub-Total of Unreported "Enemy Property"</u>	<u>9.18*</u>

continued

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\* Unreported "Enemy Property" is assumed to have been included in the privately owned land and hence excluded from the calculation of total village land.

TABLE 3 (Continued)

3 Communally Owned Land

Football ground	1.92
Land devoted to educational institutions	3.50
Road and others	1.00
Muslim Religious Property (Mosque, Open air Prayer Ground, Grave Yard)	0.96
Hindu Religious Property (Burning ghat, place for Puja, etc.)	0.78
<u>Sub-Total of Communally Owned Land</u>	<u>8.16</u>

4 Individually Owned Land

Agricultural land	405.76
Homestead land	40.93
Water bodies (Tanks & Ponds)	9.57
Garden land	20.02
Fallow land	4.09
<u>Sub-Total of Individually Owned Land</u>	<u>480.94</u>

TOTAL Village Land 556.94

Khas (Government) Land:

There are various sources of government land:\*

- a) excess land from ceiling impositions such as EBSATA\*\*, 1950 and Presidential Order (PO) 98 of 1972\*\*;
- b) land purchased by government in certificate sales (i.e. sales for arrears of land revenue);
- c) land accruing to government by surrender, abandonment and escheat;

\* See Abdullah (1976).

\*\* East Bengal State Acquisition & Tenancy Act which fixed land ceiling at 33.3 acres/family. This was enhanced to 125 acres/family in 1961. The P.O. 98 of 1972 once again brought down the ceiling to 33.3 acres/family.

d) land that was never settled since it was originally waste land/ forests or used as public utility, such as roads, common grazing ground, canal, etc. Although the source of the 10.26 acres of government land at Magura could not be located, it is certain that these are not excess lands arising out of ceiling imposition. It is not likely that these belong to the 4th category listed above. The grazing ground by the Muchi (Khal) Canal (3.80 acres) is communally enjoyed but obviously the richer households of Magura and Kalukhali, with a larger number of livestock at their disposal, use them much more than the poorer households. The 4.13 acres of government agricultural land has been under illegal possession of 7 UM, 3 R II and 3 M households of Magura, Kalukhali and Poradanga for many years now. When asked how this was possible, the Tehsildar (the revenue official in charge of collecting land revenue for about 10-12 villages) had no reply. His complicity in the matter was confirmed by selected informants.

#### Government "Enemy Property"

In the wake of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, the property of Indian nationals living in Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan) was declared as "enemy" property and as such taken over by the government.

2 Hindu RH II and 2 RH I did not report the property that should have been declared as "enemy" property. This amounts to about 9.18 acres of land. Through bribing relevant officials, legal documents were brought out to show that these were not "enemy" property. Of the reported "enemy property" of 58.15 acres, 44.54 acres are under legal/illegal possession of 22 Hindu RH II, RH I and UMH. The remaining land is under legal/illegal possession of 11 M, LM and P Hindu households. This has again been possible because of either

"connections" with relevant officials or lack of implementation of the government measure. However, what is important is that in breaking this law, the richer households by far outstrip the poorer ones.

#### Communally Owned Land

Most of the communally owned land (8.16 acres) in Magura was donated by the richer households. However, as shown later, it is also they who dominate and reap the maximum benefits from the religious and educational institutions set up on these lands. (See Chapters 6 and 7)

TABLE 4 : Size-Class Distribution 1951

Private Land Ownership Pattern

Size-Class Category according to Agricultural Land owned <sup>1</sup> (in acres)	Number and Percentage of Households		Agricultural Land owned		Housestead Land owned		All Land owned	
	Number	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage
Landless Household (0)	23	17.0	0	0	3.0	6.4	4.0	0.7
Poor Household (0.01-1.00)	21	15.6	11.0	2.4	5.0	10.6	18.0	3.3
Lower Middle Household (1.01-2.50)	19	14.1	25.0	5.4	6.0	12.8	32.0	3.9
Middle Household (2.51-4.50)	32	23.7	95.0	20.4	12.0	25.5	115.0	21.3
Upper-middle Household (4.51-7.50)	17	12.6	87.0	18.7	8.0	17.0	103.0	9.1
Rich Household I (7.51-12.50)	15	11.1	127.0	27.3	8.0	17.0	137.0	25.4
Rich Household II (+12.50)	8	5.9	120.0	25.8	5.0	10.6	130.0	24.1
Total	135	100	465.0	100	47.0	100	539.0	100

TABLE 5 : Size-Class Distribution 1961

Size-Class Category according to Agricultural Land owned (in acres)	Number and Percentage of Households		Agricultural Land owned		Housestead Land owned		All Land owned	
	Number	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage
Landless Household (0)	30	21.0	0	0	4.0	9.3	5.0	1.0
Poor Household (0.01-1.00)	26	18.1	15.0	3.5	5.0	11.6	25.0	4.9
Lower-middle Household (1.01-2.50)	24	16.8	40.0	9.2	6.0	14.0	50.0	9.7
Middle Household (2.51-4.50)	30	21.0	95.0	21.8	11.0	25.6	115.0	22.3
Upper-middle Household (4.51-7.50)	15	10.5	85.0	19.5	7.0	16.2	98.0	19.0
Rich Household I (7.51-12.50)	12	8.4	105.0	24.1	6.0	14.0	117.0	22.7
Rich Household II (+12.50)	6	4.2	95.0	21.8	4.0	9.3	10.50	20.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>435.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>43.0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>515.0</b>	<b>100</b>

TABLE 6 : Size-Class Distribution 1977

Size-Class Category according to Agricultural Land owned (in acres)	Number and Percentage of Households		Agricultural Land owned		Per capita (in acres)	Housestead Land owned		All Land owned	
	Number	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage		Amount (in acres)	Percentage	Amount (in acres)	Percentage
Landless Household (0)	41	26.3	0	0	0	3.21	7.8	4.06	0.9
Poor Household (0.01-100)	29	18.6	15.95	3.9	0.09	7.36	18.0	24.0	5.1
Lower-middle Household (1.01-2.50)	34	21.8	51.34	12.7	0.26	8.70	21.3	64.91	13.5
Middle Household (2.51-4.50)	26	16.7	84.90	20.9	0.50	7.96	19.5	98.04	10.4
Upper-middle Household (4.51-7.50)	11	7.0	60.91	15.0	0.69	3.93	9.6	71.54	14.9
Rich Household I (7.51-12.50)	10	6.4	88.12	21.7	1.12	6.02	14.7	99.05	10.6
Rich Household II (+12.50)	5	3.2	104.54	25.8	1.90	3.75	9.1	118.29	24.6
Total	156	100	405.76	100	0.42	40.93	100	480.37	100

From Tables 4 - 6, the following trend may be noticed. Firstly, landlessness was considerably on the increase, from 17.0% of all households in 1951 to 26.6% of all households in 1977. Similarly, households with landholding below 2.5 acres increased from 46% in 1951 to 54% in 1961 to 65% in 1977. Secondly, in 1951, the top 16% households owned about 50% of the land. In 1977, the top 16% owned almost 60% of the land. Also, in 1977, the per capita agricultural land for RH II was approximately 21 times greater than the per capita agricultural land for PH, indicating staggering inequality in land ownership among the households. However, while there was a clear trend of increased differentiation among the households into owners and non-owners between 1951 and 1977, the data do not show that it was occurring at a very rapid pace, at least until the present (so far, landlessness increased at the rate of only 0.36% per annum); land transfer data for the period 1968-76 also confirm this:

TABLE 7

Reported Land Sale, 1968-1976

Class Background	Buyers	Sellers
LLH	-	-
PH	3	27
LMH	7	36
MH	25	18
UMH	12	5
RH I	26	2
RH II	18	3

There was no doubt a considerable number of unreported transfers (i.e. parties did not register the transaction) because: (a) legal

sales involved payment of fees to the government exchequer as well as bribes to the government officials; (b) when a rich person was the buyer he could be "officially" exceeding the ceiling through purchase of new land; (c) legal purchase enhanced land revenue and cesses; (d) the existing law of pre-emption provided that certain relatives had preferences over non relative purchasers, which meant that relatives could create problems for a seller, especially if the land sale was officially registered; (e) some of the transfers were due to inability to repay outstanding debts for which land was a collateral. In such cases, the usual procedure was to deposit a land-ownership deed with the money lender, and the latter did not press for formal legal transfer because the borrower, being the weaker party, would not generally lay claim on land lost to the money lender, legally or otherwise. However, our estimate is that total land transferred through sale and mortgage during this period, after taking into consideration unreported transactions, would not exceed 75.0 acres. This means a transfer of only 8.33 acres per year.

TABLE 8

Legal Land Sale, 1968-1976

Year	Amount sold in acres
1968	1.51
1969	6.75
1970	5.51
1971	-
1972	1.40
1973	1.60
1974	3.3
1975	5.41
1976	6.1
Total:	31.58

Source: Records maintained in the office of the Sub-Registrar of Land, Narail.

In explaining this rather slow pace in the differentiation process at Magura, the nature of in- and out-migration for this village since 1947 needs to be examined carefully. Of the 56 households migrating to India between 1948 and 1977, 26 were LLH, 5 PH, 19 LMH, 5 MH and 1 RH I at the time of their migrations. Of the 11 households migrating out to other villages during this period, 9 were LLH, 1 PH and 1 MH at the time of their migration. On the other hand, of the 8 migrating in households (from other villages) 5 were LLH, 2 PH and 1 LMH at the time of migration. This means not only a net exodus, but one consisting of more poor than rich households. As such, migration has considerably hidden the real extent of differentiation at Magura.

On the other hand, Hindu migration to India also had some cushioning effect on the differentiation process at Magura in the manner in which the lands of the migrating households were transferred. While most of the land sold by the departing Hindus of this and neighbouring villages was bought by Muslim rising classes (MH and upward), it was also possible for some Muslim landless and poor households to buy this land, often on credit (See Chapter 7) so that some upward mobility took place in the post 1947 period. Given this special circumstance of Magura, involving considerable out-migration, the Magura data cannot possibly represent the actual extent of differentiation that has taken place in rural Bangladesh as a whole during this period. Finally, the land market at Magura, as elsewhere in rural Bangladesh, was a limited one. Firstly, despite economic pressures, people sold land only as a last resort. Secondly, the prospective purchaser did not go beyond a particular distance from his normal place of residence in buying new land. Thirdly, and as mentioned earlier, existing law provided that relatives had a preference over other land purchasers, which meant that relatives could create

obstacles for land sale.

However, although differentiation has been slow so far, this is likely to be rapid in the coming years, since scope for out migration has been almost exhausted and economic pressures have increased, especially since 1972.

TABLE 9

Female Ownership of Land, 1977

Mode of Acquisition	Amount (in Acres)	Number
Inheritance	13.96	12
Gift	19.20	3
Purchase	0.71	4
Total	33.87	19

TABLE 10

Female Land Ownership According to Class Background, 1977

Class	Number	Amount
LLH	1	0.12 (Homestead land)
PH	7	4.70
LMH	3	2.84
MH	1	0.06
UMH	3	2.28
RH I	2	1.00
RH II	2	22.99
Total	19	33.87

The above tables show that (1) females own only 7.05% of the total privately owned land; (2) only 3.7% of the females in this village own some land. In most cases, females were found giving up

the little land that they were legally entitled to inherit in favour of brothers (according to both Hindu and Muslim family laws, the female share of inherited property is much lower than that of the male) because in case of misfortune like divorce, death of husband, etc., such a gesture was considered to ensure shelter in the brother's household.

Ownership of Other Means of Production in the Agricultural Sector:

TABLE 11

Bullock Ownership Pattern, 1977

Class	Number Bullocks Owned	Number Bullocks/ Household	Number Bullocks/acre of Agricultural Land Owned
LLH	4 (4)*	0.09	0
PH	18 (10)	0.62	1.128
LMH	30 (18)	0.88	0.55
MH	27 (15)	1.03	0.32
UMH	22 (9)	2.0	0.36
RH I	28 (8)	2.8	0.32
RH II	13 (4)	2.6	0.03
<b>Total:</b>	<b>142 (68)</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>0.35</b>

\* Figures in parentheses indicate the number of households owning bullocks.

TABLE 12Plough Ownership Pattern, 1977

Class	Number of Ploughs Owned		Number of Ploughs/Household	Number of Ploughs/acre of Agricultural Land
LLH	5	(5)*	0.12	0
PH	12	(11)	0.41	0.75
LMH	18	(17)	0.53	0.33
MH	18	(16)	0.7	0.21
UMH	10	(9)	0.9	0.16
RH I	16	(8)	1.6	0.18
RH II	6	(3)	1.2	0.06
Total:	85	(69)	0.54	0.21

\* Figures in parentheses indicate the actual number of households owning a plough.

Ownership of Water Bodies in and Around Magura:Ponds and Tanks:

There are 21 tanks (pukur) and 4 ponds (Doba) in Magura village, comprising an area of 9.57 acres. Of these, only 12 are in good condition, i.e. not derelict.\*\* These are owned as follows:

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\*\* On physical inspection, it was found that all the tanks and ponds in this village require some degree of renovation if they are to be used for scientific fishing and as sources of clean water.

TABLE 13

Ownership of Tanks and Ponds, 1977

Class	In Good Condition	Derelict
LLH	-	1
PH	-	1
LMH	1	2
MH	-	3
UMH	3	1
RH I	4	4
RH II	4	1
All Classes:	12	13

Thus, the richest three classes, among themselves, own 17, i.e. 62.9% of the tanks and ponds. In terms of area, this is well over 80% of the total tank area in the village. Of the 8 tanks and ponds owned by the lowest 4 land-owning classes, only one is not derelict. On the other hand, about 65% of water bodies owned by the three upper classes were in good condition. Not one of the tanks is owned by any member of the fishing community. In 1951, the number of tanks and ponds in this village was 18 and ownership was more or less as skewed as it is today (no specific statistics could be collected in this regard).

The River System

Before 1950, fishing rights in the eight miles of river system in and around Magura (Fatki, Kajla, Chitra and Bamunkhali canal) belonged to the family of one GSK<sup>1</sup> of the neighbouring village of

Bamunkhali. This was part of their 'Gantidari' (at present GSK<sup>1</sup> is a millionaire businessman). In lieu of an annual rent, the family used to lease these eight miles of open fishery to fishermen of villages Magura, Bamunkhali and Tarashi. Eight fishermen of these three villages obtained written deeds to this effect, while for the remaining 90 fishing households of these villages, it was an oral lease. Following the enactment of the EBSATA\* in 1950, ownership of this open fishery vested in the government. This was contested in the civil court by those eight fishermen who had written deeds. The other 90 fishing households also joined these eight in the legal battle. In 1955, that is, after about four years, the court gave its verdict in favour of the fishermen. Since then, the fishing community of the three villages has been exercising joint fishing rights over these eight miles of open fishery, so that unlike most fishermen of the country, they do not have to lease in fishing rights over these eight miles of open fisheries from the government who own almost 95% of the country's open fisheries.

However, the fishermen of these villages have been venturing out to water bodies beyond these eight miles of open fisheries for the last seven years because of the paucity of fish in these waters. During the Pakistan period, fishing rights for these water bodies had to be acquired indirectly, i.e. through Ijaradars. There were three Ijaradars relevant to the fishing community of Magura. All of them belonged to the RH II class. After obtaining a lease from the government, the Ijaradars, in turn, used to sublet fishing rights to the actual fishermen.

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\* East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act; its main provisions are indicated in Chapter 8.

In 1972, the Ijaradari system (i.e. leasing to the highest bidder on a year to year basis) was abolished, and under the new arrangement, only the local fishermen's cooperative was allowed to bid for an open fishery in the area. In other words, although government is still the juridical proprietor, the actual ownership now vests with the management of the local cooperative since the amount required for leasing in is nominal. The money for leasing in is raised by the cooperative from its members, and if non-cooperative members or members of another fishing cooperative wish to fish in these waters, they are required to pay a rent to the cooperative that has leased in from the government.

Although, nominally, all fishermen of a cooperative have equal fishing rights in the leased in open fisheries, the actual position is quite different. Firstly, those fishermen who lack or have insufficient fishing gear obviously cannot carry out fishing on the scale that fishermen with adequate fishing gear are able. Secondly, the cooperative office bearers (who are invariably the richest among the members in terms of both land and fishing gear) arrange for both leasing-in and leasing-out. For leasing-in from the government, they usually raise a much higher amount from cooperative members and appropriate the difference among themselves and revenue department officials. In fact, raising of a higher amount is usually justified to the members on the pretext of bribing revenue officials, who despite the clear legal stipulation for leasing in open fisheries to fishermen cooperatives alone, can nevertheless delay leasing on various "grounds". Similarly when renting out fishing rights to fishermen of another cooperative or fishermen outside any cooperative, it is these cooperative bosses who appropriate to themselves the extra income of the cooperative through sub-letting.

### Ownership of Fishing Gear

21 households of Magura are involved in fishing as either a main occupation (19) or as a side line (2). The fishing gear (net/boat) ownership pattern among these households is as follows:

TABLE 14

#### Fishing Gear Ownership Pattern, 1977

Ownership Type	No. of HH	Land Ownership Class						
		LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RH I	RH II
Sufficient Fishing Gear	2	-	2					
Insufficient* Fishing Gear	12	6	5	1				
No fishing gear	7	4	3					

Fifty years ago, there were 13 fishing households in this village. All of them possessed sufficient fishing gear; in any case, at that time, there was no fishing family without any fishing gear.

### Ownership of Weaving Assets

There are 41 looms in this village. Of them, only 21 are now operational. There are now 26 weaving households in this village, on the basis of caste and traditional family occupation. However, 5 households have completely switched over to agriculture. Of the remaining 21 weaving households, weaving is the main occupation of only 9 households. Among them they own 10 active looms, as shown below:

\* Owns either net or boat, or when possesses both, their condition renders these unsuitable for fishing.

TABLE 15

Loom Ownership Pattern, 1977

Number of Operational Looms Owned	Number of HH	Land Ownership Class						
		LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RH I	RH II
Owms 2 Looms	3	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
Owms 1 Loom	4	-	-	2	1	-	-	-
Owms no Loom	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-

In 1945, of the 60 weaving households in Magura, there was none without a loom and other essential weaving gear. There were then, in all, 85 looms and all in active condition.

Ownership of the Means of Transport and CommunicationOwnership of Transport Boats

There are at present 6 households whose main (4) or subsidiary (2) occupation is boating (Patni). Four of them own boats of their own, but the condition of the boats of two boating households is far from satisfactory. Two of the households hire in a boat during the rainy season, i.e. when water communication becomes important. Of the six households engaged in boating, 5 are landless and 1 is poor. In 1951, there were only 3 households dependent on boating as a main or subsidiary occupation. All of them possessed boats, and in good workable condition.

Ownership of Cycles/Rickshaw Vans/Bullock Carts

In 1977, there was no one in this village owning a rickshaw van. In all 5 cycles were owned by 3 persons from RH I and II, 1 from UMH and 1 from MH classes.

TABLE 16

Bullock Cart Ownership, 1977

Class	Number of Bullock Carts Owned	Number of Bullock Carts per Household
LLH	0 (0)*	-
PH	1 (1)	0.034
LMH	3 (5)	0.09
MH	7 (7)	0.24
UMH	8 (8)	0.72
RH I	8 (8)	0.80
RH II	4 (4)	0.80
All Classes:	31 (33)	0.198

\* The figures in parentheses indicate the number of households owning bullock cart(s).

Ownership of Trading CapitalOwnership of Trading Capital at Magura

At present the main occupation of 4 households (3 LLH and 1 LMH) is trade. One of these (LLH) does not own any trading capital, working or fixed. In 1951, the main occupation of 13 households was trade and commerce. There was no trading household at that time without at least a working capital.

Ownership of Trading Capital at Maizpara Market Place

TABLE 17

Ownership of Fixed Capital Relating to Trade by Beparis, Mohajons, Stockists, Aratdars, Permanent Shopkeepers, at Maizpara Market Place, 1977

Land Ownership Class	No. of Traders	% age of Traders	Number of Traders with Fixed Capital* (relating to trade) Valued at			
			Below Tk. 25 Thousand	Between Tk. 25 and Tk. 50 Thousand	Between Tk. 50 and Tk. 100 Thousand	Above Tk. 100 Thousand
Lower Middle Household and Below	56	29.31	30	21	5	-
Middle Household	30	15.70	12	11	7	-
Upper Middle Household	32	16.75	6	10	13	3
Rich Household I	51	26.70	-	-	40	11
Rich Household II	22	11.51	-	-	12	10
<b>Total:</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>24</b>

\* Including stock in trade.

It was not possible to find out in detail either the total value of the fixed assets or the amount of fixed assets owned by each of the above traders at Maizpara market place. However, our estimate, based on the above table and cross examination of selected informants, is that traders from rich households I and II (i.e. about 38 per cent

of the total traders in this market place) own roughly 80 per cent of the total fixed capital (relating to trade) of this market place, and also there has been, between 1951 and 1977, increased concentration in the ownership of fixed capital in this market place. One important reason for this trend is that during this period there has been very little expansion in the market place area, so that expansion in permanent shopping structures, processing industries (oil press and flour mill), storage capacity, money lender cum trading financier's establishment, etc., was brought about mostly by those persons (95 per cent of whom belonged to RH I and II from Urani-Maizpara, Charikhada and Hossainpur) who in the 1950s were already owning and controlling most of the land in and around this market place.

TABLE 18

Land-Owning Background of Holders of License, Permit, Agency and Dealership at Maizpara Market Place, 1977

Type of Trading Monopoly	Number of Holders	Land-Owning Class				
		RH II	RH I	UMH	MH	LMH and Below
Export-Import License	3	1	2	-	-	-
Cloth/Soda Permit	3	1	1	1	-	-
Cigarette Agency	4	2	1	-	1	-
GRC* Dealership	1	1	-	-	-	-
Fertiliser/Insecticide Dealership	7	4	2	1	-	-
MR Dealership	7	4	2	1	-	-
All Types:	25**	13	8	3	1	-

\* Government Rationed Commodities.

\*\* The same person may be holding more than one type of trading monopoly.

Farias (Itinerant traders) and Dalals (Brokers)

At Urani-Maizpara, the number of Farias and Dalals at the peak marketing season is about 40 and 8 respectively. Farias have no fixed capital and their working capital is also generally very small. They move from market place to market place, purchasing goods from the producer-sellers and then selling these to bigger merchants at a higher price. During the period 1951-1977 the number of Farias at this market place increased by about 4 times. None of the Farias at Maizpara came from RH I or RH II classes. About 55 per cent were from LMH and below classes, 25 per cent from MH, and 20 per cent from UMH. The Dalal's functions consist of establishing contact and negotiating deals between producer-sellers/small merchants and big merchants, and in the process charging a commission from the latter. He does not possess even working capital. 6 of the 8 Dalals are from lower middle and below households, and the remaining 2 are from middle households.

Producer-Sellers

It was not possible to determine accurately the class background of all producer-sellers and their respective contributions to the total gross marketed surplus. However, on the basis of a sample survey, the following estimate for paddy/rice was obtained:

TABLE 19

Estimate of (a) Class Background of Paddy/Rice Producer-Sellers, and  
(b) Their Contribution Gross Marketed Surplus of Paddy/Rice at  
Maizpara Market Place, 1977

Class	Percentage of Total Paddy/ Rice Producer-Sellers	Percentage of Total Paddy/Rice Marketed
LMH and Below	50	10
MH	15	8
UMH	10	12
RH I and II	25	70
All Classes	100	100

TABLE 20

Ownership of Production Assets other than Land (in Taka)

Class	Total	Value of Assets in Taka							
		0- 250	251- 1250	1201- 2500	2501- 5000	5001- 10000	10001- 20000	20001- 50000	Above 50000
LLH	41	13	12	10	4	1	1	-	-
PH	29	3	9	7	8	1	1	-	-
LMH	34	-	4	7	14	8	-	1	-
MH	26	-	-	2	9	11	4	-	-
UMH	11	-	-	-	-	5	5	1	-
RH I	10	-	-	-	1	-	7	2	-
RH II	5	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	2
Total	156	16	25	26	36	26	20	5	2

Thus, 42.9% of all households own production assets valued at Tk. 2,500/- and less; 39.1% of all households own production assets valued at between Tk. 2,500/- and Tk. 10,000/- and only 16.02% of the

households own production assets valued at between Tk. 10 thousand and Tk. 50 thousand. On the other hand, the class wise position is that while 85.3% of the landless households and 65.5% of poor households own production assets valued at Tk. 2,500/- and less, 100% of the RH II and 90% of RH I own assets valued at above Tk. 10,000/-.

From the discussion on ownership of the various means of production, exchange and distribution, two clear inferences may be drawn. Firstly, there is a strong correlation between agricultural land ownership and ownership of all other assets for production, exchange and distribution. Secondly, the trend over time in the ownership of all production assets was that on the one hand, these were getting concentrated in fewer households, and on the other, more and more households were being dispossessed of these. In other words, a distinct process of differentiation of the village households into owners and non-owners had set in. The implications of this for accentuating poverty in this village can easily be deduced.

4 Role in the Main Occupation

TABLE 21

Main Occupation, Classwise, 1977

	LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RH I	RH II	Total
Agriculture	19	17	29	23	11	8	4	111
Fishing	11	8	0	0	0	-	0	19
Weaving	1	2	3	2	0	0	1	9
Boating	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Trade and Commerce	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
House Servant	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Teacher	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Doctor	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Priest	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Carpenter	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
School Porter	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Rope Making	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Non-Agri. Labour	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>156</b>

Male Household Heads: 150

Female Household Heads: 6 (1 PH, 4 LMH, 1 UMH)

TABLE 22

Role in the Main Occupation (Agriculture - 111)

Role	LLH (19)	PH (17)	LMH (29)	MH (23)	UMH (11)	RH I (8)	RH II (4)
1 Does Manual Labour regularly	19	16	25	16	3	1	-
2 Hires in Labour regularly	-	-	-	1	5	4	2
3 Hires in Labour in Peak Seasons	-	1	10	10	6	4	2
4 Share Crops in Land	9	7	18	7	1	1	-
5 Share Crops out Land	-	2	3	3	3	3	3

TABLE 23Role in the Main Occupation (Fishing - 19)

	LLH (11)	PH (8)
Hires in Labour Regularly or Occasionally	1	0
Does manual Labour Regularly	11	7
Owens Sufficient Assets for Fishing	-	2
Owens Insufficient Assets for Fishing	5	5
Owens No Fishing Assets	4	3

TABLE 24Role in the Main Occupation (Weaving - 9)

Role	LLH (1)	PH (2)	LMH (3)	MH (2)	UMH (0)	RH I (0)	RH II (1)
Hires in Labour Regularly or otherwise	0	0	0	1	-	-	1
Does Manual Labour Regularly	1	2	3	1	-	-	-
Owens Assets for Weaving	0	1	3	2	-	-	1

TABLE 25Role in the Main Occupation (Trade - 4)

Role	LLH (3)	LMH (1)
Hires in Labour	0	0
Owens Some Capital Relating to Trade*	2	1
Hires in Assets	1	1

\* Trading Capital was less than Tk. 2,000/- in all cases.

TABLE 26

Role in the Main Occupation (Boating - 4)

Role	LLH (3)	PH (1)
Hires in Labour	0	0
Owms Assets for Boating	3	1
Does Manual Labour	3	1

From the above tables, the general trend emerging is that on the one hand, those who own the means of production are divorced from the direct responsibility of actual production, while on the other, those who are actually engaged in production (and exchange), own very little or no means of production (and exchange). This means that inequality in the ownership of means of production, in the specific context of this village, not only defeats the ends of distribution but also of production, with consequent implications for poverty accentuation.

5 Surplus AppropriationUsufructuary Mortgaging in Land

Fifty years ago, land had to be formally registered, so that the mortgages, even after paying the full amount borrowed, did not necessarily retrieve the land since the occupier of the land could produce legal documents in his favour. Now, no formal registration is required. The present terms are:

- i) The owner gets back his land as soon as he completes payment of the full amount plus interest at usurious rates against which land was mortgaged out. Until such time, land and

production from land are enjoyed by the person to whom land has been mortgaged out.

- ii) However, a fixed yearly deduction is made from the total amount payable, for use of the land. Therefore, after a certain period of time, the land automatically reverts to the owner. However, if the owner wishes to resume his land earlier, he is required to pay the amount that is payable after the aforesaid deductions.

In some cases, mortgaging out land amounts to cash renting (which is illegal), because no interest is charged for the money advanced. But when usurious interest payments are added to the amount advanced, the land is, in effect, being used as collateral in a usurious money lending operation. At present, there is no fixed custom for land mortgage and practice varies according to the respective economic strengths of the persons involved in the transaction. Thus, when a PH was mortgaging out and an RH was mortgaging in a piece of land, the terms were generally detrimental to the former. On the other hand, when the parties involved were of same economic background, the conditions tended to be softer. Causes for mortgaging out also affected the terms. The main reason for mortgaging out by a PH to a MH was immediate cash requirement to meet difficult economic and social situations. On the other hand, the only RH II (SM<sup>1</sup>)\* who had mortgaged out his land did so in order to obtain cash to buy more land. When the PH and LLH were mortgaging in land, they did so in order to supplement their otherwise paltry incomes but when an RH or a UMH did the same, there was obviously not the compulsion of a dire poverty situation.

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\* Throughout the text, Subscript 1 refers to <sup>a</sup> Muslim name while subscript 2 refers to a Hindu name. <sup>^</sup>

Over the period 1951-77, mortgaged out land as a percentage of the total agricultural land increased from 1.07 to 2.56. However, since 1972, the rate of increase seems to have accelerated. In a few cases, the terms for mortgaging were more favourable than those for share cropping. Most poor and lower middle households mortgaging out land felt that they would not be able to resume their land in the near future, and that they would have to wait until such time as the yearly deductions squared out the entire amount for which the land was mortgaged out.

TABLE 27

Class Background of HH Mortgaging in/out Land\*, 1977

Landholding Class	No Mortgaging In	No Mortgaging Out
LLH	10 (33.33)**	-
PH	6 (20.00)	7 (26.92)***
LMH	6 (20.00)	11 (42.30)
MH	3 (10.00)	6 (23.10)
UMH	2 (6.66)	1 (3.84)
RH I	3 (10.00)	-
RH II	-	1 (3.85)

\* Mortgaged out land = 10.39 acres. Mortgaging out households all belong to Magura. Mortgaging in households belong to Magura and surrounding villages, i.e. HH who have mortgaged in the 10.39 acres mentioned above.

\*\* Percentage of the total mortgaging in HHs.

\*\*\* Percentage of the total mortgaging out HHs.

## Share Cropping

### 1 Terms of Share Cropping

There is no written contract. However, at present, the following are the commonly 'accepted' terms and conditions of share cropping in this village:

- 1) Land owners can evict the share croppers at any time, although the lease (which is oral) is valid for usually one year.
- 2) Produce and by-products are equally divided between the land owner and the share cropper.
- 3) The entire cost of cultivation is borne by the share cropper. He has also to transport the landowner's share from the field to the latter's house.
- 4) The share cropper decides the crop(s) to be raised.
- 5) Sometimes, additional cash advance (non-refundable) has to be paid to the landowner.
- 6) As and when required, the share cropper is expected to render free services to the landowner and follow him in his factional politics.

Of the 38 Magura share croppers interviewed, 78.94% thought they were dependent on the landowners for their livelihood. Only 5 among them considered land reforms involving either land distribution or better terms in share cropping as a plausible way out of their dependency. The response of the rest, in fact, varied among the following:

- a) one should work hard and buy land;
- b) there is nothing to be done;
- c) do not know.

When asked specifically if they rendered free services to and/or followed the land owner in the latter's factional politics, only 52.6% admitted having done these. The main reason for this rather limited extent of extra-economic compulsion is that when the share-cropper is below the MH class and the landowner is above the MH class (which is the general case), extra-economic compulsions become prominent but when share cropping is among equals/near equals, these are not applied.

All of the share croppers interviewed thought that the terms of share-cropping have either deteriorated or have not changed over the last fifty years. No one thought that these had improved from their point of view. They mentioned that before 1967, they (share-croppers) did not have to carry the owner's share from the field to the latter's house. Also the land/man ratio being much more favourable they could bargain better with their landowners for input supplies and exemptions in case of a bad harvest. This is also attested to by O'Malley in his 1912 District Gazetteer for Jessore (p 83)

2 Extent of Share CroppingTABLE 28Land Use by Tenancy 1951-1977

Agricultural Land Use Categories	1951		1961		1977	
	Amount of Land (in acres)	Percent- age of Total Agricult- ural Land	Amount of Land (in acres)	Percent- age of Total Agricult- ural Land	Amount of Land (in acres)	Percent- age of Total Agricult- ural Land
1 Owner Managed/ Cultivated Land	235.0	50.53	233.0	53.62	287.52	70.86
2 Share Cropped out Land	225.0	48.4	196.0	45.0	107.85	26.58
3 Cash Rented out Land	-	-	-	-	-	-
4 Mortgaged out Land	5.0	1.07	6.0	1.38	10.39	2.56
Total	465.0	100	435.0	100	405.76	100

TABLE 29Extent of Share-Cropping (by Households) 1951-77

Categories	1951		1961		1977	
	Number of HH	Percent- age of Total HH (135)	Number of HH	Percent- age of Total HH (143)	Number of HH	Percent- age of Total HH (156)
1 Share Cropping in	40	31.1	45	31.47	57	36.53
2 Share Cropping in as the Main Source of Income	15	11.11	20	13.98	13	8.33
3 Share Cropping out	55	40.74	50	34.96	44	28.20
4 Share Cropping out as the Main Source of Income	30	22.22	25	17.48	12	7.69

TABLE 30

Class Background of Share Cropping in Households, 1977

Class	No. of Share Cropping in HH		Amount of Land Share Cropped In (in acres)	Amount of Land Share Cropped in /HH in the Respective Class (in acres)
LLH	(19.3)*	11 (26.8)**	18.65	0.45
PH	(17.5)	10 (34.48)	35.28	1.21
LMH	(33.3)	19 (55.9)	31.59	0.92
MH	(21.05)	12 (46.15)	15.70	0.60
UMH	(5.26)	3 (27.27)	1.84	0.18
RH I	(3.50)	2 (20.0)	1.08	0.11
RH II	-	-	-	-

\* % of the total share cropping in HH (57).

\*\* % of the total HH in respective class.

TABLE 31

Class Background of Share Cropping out Households, 1977

Class	No. of Share Cropping out HH		Amount of Land Share Cropped Out (in acres)	Amount of Land Share Cropped out /HH in the Respective Class (in acres)
LLH	-	-	-	-
PH	(20.45)*	9 (31.03)**	3.53	0.12
LMH	(29.54)	13 (38.23)	15.07	0.44
MH	(20.48)	9 (34.61)	16.76	0.64
UMH	(9.09)	4 (36.36)	14.49	1.31
RH I	(11.36)	5 (50.00)	19.75	1.94
RH II	(9.09)	4 (80.00)	38.25	7.65

\* % of total share cropping out HH (44).

\*\* % of total households in respective class.

TABLE 32

Extent of Absenteeism\* among Share Cropping out Households, 1951-77

Year	Total Number of Share Cropping out Households	Number of Share Cropping out Households Absent from Village	Number and Percentage of Share Cropping out HH not Cultivating with Family Labour
1951	55	-	40 (73)
1977	44	-	30 (68)

\*Absenteeism may be at two levels:

- 1) Totally absent from village
- 2) Present in the village but not engaged in cultivation through own labour.

From the tables above, the following may be deduced. Firstly, land under owner/owner managed cultivation increased from 50.53% of agricultural land in 1951 to 70.80% of the agricultural land in 1977. Secondly, while land under share cropping decreased from 48.4% in 1951 to 26.58% in 1977, share-cropping in households increased from 31.1% in 1951 to 36.53% in 1977, indicating that now too many households were competing for too little land, thereby decreasing the bargaining strength of the share-croppers. Share cropping as a main occupation was on a slight decline (8.33% in 1977 as against 11.11% in 1951) and this showed that the terms of share cropping being what they were, share cropping as an only occupation was becoming less attractive. Thirdly, while the overwhelming majority of the share-cropping in households were from LL to MH classes (91.2%), 70.4% of the share-cropping out households were from RH II to MH. In terms of land share cropped out, RH II to UMH classes share cropped out 72.49% of the total share cropped out land. Also, the amount of land share cropped out per household was far larger for UMH to RH II than for MH

to PH classes. There were two main reasons why some middle to poor households share-cropped out land:

- 1) pre-occupation with other income earning work such as fishing and weaving (9 fishermen and weavers of LMH to MH classes share cropping out their land while pursuing fishing and weaving);
- 2) lack of draught animals, agricultural inputs and implements, wage fund, family labour, etc., or when a female or an old/sick man was the household head; in 8 of the 31 share cropping out households within MH to PH classes, household heads were either females or old/sick males.

Thus, share cropping in Magura, as a method of surplus appropriation was characterised by rack renting in kind involving 50% or more of the produce, divorce of the owner from risk and responsibility of cultivation and various extra-economic pressures. The landowners were able to apply this particular appropriation process because of their monopoly ownership and control over land in an economy with a very low level of productive forces.

Although the surplus extracted thus is not very great, either in absolute terms or from the viewpoint of the production possibilities inherent in using modern agricultural technology and methods, the rate of return is high, given that landowners do not have to contribute anything towards cultivating cost or share in any way the risk and responsibility of cultivation.

Moreover, given the adverse land/man ratio, landowners can also extract free services and support for their factional politics from share croppers. This support can then be used to strengthen their

political position and to acquire access to the various governmental inputs supplied through the local power structure.

From the point of view of the share cropper, such appropriation leaves him with very little for necessary consumption and investment. The insecurity associated with share cropping also prevents him from making any long term land improvements. Also, at this high level of appropriation, the cost of incremental production through improved technology may outstrip the value of his share. The only compulsions to maximise production working on him are (a) his own needs of consumption and (b) threat of eviction.

As a consequence, he does what is obvious under the circumstances, namely maximisation of his labour on the share cropped land. But in this he faces a number of constraints. First, there is often his own plot of land, however tiny, competing with the share cropped land for his labour, specially during the peak agricultural seasons. Second, at his low level of consumption, the intensity and quality of the labour provided by him are not very high, even though there is no lack of effort on his part. Thirdly, the output of this labour is low also owing to the low level of implements with which he has to operate. Sometimes, he does not possess even the basic objects of labour like a wooden plough or a draught animal, or, if he does possess them, their quality is very low (and as such he has to resort to Anguri cultivation\*). In fact, this is the main reason why share croppers from poor households are preferred to those from landless households (see Table 30). Fourthly, since he has no proprietary or tenancy rights over the land he share crops, he cannot mortgage it for credit from

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\* See Chapters 4 and 9.

institutional agencies. Fifthly, the land share cropped out in this village is generally of lower quality. Finally, unless production is abnormally low there is little fear of eviction\* since, as mentioned earlier, the land owner's calculation is conditioned more by the high rate of return involving no investment and risk and responsibility of cultivation and extra-economic uses of his share croppers than by the profit possibilities of capitalist agriculture, requiring investment, management and even physical labour. Thus share cropping appropriation acts as a positive hindrance to higher production and growth of productive forces. The above explanation is based on personal observation as well as extensive interviews with share cropping in and out household heads. It is also validated by Tables 33 and 34 below which give the yield/acre for various crops in owner cultivated/managed and share cropped out land in Magura.

TABLE 33

Major Crops Produced from Owner Cultivated/Managed Land, 1977

Crop	Total acreage	Production in Mds.	Yield/Acre (Mds)
Deshi Aus	187.37	1,837.50	9.80
Scattered Amon	166.77	2,014.50	12.07
Deshi Amon	42.48	585.00	13.60
Roa Amon	15.15	174.00	11.48
Total Paddy	411.75	4,611.00	<u>11.19</u>
Jute	88.83	842.61	<u>9.48</u>

\* Evictions can and do, in fact, take place for extra-economic reasons; for example, if a share cropper does not render political support or free services.

TABLE 34

Major Crops Produced from Share Cropped Out Land, 1977

Crop	Total acreage	Total Production in Mds.	Yield/Acre in Mds.
Deshi Aus	87.21	666.00	7.63
Scattered Amon	75.93	705.00	9.28
Deshi Amon	31.56	474.00	15.01
Total Paddy	194.70	1,845.00	<u>9.47</u>
Jute	41.85	382.92	<u>9.14</u>

TABLE 35

Yield/Acre in Owner Managed/Cultivated Land and Share Cropped in Land for Lower Middle and Poor HHs who Managed/Cultivated own Land as well as Share Cropped in Land, 1977

Category	Yield/Acre in Owner Managed Land in Mds.	Yield/Acre in Share Cropped in Land in Mds.
LMH	11.3	10.9
PH	7.75	7.04

Hired Agricultural LabourTABLE 36Casual Labour\* Wages, 1924-1977

Year	Wage/Day Without Food in Taka (8 a.m. - 2 p.m.)	Wage/Day (plus meals) in Taka (8 a.m. - 6 p.m.)	Rice Equivalent of Col. (2)	Rice Equiv- alent of Col. (3) in lbs.
1925**	N.A.	0.46	-	5.12
1951	0.50	0.50	2.60	2.60
1977	4.50	4.00***	1.80	1.60

\* Work consists of land preparation, sowing, weeding, harvesting and post harvest operations.

\*\* Source: A. Momen (1925, 75).

\*\*\* Though still in existence, part kind-payment is now sharply on the decline.

TABLE 37Seasonal Variation in Casual Labour Wages, 1977

Month	Rate Without Food in Tk.
May 15 - June 15	3.00
June 15 - August 15	7.00
August 15 - October 15	2.00
October 15 - February 15	6.00
February 15 - April 15	2.50
April 15 - May 15	6.00

TABLE 38

Asset Ownership of Households With Main Occupation as Agricultural Wage Labour, 1951-1977

Asset	Percentage of Households with Agricultural Wage Labour as Main Occupation	
	1951	1977
Owens some Agricultural Land	70	40
Owens a Homestead	100	100
Owens Two Bullocks	-	-
Owens One Bullock	20	20
Owens One Complete Plough	30	10
Owens a Sickle	100	80

TABLE 39

Permanent Labour (Muni) Income, 1951-1977

Year	Annual Income pay in Tk.	Rice Equivalent in lbs.
1951	200-300	800-1200
1977	600-900	240-360

TABLE 40

Hired Agricultural Labour as Main Occupation\*, 1951-1977

Year	Number of Households	Percentage of Total Households
1951	10	7.40
1977	20 (8 PH and 12 LLH)	12.82

\* Members of other households were engaged in agricultural wage labour as a subsidiary occupation. They ranged between LLH and MH Classes.

From the above tables, the following trends may be noted. Firstly, the real income of both casual and permanent hired agricultural labourers has sharply declined over time. There is also considerable seasonal variation in the wage rates causing great uncertainty and fluctuations in total income. Secondly, hired agricultural labour as both a main and a subsidiary occupation showed some increase over this period (from 7.40% in 1951 to 12.82% in 1977) but obviously this was not enough to make wage labour a dominant form of surplus value appropriation in the agricultural sector. Thirdly, the process of dispossession had clearly set in, and even so, the hired agricultural labourers were not as yet completely divorced from the means of production.

Wage Labour Mobility

There was little wage labour mobility, owing to lack of alternative employment opportunity in and out of the agricultural sector. Only in the peak agricultural seasons was some mobility observed. 15 persons from this village (5 LLH, 5 LMH, 5 MH) regularly travel to south Barisal and Khulna for paddy harvesting. On the other hand,

both during harvesting and sowing seasons, outside wage labourers seek work in Magura. In 1976, 55 persons from Faridpur came here during the harvesting season. Called Daoals, they arrived by boat and lived in the boat during the one month they worked in Magura. They were paid in kind at the rate of 7 sheafs of paddy for every 100 sheafs harvested. Then, during the sowing season, 30 persons came to this village from Faridpur and other parts of Jessore. They worked from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for about 20 days. They were paid in both cash and kind at the rate of Tk. 2 plus 3 meals a day.

Thus, in reality, wage labour in Magura was "captive" labour, given its lack of mobility in the face of little alternative employment opportunities in and outside the agricultural sector. Consequently, landowners could dictate wage rates to their advantage and the rate of surplus value appropriated through wage labour was very high and on the increase over the years (as indicated by the fall in real wages during the period under study).

For land owners, such a high level of surplus appropriation meant little incentive to undertake productive investment (higher productive investment meant greater employment opportunities, decrease in the reserve army of unemployed, better bargaining power of the labourers for higher wages and consequently a lower profit rate for the land owners), so that actual surplus obtained was very low but the land owner's rate of return at the existing level of production was high. Such a high surplus appropriation rate also meant lower consumption by the wage labourers and consequently lower labour productivity.

At this low level of labour mobility, the land owners were also able to subject wage labourers to extra-economic pressures (which in

the last analysis, helped strengthen their economic position). Thus, of the 57 wage labourers interviewed, 32 (i.e. about 56.14%) admitted having done one or more of the following:

- 1) having given free services to the landowner;
- 2) having supported the landowner in his factional politics;
- 3) having voted in the elections according to the landowner's dictates.

It was noticed that extra-economic pressures were absent when the wage labour relation was among persons of similar economic standing.

### Surplus Appropriation in the Exchange Sector

#### 1 Level and Nature of Market Relations

In numerical terms, above 90 per cent of the exchanges undertaken by the villagers conform to C-M-C', i.e. commodities are sold to obtain money to buy, almost immediately, the various necessities of life, so that money plays a very limited role. However, the villagers are now much more market oriented than they were 50 years ago. This is most significant among petty producers (MH and below) who frequent the market place more regularly, in the hope of a better price.

Similarly, the number of itinerant traders visiting the village for courtyard purchase is now smaller than it was 50 years ago. They now generally approach producers in the market place (a few of them still come to the village directly in the winter to buy jute, coconut, pulses, etc.) because the latter now prefer to take their produce to the market place in the hope of a better price. Barter, i.e. C-C' exchange has not completely died out, and exists as follows:

- i) exchange between oil and oilseeds;
- ii) exchange between rice and betel nuts/betel leaf;
- iii) exchange between rice/paddy and utensils;

- iv) exchange between meal/rice and services, such as agricultural wage labour, haircutting, etc.

At the two market places, i.e. Maizpara-Urani and Gorer hat, M-C-M', i.e. the traders' exchange circuit assumes some importance in terms of volume of goods handled through various exchange circuits, although in numerical terms, about 80-90 per cent of the exchanges are of the C-M-C' type.

Another way of looking at the level of market relations of this village would be to examine the volume of gross marketed surpluses for the important agricultural products of this village. Data on these are presented below:

TABLE 41

Gross Marketed Surplus, 1977

Name of Commodity	Total Production in Mds.	Gross Marketed Surplus in Mds.	Col. (3) as % of Col. (2)
Paddy	6,438	807	12.5
Jute	1,662	1,542	92.7
Pulses	450	150	33.0
Coconut	6,000 pieces	4,000 pieces	66.6
Molasses	400	250	55.5

If we take into consideration that in 1977, the villagers bought 113.6 mds. of paddy and 1,355.5 mds. of rice from the local market places (Table 43), we see that this is a food deficit village, so that here net marketed surplus is negative. Jute is a cash crop, and has little use locally, so that a high percentage of the total

production has necessarily to be marketed. On the whole, the above statistics show that production for the market, of the kind that one would find in a capitalist economy, has not as yet developed. Although precise figures for 1951 could not be obtained, on the basis of personal observation and cross examination of selected informants, it is safe to assume that marketable surplus has, at best, remained where it stood, in 1951. On the other hand, according to selected informants, there has been a definite decline in the marketable surplus for jute, coconut and molasses owing to a decline in production and increase demand for household consumption.

Finally, as may be seen from the occupation structure of the village (Table 2(A), Chapter 4), trade as a main occupation has declined over time. However, as a side line, it seems to have registered a considerable increase.

## 2 Surplus Appropriation in the Exchange Sector

### a) Distress Sale

TABLE 42

Forward Sale of Jute\*, 1977

Class	Total No. of Households	No. of Households who Forward Sold Jute	Amount of Jute Forward Sold (in mds.)
LLH	41	-	-
PH	29	4	6.50
LMH	34	6	8.50
MH	26	7	19.50
UMH	11	1	4.50
RH I	10	-	-
RH II	5	1	8.00

\* There was very little forward sale of paddy or any other agricultural item and hence left out.

The forward sale by SM<sup>1</sup> (RH II) was to procure cash in order to buy land. Otherwise the pressure for forward sale came from one or both of the following needs: repayment of outstanding loans and purchase of basic necessities such as cooking oil, salt, cloth, etc. 5 persons (3 RH II, 1 RH I and 1 UMH - one of the RH II was from the neighbouring village of Bamankhali) bought this jute at prices ranging from Tk. 60 to Tk. 80 per maund.

They sold this jute in February to itinerant traders (Farias) visiting the village from Barisal and Faridpur at prices ranging from Tk. 140 to Tk. 150 per maund. Since they did not have to spend anything on transport, they made a substantial profit.

#### Sale Immediately After Harvest

Almost all households sell immediately after the harvest owing to cash requirement for various purposes (this invariably means a lower price). However, UMH to RH II households sell only a small part of the produce immediately after harvest since pressures for such sales are not acute. However, this is not so with the LLH to MH households on whom such pressures are heavy owing to the need to repay outstanding loans and buy salt, kerosene, cloth, etc. In 1977, 8 LL and 8 P households sold within a month of harvest (a) 98 maunds of jute at prices ranging between Tk. 60 and Tk. 65 per maund; (b) 10 maunds of paddy at Tk. 65/- per maund (the highest per maund prices for jute and paddy in 1977 in this area were Tk. 150 and Tk. 110 respectively). The table below presents the prices paid by the rich and the poor in respect of rice/paddy sold and bought in 1977.

TABLE 43 : Rice-Paddy sold and bought 1977

	Paddy Sale Household (mds.)	Price/md. of Paddy sold (Tks.)	Paddy Purchase/ Household (mds.)	Price/md. of Paddy purchased (Tks.)	Rice Sale Household (mds.)	Price per md. of Rice sold	Rice Purchase/ Household (mds.)	Price per md. of Rice purchased (mds.)
LLH	0.083	68.00	2.00	95.00	-	-	13.47	132.92
PH	0.250	65.00	-	-	-	-	11.31	140.08
LMH	0.384	78.00	0.615	96.00	-	-	5.91	144.14
MH	2.11	76.50	-	-	-	-	10.55	107.65
UMH	21.25	80.00	1.25	80.00	-	-	-	-
RHI	27.00	89.80	-	-	-	-	-	-
RHII	45.00	89.6	-	-	-	-	-	-

Total Paddy sold = 807.3 mds  
by villagers last year

Total Rice sold = nil  
by villagers last year

Total Paddy bought = 113.6 mds.  
by villagers last year

Total Rice bought = 1,355.5 mds.  
by villagers last year

b) Speculative Trade and Hoarding

1 RH I, 1 UMH, and 1 RH II of Magura are engaged in speculative trade of agricultural produce. One of them, NK<sup>2</sup> (RH II) has been engaged in this trade for the last 30 years. The business procedure is very simple, hoarding one's own surplus and buying up, for hoarding, agricultural commodities while these are cheapest and then releasing the stocks in seasons when these are scarce and prices are highest. Such business can be successfully carried out only by big land owners because it is they alone who have a considerable surplus over and above their consumption requirement, the necessary staying power and the space for safe storage. Also, share cropping provides them with a direct control over the produce (which could not have occurred if the rent obtained was in cash). At this low level of production, this kind of trade is highly profitable. For example, during the 1974 famine NK<sup>2</sup> sold about 200 maunds of paddy at the exorbitant price of Tk. 250/- per maund. Also, in both the market places (Gorer Hat and Maizpara) hoarding was a principal method of trade, for especially the big traders with a high staying power and monopoly over the limited storage facilities available in the market places. In doing this, they often violate government anti-hoarding measures through links with local officials.

Thus, surplus appropriation through distress sale and speculative trade (a) was closely linked with ownership of land and other assets, which gave different asset owning classes different staying power and hence different capacity to extract surplus or resist surplus appropriation through exchange; (b) provided big owners and traders with a high rate of return without the necessity to undertake productive investment and as such discouraged them from undertaking

expanded reproduction through capital investment. For the poor, such appropriation meant their greater immiserisation with a consequent fall in their labour productivity and essential consumption. Many of the MH to LLH respondents interviewed could not at first appreciate the process of unequal exchange to which they were a constant prey, because apparently the market was impersonal and guided by the objective laws of demand and supply. However, when asked to explain why, whether purchasing or selling a commodity, the price was always dictated by the trader and not by them, they readily grasped the point.

c) Extra-Economic Surplus Appropriation may be divided into two categories (i) toll collections from the market place by intermediaries; (ii) bribe/extortions by government officials. Toll collections from the market place are not something new, and in fact many of the problems faced today in this respect have remained unresolved for the last 200 years. Thus, J. Westland (1874, 86-7) wrote:

... abolition of Sayar duties was another great change at the same time\*. These were duties levied at hats or markets upon goods brought there for sale. The duties were of two sorts: first, 'chandni' which meant a sum paid for occupation of a place in the hat; and second 'tolahs' or rates paid upon the various articles, partly going to the proprietor, partly to the maintenance of the 'darogah' or keeper of the hat, the 'jarubkash' or sweeper and the caller of the hat. These taxes the government was determined to abolish as prejudicial to the interests of trade; payment for permanent occupation of land on the hats, being of a different nature, were alone to be retained. These collections were as much part of the Zemindars' revenue as their rent collections from their ryots, and upon the principle which government laid down for itself, one eleventh part of them was the property of the zemindar and 10/11ths were what he had to pay to the state as its share.

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\* Refers to 1793, i.e. when Permanent Settlement was being implemented in Bengal.

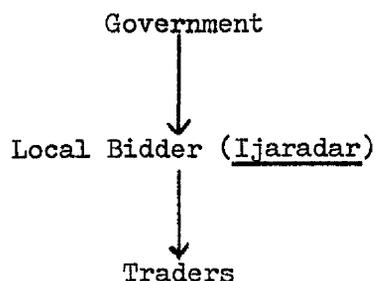
The government, therefore, reduced their demand upon the zemindar by 10/11ths of the Sayar collections, which otherwise would have formed part of it; and by way of compensating the zemindars for the 1/11th of which they were prohibited from collection for themselves, they made a further deduction equal to this 1/11th.

The zemindars, of course, consented to receiving these deductions but they did not, for all that, cease to collect the Sayar duties. The policy of the government was not carried out, and the result was not an abolition of Sayar duties, but simply a handing over to the zemindars of the entire amount of them. They continued to collect them, and appropriated not only their own share (for the loss of which they had received compensation from government) but also the share which belonged to the government.

Consequently, government legally restored toll collection in order to ensure government share of the tolls, which were being collected anyway, despite the legal ban. This situation continued until the 1950s, when the East Pakistan government nationalised all rural market places so that in place of the zemindar and his staff, government officials became responsible for their management. In this respect the government simply followed the zemindars' footsteps, that is, gave away, on a year-to-year basis, toll collection rights to the highest bidder. Although, under the law the successful bidder (called ijaradar locally) could not sublet his collection rights, in practice, several layers of intermediary toll receiving rights were created so that exorbitant toll collections continued unabated. In 1972, the ijaradari system was abolished and local hat/bazaar committees, together with revenue officials, were entrusted with the responsibility of (a) collecting tolls directly and (b) maintenance and development of the market places. In 1975, the ijaradari was restored in the face of massive misappropriation of funds and other malpractices by revenue officials and hat/bazaar committee members. In other words, matters were back to square one.

Legally, tolls at the market places have at present to be collected in accordance with a toll chart prepared regionally by a committee of local revenue officials. Although the government maintains a marketing department, its local officials are never included in these committees. On the other hand, revenue officials do not maintain any record of price movements, so that ultimately "thumb rules" and "impressions" guide the preparation of these toll charts. Sellers are quite oblivious of their existence since these have never been publicly displayed in the market place. Relevant officials have not either tried to ensure their implementation. In the last analysis, the arbitrary judgement of the toll collectors decides everything. However, such arbitrariness is not without a pattern: (a) big traders are always charged less tolls per unit than temporary shopkeepers and hawkers; (b) in clear contravention of government rules, toll is collected in kind as well. This augments illegal exactions; since toll in kind is selectively applied to petty sellers, they are the worst sufferers on this score also.

In June 1977, the legal position in regard to toll receiving interests in Maizpara-Urani market place was as follows:



Maizpara-Urani was one of those market places in Narail thana whose reputation for sub-letting of collection rights (which is illegal) was minimal. And yet, there were as many as seven toll receiving interests here, besides the legal lessee:

- a) the Managing Committee of Maizpara High School;
- b) Semi-permanent lessees of a tottering bamboo bridge across the river (at the main approach point to the market place from the other side of the river) and two nearby wharfs;
- c) the bazaar committee;
- d) private owners of hat/bazaar land;
- e) sub-lessees for tolls collected on river-transported goods to and from this market place;
- f) members of the hat/bazaar committees, toll collectors, including their substitutes and helpers;
- g) sweeper.

The Legal Ijaradari is MH<sup>1</sup>, a GRC dealer from nearby Boramara Village.

He owns more than 20.0 acres of land and a licence for the export-import trade. Previously he was a government-registered rice trader and wholesaler in indigenous cigarettes (bidis). He has also good connections with the local Awami League organisation. Apparently, he has no interest in toll collection. Since the School Managing Committee could not legally participate in the bidding in their own right, he lent his name to the bidding in order to circumvent official rules, in favour of the School Managing Committee. However, as will be evident from the list of toll collectors (see Table 44), three of them are his representatives, and they are obviously there to make considerable personal gains. Thus MH<sup>1</sup> is not only strengthening his influence in the area by distributing favours and helping a school in his area in obtaining the lease; he is also endearing himself to the existing power structure controlling the school and the market place.

The Actual Ijaradar is the School Managing Committee, and their share of the gross toll receipts are supposed to be used for the upkeep of

the Maizpara High School. The School Managing Committee do not collect tolls directly, but through 8 toll collectors.

### Toll Collectors

Toll is collected by the following 8 persons on behalf of the School Managing Committee:

TABLE 44

### Toll Collectors on Behalf of the School Managing Committee

Name	Land Owned in Acres	Occupation Other Than Agriculture	Other Characteristics
F <sup>1</sup>	10	-	Representative of legal Ijaradar
BKD <sup>2</sup>	6	Quack doctor	-
ALS <sup>1</sup>	0	Chawkider (village police)	-
SM <sup>1</sup>	2.0	-	Tout, faction leader
RM <sup>1</sup>	3.0	-	Representative of legal Ijaradar
GR <sup>1</sup>	12.0	Dealer in modified rationed goods	Ex-Chairman, Village relief committee
HRK <sup>1</sup>	1.5	-	Representative of legal Ijaradar
AR <sup>1</sup>	15.0	School Teacher	Matbar, UC member

As remuneration for toll collection, the chawkidar (i.e. ALS<sup>1</sup>) and two of the legal ijaradar's representatives are allowed to draw Tk. 3,000/- annually from the gross receipts, so that the others are supposed to be providing voluntary service. However, the actual position is very different. According to our estimate, toll collectors and their substitutes appropriate among themselves, about

Tk. 20,000 over and above what they are allowed to draw by the School Managing Committee.

TABLE 45

Net Receipts by the School Committee as Tolls from the Maizpara-Urani Market Place, 1972-76

Year	Amount at which Leased in from the Government in Tk.	Net tolls Collected in Tk.
1972	200.00	1,858.21
1973	200.00	2,625.11
1974	200.00	4,294.71
1975	200.00	5,060.86
1976	800.00	10,645.00

Source: Maizpara High School Accounts Books.

Private Landowners

NGS<sup>2</sup> and BS<sup>2</sup> own the private land in the market place. NGS<sup>2</sup> is a teacher-cum-trader-cum-money-lender; he owns about 20 acres of land and is also Secretary of the local cooperative society. He was at one time a UC member. BS<sup>2</sup> owns about 15 acres of land and is also engaged in money lending. In lieu of use of their land by the temporary shopkeepers, they charge a toll, and this is completely illegal.

Semi-permanent lessees of bridge and wharfs

The persons associated with the market bridge collect about 70 mds. of paddy per year from residents of the surrounding villages, i.e. those who regularly use the bridge (the bridge provides access to the

market place from the other side of the river). For strangers, the rate is 0.1 Tk. per crossing. Besides, they also collect fish and vegetables worth about Tk. 800/- annually from traders for use of the wharfs.

#### Sweeper

A sweeper is employed by the bazaar committee, but is not paid any salary. She collects, as salary, fish and vegetables worth Tk. 100/- per month from the market place.

#### Lessees for Toll Collection on River-Transported Goods

The rate is 10 paisa per maund of goods coming in or going out of the market place. The School Managing Committee sub-lets their collection right. In 1976, SM<sup>1</sup> (and three others) bought it for Tk. 1,000/-. He paid only Tk. 500/- to the School Managing Committee, and pocketed a net profit of Tk. 3,000/-.

#### Bazaar Committee

The Bazaar Committee raises its funds from the general members, i.e. permanent shopkeepers at the rate of Tk. 100 per month.

Besides these collections, the traders have also to pay separately for (a) upkeep of the mosque and the temple; (b) religious functions like Milad, Puja, etc., held in these premises. The following is the breakdown for the various collections from this market place in 1976:

TABLE 46

Toll Collections (Legal and Illegal) from Maizpara Market Place, 1976

Toll Receiving Interest	Net Amount Obtained in Tk.	Kind/Cash
1 Government	800.00	Cash
2 Legal Ijaradar	-	-
3 School Managing Committee	10,600.00	Cash and kind
4 Bazaar Committee	2,000.00	Cash
5 Private Landowners	500.00	Kind
6 Lessees of bamboo bridge/wharfs	7,000.00	Cash and kind
7 Payments to Chadwidar and 2 other collectors and sweeper	4,000.00	Cash and kind
8 Illegal retention by toll collectors and their substitutes	20,000.00	Cash and kind
9 Sub-lease for collecting toll on river-transported goods	3,000.00	Cash
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,900.00</b>	<b>-</b>

From the above discussion, the following may be deduced. Firstly, in comparison with what the government (i.e. the actual owner of the market place) appropriates, appropriation by various intermediaries between the government and the actual traders is far greater. Secondly, these appropriators are either rich landowners or poor people associated with the former as their henchmen/followers. About one quarter of the tolls go towards the upkeep of the Maizpara High School. Even if it is assumed that there is no outright misappropriation of these funds by the School Managing Committee members (all of whom are from rich land-owning classes), there is no reason to assume that such expenditure benefits the entire rural

society because most students and teachers of this school are from the richer classes. Thirdly, this appropriation is augmented by the political and administrative power of the rural rich, and this arises out of (a) their domination of the bazaar and hat committee (see Chapter 7), and (b) government's failure to implement its own rules on toll collections.

Several effects of such appropriations can be identified. First, these seriously hinder the growth of production for the market, in so far as these exorbitant tolls act as a disincentive to traders and producer-sellers. Secondly, since the tolls are more severe for the poorer traders/producer-sellers, it means not only hitting the weakest in the society, but also monopolisation of the market place by the strong and the sturdy. Thirdly, since such appropriations are not based on any service or production, but on the "muscle" of the power structure dominating the market place, these inevitably encourage anti-productive activities, especially because the rate of return of such appropriations is almost infinite (there being no/little costs). Finally, as was revealed through selected informants, the surplus appropriated thus was mostly used for the personal consumption of the appropriators, and very little of it was ploughed back into the market place for its maintenance and development.

#### Bribes/extortion by Government Officials

Fifty years ago, it was a common practice for most government officials on tour, especially those of the police and revenue departments, to take away various commodities from the market place for their personal consumption, either free or at throw-away prices. Such open extortions have decreased substantially. In any case, we did not detect any such case during our stay at Magura. On the

other hand, bribes and covert extortions have now become far more prominent. Thus, new or renewal of old licences for trade and godowns cannot be obtained without bribing the relevant officials. In 1977, the bribe rates were Tk. 500/- per trader's and Tk. 100/- per godown licence.

Then, there are the corruptions centring around various regulations on trading activities. For example, jute above a certain degree of moisture cannot be sold; anti-hoarding measures come into force from time to time in case of scarce commodities; tolls have to be collected in cash only and according to a certain prescribed toll chart; weights and measures have to conform to the prescribed standards; adulteration of food is an offence, and milk above a certain degree of water may not be sold; no trading and storage inside the market place is allowed without relevant licences, etc. Such regulations are more violated than followed, but this also means that relevant government officials have to be regularly bribed in order that these violations can continue unchecked and unpunished. The traders affected by bribes/extortions are generally the richer ones, but this only implies that they more than make up the losses by raising prices and carrying out those very "free for all" activities against which the above mentioned regulations are directed, so that ultimately the economically weak are the worst sufferers. On the other hand, the surplus appropriated as bribes/extortions by officials finds its way into consumption unrelated to production, as is the general fate of all "easy money".

d) Proliferation of Intermediaries in the Exchange Circuit

Over the last fifty years, there has been a relative proliferation in the number of intermediaries between the producer and the actual

consumer, given that the increase in marketed surplus has not kept pace with the increases in intermediaries. This proliferation seems to have intensified, particularly in the post-independence period. Thus, in 1977, about 35 per cent of the licensed traders and over 75 per cent of the itinerant traders at Maizpara-Urani market place entered trade in 1972 and after. For the richer households trade is more lucrative than production, because in a situation of stagnant production and increasing population, hoarding and speculative trade yield a much higher rate of return. On the other hand, for the poorer households, trade was a poverty response to seek a supplementary income in a situation of declining real wages, deteriorating terms of share cropping, etc. This trend is also attested to by the estimate of the per-maund profit made by various intermediaries for rice and jute in 1977 (as obtained through selected informants):

	<u>Jute</u>	<u>Rice</u>
Broker/itinerant trader*	0.50 - 1.00	1 - 2
Small traders*	5	7
Big traders/Stockists*	10	20 - 30
Daulatpur-Khulna-based brokers	10	not applicable
Daulatpur-Khulna-based Exporters	15 - 20	not applicable

In fact, the position of many brokers/itinerant traders is so precarious, that they are thoroughly dependent on the goodwill of the big traders for whatever little profit they are able to make. In turn, the big traders obtain from them personal loyalty which is then utilised to strengthen the big traders' political muscle in times of election, factional rivalries, etc.

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\* Located at Maizpara-Urani market place.

The other obvious effects of intermediary proliferation are

- (a) steep price increases, which ultimately intensify the hardships of those in the city and countryside having the least purchasing power;
- (b) accumulation of surplus in the hands of those who have little connection with production. In fact, some of the intermediaries, for example, the city-based jute brokers, provide no service as goods move from the village to the city. The only basis of their profits is access to capital and good connections with exporters and managers of nationalised jute industries. Similarly, big traders provide little service (such as processing, packaging, etc.) and the real basis of their high profits is their ability to hoard and speculate.

#### Money Lending

Usurious money lending was a very sensitive topic to mention in the village for a number of reasons. Firstly, in Islam, it was clearly condemned. Secondly, under the existing law, also, money lending at usurious interest rates was banned (but so far no one has been prosecuted for this in the living memory of the villagers. Some villagers were not even aware of the legal restrictions on money lending). Thirdly, the borrowers clearly saw the 'squeeze' they faced under the existing terms and conditions of money lending, and that this was possible only because of their acute scarcity situation, and that once in the grip of the money lender, they were on the road to inevitable ruin. And yet, this was a matter they were most reluctant to talk about because of fear of loss of collateral, refusal of loan in the future, and other retaliations. Many days and hours were spent in simply trying to locate the money lenders and borrowers, and it was only after a great deal of persuasion and repeated assurances that the borrowers and the money lenders finally agreed to

open up. In one case, the borrower was threatened with withdrawal of the land he had share-cropped in from the money lender, for having given us his version of money lending at Magura. The author had to visit the money lender personally and tell him that he had no fears from the fact that he was money lending at usurious interest rates but that if he withdrew land from his share cropper only because he had disclosed certain facts on money lending, the author would also retaliate against him in any way he could. Since the author was from the elite bureaucracy, the money lender took him seriously and left the poor man alone.

Usurious money lending at Magura now involves cash lending only (kind loans were quite prominent before 1972), deposition of a collateral and an annual interest rate ranging between 120 to 240%. In 1921, this rate was about 25%; the present annual interest rate for bank/cooperative loans did not exceed 17.5%. At times, the interest has to be returned in kind. The most common terms for the latter are: for a loan of Tk. 100 for 3 months, the interest payable is 1 maund of Paddy, whose minimum value would be Tk. 75. Collateral consists of wide ranging items such as ornaments, utensils, bullocks, plough, boat, fishing net, land, trees, standing crops, etc. Since 1972, land has become more prominent as a collateral, and this partly explains the increase in usufruct mortgaged land. In most cases, collateral can be recovered only if principal and interest are paid within a specified time. Of the 35 borrowers interviewed, 31 claimed to have deposited a collateral before taking out the loan. Of these, 21 thought they could not/did not hope ever to recover their collateral.

TABLE 47

Main Money Lenders Relevant to Magura, in Order of Importance\*, 1977

Name	Village	Landholding Class	Occupation and other Characteristics
NK <sup>2</sup>	Magura	RH II	Matbar, School Teacher, Speculative Trader, Agriculture
MM <sup>1</sup>	"	RH I	Matbar, Agriculture
FR <sup>1</sup>	"	RH I	Matbar, Agriculture
KPD <sup>2</sup>	"	RH II	Matbar, Agriculture
AM <sup>1</sup>	"	RH I	Matbar, Agriculture
AK <sup>2</sup>	"	MH	Cloth trade and Agriculture
JDR <sup>2</sup>	Poradanga	UMH	Trade and Agriculture
AU <sup>1</sup>	Magura	MH	Agriculture
MM <sup>1</sup>	"	MH	Agriculture, petty Matbar
AM <sup>1</sup>	"	MH	Agriculture

\* Based on capital circulating in the money lending business.

TABLE 48

Extent of Indebtedness to Money Lenders, 1951-1977

Year	No. of HH Indebted to Money Lenders	Amount in Taka	Per Capita* Indebtedness
1951	18 (14.0%)	5,000.00	5.31
1977	37 (22.0%)	21,530.00	22.40

\* In 1921, the per-capita indebtedness for the entire Jessore district was Rs. 12.125 (Momen, 1925, 71). The decline in per-capita indebtedness between 1921 and 1951 could be explained by migration of money lenders (most of whom were Hindus), flight of rural capital to India in the years immediately following 1947 and political and economic instability as an aftermath of Partition, communal riots, exodus, etc.

TABLE 49

Class Background of Households Indebted to Money Lenders, 1977

Land Owning Class	Number of Households indebted to Money Lenders
LLH	11
PH	9
LMH	11
MH	4
UMH	-
RH I	-
RH II	-
All Classes	35

From interview of borrowers and money lenders, cross examination of selected informants and personal observations, the following other money lending characteristics could be discerned at Magura:

- 1) there was generally no kinship relation between lenders and borrowers;
- 2) in order of importance, the reasons for taking loans were general poverty, crop failure and marriage expenses;
- 3) in order of importance, the reasons why poor borrowers could not/did not avail themselves of the bank/cooperative/government loans were lack of "connections", non-availability in time, bribes by credit officials and red tape;
- 4) 12 out of the 35 borrowers claimed that besides returning the principal and repaying the interest, they had to do one or more of the following:
  - i) free services for the money lender,

- ii) vote in the election according to the money lender's dictates,
  - iii) support the money lender in his rivalries and factional politics. However, where the money lender and the borrower were of similar landholding classes (for example, when a LMH/MH was borrowing from a MH) such pressures were rare;
- 5) two of the money lenders were using government/bank loans (received at lower interest rate) for money lending purposes.
- In order of importance, money lending surplus found its way into consumption, transfers out of the country, recycling into money lending and trade, and land acquisition.

The above discussion on moneylending may be summed up thus. Firstly, usurious money lending at Magura, as a method of surplus appropriation, yielded a very high rate of return involving no productive investment. Secondly, it could be practised on a significant scale only by the richer land owning classes since they alone had the necessary surplus (and the staying power) to allow a part of it to circulate in money lending. Thirdly, it could thrive only because there was general capital scarcity and wide spread poverty in the village. The high interest rate represented only the monopoly over scarce capital but neither administrative costs nor risk premium since these simply did not exist given that loans were duly covered by collaterals and money lenders and loanees lived close to one another. Fourthly, given the high rate of return it yielded and the extra-economic stranglehold it ensured over the poor, surplus obtained from money lending could not possibly flow into any productive investment, and this is confirmed by empirical evidence.

Finally, for the village poor, usurious money lending implied loss of productive assets as collateral and their pauperisation and

immiserisation through extraction of high interest surplus, with consequent adverse effects also on labour productivity, effective demand and production.

#### Appropriation of Governmental Inputs/Assistance

The rural sector has traditionally received very little governmental assistance and inputs. Since the 60s an increased flow has been ensured, and this consisted of the following:

- a) Various production inputs at subsidised rates (credit, fertilizer, yarn, insecticide, fishing net, power pump, HYV, etc.);
- b) funds for development of physical and social infrastructure (roads, canals, culverts, buildings for schools and local government offices, tubewells, health and family planning programmes, etc.);
- c) materials, specified for target groups (relief materials for flood/famine victims, modified rationing for the low income households, etc.).

As will be seen in Chapter 8, in detail, most of these have been appropriated outright by the rural rich (i.e. UMH to RH II landholding class) and by the bureaucrats. In Chapter 7, it is shown that the various institutions/committees/organisations through which government assistances have been channelled are dominated by the rural rich. As is apparent from the discussion on different methods of surplus appropriation, their very nature generates and strengthens existing dependency relations and extra-economic pressures, and as is shown in Chapter 7, in greater detail, these are used for dominating the local power structure through which all governmental items are funnelled. Such appropriation of government funds by the rural rich thus

illustrates (a) translation of economic relations into political power relations and (b) use of political power relations not only to maintain existing economic relations but also to acquire further economic resources originating from the urban sector/beyond the national boundaries.

Again, like other appropriations discussed earlier, this is also effortless in the sense that it requires no productive enterprise. It is, in fact, little better than plunder and hence militates against production. For the rural poor, the consequences of such appropriation can easily be deduced. On the one hand, the bias against production associated with such appropriation makes them poorer. On the other, such appropriation further strengthens those who are already dominating them economically and politically.

#### Surplus Appropriation in the Fishing Sector

Before 1950, the open fisheries (i.e. the river system) in and around Magura belonged to the family of GSK<sup>1</sup>, big gantidar of the neighbouring village of Bamunkhali. They used to sublet these to individual fishermen at annual rents varying from Tk. 5 to Tk. 50 per person, depending on the fishing assets possessed. Over and above this, the fishermen were also obliged to supply GSK<sup>1</sup> with as much fish as his family wanted, free of cost. As mentioned earlier, fishing rights in these waters passed on to the fishermen directly, although in general, open fisheries throughout the country became government property and came to be leased out to the highest bidder on a year-to-year basis. Since the latter part of the 60s, Magura fishermen started, increasingly, to visit the open fisheries outside their own fishing grounds, and as such they were also affected by the appropriation taking place there. In the government-owned open fisheries, the

lessee (ijaradar) was almost always a non-fisherman who generally obtained the lease through under-hand dealings with revenue officials. He would then sublet fishing rights at a 4-5 times higher amount and, sometimes, there would be several intermediary rent receiving interests which meant rack renting of the actual fishermen and a high rate of return without the risk and responsibility of fishing for the lessees and sublessees of fishing rights. On top of this, a substantial quantity of fish had to be given away free to Ijaradars, U.P. members/ chairmen, police officials, etc. After the abolition of Ijaradari in 1972, such open exactions stopped, and fishermen cooperatives came to be the only bidders in respect of open fisheries in the area. However, the cooperative executives who are invariably the richest among the fishermen (and generally not participating in fishing directly) were engaged in the following:

- 1) appropriating rents obtained by subletting fishing rights to non-cooperative members;
- 2) raising a higher amount from cooperative members than required for payment to government as lease money and then splitting the difference among themselves and revenue officials (the rationale used for raising a higher amount being that unless offered a bribe, government officials would delay lease permission, which is often the case);
- 3) pilferage of inputs supplied by the government at subsidised rates in order to sell these in the black market.

As such, although formal Ijaradari has been abolished, its vestiges continue to haunt the fishing sector.

Of late, some 20 persons of villages Aranggacha, Komkhali, Goshgati, Ramanada Kathi, Tarashi and Charbilla have been forcibly

catching fish from the 8 miles of open fisheries. They are all Muslims, and their backgrounds range from rich to lower middle households. Retaliation against protest by the fishing community included stealing, and even open snatching of their nets and other implements while they were catching fish.

None of the tanks and ponds in Magura is owned by any member of the fishing community, i.e. those who have some fishing knowledge and expertise. The richer tank owners employ them for catching fish from these tanks on condition that 75% of the sale proceeds of the fish caught would belong to the former. Thus, given no investment, the rate of return for the owners is very high. Also, since these more or less meet the consumption needs of richer tank owners, they are not very concerned about modern pisciculture and tank re-excavation.

#### Surplus Utilisation Pattern

As may be noted from Chapter 6, net income, on the whole, is very small compared with production possibilities from the available resources, and necessary consumption (especially food) takes up the major part of this, so that surplus available for productive investment is very small in absolute terms. On the other hand, unproductive and wasteful consumption such as in social/religious rites/festivals increase with land ownership (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7). Puja, Eidul-Azha (see Table 50), Ziafat, Sradh, marriage and dowry consume a substantial part of the rural rich incomes. The poor cannot afford these and hence, over the years, they have been increasingly abstaining from such expenditures. However, as noted in Chapter 7, their mental attachment to these does not seem to have declined, and there is no reason to believe that under the existing system, a landless household of Magura would not

emulate the life style of the rural rich, if suddenly he obtained a lot of money, say in a lottery. An interesting aspect of such wasteful consumption was that in all these festivals/rites, the major expenditure was on food, and over-eating and waste were endemic. At least this was the author's experience whenever he visited the rural rich during various festivals and rites.

TABLE 50

Animal Sacrifice\* on the Eidul Azha Festival, 1972-1977

Year	Cows	Goats	Class Background							Total
			LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RH I	RH II	
1972	5	2	-	-	-	4	3	6	2	15
1973	4	1	-	-	-	3	3	5	2	13
1974	6	2	-	-	-	3	3	7	2	15
1975	4	1	-	-	-	3	3	6	2	14
1976	4	2	-	-	-	3	3	6	3	15
1977	3	5	-	-	-	**3(19)	5(8)	5(8)	3(3)	16

\* The ability to sacrifice animals on the day of Eidul Azha was a good indicator of a household's poverty/prosperity situation.

The number of households sacrificing was about double the number of animals being sacrificed in a year because sacrifice was mostly on share.

\*\* The figures in the parentheses indicate the total number of Muslim households.

In the agricultural sector, the relative under-utilization of agricultural land (in terms of yield/acre) by the rural propertied classes is apparent from the following Table:

TABLE 51

Yield/Acre of Paddy in Owner Managed/Cultivated Land According to Size  
- Class Distribution, 1977\*

Size Class Category	Total Acreage of Owner Managed/Cultivated Land	Total Production in mds.	Yield/Acre in mds.
RH II	123.60	1,323.00	10.7
RH I	77.40	846.00	10.9
UMH	61.80	739.50	11.96
MH	76.05	952.00	12.38
LMH	53.94	613.50	11.30
PH	18.96	147.00	7.75
All Classes	411.75	4,611.00	11.19

The above table shows that yield/acre is highest with the MH and UMH and very low for both PH and RH I and RH II. For the PH, low yield/acre may be explained by their lesser access to production assets, poor quality of land, lower labour productivity, etc., which offset the back breaking labour they apply on their land. On the other hand, the low yield/acre for RH I and RH II can be explained only by the assurance of a high rate of return from appropriations associated with little responsibility and risk for production. Similar is the situation with the tanks and ponds owned by the rural propertied classes. Despite the considerable fish production potential

\* In the context of India, existence and causes of an inverse relationship between size of holding and productivity have been the subject of a long drawn out debate, which is by no means over and concluded. Some of the important contributions so far in this regard are by Sen (1962), Sen (1966), Rao (1966), Bhagwati and Chakravarty (1969), Bharadwaj (1974), Patnaik (1972), Chattopadhyaya (1972), Chanda (1978), Rudra (1968), Ghose (1980), etc. However, we have purposely avoided this debate because it does not concern us directly.

of these tanks (the price incentive is also present in that fish is very costly in this region), not more than 5% of it has been exploited (see Chapter 4). Here again and as pointed out earlier, it is the existing high rate of appropriation which mainly guides this response. Also, from time immemorial, tank excavation has been undertaken by the rural rich more as a mark of social prestige and distinction than from utilitarian considerations. That a tank can be a source of fish production on a commercial scale is a notion that is making headway among the rural propertied classes, who own most of the tanks, if at all, only very slowly. Thus so far only one person from a rich household added a high yielding variety fish to his tank.

The poor tank owners have entirely different problems. They do not have the necessary capital to undertake re-excavation and modern pisciculture, and this is clearly borne out by the fact that only one among the ten tanks owned by them is in any usable condition. They do not either have the required knowledge for modern pisciculture. If they had a strong organisation among themselves, they could easily have re-excavated these tanks by pooling their labour power on a cooperative basis. But this is something that is yet to develop in this village.

As pointed out earlier, money lending and speculative trade were some of the important investment avenues of the surplus, since these yielded a high rate return without any productive effort, and in an economy characterised by lack of capital and production. It was not possible to find out precisely the amount of capital circulating into these activities but on the basis of evidence presented earlier, it is certain that such capital was increasing over time and a portion of the capital obtained from government/semi-government sources for the

purposes of agricultural production was being redirected into these activities.

The data on land transactions, presented earlier, clearly show that the rural propertied classes invested a considerable portion of their surplus in land acquisition, but again no precise statistics could be obtained in this respect. However, the land purchase spree among them is well illustrated by the example of SM<sup>1</sup> (RH II) who mortgaged his existing land to obtain money to buy more land.

The table below presents an estimate of how the trading surplus was being utilised by the UMH, RH I and RH II traders of Maizpara-Urani market place in 1977.

TABLE 52

Utilisation of Trading Surplus\* at Maizpara-Urani\*\*, 1977

Main Field of Utilisation	Number	Percentage
Land Purchase	26	24.70
Money Lending	5	4.90
HH consumption ***	64	60.90
Industrial Production	3	2.85
Ploughing Back into Trade	3	2.85
Transfer out of the Country	4	3.80
All Fields	105	100.00

\* Gross Earnings - Operational Costs, including costs towards licenses, bribes, fees, taxes, etc.

\*\* Based on straight survey, modified by cross examination of selected informants.

\*\*\* It was not possible to separate "necessary" from "socially wasteful" consumption.

As the above table clearly demonstrates, the trading surplus was not moving into production proper on any mentionable scale.

It is, therefore, quite evident from the above discussion that the surplus utilisation pattern that has existed in Magura over time was a class phenomenon: those who did not possess a surplus were involved in production, whereas those owning a surplus channelled it into socially anti-productive activities. Also, in the context of Magura, there was little in the 'explanation' that it was linked with lack of profitable investment opportunities.\* As will be evident from Chapter 8, all production facilities and incentives were, in effect, flowing specifically to the rural rich, i.e. those who owned the surplus. On the other hand, there were strong indications to suggest that this was mainly because there were no restrictions on socially anti-productive activities, which yielded a very high rate of return, and which did not require any risk bearing enterprise, management/skills, gestation period, etc. The effects of such surplus utilisation on production in general, and on price movement, optimum use of available resources, and employment expansion, in particular, can easily be deduced.

#### A Comprehensive Class Analysis for Magura

So far in this Chapter, I have employed a particular class analysis scheme, which I have called a tentative class analysis scheme (hereafter TCAS). It is characterised by a number of categories which, in practice, seem illuminating but which are difficult to trace historically. In the final section, I shall present a comprehensive class analysis

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\* Schultz (1964, 131-2) is the main proponent of this line of argument.

(hereafter CCA), in which the relevant categories are reduced, and which has the merit of being amenable to historical treatment. The different schemes will suit different purposes. In the analysis of contemporary poverty at the village level, I have felt the former to be the more useful.

Before laying out the CCA for Magura, a few clarifications are in order. Firstly, the data presented in Table 6 of this Chapter show that family size does not in any way invalidate the classes defined in the TCAS: per capita land ownership increases clearly as one moves from PH to RH II, the per capita agricultural land ownership of RH II being 21 times higher than that of PH (the per household agricultural land ownership disparity is, of course, far greater among the TCAS classes, per household agricultural land of RH II being 41 times greater than that of PH). However, it is likely that a very small number of households would move up or down the class ladder, if family size was superimposed on TCAS classes. On the other hand, the by-and-large direct correlation between natural land productivity and class position and a clear inverse relationship between family structure (in terms of dependency ratio) and TCAS classes would tend to balance the possible off-setting effect of family size on class position of this small number of households. Therefore, no need was felt to improve the TCAS classes in terms of effect of these factors, in arriving at the CCA. Secondly, as in the TCAS, the CCA takes agricultural land as the proxy for all means of production (and exchange). This is because the data in this Chapter clearly show a direct relationship between ownership of agricultural land and that of all other

assets.\* Thirdly, the CCA is a definite improvement upon the TCAS in that in CCA, each class exhibits surplus appropriation and utilisation characteristics quite distinct from those of the other classes. TCAS is based only on land ownership and does not take into consideration the surplus appropriation and utilisation situation of the households. However, TCAS is not without its advantage. The larger number of classes according to TCAS (7), compared with 3, according to CCA is perhaps more desirable for an accurate formulation of class alliances at a given point in time, against the main contradiction of the village poor. Fourthly, the author is aware of (i) Kritsman's direct method of class analysis (see Cox, 1979 for details), whereby hire and sale of labour power, rent and lease of land and the hire and lease of stock and working animals are computed for a household, and on the total surplus appropriated, its class position is determined; (ii) Utsa Patnaik's (1976) modified application of the Kristman method in the Indian context, through the use of the "E-criterion", where,

$$E = \frac{(a_1 - a_2) + (b_1 - b_2) + (c_1 - c_2)}{Y_1 + Y_2}$$

;  $a_1$  = labour (in man-days) hired in;  $a_2$  = labour (in man-days) hired out;  $b_1$  = man-days equivalent of value received through leasing out of land  $b_2$  = man-days equivalent of value paid out for leasing in land;  $c_1$  = man-days equivalent of value received for hiring out ploughing servies;  $c_2$  = man-days equivalent of value paid out for hiring in ploughing services;  $Y_1$  = family labour (in man-days) used in cultivation;  $Y_2$  = exchange ("Badli") labour (in man-days) provided.

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\* However, from the considerations of a thorough going asset reform aiming at (a) "one household, one occupation" (in order to promote specialisation, relieve pressure on agricultural land and arrest the decline of rural industries), and (b) distribution of particular assets only among those households for whose present main occupation, such assets are relevant, a different schema would have been more appropriate: first, a classification of households into main occupations, and second, within the main occupation, further classification of households according to ownership of the main means of production relevant for the particular occupation (e.g. agricultural land for agriculture, net/boat for fishing, looms for weaving, etc.).

However, there are a number of problems with the direct method. Most important, it is extremely difficult to collect accurate data, especially on the quantum of labour hired in/out for a whole year through administration of a questionnaire at a single point in time owing to memory relapse of respondents, irregular character of labour hiring, existence of a number of labour hiring arrangements, etc. As Adnan (1977, 35-6) points out, in the context of Bangladesh the E-criterion is concerned only with the agricultural aspect of a household's class position (and hence inadequate for households pursuing other occupations) and it cannot either handle cases of households which operate as intermediaries in agriculture. Also, Patnaik assumes the same labour productivity for hired and family labour, but this does not hold good in reality. No less important is the fact that the Kritsman method emerged in the specific situation of post-1917 Russia, where sweeping land reforms had been carried out, and consequently, there remained significant differences among households in the ownership of only agricultural assets other than land. In view of the above, we did not opt for the direct method, but at the same time we did not either settle for acreage grouping as the only criterion for class analysis. Instead, we have first tried to bring out the dominant trends in surplus appropriation and utilisation for as many as seven acreage groupings, and therefrom deduce the final classes.

Finally, a clear distinction needs to be drawn between "academic" class analysis and that carried out from the fold of a vanguard party of the poor\*, engaged in concrete political practice, and therefore placed in a unique position to comprehend reality in the process of

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\* For example, Mao's famous 1926 class analysis for China, in Mao Tse-tung, Selected Works, Vol. I, FLPH, 1966.

changing it. Thus, while an "academic" class analysis, by its very nature, can be no more than a rough approximation of reality, a political class analysis is likely to make a more concrete appraisal of the effect of factors like family size, family structure, quality of the means of production, etc., on the class position of individual households\*, as also of the concrete requirements of political alliances and asset reforms, demanded of at a given point in time.

Historically, five classes may be identified for Magura, namely Zemindars (i.e. the big statutory landlords), Gantidars (i.e. tenure holders or quasi landlords), rich peasants, middle peasants and poor and landless peasants. Of these, the first two classes disappeared after the 1950 land reforms. However, these will also be discussed in order to trace the evolution of present classes in Magura historically.

#### Zemindars

Magura fell within the estate of the Narail Zemindars (in Jessore, their estate covered Narail and Lahagora thanas and Magura Sub-Division. They had smaller estates in Faridpur, Bajshahi, Pabna, 24 Parganas, etc.).

#### General life style

At Narail town, they maintained a fabulous palace with marble walls and floors, mahogany furniture of the finest workmanship, life-size statues and oil paintings, sprawling gardens, artificial lakes, large temples, Mogul-style dance floors, chandelier decorated anterooms. In fact, all that imagination suggested as desirable was to be found within their palace

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\* See, for example, William Hinton, Fanshen, Penguin, 1964.

compound. And there they lived in rare grandeur. Constantly attended by a large retinue of servants they enjoyed the best food, clothes and drinks that money could buy. They completely shunned physical work and abhorred any contact with the labouring masses. When they moved about in their phaetons or palanquins, no one was allowed on the road. No one even dared to carry an umbrella within their sight. Their lives were filled with festivals, merry making and carnal pursuits. After dusk, their garden houses became the venues for all-night sessions of music, dance, drink and orgies. It is said that within their estates, any woman who pleased their eyes had to submit to their lusts. During the "Dur̄ga Puja", they would spend huge sums of money on splendid feasts, and in organising dances, music and operas, with artistes hired from Calcutta. After 1930, the Narail zemindars shifted to Calcutta permanently, where they had already acquired several palatial houses and commercial concerns. At this time, effective administration of the estate passed to their Chief Manager, stationed at Narail. However, until 1948, the Narail zemindars continued to visit Narail regularly in order to supervise estate affairs. In 1950, the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act did away with statutory landlordism. In 1947, the Partition of Bengal had also taken place. There was, therefore, very little incentive for them to visit Narail any longer.

#### Surplus extraction and use

The estate land could be divided into three categories: (a) land that was not rented out, i.e. it remained under direct control of the zemindars; (b) land cash rented out to tenure holders,

such as gantidars, jotedars, etc.; (c) land cash rented out to the ryots. For rent collection, the estate was divided into a number of units, each under a rent collector (Naib). In case of default, the penalty was auction sale of land and other assets, executed by the zemindar's staff. Subsequent legislation provided that such auction sales had to be vetted by a court of law. However, legality was never any consideration for the zemindars and their staff. Physical violence was often used against defaulting tenants. When default took an organised form, zemindars would let loose their private army (lathials) to ensure general reprisals. This estate was also notorious for "abwabs", i.e. illegal collections over and above the rates sanctioned by government. Sometimes, default resulted from the rent collectors' refusal to receive rents in time or even after receiving these, refusal to issue receipts for the same, so as to extract additional amounts later from a helpless peasantry. Annual legal rent amounted to Tk. 1.3 million, whereas total annual rent collected amounted to about Tk. 2.0 million. Government demand was only Tk. 0.6 million, so that the zemindar's surplus was Tk. 1.4 million. This was spent in the following ways:

- a) salaries of a large number of servants and officials;
- b) maintenance of the life style described above;
- c) construction and maintenance of a number of public utilities, like roads, educational institutions, medical centres, etc.;
- d) religious festivals and rites.

The effect of expenditure on public utilities was very limited. Firstly, they provided only the upper strata in the rural areas with access to modern medical, educational and communication

facilities. Secondly, the amount directed for such philanthropic work was no more than a drop in the ocean compared with what was wastefully consumed by the zemindars, who made no productive investment either in industry or agriculture.

#### Links with administration and politics

Narail zemindars and their officials always maintained close links with the colonial administration. Most District and Sub-Divisional officers accepted their hospitality, so that they generally took a lenient view of the zemindars' "excesses" with the peasantry. The zemindars maintained special retainers in the offices of these administrators. Several of the Narail zemindars were awarded titles like "Rai Bahadur" by the British Raj. Towards the latter part of the 1930s, several members of the Narail zemindar family became supporters of Congress, by then established as the major political party in India and Bengal. One of them became a Legislative Council member on the Congress ticket. By this time many members of the zemindar family had obtained higher education at Calcutta and abroad, and became prominent lawyers and government officials.

#### Effects of 1950 land reforms

Narail zemindars did not fight out the 1950 land reforms in the law courts. For them the Narail estate had lost its attraction. Over the years they had taken out a large part of the surplus derived from Narail estate to West Bengal (several palatial houses and commercial concerns at Calcutta and zemindari estates in 24 Parganas). Also, after the creation of Pakistan, they felt they had no stake in the Muslim-dominated East Bengal. They transferred some of the moveable assets to India in 1948. The

rest of their assets at Narail were in no time either plundered or "legally" acquired by bureaucrats and local rising Muslims. Only a small portion of their non-rented land is now government property.

### Gantidars

Before 1950, there were seven gantidars in this village. Only one among them was a Muslim. The gantidars constituted the stratum below the Narail zemindars as far as land in this village was concerned. About two-fifths of the village land was their "Khas" property, i.e. not cash rented out and under their personal control. This was mostly share cropped out and only a small portion of it was cultivated through wage labour. For the remaining three-fifths of the land they were "rent receivers", in which capacity they obtained cash rents from their ryots, who in turn either sub-let these to under-ryots or got them cultivated through share croppers/wage labour/family labour. The rents paid by the gantidars to the Narail zemindars were approximately one-third of what they realised from their ryots. Most gantidars collected rents personally (i.e. did not employ rent collectors) but generally the tenants came down to pay up the rents. Default was punished by auction sale, and illegal collections were quite common. Ryots, share croppers and wage labourers involved with them were also obliged to render free services whenever these were demanded. (According to one ex-gantidar, this was done out of respect and gratitude!) One gantidar would regularly let loose his cows, and tenants were strictly forbidden to restrain them from eating standing <sup>used</sup> crops. Another gantidar regularly to snatch the best of the fishermen's catch with little or no payment. One of the gantidars was a prominent money lender in the area. He also employed weavers,

produced hand-loom cloth and sold this in Calcutta, where he maintained wholesale trading facilities. Most gantidars were also speculative traders in agricultural products. Like zemindars, they were also divorced from manual labour and risk and responsibility of production and given to conspicuous consumption, especially during marriage and death rites, baptisms and religious festivals. After the 1950 land reforms, two of the gantidar households left for India, after suitably disposing of their landed property. At least two gantidars had personal land above the 1950 ceiling. They escaped the ceiling by falsifying records in collusion with revenue officials. Those gantidars whose personal land was below the ceiling resumed, in contravention of the law, cash rented out land. Also, since the abolition of rent-receiving interests were implemented after considerable delays, they continued to extract rents long after 1950. Finally, they also received compensation for loss of their rent-receiving interests. In this way, they were left virtually untouched by the 1950 reforms, except that social prestige associated with rent-receiving rights was now gone, and they could no longer openly bully the village poor. Of the seven gantidars, there are now only three in the village. Others have migrated to India.

#### Rich peasants

They now constitute the dominant class at Magura. They are composed of RH II, RH I and UMH, as defined by TCAS. Before the 1950 land reforms, this class consisted of (a) smaller 2 of the 7 Magura gantidars, and (b) some of the superior tenants (i.e. occupancy ryots and ryots at fixed rents). After the reforms, the remaining gantidars and some of the Muslim middle peasants (owing to the vacuum created by large-scale migration of Hindus from this region after 1947) came to

join this class. Between 1951 (i.e. the year following the reforms) and 1977, the percentage of village households falling into this class declined from 30 to 17 (see Tables 4 and 6, Chapter 5). This took place owing to mainly two factors, (a) migration of some of these households to India, (b) partition of households. However, none of the households originating from the rich peasant class in 1951 has fallen below the middle peasant class in 1977. On the other hand, the per household agricultural land ownership for this class increased from 8.35 acres in 1951 to 9.70 acres in 1977, indicating growing economic differentiation and concentration, despite the cushioning effect of Hindu migration.

In the agricultural sector, present rich peasant economic activities consist of share cropping and owner managed cultivation (i.e. through wage labour) but little or no cultivation through family labour, and at the same time extracting unpaid labour/services from their share croppers and wage labourers through extra-economic pressures. In the non-agricultural sector, rich peasants are engaged mainly in usurious money lending at exorbitant interest rates and speculative trade in agricultural commodities. In recent years, there is an increased tendency among them to diversify their occupations by taking up professional (e.g. teaching) and administrative jobs in rural and semi-urban areas, and this coincides with their shift away from even supervisory association with traditional pursuits like agriculture, weaving, etc. They are also given to outright appropriation of various government-provided inputs through domination of the rural power structure. There are no merchants with fixed capital from this village, but the richest of such merchants at Maizpara-Urani and Gor market places are from this class. However,

for both speculative traders of Magura and the established merchants in the two market places, the modus operandi for profit making are similar, i.e. hoarding, price speculation, purchase of distress surplus, etc. In keeping with their surplus appropriation mechanisms, rich peasants of this village utilise their surplus for mostly wasteful consumption, reinvestment in money lending and speculative trade, land purchase, transfer out of the country, etc. On a limited scale, some of them do invest in agricultural production in the shape of modern inputs and agricultural practices, but so far, no rich peasant owner of tanks and weaving looms of this village has taken any steps towards either tank development for modern pisciculture or modernisation of looms for increased cloth production.

To sum up, rich peasants at Magura were by and large anti-productive, parasitical, and generally divorced from the risk and responsibility of production. As Table 51 of this Chapter shows, despite their far superior access to production inputs, yield/acres in rich peasant farms was lower than in middle peasant farms, and only for the lowest segment of this class (UMH), was the yield/acre nearest to the middle peasant yield/acre. Their anti-productive role is possible because by using their monopoly control over all means of production, they can obtain a high rate of return from anti-productive activities (e.g. rack renting, money lending, speculative trade, etc.), diversify their occupations and augment their incomes through exclusive appropriation of governmental inputs.

#### Political and social role

Socially, they enjoyed a superior position; among the Hindus they generally belonged to the upper castes. The same was true also in the sphere of education. Most of the school graduates

and students at primary and secondary stages came from this class. Politically, this class acted as intermediaries between the village and the outside world; they were Matbars (i.e. faction leaders) and Samaj leaders. They sat on the Shalish (village judicial bench) and dispensed justice according to their interests. They were in complete control of local government institutions and other public committees and institutions in the area. They had the closest links with central government officials. As mentioned earlier, they appropriated to themselves government-provided inputs through domination of the rural power structure and connection with officials. They also used these to dominate the rural poor. During local and national elections, they acted as "vote banks", thereby ensuring the electoral success of "appropriate" persons and political parties and consequently policies which would not hurt their interests (see Chapter 7).

#### Middle Peasants

They are composed of MH and LMH, according to TCAS (i.e. land ownership ranging between 1.01 and 4.50 acres). In both 1951 and 1977 they constituted about 38 per cent of the village households (although there has been a slight increase in their number from 52 to 60 during this period). The reason why the percentage remained constant is that while (a) some middle peasants moved to landless and poor peasant class, and (b) there was an upward mobility of some middle households to rich peasant class in the aftermath of post-partition Hindu migration to India, some rich peasant households came down to this class, owing to household partition. During the period 1951-1977, the per household land ownership for this class declined slightly, from 2.30 to 2.27 acres.

### Economic role

Before 1950, they were both superior and inferior tenants (i.e. under ryots). The 1950 land reforms conferred on them proprietorship of land they were cash renting from zemindars/gantidars/superior tenants. They were more owner-cultivators (i.e. cultivating with family labour) than share croppers. In peak agricultural seasons, they also employed small amounts of wage labour, but in times of crisis, they could also be employed, on a temporary basis, as agricultural wage labourers. Some middle peasant households, lacking adequate family labour, were also share cropping out land. They were generally not market oriented, and production was geared to the needs of the family and subject to the logic of family-based agriculture. But again, in difficult conditions they also marketed a "distress" surplus. All in all, they enjoyed a very precarious situation, given the fact that they could easily be ruined through bad harvests, price fluctuations, flood, drought, litigation, etc. The most common pauperisation process was borrowing from the money lender at high interest rates to meet an emergency situation, and then asset disinvestment to repay outstanding debts. Like rich peasants, they were also trying to diversify their occupations. For example, some of the middle peasant households now own agricultural land, although their main occupations continue to be fishing or weaving, i.e. their caste/family occupations.

### Social and political position

Socially and educationally, they are generally in between rich peasants and poor and landless peasants. There are a few Matbars (village factional leaders) and sub-Matbars from this

class. This is because some of them (a) are connected to the rural rich through kinship ties, and (b) have a popular following and constitute a powerful opposition to the rural rich, so that they have to be accommodated within the power structure for maintaining the existing balance and stability. As brought out in the response to past land reform policies and their implementation and role of rural power structure, they appeared to be more militant than landless and poor peasant respondents. This was because they enjoyed a more independent economic position, and were rarely tied to rich peasants in a direct unequal economic relationship. But on the other hand, there was also scope for the rich peasants to win some of them over through selective distribution of favours. However, given the growing economic crisis, the threat of a rapid pauperisation of this class was now a real one, and most middle peasants seemed to be aware of it, even if some of them nurtured rich peasant aspirations (especially since some of them were rich peasants one or two generations ago). This has clear political implications in terms of providing an objective basis for alliance between middle, landless and poor peasants.

#### Poor and landless peasants

They are composed of PH and LLH, according to TCAS (i.e. land ownership ranging between 0 and 1.0 acres). Between 1951 and 1977, the percentage of households falling into this class increased from 32.6 to 44.9. This took place owing to (a) partition of households in this class, and (b) differentiation among middle peasant households. During the same period, the per household all land ownership (i.e. including homestead and other non-agricultural lands) for this class declined from

0.5 to 0.4 acres, indicating their pauperisation on the one hand, and concentration of land in the rich peasant class on the other.

In agriculture they are more share croppers and wage labourers than owner cultivators. However, the completely landless among them are more wage labourers than share croppers. One reason for this is that landowners prefer poor peasants to landless peasants as share croppers, since the former are comparatively better endowed with agricultural implements in order to carry out their own cultivation on their own tiny plots. In order to meet their deficiencies with respect to agricultural implements, they sometimes resort to "Anguri", whereby they rent in these from richer peasants in exchange for agricultural labour. In peak agricultural seasons they may occasionally hire in labour, but sometimes they also resort to "Badli", i.e. by turn they provide labour in each other's fields. Some households of this class, lacking family labour and agricultural implements, also share crop out their land. The terms of share cropping are very harsh, when they share crop in and are becoming detrimental to their interests. Real wages have declined over time. They are also victims of seasonal fluctuations in agricultural wages. They are responding to this situation by diversifying their occupations as far as possible. Thus, they are at times share croppers, at times wage labourers, at times fishermen, and at times agriculturists. However, this has its limitations, given almost no scope for employment in the urban sector. In the exchange circuit they are losers in both roles, as sellers as well as buyers. They market a "distress surplus", which owing to the supply situation at the time of marketing, fetches them very low prices (but they are compelled to market thus at this time, given the compulsion to buy basic necessities, or pay outstanding

debts, etc.). On the other hand, if necessary through further borrowings from money lenders and disinvestment, they are forced to buy food several months after the harvest, when under a declining supply situation, food prices begin to soar. Most of them are heavily indebted to usurious money lenders, whose rates of interest have increased manyfold compared with the situation fifty years ago. At present, some of their production assets are also lying with money lenders as collateral.

Given their personal dependence on rich peasants for land, employment, credit, etc., they are bound in a semi-free relationship with the latter. This finds expression in two ways: through providing free labour (this is less frequent now compared with the situation fifty years back), and as faction followers of rich peasant Matbars (faction leaders). The latter amounts to supporting Matbars in their competitions and quarrels with rivals and voting in various local and national elections according to their dictates, thereby ensuring rich peasant domination over the local power structure and government developmental inputs flowing in to the countryside. They are also frequent victims of various open and extra-legal violences of the rural rich (see Chapter 9). Socially, they are at the bottom of the ladder, and this is reinforced by the dominant social, cultural, and religious institutions and ideology in the village (see Chapter 7).

By and large, it can be said that most poor and landless peasants of this village are not conscious of their objective situation in the society, or even if conscious, have not as yet considered collective and political actions as serious alternatives. This is also brought out clearly in their response to past land reforms policies and implementation and role of rural power structure (see Chapter 8).

However, given the growing differentiation and pauperisation (even now, all landless households own some homestead lands and a few agricultural implements), the objective conditions for a more militant and revolutionary response are becoming more pronounced.

CHAPTER SIXRELATIONS OF DISTRIBUTION

In this chapter, the distribution of the social product among various classes of people in the village is discussed. In so doing the following aspects are covered:

- 1) access to the five basic needs of life, i.e. food, shelter, clothing, health and education;
- 2) possession of durable consumer goods;
- 3) income and expenditure pattern;
- 4) gainful employment;
- 5) self-assessment of the villagers on their poverty situation.

Food Consumption Pattern

The main food items are rice, wheat, pulses, vegetables, gur\*,oil, fish, fruit, eggs, milk and meat. In general rice is preferred to wheat, but poorer households eat mostly wheat which is cheaper and sometimes offered as wages.

TABLE 1Average Food Consumption, 1977

Class	Half fed (in months)	Only one meal (in months)	Unfed (in months)	Number of months in the year own production sufficient to meet household consumption requirement
LLH	3.25	1.75	0.45	1.46
PH	2.80	1.80	0.95	2.54
LMH	1.58	0.30	0.13	7.76
MH	0.83	0.27	0.03	7.11
UMH	-	-	-	12.00
RH I	-	-	-	12.00
RH II	-	-	-	12.00
Total	1.78	0.85	0.35	6.006

\* Molasses.

TABLE 2

Daily Calorie and Protein Consumption, 1977

Class	Daily Calorie Intake per capita* (in kcals)	Daily Total Protein Intake per capita (gms/day)*
LLH	1,848.0	48.48
PH	1,934.0	49.97
LMH	1,929.0	50.21
MH	2,108.0	53.85
UMH	2,477.0	60.84
RH I	2,528.0	65.74
RH II	2,584.0	67.43
All Classes:	2,079.69	53.66

\* The Bangladesh national averages, according to the 1975-76 Dacca University Nutrition Survey, are 2,094 kcals and 58.4 gms. respectively. According to a survey of four Kushtia thanas (Kushtia is the district adjacent to Jessore), in 1977, the average daily calorie intake per capita for rural households with landholding between 0 and 2.5 acres was 1900 calories (Kingdom of the Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1978, p. 28, hereafter Dutch Report).

From tables 1 and 2, it is clear that

- i) there is a general correlation between the level of food consumption and the class position of the households, and
- ii) both average calorie and average protein intake at Magura are slightly lower than the national averages (2,094 kcals and 58.5 gms. respectively) for 1975.76.

From personal observation and cross examination of selected informants, it also seems quite certain that, in general, females were more under-nourished than males, except in the highest land owning households (i.e. from UMH to RH II).

Housing ConditionTABLE 3Housing Condition According to Valuation in Taka\*, 1977

Class	Number of HH	Type A House	Type B House	Type C House	Type D House	Type E House	Type F House
LLH	41	34	5	-	2	-	-
PH	29	17	7	3	1	1	0
LMH	34	13	6	10	3	2	0
MH	26	5	2	9	5	5	0
UMH	11	0	0	3	3	3	2
RH I	10	0	0	1	0	5	4
RH II	5	0	0	0	1	1	3
All Classes:	156	69	20	26	15	17	9

\* Housing materials varied widely among houses as well as among various parts of a house. Accordingly, the proxy for housing quality is expressed in terms of valuation in Taka.

Valuation (in Taka)

Type A	Less than 500
Type B	501 - 1000
Type C	1001 - 2000
Type D	2001 - 5000
Type E	5001 - 10,000
Type F	10,001 - and above

TABLE 4

Housing Condition According to Homestead Land Owned, 1977

Class	Area of Homestead Land per Household (in Acres)
LLH	0.078
PH	0.253
LMH	0.256
MH	0.306
UMH	0.357
RH I	0.602
RH II	0.750
All Classes:	0.262

Source: Computed from Table 6, Chapter 5.

TABLE 5

Housing Condition According to Number of Rooms\*, 1977

Class	No. of HH	Total Number of Rooms	Number of Rooms per HH	Number of Persons per room
LLH	41	68	1.65	2.95
PH	29	56	1.93	3.07
LMH	34	98	2.58	2.03
MH	26	74	2.84	2.27
UMH	11	45	4.09	1.95
RH I	10	45	4.50	1.73
RH II	5	30	6.00	1.83
All Classes:	156	416	2.69	2.30

\* Includes kitchen/store room. 3 persons per room is estimated as minimum level of satisfaction acceptable in present day Bangladesh (see Dutch Report, 1978, 28).

From Tables 3, 4 and 5 the following may be gleaned. Firstly, 57.05% of all households (which included 90% of LLH and PH) owned houses worth less than Tk. 1,000/- whereas only 16.66% households (which included 18 out of 26 UMH to RH II) owned houses valued at more than Tk. 5,000/-. indicating that quality of housing varied in general according to land ownership of households. Secondly, there is a positive correlation between land ownership and number of rooms per head. On the other hand, the number of persons per room decreases with increase in the household land ownership. If kitchens are excluded from the total rooms, then the number of persons per room would be above 3, the minimum acceptable level, for LL to M households. Finally, there was also a general correlation between ownership of homestead land and class position of the households.

### Cloth Consumption

TABLE 6

#### Average Cloth Consumption Pattern, 1977

Class	Number of HH	Insufficiently* clothed (in percentages of HH in the respective class)
LLH	41	60.97
PH	29	62.06
LMH	34	32.35
MH	26	26.95
UMH	11	-
RH I	10	-
RH II	5	-
All Classes:	156	39.10

\* Insufficient clothing was defined as follows: If within a household, a member did not possess something which the family considered warm enough to protect the upper portion of the body, from cold during the winter months or if an adult female member's Sari(s) was torn to the extent that she could not come out of the house, the household was considered as possessing insufficient clothes. This is a stricter definition than the one offered by A.R. Khan (1977, 85) i.e. 7 yards per capita per year.

Table 6 shows that (a) 39.10% households in Magura were insufficiently clothed (despite the existence of a weaving community in the village), and (b) insufficiency of clothing in the village does not go beyond the middle class.

#### State of Health and Medical Care

The changes in the general state of health during the last fifty years have been as follows, classwise:

##### Upper Middle and Above Classes

Fifty years ago, jotedars, gantidars, money lenders, big traders, etc. enjoyed good health. They were generally fair looking, their skin was soft and they were generally on the fat side with rounded limbs and pot bellies. This was because they were a leisured class, did not go out in the sun, ate rich food, and felt more assured of their position. At present, their health is still the best among various classes, but not to the extent it was fifty years ago. General scarcity of quality food, mental worries in the face of complexities of the present times, etc. were the main contributing factors in this respect. In the given circumstances, they had the best access to medical treatment and care. In 1977, some of them went as far as Narail and Jessore towns to obtain allopathic medical treatment.

##### Lower Middle and Middle Classes

Compared with the situation fifty years ago, the health of the middle classes has deteriorated considerably. The physical labour that a middle class young man can undertake now is certainly much lower than what he could fifty years ago. At that time, a sixty year old man could undertake a non-stop 20 mile walk. Now at this age he feels lucky if he can simply move about. The general economic crisis, food

shortage and unemployment, together with increasing mental worries have all contributed to this situation.

#### Poor and Landless Households

The health of the poor has sharply deteriorated over the years. Fifty years ago, a man could be poor but he was generally strong and stout, since he was at least assured of a full meal. Now, he is generally half-fed and suffers from malnutrition. In most cases, the poor people are bent, short, skeletal and sunburnt. A forty year old poor man now looks 70 years old. Stunted growth among children and anaemia among women from poor and landless households are common features, although these are to be found also among lower middle and middle households. From middle to landless households, self-treatment through herbs, allopathic treatment through quack doctors and homoeopathic treatment are the main forms of medical care.

TABLE 7

#### Reported Infant\* Mortality, 1976 and 1977

Class	No. of Deaths	Tetanus	Virus Fever	Diarrhoeal Dysentric	Others
LLH	5	2	1	1	1
PH	3	3	-	-	-
LMH	3	1	-	2	-
MH	2	1	1	-	-
UMH	1	1	-	-	-
RH I	1	-	-	-	-
RH II	-	-	-	-	-
All Classes:	15	8	2	3	1

\* 5 and under.

TABLE 8Extent of T.B., Night Blindness, Gastric Ulcer and Rheumatism, 1977

Name of Disease	Number of Persons Suffering with Class Background
Night Blindness	5 (2 LMH, 3 PH)
Tuberculosis	5 (3 MH, 1 LMH, 1 PH)
Gastric Ulcer	9 (2 UMH, 1 MH, 3 LMH, 2 LLH, 1 PH)
Rheumatism	7 (1 RH I, 2 UMH, 2 MH, 2 PH)

From the above discussion and tables, a number of points may be noted. Firstly, the general level of health has deteriorated, affecting all classes of people but the lower landholding classes have been the worst hit. Secondly, although, as discussed earlier, certain epidemic diseases, which took a heavy toll of human lives fifty years ago, have been controlled, diseases which are clearly related to intake of regular and nutritious food are becoming prominent, with the majority of the victims from MH and below classes. Thirdly, the present infant mortality rate is low compared with the situation fifty years ago, but as before, the affected households continue to be more from MH and below classes. Finally, such a low level health equilibrium (i.e. lower death rate but those living little better than living dead) had disastrous implications for both production and development of political consciousness among the village poor.

EducationTABLE 9Literacy Rate, 1977

Class	Number of Persons Able to Read and Write	Percentage of Total number of Persons Able to Read and Write (198)	Total Number of Persons Classwise	Col. 2 as Percentage of Col. 4
1	2	3	4	5
LLH	22	11.11	201	10.94
PH	23	11.62	172	13.75
LMH	35	17.67	199	17.59
MH	44	22.22	168	26.20
UMH	28	14.14	88	31.82
RH I	31	15.66	78	39.74
RH II	15	7.58	55	27.27
All Classes:	198	100	961	20.6

TABLE 10Attendance in all Educational Institutions, 1977

Class	Number Attending Institutions	Percentage of Total Number Attending Institutions
LLH	8	6.89
PH	6	5.17
LMH	15	12.93
MH	24	20.68
UMH	23	19.86
RH I	24	20.68
RH II	16	13.79
All Classes:	116	100

TABLE 11Primary Education Attendance, 1977

Class	Number Attending	Percentage of Total Attending	Number in the Primary Age Group	Col. 2 as a % of Col. 4
1	2	3	4	5
LLH	7	11.48	42	16.6
PH	1	1.64	28	3.57
LMH	11	18.03	40	27.50
MH	11	18.03	35	31.42
UMH	11	18.03	20	55.0
RH I	10	16.39	15	66.6
RH II	10	16.39	13	76.9
All Classes:	61	100	193	31.6

TABLE 12High School Attendance, 1977

Class	Number Attending	Percentage of Total Number Attending	Number in the High School age-group (11-16)	Col. 2 as a % of Col. 5
1	2	3	4	5
LLH	2	5.3	32	6.25
PH	3	7.9	27	11.11
LMH	2	5.3	30	6.66
MH	12	31.5	27	44.44
UMH	9	23.6	20	45.00
RH I	8	21.1	18	44.44
RH II	2	5.3	10	20.00
All Classes:	38	100	164	23.17

TABLE 13

Female Primary School Attendance, Classwise, 1977

Class	Number Attending	Percentage of Total Attending	Number in the Primary Age Group	Col. 2 as percentage of Col. 4
1	2	3	4	5
LLH	-	-	19	-
PH	-	-	17	-
LMH	5	31.25	23	21.7
MH	1	6.25	20	5.0
UMH	2	12.50	9	22.2
RH I	6	37.50	8	75.0
RH II	2	12.50	4	50.0
All Classes:	16	100	100	16

TABLE 14

Female High School Attendance, 1977

Class	Number Attending	Percentage of Total Attending	Number in the High School Age Group	Col. 2 as percentage of Col. 4
1	2	3	4	5
LLH	-	-	2.2	-
PH	2	20	18	11.11
LMH	-	-	11	-
MH	2	20	12	16.66
UMH	2	20	10	20.00
RH I	3	30	6	50.00
RH II	1	10	5	20.00
All Classes:	10	100	84	11.9

TABLE 15

Class Background of the Teachers and Managing Committee Members  
of Magura High School and Primary School, 1977

Category	Number	
	Primary School	High School
LLH	-	-
PH	-	-
LMH	-	1
MH	2	4
UMH	2	2
RH I	3	4
RH II	3	2
All Classes:	10	13

TABLE 16

Permanent Dropouts from Magura High School and Primary School, 1977

Class	Primary School		High School		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
LLH	2	2	6	1	11
PH	3	-	-	-	3
LMH	3	-	3	-	6
MH	-	-	-	-	-
UMH	-	1	1	-	2
RH I	-	1	1	1	3
RH II	-	1	1	-	2
All Classes:	7	6	12	2	27

70.3% of the dropouts were from LLH to LMH background.

TABLE 17

Reasons for Dropout

Reasons	Number, with Class Background
Economic Compulsions*	20 (LLH to LMH)
Neglect by Guardian	2 (UMH)
Marriage (not out of economic compulsion)	3 (RH I and II)
Does not like Studies	2 (RH I and II)

\* i.e. inability to bear educational expenses, need to help the family, marriage since family cannot maintain, etc.

TABLE 18

Educated Unemployed, 1977

Name	Qualification	Class Background	Present Employment Status
JM <sup>1</sup>	S.S.C.**	RH II	Connected with Agriculture*
PPK <sup>2</sup>	S.S.C.	RH II	Trade and Commerce
AW	S.S.C.	RH I	Connected with Agriculture
AKKC <sup>2</sup>	B. Com.	RH I	Learning Typing and Shorthand
SD <sup>2</sup>	I. Com.	UMH	Private Tuition Plus Connected with Agriculture
MR <sup>1</sup>	S.S.C.	UMH	Connected with Agriculture
AR <sup>1</sup>	S.S.C.	MH	Connected with Agriculture
AB <sup>1</sup>	S.S.C.	MH	Connected with Agriculture

\* Connection with agriculture is tenuous in that this is taken up as a last resort and involves practically no physical labour. Even the supervisory role in the agricultural sector is not done properly. It is a difficult situation: the education they have received has made them averse to manual labour and agriculture; on the other hand, they could not get the urban white collar jobs to which they aspire. During our stay at the Project area, these young men were constantly approaching us for jobs, and if that was not possible, to recommend them to persons who could give them the jobs they were looking for.

\*\* Secondary School Certificate.

A number of trends emerge from tables 9 - 18:

- 1) The literacy rate was very low (20.6%); only 31.6% of the children in the primary school age group were attending primary school; the attendance in the high school was even lower (23.27% of the total number of high school age group children). If female children were considered separately the picture was still more dismal. 16% of the primary school age group females and 11.9% of the high school age group females were respectively attending the primary and the high school. Dropout in 1977 was 27.27% of the total High School and Primary School enrolment. There were 8 persons in the village who possess Secondary School Certificates and above. All of them were unemployed.
  
- 2) There was a general correlation between access to education and class position of the households. Thus not only were the upper land-holding classes (UMH and above) more literate than the lower land-holding (MH and below) ones (Table 9, Col. 5), but there was also wide discrepancy between them in total and female attendance in the local primary and high schools (Table 10, Col. 5; Table 11, Col. 5; Table 12, Col. 5; Table 13, Col. 5). Of the teachers and managing committee members of the local schools, about 70% were from UMH and above classes. There was no one on the teaching staff or managing committee from LLH and PH. 10.3% of the 1977 dropouts from the local educational institution were from LLH to LMH classes and for them the reason for dropout was invariably economic compulsion (Tables 16 and 17). Of the 8 persons in the village with S.S.C. and higher degrees, there was no one from LMH and below.

Possession of Durable Consumer Goods

TABLE 19

Ownership of Durable Consumer Goods\*, 1977

Class	No. of HH	Number of Households Owning Durable Consumer Goods worth Taka:					
		0-250	251-500	501-800	801-1000	1001-2500	2501-7500
LLH	41	25	15	1	-	-	-
PH	29	15	7	3	2	1	-
LMH	34	15	11	6	2	-	-
MH	26	3	10	2	6	5	-
UMH	11	1	2	3	2	1	2
RH I	10	-	-	1	5	2	2
RH II	5	-	-	1	-	2	2
All Classes	156	60	45	17	17	11	6

\* The items considered as durable consumer goods were furniture, radio/transistors, utensils and crockery, clocks/watches, cycles, umbrellas and thermos flasks.

To give an indication, the most ordinary bicycle now costs about Tk. 1,200/-.

Gold and silver ornaments were excluded from this list because accurate responses on these were highly unlikely. However, according to selected informants, their possession was clearly related to class position.

From Table 19, the following maybe noted:

- 1) 67.3% of households owned durable consumer goods (DCG) valued at Tk. 500 and less;
- 2) 97.6% of LLH, 79.31% of PH, 76.47% of LMH and 50% of MH owned DCG valued at Tk. 500/- and less;
- 3) 90% of RH I and 80% of RH II owned DCG valued at Tk. 801 and above.

### Income and Expenditure Pattern

TABLE 20

#### Average Household Income in Tk., 1977

Class	Average Gross Household Income	Average Household Operational Expenses	Average Net Household Income	Average Net Per Capita Income*
1	2	3	4	5
LLH	3,139.75	505.25	2,634.50	537.65
PH	3,900.00	642.00	3,258.00	549.40
LMH	4,411.30	965.80	3,245.50	554.70
MH	5,015.40	1,129.70	3,885.70	601.50
UMH	12,596.75	3,091.50	9,495.25	1,186.87
RH I	16,069.33	3,362.33	12,707.00	1,629.10
RH II	25,685.67	5,131.00	20,554.67	1,868.56
All Classes	6,089.10	1,293.19	4,795.91	778.56 ( $\text{₹}$ 38.93)**

\* The average per capita income was obtained by dividing the average Net Household Income by average household size of class. According to the Dutch Report (1978, 27) the per capita income in 1977 varied between Tk. 250 and Tk. 500 for households with land holding from 0 to 2.5 acres, in the adjacent Kushtia district.

\*\*  $\text{₹}$  1 = Tk. 20 (approximately).

TABLE 21

Household Annual Monetary Expenses on Selected Items, 1977

Class	Average Annual Household Monetary Expenses on				
	Food*	Education	Medicine	Clothes	Social/Religious Rites Festivals
LLH	2,578.17	12.50	55.00	479.17	31.67
PH	2,475.91	-	105.64	450.91	39.00
LMH	1,798.75	87.50	170.83	608.33	54.17
MH	1,676.00	82.00	400.00	653.00	78.00
UMH	887.50	475.00	562.5	1,125.00	662.50
RH I	436.67	373.30	533.3	1,333.33	1,196.67
RH II	230.00	433.30	833.3	2,666.67	2,066.67

\* Col. 2 does not indicate the Tk. equivalent of food consumed but only the amount spent on buying food from the market.

From Tables 20 and 21, the following may be noted:

- 1) The average per capita net income was about Tk. 778.56 or  $\text{₹}38.93$  (calculated at  $\text{₹}1 = \text{Tk. } 20$ ). There was a clear direct relationship between class and income. The average household income of the highest landholding class was 7.8 times that of the lowest landholding category. However, the average household income of the highest landholding class, i.e. Tk. 1,712.8 per month ( $\text{₹}85.64$ ) was very low by international comparisons (even if allowances are made for differences in prices, "national culture" and natural environment).
- 2) The major expenditure item for most households was food and for the LLH class, more than 90% of income was spent on food. Although available data do not clearly indicate the situation

in respect of other classes, it is safe to assume that none of the classes spent less than 50% on food. For other items, the trend is clear; it varied directly with income and class.

Gainful Employment

TABLE 22

Households According to Number of Earning Members\*, 1977

Class	No. of HH	Number of Households with Earning Members									Total No. of Earning Members	Average No. of Earning Members per HH
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
LLH	41	27	12	2							57	1.39
PH	29	14	9	3	2			1			56	1.93
LMH	34	19	7	5	2	1					61	1.78
MH	26	12	9	5							45	1.73
UMH	11	5	2	4							21	1.99
RH I	10	3	1	4	2						25	2.30
RH II	5	1	1	1	1	1					15	3.00
All Classes	156	81	41	24	7	2		1			278	1.78

\* Earning member was not defined in the survey questionnaire. It was left to the respondents to answer according to their concept of earning member.

As shown in Table 22 above, there was, on the average, 1.78 earning members per family at Magura. However, earning members per household decline as one moves from RH II to LLH class, which clearly indicates that gainful employment opportunities were again directly related to

a household's socio-economic position. Given the seasonality of agricultural wage labour, the employment situation of poor households is rendered precarious by also low labour demand and low agricultural wages in the slack season (see Table 37, Chapter 5). Since women, in general, are restricted to domestic chores, to which no monetary value is attached, their socially useful and economically vital role in the production process (i.e. especially in freeing men in obtaining gainful employment outside the home) is not recognised. On the other hand, only females of land-poor households are engaged in outside home work (females of rich households do not have to work since these households generally employ maid servants). In 1977, 15 women, all from LL to LM households, were working as maid servants or in other paid jobs (mostly on part-kind, part-cash payments basis). As maid servants, they have to do very heavy work, such as paddy husking, grinding wheat and pulses, washing and plastering floors and walls with a mixture of cowdung and mud, fetching water, etc.

Self Assessment by Villagers of their Poverty Situation

TABLE 23

Household Head's perception of his/her Economic Condition

Class	Total number of HH	Consider themselves as Poor	Do not consider themselves as Poor
LLH	41	41	-
PH	29	28	1
LMH	34	32	2
MH	26	21	5
UMH	11	1	10
RH I	10	-	10
RH II	5	1	4
All classes	156	124	32

TABLE 24

Household Head's Perception of Cause of his/her Poverty

Response	LL(41)	PH(28)	LMH(32)	MH(21)	UMH(1)	RH I(1)
1 Lack of/ Insufficient Land/Productive Asset	37	24	18	8	-	-
2 Income Less than Expenditure	-	-	10	10	1	1
3 Sickness	-	2	2	2	-	-
4 Do not know	4	2	2	1	-	-

TABLE 25

Household Head's Perception of his/her Present Economic, Social  
and Educational Conditions vis à vis his father

Response	Economically	Educationally	Socially
Better than Father	16(10.25)*	80(51.3)	10( 6.4)
Same as Father	32(20.51)	52(33.3)	68(43.5)
Worse than Father	108(69.23)	24(15.4)	78(50)
Total	156(100)	156(100)	156(100)

TABLE 26

Household Head's Perception of his/her present Economic Condition  
vis à vis his Father

Response	Total	LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RH I	RH II
Better than Father	16	3	-	4	4	1	3	1
Same as Father	32	6	8	4	5	4	3	2
Worse than Father	108	32	21	26	17	6	4	2
Total	156	41	29	34	26	11	10	5

From Tables 23 to 26, the following trends emerge:

- 1) 79.48% households considered themselves as poor. Of these, 70.16% blamed lack of land/productive assets as the root cause of their poverty. 8.87% households claiming to be poor said they did not know why they were poor. 17.74% of these households mentioned income less than expenditure as the cause of their poverty. Since this is a vague answer, it is safe to assume that 26.61% of the households claiming to be poor did not know specifically why they were poor. 69.23% household heads thought that they were economically worse off than their respective fathers. 20.51% thought that the situation did not change since their father's days and only 10.25% felt that they were better off than their parents.
  
- 2) 100% of LL, 96.55% of P, 94.11% of LM, 80.76% of the M, 9.09% of the UM household heads and only one from among the R I and R II household heads thought that they were poor. 90.24% of LL, 85.7% of P, 56.25% of LM and 38.09% of M household heads who considered themselves as poor thought lack of/insufficient land/production assets was the root cause of their poverty.
  
- 3) 78.04% of LL, 72.4% of P, 76.47% of LM, 65.38% of M household heads thought they were economically worse off than their fathers. 14.6% of the landless, 27.58% of the poor, 11.76% of the lower middle and 19.23% of the middle household heads thought their economic condition is the same as it was in their father's days. The rest thought that they were better off now.

- 4) 51.3% of household heads thought that they were educationally better off than their fathers. On the other hand, 50% of household heads considered themselves socially worse off than their fathers, indicating a positive correlation between social and economic positions and a negative correlation between educational and economic positions of the households.

From the data and discussion presented in this Chapter, the following inferences may be drawn:

- 1) There is a strong correlation between poverty and class, based on ownership of production assets, particularly agricultural land; and the various manifestations of poverty become prominent as one moves from the middle to the landless class. As such middle, lower middle, poor and landless households of this village may be considered as being below the "poverty line". If two poverty lines, as suggested by Khan (see Chapter 2), are drawn, then it is self-evident from the data presented above that landless and poor households would fall under "extreme poverty" while middle and lower middle households would be classified under "absolute poverty". In other words, respectively 83.3% and 44.4% of the Magura households live below "absolute" and "extreme" poverty lines, a finding quite consistent with that of Khan (1976, 15). However, unlike Khan, we have been able to identify them concretely in terms of their asset ownership and surplus appropriation and utilisation characteristics.
- 2) On the other hand, if international comparisons are drawn (after making due allowances) it would appear that the

general level of economic well being, including those whom we have termed as RH 1 and RH II, is very low and this seems to strengthen the general finding of the previous chapter that the root cause of poverty lies essentially in the village's existing socio-economic structure, and more concretely, in class-relationships, the very logic of which accounts for both low production and inequitable distribution of the social product.

- 3) The existing relations of distribution are not only highly inequitable but also these hold back increased production through depressing the labour productivity (as expressed through access to food, medical care, education, etc.) of those who are actually associated with production.

CHAPTER SEVENSUPERSTRUCTURE AND POVERTY

There are basically two theoretical positions within the Marxist tradition on economic base (i.e. mode of production) - superstructure (i.e. non-economic factors) relationship, namely "fundamental" and "dialectical". The former holds firstly that base and superstructure are distinct and externally related, secondly that changes in the economic stratum (i.e. mode of production) produce corresponding changes in the superstructure and thirdly that the casual relationship is entirely or almost exclusively one way, with the economic system determining the superstructure and not vice-versa. The latter maintains that there is a dialectical interaction between the two strata and that superstructure enjoys a "relative autonomy", in that even after a mode of production changes, some elements of the old superstructure may persist and interact with the new mode of production. As Melvin Rader (1979, Chapter I) shows, the former position amounts to economic determinism and is far out of line with what Marx and Engels wrote and meant.\* In fact, in the context of "Asiatic mode of production" (which covers pre-British South Asia), Marx clearly conceded to the state (an important element of the superstructure) the dominant role in its relationship with the economy (Mandel, 1971, 122).

In this Chapter, therefore, we examine, in the context of Magura,

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\* Engels wrote: "Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that younger writers sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than due to it. We had to emphasise this main principle in opposition to our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, place, or the opportunity to allow the other elements involved in the interaction to come into their rights." (Marx and Engels, 1942, 477.)

the effect of the superstructure (i.e. non-economic factors) on the economy in general, and on production and distribution in particular, and therefrom assess the relationship between superstructure and poverty. In this regard, the following aspects of the village superstructure are taken up for detailed analysis:

- (i) religious and socio-religious institutions and practices;
- (ii) dominant ideology and value system;
- (iii) communalism;
- (iv) factions;
- (v) Samaj ("society");
- (vi) Shalish (village adjudicating bench);
- (vii) Union Parishad (the lowest level local government);
- (viii) kinship;
- (ix) recreation and entertainment;
- (x) Management Committees of Gor and Urani-Maizpara market places (i.e. the two market places most frequented by Magura residents).

#### Religious and Socio-Religious Institutions

Religion is and has been a powerful force in this village among both Hindus and Muslims. In order to understand its relationship with poverty, it is necessary first to delineate the extent, formal functions and class content of the various religious institutions in this village.

#### Muslim religious institutions and practices

##### Mosque and Idgah:

The village has its own mosque and Idgah (open air facility for holding annual congregational prayers). Fifty years ago, the

mosque was completely controlled by the Mollah Goshthi.\* Now it is run by a Committee headed by SM<sup>1</sup> (RH and Matbar of the Mollah faction) and the other 4 Committee members are Matbars from Madhya Para and Baghpara. The mosque employs a Muazzin (i.e. one who calls for prayers), an Imam (i.e. one who leads the prayers). The Imam\*\* is paid Tk. 24/- per month and the Muazzin is paid two maunds of paddy every year. The Imam is landless, from a neighbouring village and 'Imamati' is his hereditary profession. The villagers, according to capability, donate towards the upkeep and maintenance of the mosque, the Imam and the Muazzin.

The most important function of the mosque is to organise prayers, especially the Friday congregations. In his Friday sermons, the Imam generally upholds traditional interpretations of "good and evil" and their rewards and retribution in this life and hereafter. Explanation of poverty is usually in terms of the individual's own actions and "divine retribution" like flood, cyclone, drought, etc.; and due care is taken to avoid sermons that may cause any resentment against the village power structure in general and the mosque committee in particular. For example, he has never condemned the many immoral (i.e. from the point of Islam) activities like money lending at usurious rates, illicit sexual relationships, nepotism, pilferage and maldistribution of public property, etc. in which the village rich are prominently involved. This is obviously because the Imam's livelihood is entirely at the mercy of the rural rich. Finally, the

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\* Approximately the patrilineal kin group.

\*\* Besides his duties at the mosque, he also performs rites in connection with death, birth, marriage, etc. He has to be paid separately for these.

sermons emphasise strict purdah observance and discourage female education and working outside the home.

#### Religious Educational Institutes

There are two religious educational institutes relevant for this village. Both are under firm control of the village rich. None of the students comes from below MH classes. A special toll is collected from the sellers at Gor market place for upkeep of one of the institutes. About  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the collection is misappropriated by people collecting toll on behalf of the institute. There is close ideological similarity between what is taught at the two institutes and what is preached from the pulpit of the mosque.

#### Waz

Waz (open air religious meeting) is held in Magura and adjoining areas quite regularly and is addressed by the big Maulanas (i.e. those well versed in religion) and Pirs (seers) of the district. The last Waz in Magura was held in the High school football ground and was attended by about 3,000 persons. In this regard, the village Matbars and the Madrasah at Shahbad (4 miles from Magura) took the leading role. Before and during the Waz, substantial "presents" and subscriptions in cash and kind were raised. A part of it went towards meeting the expenses of the Waz (in particular the sumptuous food consumed by the speakers and their followers during the week long Waz) and the rest was divided among the speakers and carried home. Nowadays, the Waz speakers usually avoid reference to national level politics and concentrate on socio-religious matters and the general line pursued is the same as that of the Imam of the Magura mosque,

i.e. revivalist, anti-women, communal and generally supportive of the status quo.

#### Animal Sacrifice

Yearly animal sacrifice on the day of Idul Azha is restricted to UMH, RH I and RH II classes only. During the last five years, on an average, 7 cows and 10 goats have been sacrificed annually.

Animal sacrifice by the Muslims is not liked by the Hindus because the cow is revered by them; but there has been no untoward incident so far on this issue.

#### Zakat

The incidence of Zakat (poor tax) in this village is on the decline. Last year, only 6 households (all RH) gave Zakat and that, too, as a nominal gesture (i.e. it was far less than they should have given according to the laid down principle).

Other prevailing Muslim religious practices in the village are Haz (pilgrimage to Mecca), Roza (fasting during the month of Ramadan), visiting Dargahs (holy shrines), religious therapy conducted by "Takers", Idul Fitr (celebrations following the month long fasting), Shabe Barat (night long prayer followed by feasting, congregational prayer, distribution of sweets, etc.), Khatna (circumcision rite involving feasting attended mainly by relatives), Challisa/Jiafat (Public feast on the 40th day after death), Akika (Muslim equivalent of Christening), etc. Most of these practices entail considerable expenses, food being the main item. Over the last fifty years, there has been a clear decline in their incidence and grandeur, owing to the deteriorating economic condition of most villagers. At present, these expenses can be afforded only by the village rich. For example, the Challisha for SM<sup>1</sup>'s mother (RH) in 1976 involved a feast in which

6 goats, 4 maunds of rice and 3 maunds of yogurt were consumed.

### Hindu Religious Institutions and Practices

#### Kali Tala

There is no temple in the village and the shade under a banyan tree (known as Kali Tala, after the Goddess Kali) is its substitute. All the major pujas (acts of worship) are held here.

#### Guru (religious leader)

MPH<sup>2</sup> is the only Guru of this village. He is a hereditary Guru with a number of disciples in Magura, surrounding villages, and in the Khulna district. To become a disciple, one has to arrange for Puja involving, among other things, presents to the Guru and feasting. Fifty years ago, a non-Brahmin could not marry unless he became a disciple. This restriction is now gone. After becoming a disciple, various diet restrictions have to be followed. MPH<sup>2</sup> has 3.00 acres of land but his main income is derived from his disciples. In his youth, he used to move from house to house among his disciples, and by the time he came back to Magura, he had enough "gifts" to sustain him well for the year. In recent years, his disciple strength declined considerably owing to Hindu migration to India and his decreasing mobility due to old age. Consequently, his income as a 'Guru' fell considerably, but since all his children are now in India, he is still very well off.

#### Purohit (Priest)

There are 7 purohits (i.e. conductors of various socio-religious rites) relevant to this village. Of them 3 are from UMH to RH, 3 are from LMH and only one is from LLH. Among them they are the priests for various caste groups in and around Magura. In exchange

for providing religious services during the Pujas and other socio-religious occasions, they are given sumptuous gifts (both cash and kind) by the laity.

Interviews with the Guru and the 7 purohits revealed the following: Firstly, they all upheld the Hindu caste system with all its ramifications and injunctions and felt distressed at certain changes that have taken place recently. Secondly, according to them, the Hindu view of life consisted in accepting one's reality as rewards and punishments for one's actions in a past life, and that it was through righteous actions within one's existing station in this life that one could attain salvation of the soul. Thirdly, they all vigorously preached such views to their followers.

#### Puja

Since the early 60s, the two most important Pujas (i.e. Durga and Kali Pujas) have been held collectively (i.e. transcending caste barriers) through a committee constituted for the purpose. Of the 11 committee members, 6 were from UMH to RH II. The puja expenses (at present about Tk. 3,000/- per puja) were met by subscriptions raised by the committee. Before 1967, low caste Hindus were not allowed to come close to the idols. No collective puja has been held during the last two years following allegations of funds misappropriation by some committee members. Other important pujas for this village are Lakshmi Puja, Sarawaswati Puja, Manosha Puja, Shani Puja, Narayan Puja, Ganga Puja, Bishakarmar Puja, Fagun and Shubha Chanin Puja. Among other things, these involve making idols of relevant god/godess, "offerings" to the god/godess, feasting, gifts for the purohit, etc. Over the last fifty years, Puja celebrations have become increasingly limited to the village rich as the poor simply cannot afford the expenses.

Other Hindu Socio-religious rites and festivals important for this village are Sradh (Hindu equivalent of Muslim Challisha), Anna Prasanna (Hindu equivalent of Muslim Akika), marriage, Shad Bhakhan (to mark pregnancy), Jamai Jashthi (feasting in honour of the son-in-law), Bhai-Phota (to cement brother-sister relationship), Pahela Baisakh (to celebrate the Bengali New Year), Maghi Purnima (bathing in Ganges water), Ratha Jatra (to celebrate the chariot ride of Radha and Krishna), etc. All these involve elaborate arrangements and intricate rituals and entail considerable expenses. As with the Pujas, poor people's participation in these rites and festivals has dropped to the barest minimum.

We may sum up the above discussion as follows. Firstly, although over the years, their hold was somewhat weakened, religious institutions and practices are still a powerful force (as will also emerge from a later section on dominant ideology and values) in village life. Secondly, religious institutions are clearly dominated and manipulated by the village rich. Thirdly, religious rites and festivals involve considerable non-productive consumption, and this clearly militates against production and investment in productive channels, especially since the existing production level is very low. Fourthly, the existing religious institutions preach an interpretation of life and religion, which clearly help and justify the maintenance of the status quo in the existing power and class equations in the village society. Finally, the poor have clearly opted out of those aspects of religious rites and festivals which demand expenditure, owing to their poverty situation; however, this does not necessarily indicate a declining commitment on their part to the ideology contained in the dominant interpretation of religion in this village.

### Dominant Ideology and Value System

In order to delineate the nature and extent of the dominant ideology and values in this village, the following ten topics were selected (the choice of topic was guided by three criteria - direct relevance for poverty, easy comprehension of the topic by the villagers and minimum number of sensitive topics): fatalism, belief in superstition, caste system, manual work, female and co-education, purdah, females working outside home, husband's domination of the wife and dowry. Through direct interview (DI), villagers' attitudes towards these ere then ascertained (for this purpose, we selected 132 adult\* respondents, roughly  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total adults of the village, through stratified random sampling, based on the distribution of population according to age, sex, class and religion. A choice of four responses was offered: "favourable", "favourable to some extent", "unfavourable" and "do not know/refuse to answer".) Finally, this was followed by cross-examination of selected informants, i.e. knowledgeable and trustworthy persons of the village who were selected for verifying information obtained through other methods (henceforth CESI) on the same topics. Thus, data generated through application of these two methods, together with our own observation, form the basis of our analysis of the dominant ideology and value system at Magura, as spelt out below.

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\* In the case of females, of age 14 and above, and in the case of males, of age 16 and above.

FatalismTABLE 1Attitude towards Fatalism at Magura, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

Respondent Categories	Percentage of Favourable Response
Male	40.6
Female	69.1
Hindu	54.0
Muslim	56.0
Poor**	58.75
Middle Class**	55.88
Rich**	38.88
Total (132)	55.3*

\* 66.66% if we include those who responded 'favourable to some extent'.

\*\* Poor (LLH + PH); Middle (LMH + MH); Rich (UMH + RH I + RH II).

Trend as obtained through cross examination of selected informants (CESI)

- i) There has been some decline in fatalism during the last fifty years but the majority are still fatalistic.
- ii) The poor, the Muslims and the females were respectively more fatalistic than the rich, the Hindus and the males. Poverty, lack of education and belief in a particular interpretation of religion were the main causes for this difference.

Poverty implications of fatalism

- i) A resigned attitude towards life acts against the growth of productive forces and justifies the maintenance of the irrational and inequitable production relations.
- ii) It demobilises the poor in that it prevents organised/conscious responses to distress situations.

Superstitious Beliefs\* (regarding eating habits, birth, death, marriage, travel, etc.)TABLE 2

Attitude towards Superstitious Beliefs at Magura, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

<u>Respondent Categories</u>	<u>Percentage of Favourable Response</u>
Male	59.3
Female	66.1
Hindu	66.0
Muslim	66.90
Poor	66.25
Middle Class	55.90
Rich	50.00
<u>Total (132)</u>	<u>62.80</u>

\* In formulating the question, the word superstition was avoided in order not to offend the respondents.

Trend as obtained through CESI

- 1) There has been some decline in superstitious beliefs during the last fifty years; however, the majority still believe in various superstitions.
- 2) The poor, Hindus and females were more prone to superstitions than the rich, the Muslims and the males respectively. Poverty, lack of education and preponderance of myths in the Hindu religion appeared to be the main causes. In this respect, the sayings of Khana, the wise sage of ancient Bengal seem to have a particularly strong effect (see Chapter II on Khana's sayings on agricultural practices). Although Islam does not formally encourage superstitious beliefs, Muslims are not immune from these.

Poverty Implications of Superstitious Beliefs

- 1) The prescriptions provided by these superstitions have no rational scientific basis; as such these ultimately hamper productive activities.
- 2) These help demobilise the poor in that these make them depend on chance factors and prevent them from taking conscious efforts in life, and from grasping the real causes and solution of their poverty.

Casteism among HindusTABLE 3Attitude towards Casteism at Magura\*, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

Respondent Categories*	Percentage of Favourable Response to casteism in general	Percentage of Favourable Response to inter-caste marriage
Male	50.0	8.33
Female	61.5	7.69
Poor	53.3	6.66
Middle Class	53.5	13.3
Rich	60.0	-
Total (50)	56	8.0

\* All respondents were Hindus.

Trend as obtained through CESI

The grip of the caste system has somewhat loosened in certain respects over the last fifty years but it continues to be a dominant institution. Some of the obvious "excesses" are gone but caste still controls choice of occupation and maintains social distance between upper and lower castes. Thus, there has been so far no inter-caste marriage in this village; until 1967, the lower castes were not allowed to come close to the idol during the collective Puja ceremonies; in 1973, the upper castes (i.e. Brahmins and Kaesthas) refused to attend the post-death rites of a scheduled caste fisherman.

The females and the rich were more conservative about caste than the males and the poor respectively. Lack of education on the part

of women and co-occurrence of higher caste with wealth explained this phenomenon.

The changes that have taken place were caused by spread of education, migration of upper caste Hindus to India after 1947, their loss of political and economic power after the establishment of Pakistan and the impact of various political struggles such as the Tebhaga of 1946-47 and the 1971 Bangladesh independence movement.

#### Casteism among the Muslims

Theoretically, there is no scope for casteism among Muslims since such distinctions between man and man are clearly condemned in Islam. However, in Magura, the story is quite different. Thus, the residents of Daipara, who are all Muslims, are considered as social outcastes by the rest of the Muslim villagers: they are not members of any of the Muslim 'Samajes' and 'factions' and no inter-marriage can take place, or has so far taken place with them. This is because besides being poor, they are either recent arrivals or their females are engaged as quack midwives (Dai) and both these characteristics relegate them to a lowly social position.

#### Poverty Implications of Caste

- 1) It prevents the poor among the various castes from coming closer and from becoming conscious of their objective economic condition.
- 2) Since upper castes by and large coincide with upper economic classes, caste is used to augment the domination of the poor by the rich.
- 3) It is an irrational division of labour and hinders

occupational mobility and hence development of productive forces.

- 4) By implication, it preaches man's predestined role in life and hence justifies a status quo that militates against the poor.

#### Manual Work

TABLE 4

Attitude towards Manual Work at Magura, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

Respondent Categories	Percentage of Favourable Response
Male	89.06
Female	80.08
Hindus	82.00
Muslims	86.58
Poor	83.75
Middle Class	85.29
Rich	87.65
Total (132)	84.8

#### Trend as obtained through CESI

- a) There has been some increase in a positive attitude towards manual labour over the last fifty years. The majority of the villagers still do not consider it dignified. The general attitude was, "the poor people must do manual labour because they can't do without it". Conversely, anyone who could afford to escape manual labour would do so.

- b) Fifty years ago, no educated person\* and only about 10% of the rich did any manual labour relating to their occupation. At present about 20% of the educated and 25% of the rich did any manual labour. Manual labour and the poverty situation of a household are inextricably linked with one another.
- c) At present, the Hindus and the rich are more averse to manual labour than the Muslims and the poor respectively. In the dominant interpretation of the Hindu religion, manual labour is reserved for only the lower castes; there is no such formal sanction in Islam. The rich consider manual labour undignified. There is considerable discrepancy between the findings of DI and CESI. We consider the latter to be more authentic. In our observation, the DI results do not reflect the real feelings and life style of the rich and the educated.

#### Poverty Implications of Adverse Attitude to Manual Work

At the existing level of productive forces, organised manual labour was of the utmost importance in increasing social capital. Such an attitude was thus a serious hindrance to the development of productive forces, especially when those possessing education and capital did not want to combine mental with manual labour.

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\* Possessing School Leaving Certificate and above.

Women's Emancipationa) Female and Co-Education:TABLE 5

Attitude towards Female and Co-Education at Magura, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

<u>Respondent Categories</u>	<u>Percentage of Favourable Response to female education</u>	<u>Percentage of Favourable response to co-education</u>
Male	98.84	21.87
Female	95.25	16.17
Hindus	98.44	26.0
Muslims	96.28	14.63
Poor	96.78	21.25
Middle Class	100.00	11.76
Rich	100.00	22.22
<u>Total (132)</u>	<u>97.72</u>	<u>18.9</u>

Trend as obtained through CESI

- 1) There has been some progress in female education over the last fifty years and attitudes towards female education are now more favourable because female education means either better education for children at home, or brighter marriage and employment prospects, or both to most villagers.
- 2) However, the strategy that most villagers desire in obtaining female education is through separate education, the attitude to co-education being strictly negative. But given the present resource position, such a strategy is impossible to attain, especially since the existing educational institutions are poorly manned and equipped

owning to lack of funds.

- 3) On female and co-education, the Muslims and the females were more conservative than the Hindus and the males respectively. In the interpretation of Islam dominant at Magura, female education is looked down upon; given their relative lack of education, female conservatism in this regard stems mainly from their continued subservience to men.

b) Purdah\* and females working outside home

TABLE 6

Attitude towards Purdah and Females Working Outside Home at Magura, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

Respondent Categories	Percentage of Favourable Response to Purdah	Percentage of Favourable Response to Females Working Outside Home
Male	59.37	28.12
Female	83.82	38.23
Hindus	54.0	44.00
Muslims	82.92	26.82
Poor	71.25	37.50
Middle Class	73.52	26.47
Rich	66.66	27.77
Total (132)	71.9	33.33

\* Literally means veil. In practice, it constitutes covered/non-appearance of especially adult females before certain categories of unrelated and distantly related adult males.

Trend as obtained through CESI

- 1) Purdah observance has considerably decreased over the last fifty years and in the same period the percentage of females working outside the home has also increased and similar has been the change in respect to attitude towards purdah and females working outside the home. However, the present situation is still far from a decisive break with the past.
- 2) The relaxation in respect to purdah and females working outside the home is more marked among the Hindus and the poor than among the Muslims and the rich respectively. In the interpretation of Islam prevailing here, purdah is very strictly defined; there is no such sanction in Hinduism. On the other hand, poverty has driven the poor females out of their huts. They are at present engaged as either maid servants in the rich households or in various post-harvest operations.

c) Dowry

In the direct interview, only 2.2% of the respondents considered dowry as desirable. However, despite this universal condemnation, it was clearly on the increase. Fifty years ago, dowry was unknown in this village. In fact, at that time, the reverse, i.e. bride price, was the dominant norm. Dowry started with upper caste Hindus and the educated. Now it is common to all classes and religious and caste groups.

Nowadays the amount of dowry generally varies as follows with different classes:

Rich: Cash and presents worth Tk. 10 - 15 thousand

Middle class: Cash and presents worth Tk. 5 - 7 thousand

Poor: Cash and presents worth Tk. 2 - 4 thousand.

During the last five years, breach of promise in respect of dowry resulted in two divorces, 5 wife beatings and 10 cases of neglect to the wife. A poor peasant had to sell his tin roofs to provide his daughter's dowry. He is now shelterless.

The increase in dowry can be ascribed to several causes: (a) the relatively greater importance of man in the economic process, (b) the lower social position of women, augmented by the prevailing interpretation of religion, and (c) decline in polygamy and child marriage, thereby relatively increasing the number of marriageable females.

d) Husband's domination over wife

TABLE 7

Attitude towards Husband's Domination over Wife at Magura, 1977 (as obtained through DI)

Respondent Categories	Percentage of Favourable Response
Male	92.18
Female	89.70
Hindus	86.90
Muslims	92.68
Poor	91.25
Middle Class	85.29
Rich	94.40
Total	90.90

Trend as obtained through CESI

- 1) There has been only very slight decrease in the domination of wife by husband over the last fifty years, owing especially to man's predominant economic and social position (female land ownership clearly points to this: See Chapter III).
- 2) Wife domination was quite severe among the poor, despite the fact that poor women were more associated with productive labour than rich women. There was no significant difference between Hindus and Muslims in this regard, possibly because in the dominant interpretations of both the religions, women have been down-graded.

Poverty implications of adverse attitude to women's emancipation

Women constituted half the population, and unless they were liberated from various bondages, the development of productive forces was bound to be impeded. The existing sexual division of labour was highly irrational and held back the full realisation of their potentialities. Similarly, the present man-woman relationship also promoted exactions like the dowry, which, among other things, amounted to non-productive consumption.

Communalism

A serious impediment towards the political mobilisation of the rural poor is communalism, which has always come as a handy tool to the propertied classes, both Hindus and Muslims, for diffusing the former's attempts at economic and political emancipation. In order to understand the level, strength and ramifications of this force, it needs to be discussed in historical perspective.

Before 1947, class and religious divisions more or less coincided in the village. About 60% of the villagers were Hindus. Among the seven gantidars, who among themselves owned the entire village land, only one was a Muslim (and that too a petty gantidar). The majority of the Muslims were from MH to LLH classes, whereas the majority of the Hindus were above the MH class. In other words, the majority of the Muslims were employed as wage labourers and share croppers in Hindu-owned land. This, together with the prevailing interpretation of Hinduism, which downgraded both Muslims (as converts from low caste Hindus) and manual labour, made the Muslims of this village objects of various forms of social discrimination: they were called 'Chotolok' (lowly people) openly; even the young children of the gantidars would address elderly Muslim peasants by their first names (which is a sign of disrespect). If a Muslim peasant visited the house of a Hindu, he would be offered at best a gunny bag to sit on; if a Muslim passed by the house of a Brahmin, water and cowdung would be sprinkled for purification of the "polluted" place. Elderly villagers still recall an incident of 1940 when a small Muslim boy of a poor peasant family was tied up and detained for 24 hours by a Hindu gantidar for having trespassed into his mango gardens.

It was these circumstances that paved the way for communal politics in Magura and the region. In the 1937 legislative assembly elections, the main contestants were from the Muslim League and the Congress, and the votes were divided clearly on communal lines. The Congress candidate won mainly because the voters for this election were those who paid the village police tax (which was fixed according to the amount of property owned) or were Matriculates, and both these criteria favoured the Hindus much more than the generally poorer and the less educated Muslims. In the 1946 referendum for Pakistan, the

Congress purposely set up a Muslim candidate from this area (Syed Nausher Ali\*) in order to divide the Muslim votes. As a result, neither the Muslim League nor the Congress but the scheduled caste Hindu candidate won. He chose to vote in favour of Pakistan, much to the dismay and anger of the upper caste Hindus. At this time, the local Muslim League leadership rested with the rising Muslims of the area (i.e. persons from rich and upper middle households in the rural areas and lawyers, teachers, etc. in the towns) who had little scope for further upward mobility given the entrenched position of Hindu landowners, merchants and professionals. Thus, they started making free use of communalism, given the contradiction between Muslim peasants and Hindu landowners, in furthering their own cause. And indeed after 1947, with the departure of about 60% of the Hindus from this area, the rising Muslim classes were able to acquire land and fill in professional (for example, teaching) positions vacated by Hindus. Although we could not get hold of relevant official records, according to our informants, in the years following 1947, a substantial amount of the village land was transferred by the departing Hindus to the local Muslims. Since the former were in a great hurry to leave the village, owing to their acute insecurity generated in a general atmosphere of communal riots and bitter Hindu-Muslim relationships, the land price dropped very low. Although the lion's share of this land was bought by the rising Muslims (MH and above classes), some of the Muslim landless, poor and lower middle households were also able to obtain the land at this price. In several cases, the Hindus preferentially sold their land to their Muslim share-croppers on credit (i.e. on the condition that the price would be paid after harvest and

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\* Later member of the Indian Rajya Sabha.

sale of the standing crop) because some of the powerful Muslims were conspiring to obtain Hindu land completely free.

Following the 1947 Partition, political allegiance of the Hindus to India and their transfer of resources across the border became the new basis of communalism in East Pakistan. However, a number of countervailing factors were also at work. Firstly, the Partition and the exodus significantly eroded the class basis of communalism in that now, the majority of both the upper and the lower classes were Muslims. At the level of social intercourse, even the poor Muslims of the village, especially following the enactment of the EBSATA in 1950, ceased to show respect and reverence to Hindu gantidars. Secondly, the concession obtained in the aftermath of the exodus was a once-and-for-all affair able to satisfy only a small section of the rising Muslims of East Pakistan; and with the growth of a new exploitative arrangement vis-à-vis the West Pakistan based ruling class, the ambition of the Bengali rising bourgeoisie and rural propertied classes, especially those who failed to capitalise on the post-Partition vacuum, received a serious jolt. Consequently, the target for attack also changed. Thirdly, Narail was an important centre of the 1946 Tebhaga struggle. This was also the time when the Muslim League had mounted its broadside crusade for Pakistan on communal lines. Although the second current prevailed at the end of the day, the Tebhaga's class line directed against jotedars, transcending religious divisions, left behind for the common man of this area a good example of non-communal struggle, besides being able to prevent any severe communal outburst at that time (in fact, Narail was one of those few areas in Bengal where no communal killing and looting took place). Thus in the 1954 elections, despite the communal stance of the Muslim

League and its tirade against the UF\* (United Front) for being pro-Hindu and pro-Indian, the latter swept the polls in Narail (as in most other constituencies). Following the promulgation of Martial Law in 1958 and return of the Muslim League to power under the wing of the armed forces, the government provided a number of provocations for communal riots (for example, in 1964 and during the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War). But these did not produce the desired effect in Magura and the adjoining area. In fact, by the end of the 60s, given the complete disenchantment of the majority of the Bengali Muslim rising classes with Pakistan and the need to look for an external ally in neighbouring India, Hindu-Muslim unity became quite visible, and in the 1970 general elections, Hindus and Muslims of the village worked jointly towards the electoral success of the Awami League. After the 1971 crackdown by the Pakistan army, the Hindus and the Awami League supporters of the area fled to India. Meanwhile, the village came under control of the Razakars\*\* for a brief spell, during which time they hired and encouraged some of the Muslim villagers to loot abandoned Hindu property. The looting was put to an end, when in the next phase, the Naxalites took over and tried to launch a class struggle. On return to the village, in the wake of triumphant entry of the Indian army and the Mujib Bahini\*\*\* in this area at the end of 1971, the Hindus found their property destroyed and looted and were obviously angered. On the other hand, the Muslims in the village were generally

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\* The U.F. consisted of anti-Muslim League forces - the Krishak Sramik Party, the Awami League, the Congress, etc.

\*\* Para-military force raised by the occupation Pakistan army.

\*\*\* Para-military forces raised by the Awami League from its student supporters.

offended by the 'victor' attitude of Hindu returnees, and their boastful threats of retaliation, on the strength of the Indian occupation army and the Awami League government. The real looters and Razakars also took advantage of this situation. In order to hide their crimes, they started whipping up hatred against Hindus by playing on Muslim religious sentiments. After Sheikh Mujib's assassination in 1975, the rich Hindus of the village appeared rather afraid. They took the fall of Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League as their own, and openly spoke of migrating to India. They tended to equate anti-Indianism with anti-Hinduism and some of them even secretly relished the withholding of Ganges water by the Indian government through the Farakka barrage. On the other hand, local followers of the Jamat-i-Islam and the Muslim League have been constantly imparting a communal colour to the political allegiance of some of the Hindus to India and their resource transfer across the border. Thus, after 1971, the Hindu rich in the village were able to unite all Hindu castes into a single faction to put up a joint front against the Muslims, and in doing this, they made particular use of the looting incident. Also, during the 1978 Presidential elections, despite the existence of a pro-Zia\* Scheduled Caste Federation, the majority of Hindus, including the lower castes, were induced to vote for Osmani, the Awami League candidate. Similarly, during the last U.P. elections, some of the Muslim Matbars of this village and Union invoked religious sentiments in their election campaign against BB<sup>2</sup>, the U.P. Chairman.

All in all, communalism is on the wane, and there have been several instances since the Tebhaga struggle of 1946 when the poor of both the communities got together against their exploiters, whether

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\* The present President of Bangladesh.

Hindu or Muslim. However, this does not mean that communalism, as a divisive force, has died out. Despite the erosion of the economic basis of communalism, it can still be whipped up to generate hatred on religious lines. At the level of social intercourse, the gross form of discrimination of the past is now unthinkable and yet the distance remains. For example, (a) in living memory, there has not been a single Hindu-Muslim marriage in this area, and the attitude of both the communities towards such marriages is strictly negative; (b) the very residential pattern in the village, divided as it is into 9 distinct neighbourhoods, clearly reveals the reality of not only religious but also caste barriers among the villagers.

#### Factions

Bangladesh is one of those areas in South Asia, where an organised village government consisting of a headman, an accountant and a Panchayet (council of elders) never quite flourished, especially after introduction of Permanent Settlement in 1793.\* What has definitely existed instead are the factions (Dal). A faction is generally composed of one main leader (Matbar), one or more sub-leaders and followers. A faction is supposed to safeguard both group (vis-à-vis other factions) as well as individual interests of its members.

There are at present 5 factions in this village. All the Hindus

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\* The 1871 Bengal Administration Report commented, "... some things are in some places regulated by village Panchayets and by headmen, elders. But more and more, the Zemindari agent supplants the old model and the landlord takes the place of indigenous self-rule". (Quoted in Tapper, 1976, 31.)

of this village (59 households) belong to a single faction while the Muslims (97 households) are divided into the following 4 factions:

- i) the Mollah faction (16 households);
- ii) the Madhya para\* faction (26 households);
- iii) the Bagh para faction (20 households);
- iv) the Purba para faction (27 households).

Eight households of Dai para do not belong to any of the factions.

Until 1950, all Muslim households of this village belonged to a single faction, led by IM<sup>1</sup>, RH II and prominent Matbars from the Mollah goshthi (kinship lineage group). He was also one of the prominent leaders of the greater Muslim 'Samaj' consisting of Muslims of Magura and four other neighbouring villages. In leading the Magura faction, he was assisted by heads of other prominent kinship lineage groups of the village. But the main leader of this faction traditionally came from the Mollah goshthi. Various complaints accumulated against the Mollah leadership over time. However, at the root of it all was the special social status enjoyed by the Mollahs owing to their so-called blue blood\*\* (for example, (i) a member of the Mollah goshthi always led the Idd congregational prayers, (ii) Mollahs considered families outside their lineage too low for matrimonial relationships despite the high economic standing of some of them and this was obviously something very difficult for them to swallow). In 1951, following the death of IM<sup>1</sup>, the faction split into two, one consisting of member of the Mollah goshthi, and the other consisting of the remaining Muslim Households of Magura. The

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\* Neighbourhood.

\*\* Before coming to this village the person who founded the Mollah Goshthi was a weaver. Their new aristocracy was based on land ownership and better access to religious knowledge.

immediate cause for the split was non-consultation with the rest of the village in drawing up the list of invitees for the 'Challisha' (feast to commemorate death) of IM<sup>1</sup>.

In 1967, the non-Mollah faction further split into three new factions over a land dispute between two cousins of a rich household, UT<sup>1</sup> and J<sup>1</sup>. As the dispute intensified from exchange of hot words to physical fights and litigation in the courts, they invoked their respective kinship ties and dependency relationships with the poor households to increase their strength, and in the process Bagh para and Madha para factions were formed. Only 6 households of Purba para joined the Bagh para faction and the remainder steered clear of this fight and constituted the Purba para faction. During the 1971 liberation struggle, animosity between Bagh para and Madhya para factions intensified and manifested itself through sharply opposed political stands, dacoity, murder and damage to property. Following liberation, weariness forced the three factions into peace and reconciliation. However, in 1975, the three way split came once again, this time over invitation to the marriage ceremony of a Matbar's son. In reality, it was a pretext to fall apart after three years of uneasy truce.

The eight poor and landless households not falling into any of the factions all belong to Dai para. They are virtually outcastes from the Muslim society of this village because of their lowly family profession of midwifery and recent arrival to the village.

Until 1948, there was only one faction among the Hindus of this village. The split came over misappropriation and black marketing of yarn, meant for distribution among weavers through the village weavers' cooperative, by NNK<sup>2</sup> and his brother SSK<sup>2</sup> (they were respectively

President and Secretary of the cooperative and were responsible for lifting the yarn from the government store at Narail). This first affected only the weavers, and later the entire Hindu community of the village. The faction led by NNK<sup>2</sup> consisted of only 10-12 households. In 1950, the two factions decided to bury the hatchet given the need for unity to cope with communal riots, migration to India and general insecurity to their life and property. In 1968, the Hindu faction split once again, this time over the social acceptance of DJB<sup>2</sup>, who had earlier become a Muslim but later wanted to be reconverted to the Hindu faith.

In 1972, after their return to Magura from India based refugee camps, the Hindus decided to reunite. They felt that they could cope better with the destruction carried out on their lives and property by Razakars and local Muslims, if they were united.

There are 5 Matbars and 13 sub-Matbars in these 5 village factions. Of them 14 (i.e. over 75%) belong to UMH to RH II classes, and the remaining 4 are from LMH to PH classes. There is no landless Matbar or sub-Matbar and none of the main Matbars are from classes below UMH. Of the 18 Matbars and sub-Matbars, one is a graduate, two are matriculates, 5 had some schooling and the remaining 11 had no schooling and are virtually illiterate.

Most of the Hindu Matbars support the Awami League, obviously because of its secular policy and good relations with India. Before partition, it was invariably the Congress. Among the Muslim Matbars, the strategy appears to be to bend with the wind. Before 1969, only two of the 13 Muslim Matbars had any link with the Awami League. The rest were generally sympathetic to either the Muslim League or the

Jamati-i-Islam or were "non-political". With the approach of the Awami League wave in 1969, there was a positive swing in their political allegiance. Moreover, this was also the time when Naxalites were pursuing their "class annihilation" line in this sub-division. As such they found in the Awami League a better alternative to the Muslim League. After independence, they all welcomed the Mukti Bahini. Those who had collaborated with the Pakistan army either tried to hide their past connections by maintaining a low profile or made compromises (for example, Ar<sup>1</sup>) with the victors. Only one Hindu Matbar was not a supporter of the Awami League. He did not consider any of these parties (i.e. Awami League or Muslim League) relevant to the rural poor. In general, the Matbars strongly hated the Naxalites, although some of them had to put up with them in 1971 under duress.

The voting pattern in both union and national level elections is heavily influenced by the Matbars, who act as vote banks. In all the elections that have taken place so far, they have been the crucial contact points, and over and above the general campaign, either the candidate himself or supporters or activists on his behalf from the concerned political party approached the Matbars. Thus all the Matbars admitted to being contacted by the candidates during the last U.P. election. Similarly during the same election, of the 45 faction followers interviewed, only 7 were approached by the candidates alone and the rest were approached either by the Matbar alone or by the candidate along with a Matbar (these seven were mostly from UMH and above classes). However, over the years, the grip of the Matbars on the vote bank seems to have slightly loosened in that some followers pretended to vote according to Matbar's directive but actually voted

for candidates of their own choice. Also, unless pressed too hard, some followers generally did not turn up for voting (since Bangladesh's independence, the faith in the ballot appears to be on the decline in this village).

At the Union level power struggle, the support of the Magura Matbars is presently divided among two groups, one led by BB<sup>2</sup> the present U.P. Chairman (other prominent members of this group are JUS<sup>1</sup>, ex-U.P. Chairman from Charikhada, NGS<sup>2</sup>, ex-U.P. member from Maizpara, etc.) and the other led by JA<sup>1</sup>, BB's contender in the last U.P. elections. In terms of economic and social standing and educational attainment, the two groups are evenly matched, although a more accurate assessment would perhaps suggest a greater strength in the former. Their contention is over power at the Union Parishad, which, in turn, ensures a strong grip over developmental inputs and other facilities from the government for self-aggrandisement and patronage distribution. During the last two U.P. elections, both groups claimed the backing of the Awami League, then the ruling party. At Magura, the BB<sup>2</sup> group counted on Hindu Matbars and BB<sup>2</sup>'s personal equation with Matbars of the Mollah group. On the other hand, JA<sup>1</sup> no longer claimed Awami League patronage, now that it had been replaced by a Martial Law regime. At Magura, he was now raising two issues, namely domination of the Maizpara Union Parishad and market place by Hindus led by BB<sup>2</sup>, and discrimination showed by BB<sup>2</sup>'s Maizpara group towards development activities at Magura (opposition of the Maizpara group to government recognition of Magura High School was specifically cited as an example in this regard).

The voting pattern in the last U.P. election revealed the following:

- a) All Hindus and some members of the Mollah faction (the youth supported JA<sup>1</sup>) voted for BB<sup>2</sup>. All members of the other three factions voted for JA<sup>1</sup>. Ar<sup>1</sup>, one of the Bagh para Matbars, openly canvassed for JA<sup>1</sup>.
- b) For membership of the U.P., there were six candidates from the ward of which Magura is a part. Of them, 5 were from RH I and II classes while the remaining one was from a middle household (AA<sup>2</sup> of Kathalbaria). The Matbars of this village supported WA<sup>1</sup> of Kalukhali, and he was easily elected.

Of the 18 Matbars and sub-Matbars, agriculture was the main occupation of 16. There were 5 who had more than one occupation which included teaching, trading and moneylending. In agriculture, 12 were either sharecropping out or engaging agricultural wage labour or both. Even those who did manual labour in the field employed some agricultural labour, especially during peak seasons. Followers in the faction were clearly tied down to Matbars for sharecropping in land, wage labour, credit, etc., although this was not admitted by most of the LLH to MH followers in the survey conducted through direct interview.

Of the 18 Matbars and sub-Matbars, 5 were not associated with any committee/organisation, (of them, 3 were from LMH and PH classes). The remaining 13 have been/are office bearers of one or more of the following organisations/committees:

- i) U.P.
- ii) Village Guards
- iii) IRDP cooperative
- iv) Fishermen's cooperative

- v) Weavers' cooperative
- vi) Magura High School Managing Committee
- vii) Magura Primary School Managing Committee
- viii) Magura Relief Committee\*
- ix) Magura Mosque Committee
- x) Management Committee for Market place at Gor
- xi) Maizpara Union Swanirvar Committee
- xii) Maizpara Union Multipurpose Society.

As a result of this association, the majority of them come to acquire close access to various U.P., thana and sub-Division level functionaries, and this is then utilised to obtain from them various inputs and concessions for both personal benefit as well as for patronage distribution among faction followers. Two of the Matbars also have "special" links with the police; they are known to harbour thieves and act as "brokers" between the police and the offenders.

All of the Matbars claimed that they served the faction members through support/security in times of crisis, recommendation/advocacy (Shuparish') for help from Union/Central government functionaries, and that unless they did so, there would have been either desertion from the faction or else retaliation by those not receiving help.

Of the 45 followers interviewed, only 14 (10 of them were LLH to MH) said they received no help from their Matbars last year. However, 39 followers (which included 30 of the 34 LLH to MH followers among the 45 followers interviewed) thought that in distributing patronage within the faction\*\*, Matbars were distinctly biased in favour of

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\* Formed in 1972, now defunct.

\*\* All of the followers thought that patronage by Matbars did not go beyond the faction.

persons with economic and social standing similar or higher than that of the Matbars, and that these persons generally turned out to be Matbars' relatives or next door neighbours. On the other hand, last year, 24 of the 45 followers (including 18 of the 34 LLH to MH followers) claimed to have either rendered free services to their Matbars or help them during an election or support them in their fights/quarrels with their rivals. Fifteen followers thought that retaliatory actions could be taken by the Matbars if their followers failed to serve and help them (this was denied by all the Matbars). On the other hand, only 4 followers (all MHs) thought that they could take retaliatory measures against their Matbars if they failed to help them. On the basis of personal observation and cross examination of selected informants, it seems that relationship between Matbars and their poor followers is much more unequal than has been brought out in the direct survey. Thus, in both exchanges between Matbars and followers and in the capacity for retaliation, the former definitely enjoyed a far more advantageous position than the latter.

Only 20 out of the 45 followers interviewed considered their respective Matbars to be good. On the other hand, 25 (this included 20 out of the 34 LLH to MH followers among the 45 interviewed) thought their Matbars were "just alright". No one thought that his Matbar was bad. Again, personal observation and cross examination of selected informants revealed a very different story: very few of the poor (i.e. LLH to MH) followers (excepting the henchmen) considered their Matbars to be good. They were simply afraid to think aloud. However, they felt that they had little choice not to abide the dictates of the Matbars.

Among the five Magura factions, the leader-follower relation appears to be without any tension in the Mollah faction. This is because of close kinship ties among members of this faction and the aura of 'aristocracy' associated with this kinship group which, in turn, allows for a better equation between followers and leaders, as also smoother manipulation by the leadership in establishing faction solidarity. The situation is quite different (in varying degrees) in the remaining 4 factions. Firstly, there are deep-seated rivalries among faction leaders (for example, caste rivalries among Hindu faction leaders and land disputes between 2 Madhya para faction leaders) which led to bitter fights and even spilling of blood in the past; consequently, their stranglehold over their followers is not very tight. Secondly, in these factions, kinship ties between leaders and followers are less prominent. Thirdly, Matbars of these factions are noted for their open partiality in patronage distribution and for ruthlessness in their economic relations with followers. As a result, there were some moments in the past when followers of different factions tried to cut across factional barriers and put up a common fight against the village rich (for example, during the 1946 Tabhaga struggle and in 1968, when sharecroppers demanded a better deal and in 1971, when they were politicised by the Naxalites). In such situations, the Matbars responded by closing their ranks, despite rivalries, and taking joint actions against such recalcitrance.

All the main Matbars and 75% of the sub-Matbars had a family tradition in faction leadership. For eight of them, Matbari could be traced back to at least two generations. If the sub-Matbars were poor (i.e. MH or below), it meant they had one or more of the following characteristics: (i) son of well known Matbar (MK<sup>1</sup>), (ii) good henchman of the main Matbar (MZM<sup>1</sup>), (iii) formed a powerful

opposition within the faction, and hence had to be conceded some power and authority (BRB<sup>2</sup>). All the main Matbars and about half the sub-Matbars attend shalish within the village in their own authority. The remaining half are either specifically invited to a particular shalish or attend as assistants to the main Matbars. Three of the main Matbars are regularly invited to attend shalish in outside villages.

Four of the 5 main Matbars and 6 of the 13 sub-Matbars did not want any one from low families (Nichu Bangsha) to be Matbars. All the main Matbars have given or would like to give their sons and daughters in marriage to persons of either equivalent family (living in village or town) or of family of higher standing than theirs. Three of the 5 main Matbars and 5 of the 13 sub-Matbars admitted to having obtained either free labour or support during fight/dispute with others, from their respective followers. All Matbars claimed to have helped their followers through money, advice, recommendation, relief goods, etc.

The following conclusions may now be drawn from the above discussion:

- 1) Although faction structure at Magura reflected, in the main, the economic dependence of the poor on the rich generated by sharecropping, usurious money lending, limited and non-free wage labour, speculative trade, low level of productive forces and production, superstructural elements such as religion, neighbourhood, kinship, caste, etc. (which were themselves again related to the underlying economic structure) were also freely invoked in the formation and maintenance of a faction.

- 2) Factions serve two main purposes. Firstly, they provide the village rich with political power which is then used by them for access to/control over economic/other political resources in and outside the village, resulting in competition among themselves, with their poor followers ending up mainly as cannon fodder. Secondly, it helps demobilisation of the village poor in that it creates an illusion of solving their economic problems within the fold of the faction and prevents them from uniting with themselves, cutting across the factional barriers, and in the process, realising their objective position in the society and their possible role in changing this reality.
  
- 3) Faction as an institution was not an insurmountable proposition in view of its weakening over time owing to reasons stated earlier. Also, middle households were relatively more independent and initially, they could provide an alternative leadership of the village poor, provided, however, the latter also became conscious of their objective position in the society and the need for changing this.

### Samaj

Traditionally, the function of the Samaj (literally meaning society) has been regulation of two aspects of village life, namely personal/social conduct of its members in accordance with religious/ caste injunctions and practices regarding socio-religious festivals, rites, customs, etc.

Among the Hindus of this village, there are now 3 Samajes, based

on caste distinction, namely Brahmin-Kayestha Samaj, weavers ('Tanti') Samaj and fishermen ('Jele') Samaj. Before 1947, all the three Samajes had two forms:

- i) The extended Samaj consisting of same caste households of a large number of villages, some of which were as far distant as 10 miles from Magura.
- ii) The everyday Samaj of the same caste households of Magura and the immediate neighbouring villages. At present the extended Samaj does not exist, and in the case of fishermen, the Samaj now does not go beyond Magura.

Before 1950, the Muslims of Magura were part of a larger Samaj (Chauhuddi Samaj) consisting of 5-6 villages. At present, this has been replaced by four Samajes in Magura, which are co-terminus with the 4 factions, discussed earlier. Eight households of the Dai para are not members of any Samaj for the same reasons they are not included in any of the factions.

Before 1947, the Brahmin Samaj was led by 10 persons, all of whom were big gantidars. Three of them were also 'Pundits', i.e. well versed in religion. At present, the leadership rests with 4 persons all of whom are Matbars and from rich households. One of them, BB<sup>2</sup>, is also the present U.P. Chairman. In 1947, the fishermen Samaj had 12 leaders and they were again from the richest and the most notable families within the Samaj. The Samaj is now led by two persons only. They are relatively more solvent than the rest of the Samaj members but none of them is a Matbar. In 1947, there were 11 leaders in the weavers Samaj. Now the number has dropped to only 4. Both now and then, the leaders were Matbars and from among the community's richest households. The same is true of the Muslim Samajes.

Over the years, not only has the extent of various Samajes shrunk but also Samaj control over the conduct of its members has loosened considerably. This is best illustrated by the following examples. In 1935, a highly educated Brahmin of this village had dared to take water from a Rishi (scheduled caste Hindu), inspired as he was by Gandhi's movement against untouchability. He was at once excommunicated from the Brahmin Samaj. On the contrary, when A<sup>2</sup>, wife of MB<sup>2</sup>, another Brahmin of this Samaj returned to the village in 1972 and expressed the desire to return to her husband, after having eloped with her Muslim lover in the thick of the 1971 war, she was accepted by her husband, with full consent of the Brahmin Samaj. In 1945, a fisherman of this village eloped with a widow. As a consequence, his paternal family was excommunicated from the Samaj (that meant, complete economic, social and religious boycott including withdrawal of the services of priests and barbers) until such time as they found the runaway couple and produced them before the Samaj. After one and a half years, the family was able to locate and produce them before the Samaj leaders. His head was shaved and yogurt shake (Ghol) was poured over his shaven head as a redemption measure (Prayashchit). He had also to arrange a feast for the entire extended Samaj and forsake the poor widow, and in the process he became absolutely penniless. Thus, in the past, inter-caste marriages, dining and mixing, marriage without consent of Samaj leaders, widow marriage, love affairs, lack of purdah observance, failure to observe ceremonial rules (for example invitation to a marriage) etc., were severely dealt with in all the three Hindu Samajes. In the weavers and fishermen Samajes, pursuit of the caste trade in partnership with persons of other religious/caste denominations is also forbidden. The punishment for breaking the embargos could be anything from prayashchit to

excommunication from the Samaj. Now, all this is not totally gone, but there have been increasing instances of what Samaj leaders described as "religious and social indisciplines". Our interview with Samaj leaders indicated a unanimous lament for the "good old days". The general members of the Samajes also seemed to agree that Samaj control over their conduct had considerably loosened over time and that now many actions that were considered as serious offences in the past are no longer considered as such, or else even if considered so, these were nevertheless being committed, and the Samaj was able to do very little about it. Although Samaj code among the Muslims was, in general, far more liberal and egalitarian, it was particularly strict about purdah and man-woman relationships. Here again, and as attested by both leaders and members of the four Muslim Samajes, there has been, over time, considerable relaxation and decontrol.

A number of factors were responsible for this change. Firstly, during the last thirty years, deepening economic crisis, together with certain improvements (however peripheral) in education and mass-communication media and various political upheavals (such as partition and mass exodus in 1947, the 1968 uprisings, the 1971 war of Independence, etc.) all had their impact on the Samaj structure and changed the attitude of Samaj leaders and members towards many of the old Samaj rules and injunctions. Secondly, although governmental efforts during the last thirty years have on the whole favoured the rural rich, some of these nevertheless curtailed certain visible feudal excesses. For example, the EBSATA (1950) did away with statutory rent-receiving interests. This, together with the exodus of the Hindu zamindars and jotedars after 1947, curtailed the powers of the old rich and as a result, their effectiveness as Samaj leaders was substantially reduced. Thirdly, for the Hindu Samajes, the

post-partition exodus to India not only affected their size and composition but also reduced their effectiveness by generating despondency and frustration among Hindus who stayed back. Moreover, the establishment of Pakistan meant that for livelihood and survival they would now have to increase their economic and social intercourse with ascending Muslims; and that also demanded relaxation of many Samaj controls. Thus in the words of a lower caste Matbar: "if a Muslim officer on tour could now be entertained by a Brahmin in his house, it was difficult for him to invoke Samaj discipline and prevent a scheduled caste from drinking water from the tube-well he was using".

It is clear from the above discussion that, in reality, the Samaj was called upon to play two roles. Firstly, it invoked "order and discipline", "common good and propriety", "religious sanctity", etc. to defend and legitimise various social inequities, and this in turn strengthened the perpetuation of the underlying inequitable economic structure which made possible the existence of an institution like Samaj. Thus, in the final analysis, the essence of the Samaj is that while the leaders are the economically strongest in the village the followers are poor and economically tied down to them as share croppers, wage labourers, creditors, etc. Secondly, the Samaj, so far it has been successful in dividing the villagers according to caste and religion, prevented the village poor from uniting among themselves. In this sense, it has been, like the faction, an institution for their demobilisation.

In Magura, the Samaj, as an institution, is certainly showing clear signs of decay, though its existing control over the lives of the villagers can by no means be minimised. But while breakdown of the Samaj as an institution appears as a necessary condition for mobilisation of the village poor, it does not appear as a sufficient one.

Most of the respondents, irrespective of class, caste, religion, etc., seemed to agree that if this rot continued, the village could drift towards social anarchy. Maybe it is in the context of this apprehension, i.e. disintegration without any sign of a better alternative to replace the old order, that the old Samaj, despite its rigidities and cruelties, appeared as a lost haven to even many of the rural poor we interviewed.

### Shalish

Justice administration at the village level takes place through what is known as the Shalish bench. As is the situation all over rural Bangladesh, the Shalish bench at Magura, despite its considerable authority, is not a formal legal institution. It deals with both criminal and civil matters (however, when these are of very serious and complicated nature, the parties generally resort to the formal courts). The bench consists of all the Matbars of this village (though not all of them are required to be present during the hearing of a particular case). Its jurisdiction is limited to disputes involving Magura residents. If a dispute involved a Magura resident and someone from another village, the Matbars of both the villages could constitute a special Shalish bench for the purpose. In case of an inter-village dispute the Shalish bench consists of U.P. Chairman/ members and prominent Matbars of the concerned villages. Prominent Matbars of one village are also invited to adjudicate in the internal disputes of other villages. The Shalish proceedings are as follows. The aggrieved party approaches his own Matbar first and then other Matbars of the village. Someone, on behalf of the Matbars, then ensures the attendance of all concerned parties including witnesses and village notables at a certain place and time decided by the Matbars.

One of the Matbars is elected chairman of the Shalish bench. The rest follows usual court procedures except that no lawyers are present and the court is held in the open air involving very few formalities.

The following were some of the important cases tried by the Shalish bench during the last five years:

- 1) In 1972, some young men of Bagh para and Madhya para stole the standing crops of a Hindu rich peasant-cum-Matbar. In the shalish that followed, the plaintiff did not accuse anyone specifically (although he knew who the offenders were) but requested the bench to investigate the matter and identify the offenders. Accordingly, 5 Matbars of Bagh para and Madhya para were deputed for the purpose. Nothing was actually done. One of the Matbars investigating the theft had actually planned and led the operation and the remaining offenders were close relatives of the other 4 Matbars.
- 2) In 1974, 2 LLH persons were caught red-handed while stealing standing crops from the field of an UMH. The bench fined each one of them Tk. 100/-. The fine and the stolen crops were promptly realised.
- 3) In 1974, two UMH persons accidentally burnt their PH neighbour's standing crops, while trying to burn dead stubble in their own field. The compensation was fixed at Tk. 250/- to be paid to the plaintiff by the accused. The accused never paid the money. One of them is the brother of a prominent Matbar.
- 4) In 1975, a LLH person stole some goods from the house of a RPH. During the course of the shalish, it was found that 3 others (2 LLH and 1 PH) were involved in the theft. They

were fined Tk. 250/- and the fine was promptly realised.

- 5) In 1976, a LLH person was accused of stealing a tetron shirt from the house of a PH. The bench fined the accused Tk. 125/- plus the cost of the shirt (which had already been sold and hence could not be recovered). It was decided that the fine money would be donated to the school fund and SM<sup>1</sup>, one of the prominent Matbars was entrusted with this task. The money is still lying with him. In fact, SM<sup>1</sup> has in his custody Tk. 750/-, all raised through realisation of fines and to be donated to the school fund. Some of the teachers have approached him several times in this connection. It is unlikely that he will ever hand over the money.
  
- 6) The younger brother (who was almost penniless) of a Hindu R.H. came back to Magura from India in 1974 and demanded his share of the property. The elder brother not only refused to part with any property but also reported him to the police for illegal entry into Bangladesh. The police arrested him but later released him when someone from the village, on his behalf, bribed the police. After his release, he sought justice with the shalish bench, who awarded him 3.5 acres of the total land held by the elder brother. So far, he has received only 0.5 acres.
  
- 7) In 1977, J<sup>1</sup>, an unmarried young daughter of a LMH was forcibly seduced by her brother-in-law (sister's husband) R<sup>1</sup>, (MH) from a neighbouring village. Consequently, she became pregnant. The seduction took place in the full knowledge of her sister who was mercilessly beaten up whenever she

tried to protect her sister from her husband. At R<sup>1</sup>'s insistence, J<sup>1</sup> consented to abortion which did not succeed. The subsequent delivery was arranged secretly, the baby was murdered and buried in a nearby ditch. This information was leaked by the first wife of R<sup>1</sup> (R<sup>1</sup> had two wives) and soon the whole village knew about it. In the Shalish held, an Alem (i.e. one well versed in religion) was also called in. It was decided to publicly beat her with a shoe 25 times and make her beg apology to the entire village. The verdict was duly executed. But nothing happened to R<sup>1</sup>, the actual culprit, because he was able to bribe the Matbars of his own village into silence.

- 8) In 1977, a servant (LLH) of a RH was caught red-handed while stealing jute from his master's house. At the Shalish, the servant disclosed that the stolen jute was lying with the sons of two Matbars of Madhya para and that it was they who had instigated him into stealing. The stolen jute was accordingly recovered but the accomplices received no punishment. The servant was fined Tk. 100/-. The person whose jute was stolen was himself a Matbar of Madhya para and he did not either press for punishment of his fellow Matbar's sons.
- 9) In 1975, a dispute ensued between two Hindu rich households over the ownership of a tree that had been felled by one of them. In the Shalish that followed, it was decided that the tree actually belonged to the one who had felled it. The plaintiff accepted the verdict of the Shalish bench.

From the above discussion, the following trend may be deduced.

Firstly, the Shalish bench has always been composed of Matbars, who are also among the richest in the village, and conversely, the village poor have always been excluded from participating in the administration of justice. Secondly, in the resolution of disputes, 'justice' tends to tilt in favour of the rich and the powerful: when the plaintiff is poor and the offender is rich, the latter can either get off lightly or is able to defy the verdict of the Shalish. In the reverse situation (i.e. plaintiff is rich and the offender is poor), punishment is promptly awarded and executed. On the other hand, when disputes are between the rich, the outcome of the Shalish is generally compromise and amicable settlement. Also, some of the offences are committed by the poor at the instigation of powerful men but punishment is always reserved for the former. Finally, in sexual offences, the woman is treated much more harshly.

It may be mentioned here that not only in commission, but also by way of omission, the Shalish bench has shown definite bias in favour of village Matbars and rich. A number of examples may be cited in this respect:

- 1) Numerous cases of misappropriation and maldistribution of relief goods/development inputs by the leaders of various cooperatives/relief committees (see Chapter 8).
- 2) Failure of SM<sup>1</sup> (Matbar), despite numerous reminders by the teachers, to deposit the money, raised through imposition of fines, to the school fund.
- 3) Ar<sup>1</sup>'s (Matbar and UMH) illicit relationship with his young and widowed aunt (the woman became pregnant and abortion was arranged secretly. A woman who helped in the abortion

leaked out the information. When the entire village came to know of the matter, some rival Matbars insisted on a Shalish. Ar<sup>1</sup> retaliated by threatening the chief witness, i.e. the woman who helped with the abortion, with dire consequences. As a result, she backed out and refused to depose before the Shalish bench. The Shalish did not take place and nothing happened to Ar<sup>1</sup> or his aunt).

- 4) Theft by MM<sup>1</sup>'s brother-in-law S<sup>1</sup> in 1974 (he stole a cow from village Ganga Rampur and brought it to his brother-in-law's house at Magura. By the time the cow was slaughtered and the meat was sold, with some of it being distributed free among the Muslim Matbars, the owner of the cow found out the thief, and was able to identify his cow from its skin which S<sup>1</sup> took to the local market for sale. The owner demanded a Shalish but MM<sup>1</sup> and other Matbars intervened on behalf of S<sup>1</sup> and no Shalish was held.)
  
- 5) Dispute between Magura and Maizpara over the establishment of a High School at Magura in 1972. (The Maizpara based Matbars and rich people, many of whom are also U.P. functionaries, led by BB<sup>2</sup>, in a written application to the District Education Officer, opposed government recognition of Magura High School on the plea that the distance between Magura and Maizpara High Schools was less than 2 miles and in the process were able to postpone the same by about 3 years, during which time an enquiry took place and Magura based Matbars continued to influence the relevant officials. The real reason why Maizpara Matbars opposed the establishment of Magura school was fear of loss of Maizpara's

dominating position in the area, and student enrolment. Some of the Magura Matbars requested BB<sup>2</sup> for an amicable settlement through Shalish. This was not conceded, although the Union Parishad is expected to adjudicate in case of an inter-village dispute).

#### Kinship (Atiya-Shajon)

In terms of over all social, economic and political affinity and intercourse, patrilineal ties (which form the basis of the patrilineal group called goshthi) are more important than matrilineal and matrimonial kinship relations. In this village only in 16 households of Mollah para do kinship ties cut across economic class lines to any appreciable degree. In other paras, the dominant trend was confinement of kinship relations within class boundaries, and only 26 landless to lower middle households of this village claimed blood (i.e. patrilineal and matrilineal) relations with rich households (i.e. UMH and above) of Magura and other villages. There was no LLH to LMH at Magura which had matrimonial kinship ties with the rich households of Magura or other villages. Interviews with selected informants brought out the following general picture: economic relations with richer relatives were insignificant; the poor relatives were not given any special preference in the selection of sharecroppers or employment of wage labourers. This is also corroborated by survey data: last year, in a sample of 38 sharecropping-out households, only 3 had relatives among their sharecroppers, and none of the 11 rich households from among these 38 had a relative among their sharecroppers. Similarly, in a sample of 36 wage labour employers, 4 (2 of whom were from UMH and above classes) among themselves employed 20 relatives as wage

labourers. However, selected informants confirmed that in times of crisis, the poor did obtain some help from their richer relatives in the shape of a loan, charity, influence for obtaining relief materials and other benefits from local/central government agencies, etc. At the social level, intercourse and affinity appear to be a one-way traffic in that it is the poor who are eager to pay visits and renew contacts with their richer relatives and not vice versa. Sometimes, the richer relatives would not even want to recognise them socially and prefer matrimonial (Kutumbo) relations and neighbours of equal economic standing for social intercourse. All in all, the 26 households interviewed bore a mixed attitude to their richer relatives: they were certainly resentful of the social neglect and for not receiving any special economic concessions but nevertheless derived considerable strength, even though mostly psychological, from the fact of having powerful and rich relatives. In this sense, such kinship ties helped their demobilisation and prevented them from organising on class lines and understanding their objective situation in the society.

On the other hand, the rich households invoked kinship ties with both poor and rich households in so far as these helped maintain their dominant position in the village life. Thus, kinship ties were used for creating and maintaining factions, as demonstrated clearly in Mollah para and to a lesser degree in Bagh para and Madhya para. No less important is the role of kinship ties in mobilising support in times of election, dispute, etc. Thus, in the fight between faction leaders of Madhya para and Bagh para in 1971, kinship ties were extensively used on both sides. Kinship ties are also useful in protecting the village rich against collective and political

expressions of the poor. As the Naxalite movement gained some strength in this area after 1969, some relatives of the village rich (son of NK<sup>2</sup> of Magura, son-in-law of BB<sup>2</sup>, the U.P. Chairman and son of JUS<sup>1</sup>, ex-U.P. Chairman from Charikhada, to cite a few prominent examples) managed to join the movement. Without even imputing conspiracy to their motives, it can be said that this considerably helped to defuse the situation, and indeed the "annihilation" of the village rich that followed did reveal a pattern, i.e. exclusion of those who were relatives of the "cadres". Finally, kinship ties are freely used in exerting influence to obtain employment, relief materials, developmental inputs and other benefits from the local/central governmental agencies. Since all village and union level organisations and institutions are controlled by the rural rich, and most of their relatives are also rich, kinship ties help cement and strengthen their economic interests.

TABLE 8

Government Constituted Committee for Urani-Maizpara Hat\*, 1977

Names	Land Owned (in acres)	Occupation other than Agriculture	Membership/Office bearer of Organisations/Committees, etc.
BB <sup>2</sup>	15.0	Quack doctor	U.P. Chairman, President, Swanirvar Committee, Member School Committee, Thana A.L., Sub-Div. Red Cross, Chairman, School Hat Committee, was Juror, Chairman, Zilla Minority Board, etc.
NGS <sup>2</sup>	20.0	Primary School Teacher, Money Lender, Trader	Secretary, Multi-purpose Cooperative Society, Ex-Member, U.P.
DS <sup>2</sup>	5.0	Owner of Grocery Shop	Holds Trading Agency, Commander, Bazaar Committee
AH <sup>1</sup>	2.0	Tailor/Trader	Commander, Bazaar Committee.
JUS <sup>1</sup>	45.0	Owner of permanent shops in the Bazaar	Ex-U.P. Chairman, Member Awami League, Well connected with the Police

\* Responsibilities: ensure maintenance of the market area and collection of tolls according to government approved rates.

TABLE 9

Maizpara School Constituted Hat Committee\*, 1977

Name	Land Owned (in acres)	Occupation other than Agriculture	Membership/Office bearer of Organisations, Committees, etc.
BB <sup>2</sup>	15.0	See Table 8	
GRM <sup>1</sup>	15.0	M.R. Dealer	Ex-Chairman, Village Relief Committee, Ex-Member, Rural Works Programme Project Committee, Member, A.L.
WM <sup>1</sup>	30.0	Trader	-do-
MR <sup>1</sup>	4.0	-	Ex-Chairman, Village Relief Committee, Ex-Vice Chairman, U.P.
SR <sup>1</sup>	5.0	Teacher	Ex-Chairman, Village Relief Committee
JUS <sup>1</sup>	45.0	See Table 8	
MB <sup>1</sup>	8.0	-	Member, Muslim League, Matbar
HCM <sup>2</sup>	35.0	-	Manager, Cooperative
SM <sup>1</sup>	2.0	-	Matbar, Member, Swanirvar Committee
AR <sup>1</sup>	15.0	Teacher	U.P. Member, Member Sub-Div. Sec. Teachers Association
DS <sup>2</sup>	5.0	See Table 8	

\* Organises the collection of tolls as a lessee.

TABLE 10

Maizpara Bazaar Committee\*, 1977

Name	Land Owned (in acres)	Occupation other than Agriculture	Membership/Office bearer of Organisations, Committees, etc.
KB <sup>2</sup> (Chairman)	12.0	Trader	-
DS <sup>2</sup> (Vice- Chairman)	5.0	See Table 8	-
PKS <sup>2</sup> (Secretary)	15.0	Trader/Money Lender	Member, Awami League
AKK <sup>2</sup> (Commander)	16.0	Trader	-
LMM <sup>1</sup> (Cashier)	5.0	Trader	Ex-Chairman, Village Relief Committee
AS <sup>1</sup> (Member)	5.0	Trader	Member, Muslim League
AS <sup>2</sup> (Member)	12.0	Trader	Commander, Village Guards
AKS <sup>2</sup> (Member)	10.0	Trader	-
AHS <sup>1</sup> (Member)	3.0	Trader and Mechanic	Ex-Member, Village Relief Committee

\* Raises subscriptions from its members, guards and maintains the bazaar premises, collects tolls as a sub-lessee.

TABLE 11

Management Committee for the Market Place at Gor, 1977\*

Name	Land Owned (in acres)	Occupation
FA <sup>1</sup>	15.0	Agriculture, Teaching
FB <sup>1</sup>	6.0	Agriculture, Trade
TR <sup>1</sup>	7.0	Agriculture, Teaching
SU <sup>1</sup>	14.0	Trade, Agriculture
SH <sup>1</sup>	5.0	Agriculture
SM <sup>1</sup>	3.0	Agriculture
DA <sup>1</sup>	4.0	Agriculture
KM <sup>1</sup>	6.0	Agriculture
AAM <sup>1</sup>	8.0	Agriculture, Trade

\* The market committee was last formed in 1974. .

Management Committees of Market Places at Maizpara and Gor

As may be seen from Tables 8-11, more than 50% of the members in the various management committees of the two market places belong to RH II class. On the other hand, there is no one on these committees from PH and LLH classes. Also, those from LMH and MH classes are mostly associated with the richer committee members in their factional politics. It is, therefore, quite obvious that the richer people of the area derive the maximum benefit from these market places.

### The Union Parishad

Maizpara Union consists of 12 villages. The Union Parishad is an elected body consisting of a Chairman and 9 members. In 1977, 2 additional seats reserved for women (to be filled through nomination by the elected functionaries) were created. Its permanent employees are a clerk, 4 chowkidars (village police) and 3 Dafadars (messengers). Both the elected functionaries as well as the permanent staff are paid salaries from out of the central government exchequer. U.P. jurisdiction covers 'residual' matters in various areas such as law and order, justice, local tax, and developmental activities, etc. Over the years, and especially during the Ayubian decade (i.e. 1958-68), the U.P.'s powers, functions and funds increased considerably, and the U.P. Chairman also came to be an ex-officio member of the next higher tier of local government, namely the Thana Council. However, in real terms, the U.P. still has little autonomy and the guardianship and controlling roles are firmly in the hands of central government bureaucrats at thana, sub-division and district levels. We could not obtain complete information on all the Union government functionaries between 1932 (i.e. the year of its inception as the Union Board) and 1971 from official records. However, perusal of these and cross examination of selected informants revealed that during this period, the Union government was wholly dominated by males, sexwise, gantidars and rich peasants, in terms of class and by the Muslim League and the Congress politically, the latter depending more or less on the religious affiliation of the Union Council members.

Of the total number of 19 elected functionaries for the present and the last term of office (1972-77 and 1977-78) in the Maizpara U.P., 14 are from RH II and RH I classes, 1 from UMH class, 3 from MH class and only 1 from PH class. Only two are females, that too by reservation

and nomination and also they were both from RH II class. Political affiliation of the U.P. functionaries ranged, between the Muslim League and the Awami League, the latter claiming about 80% of their support between 1970 and 1975. After the fall of Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League, the majority of the Awami League supporting functionaries became 'neutrals', in other words, with the Awami League out of power and Martial Law on, they were waiting for realignment with the emerging faction of the ruling class. Other common characteristics of these U.P. functionaries were their membership of large families and kinship groups and record of considerable election expenditure (except in the case of BB<sup>2</sup> who did not have to).

Thus the scenario changed very little, at least in terms of the class character of the Union Parishad, between these two periods.

Various factors have contributed towards bringing the U.P. functionaries/rural rich close to central government officials. Firstly, U.P. functionaries, and especially the Chairman, have to maintain formal links with thana and sub-division level officials in the course of meetings, conferences, training programmes, etc. Various government relief and development funds and activities are now channelled through the U.P. In this capacity, the latter is required to execute and supervise programmes and construction work, maintain records and accounts, etc. On the other hand, officials depend on the U.P. for various statistics, proposals and plans for local development activities, recommendations for employment, license/permits and various developmental inputs (fertilisers, credit, HYV, seeds, power pumps, etc.). Also the U.P. Chairman is an ex-officio member of the thana council of which sub-Divisional Officer is the Chairman, Development Circle Officer is the Vice-Chairman and thana level officials

of the so-called "national building" departments are members (the thana council is the tier above the Union Parishad in the local government hierarchy).

Secondly, in the course of official tours to rural areas, government officers not only meet U.P. functionaries during work but also they generally end up by accepting the hospitality of the latter, although most officials are now provided with an additional daily allowance when on tour. Besides the attitude of bribe and "living off the land" which permeates the bureaucracy, such behaviour is also accentuated by the tendency to repeat upon the Union Parishad functionaries and the rural rich what they are obliged to do vis-à-vis their seniors in the service. Also, there being little public facilities for food and accommodation in the countryside the officials gravitate often unconsciously to households where they can find the standards they are used to. Thirdly, corrupt officials and U.P. functionaries must come close to one another in order to obtain bribes, misappropriate government funds and indulge in nepotism, etc. Fourthly, unlike most thana and sub-divisional level officers (under the present rules, field officers cannot be posted anywhere in the home district), the subordinate staff in these offices, consisting of clerks, typists, assistants, accountants, store-keepers, etc., are generally locals and connected to the rural rich/U.P. functionaries by birth and marriage. As such, often through the latter's mediation, officers and the rural elite come close to one another. Finally, there is the overriding compulsion of similar class background and hence also similar ideological orientations and values. Thus, in a sample of 35 sub-divisional and thana level officials of Narail, 33 were of rural origin. And of these 33, families (i.e. either the nuclear family consisting of the official, his wife and children, or the joint family including the official's parents and brothers and

sisters) of 24 owned agricultural land beyond 7.5 acres in their respective villages. In a considerable number of cases, they were total absentees, arranging the cultivation of their land through sharecroppers. In a sample of 47, consisting of 12 U.P. Chairmen of Narail thana and the above mentioned 35 thana and sub-divisional level officers of Narail, 44 (i.e. 93.6%) considered lowering of land ceiling to 7.5 acres/family and free distribution of excess land arising therefrom among the land poor classes as completely undesirable. Similarly, 42 of the 47 respondents thought that "over-population" was the main cause of poverty, even though, leaving aside the unmarried and those married for less than 5 years from among them, the rest all had more than 2 children. Finally, 45 of the 47 respondents considered foreign aid as essential for the country's economic development. In this context of similar class background and ideological orientations, it is only natural that rural and bureaucratic elites would be bound together by common interests. The implications of this closeness are obvious. Firstly, this leads to massive plunder of the economy, of both governmental resources as well as through bribes and extortions, the ultimate price of which has to be paid by the rural poor. In some cases, it is a direct appropriation, with the rural elite acting as "brokers"/"intermediaries" while in others, it begins with bribes from the rural rich, who in turn, make it up by raising prices and flouting at random various governmental measures (for example, on hoarding, money lending, toll collections, etc.) for regulating the economy. Secondly, this closeness strengthens the political power of the rural elite and hence their stranglehold over the rural society. Thirdly, whatever development policies are ultimately implemented in the countryside favour the rural rich. In Chapter 8, empirical evidence has been presented to substantiate the above.

We also interviewed 52 male household heads or adult male members\* (i.e. a female was household head or the male household head was sick or away) from landless, poor, lower middle and middle households drawn through stratified random sampling.\*\* 72.5% of the LLH and PH respondents (category III) and 76% of the lower middle and middle household respondents (category II) thought that, on the whole the U.P. functionaries they have known so far were corrupt and served only their own personal interests. 16.5% of category III and 12.6% of category II respondents did not have any complaint against the U.P. functionaries they have known so far, and the remainder of both the categories pleaded lack of knowledge on the subject. On the question, "what do you think should be done to rectify the situation?", addressed to those who were unfavourably disposed towards the U.P. functionaries, the responses were as follows: 50.8% of category III and 61.6% of category II respondents wanted the central government to rectify the situation. Only 2 from category III and 2 from category II confided to us that unless the poor people fought hard, they would never have a government to represent their own interests. The rest avoided any definitive answer.

#### Recreation and Entertainment

The common entertainments for the residents of Magura are: story telling, vocal music, jatra, fair and cinema.

Story telling sessions generally begin in summer evenings and continue till midnight. In Magura, these are held in the courtyards

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\* Females were left out of the sample because during preliminary enquiries, their responses were found to betray a total lack of comprehension of our questions.

\*\* This was the sample used for land reform implementation interviews (Chapter 8).

of 6-7 well-to-do households. The listeners are generally children and adult females. The story tellers are mostly elderly persons again from well-to-do households. Compared to 1970, story telling sessions are now less frequent, and attendance has dropped by at least 50%.

According to our informants, the following reasons account for this change. Firstly, the fight to stay alive is now more acute and people, in general, have less time to spare and less peace of mind for stories. Secondly, the war of 1971 has changed the villagers' attitude considerably in that they now look for more realistic and tangible pursuits. Thirdly, the increasing influence of the cinema has taken away some of the young audience from the story telling sessions.

Most story themes are woven around religion, mythology, miracles, fairy tales, etc. However, of late, owing to the increased influence of the cinema, man-woman love in a modern setting has also found some place in these stories. Most stories create a make-believe world: sure rewards for the honest, punishment to the oppressor and the unjust either automatically or through intervention of some supernatural force, Cinderella model romance between poor girls and rich boys (and vice versa), in which after overcoming a few social hindrances the lovers get married and live happily thereafter, etc. Needless to say, such ideology acts against any change in the existing social order, and more importantly, raising the consciousness required for bringing about such a change.

From time immemorial, rural Bangladesh has been the cradle of rich folk music and songs, and this region is no exception. For the

Hindus, no Puja (worship) is complete without the accompaniment of music. Among Hindu devotional songs, the more prominent ones in this area are Kirtans, sung by the Baishnava Hindus in praise of Radha and Krishna. In the dominant interpretation of Islam, music is looked down upon. However, under the influence of the Sufi order in Bengal, Marfati, Murshidi, Jari, etc. came to be very popular with the rural Muslim masses. In terms of form, these devotional songs of Hindus and Muslims, by their melody, natural freshness, simplicity and lack of excessive ornamentation, constitute a rich cultural heritage for the entire country. However, when it comes to content, both types of songs are characterised by idealism and resigned attitude towards life herein. At a more secular level, certain common songs to suit occasions like marriage, harvest, boat racing, etc. are also sung and enjoyed by people of both the communities.

Since 1972, however, songs of rural origin, especially those with religious overtones have been yielding place somewhat to modern Jatra and film songs, whose themes are mostly man-woman love bordering on crude permissiveness. In particular, the younger generation of the village seems to have been considerably permeated by such songs. In terms of developing the political consciousness of the poor people, the content change, i.e. from fatalism to crude sex is like embracing the devil in preference to the deep blue sea, since both help divert poor people's attention from the real issues facing them.

About 10 annual fairs are important for this village. Of them, 6 are held to celebrate one or the other Hindu religious festival while 4 are held on the occasions of boat racing, horse racing, wrestling and Independence Day. These fairs are held at nearby villages/market

places at various times of the year. Apart from the speciality associated with a specific fair, the common items of all these fairs are circus, dances and songs, puppet shows, Jatra, gambling, stalls selling sweets, toys and other commodities. In some fairs, concealed prostitution is an added attraction. In none of these fairs, is there any emphasis on exhibitions to promote production.

About 75% of the villagers attend these fairs, and of them the younger generation constitute about 50%. For the young, the main attractions are gambling and other entertainments. For the elderly among the Hindus, a visit to a religious fair is like a holy pilgrimage.

The fairs are serving two undesirable ends. Firstly, they encourage wasteful consumption and some of the main fairs are held immediately after the harvests. This is a time when villagers have some money in their pockets and as such a tendency to overspend. Even the poor, through demonstration effect, are tempted into the wasteful consumptions provided for by the fairs. Secondly, they exert a degrading effect on the morals of the people, especially the younger generation, through the provision of gambling, obscene dances, prostitution, etc. In fact, since independence, the provisions which help demoralisation are becoming more acceptable constituents of the fairs. Thus, while the fairs are providing a venue for entertaining the villagers, they are also encouraging wasteful consumption as well as helping to demobilise the poor people.

The nearest cinema hall for Magura is in Narail town (11 miles). In 1976, 46 persons from this village saw 42 films at the Narail cinema hall. Since the common practice here is to narrate film stories among friends and relatives several times (often with

exaggerations), the total effect goes far beyond the direct cinema goers. Of the total cinema goers, 41 were males and 39 belonged to the 14-30 age group. There was no significant difference among them in terms of class and religion. Compared with 1970, cinema going has considerably increased owing to relatively cheap tickets, improved accessibility of Narail town and change in the villagers attitude under the impact of education and the liberation war.

An analysis of the 42 films seen by the villagers brought out the following. Firstly, 41 were comedies and only 10 were based on popular folk tales (the rest had a contemporary setting). Secondly, 90% of the film stories were unreal, that is quite impossible in real life. Common examples are: the rich man's daughter falls in love with the poor man's son (or vice versa), the villain is always found out in the end and punished, the police promptly come to the aid of justice and crush the crime syndicate, the factory owner has a change of heart and is greatly concerned for the well-being of his workers, the rich man's son defies his father and chooses to live and work in the slum, etc. Thirdly, almost all the film stories crudely exploit sex; vulgar dances and suggestive songs are forcibly interwoven into the plot with the clear intention to hit the box office.

As such, the total effect of films on the villagers is a perverse modernisation which attempts to replace the opium of fatalism by the opium of class harmony and sex, and in the process help maintain the existing status quo through demobilisation of the poor.

The Jatra is a speciality in the cultural life of rural Bangladesh. It is a theatre, with an open stage placed at the centre of the audience. The musicians form a ring round the stage and provide instrumental music at various stages of the play. The costumes and

make-up are simple and cheap. The light is generally provided by hazack lamps but nowadays dynamo electricity is also being used. Except for a few "honoured" guests, the rest of the audience are seated on the ground, and the openness of the stage provides tremendous communication between the actors and the audience. The play begins with a prologue, and between the Acts, interludes consisting of songs and dances are provided. The Jatra is held in the winter, following the main harvest, that is, when the weather is agreeable, communication is easy and there is both time and money to spare. The Jatra is organised by various mobile companies consisting of owners, managers, trainers, artistes, etc.

At present, most Magura residents see Jatra, and no religious sanction seems to be working against it. However, Muslim women generally do not see Jatra as much as their Hindu counterparts. Fifty years ago, many Muslim males would also shun the Jatra.

Compared with the situation fifty years ago, there has been a considerable change in the content of the Jatra shown in this region. The majority of the past Jatra stories were borrowed from religion and mythology. Man-woman love in a contemporary setting is now a more common theme, although the old mooring has not been totally discarded. Despite the thematic difference, the ideology of the contemporary Jatra, like other entertainment media, serves as a poor people's tranquiliser in that it creates a world of false consciousness where love, justice, fair play, etc. transcend class barriers. Besides, the modern Jatra is also the vehicle for obtuse taste and crude sex in the countryside: the so-called "dances" provided during the interludes of most Jatras are obviously deliberate tantalisers to draw crowds. Even the Jatra titles are twisted to produce the desired effects. Thus, the

mythological Hindu epic "Mahabharata" is now advertised under the title "The Undressing of Draupudi". One reason why the Jatra has adopted this strategy is that it has to, for survival, compete with the cinema which can exhibit more "saucy" stuff and has, at its disposal, better technology, organisation and finances.

From the above discussion, the following may be summed up. Firstly, the superstructure, consisting of dominant religious, social, political, cultural, administrative, juridical institutions/practices/ideology/values, is still a very powerful force in the life of the villagers; there are no indications to show that it has undergone any appreciable qualitative transformation during the last fifty years. Secondly, the existing superstructure is clearly dominated by the village rich; through propagation of false consciousness, and manipulation of ideological and power apparatuses to their own advantage, often accompanied by use of naked force (see also Chapter 9), the rich have so far been successful in legitimising the existing low production and highly inequitable distribution of the social product; and conversely, counter consciousness, challenging the status quo, has not as yet been able to take hold of the poor people and thereby emerge as a "material force".\* In other words, the existing superstructure's main role has so far been to maintain and legitimise poverty and inequality at Magura.

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\* Marx wrote, "Material force can only be overthrown by material force; but ideology itself becomes a material force when it has seized the masses" (Marx, 1963, 59).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE  
TO POVERTY AT MAGURA

Of all the superstructural elements, the state occupies the most crucial role. In the Marxist tradition it is seen, in the last analysis, as a structure specific to and in the service of the economically dominant classes for perpetuating their economic, political and social domination over the rest of the society (Miliband, 1965). In the Third World situation, the state assumes added importance because of its pervasive involvement in the direct control and management of the economy. Therefore, the need to focus on state economic policies in the rural sector and their implications for rural poverty can hardly be overemphasised. In this regard P.C. Joshi's (1970, 11-12) distinction between "ideology" and "programme" of such policies (i.e. between what is stated on paper and what ultimately gets implemented) and Dasgupta's (1979, 48-9) point that the class character of the state should be deduced ultimately from the class character of the actual long-term beneficiaries of state economic policies, need to be particularly borne in mind. In this Chapter, an attempt is made precisely in this direction.

Ideology of State Rural Development Policy

The ideology of state rural development policy in post-independent Bangladesh is stated thus in a government document, "Having all these in view, poverty-oriented rural development has been designed to fulfil five basic objectives, namely, increase of agricultural production at an accelerated pace, creation of new employment opportunities for the rural poor, more broad-based spread of incremental benefits, strengthening of rural institutions for effective delivery of development services supplies

to all irrespective of their present economic and social status, and improvement of rural infrastructure" (GOBD, 1977, 2). In the same document (p.3) specific anti-poverty measures identified are development of rural institutions with direct involvement of small and marginal farmers and landless labourers not only as a receiving mechanism of development services, but also to ensure equity in the distribution of income, delegation of increasing responsibilities to the local bodies as a step towards decentralisation and of people's participation, undertaking some target group-oriented programmes to benefit small peasants and landless labourers through development of productive activities and promotion of rural industries for diversification of employment opportunities. As may be seen, there is hardly anything in this strategy which may be described as "radical". However, keeping this stated policy in view, let us now see concretely the effect of various anti-poverty and development measures adopted by the state over time on the poverty situation at Magura.

#### Agricultural Co-operation

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which is basically an attempt at agricultural co-operation, grew out of the experience of the Comilla co-operative experiments conducted in the 1960s under the personal guidance of Dr. Akhter Hamid Khan, founder-Director of the BARD (Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development).

Following Bangladesh's independence, the IRDP expanded,\* and Magura also came under its purview. The Narail-based IRDP officials came to the village in 1973 and carried out a propaganda campaign among the villagers to start an agricultural production co-operative. They offered, by way of incentives, easy loans, power pumps, insecticides, fertilisers, HYV and training in the advanced methods of cultivation. Consequently, a co-operative was established that same year.

#### Agricultural Production through the Co-operative

In 1973, the Co-operative decided to cultivate IRRI in 25.0 acres of land. A block was formed and it received a 2 cusec pump, diesel oil, HYV, fertiliser, etc., from BADC\*\* at subsidised rates and a loan of Tk.1,000/- from the IRDP. The project failed miserably for a number of reasons. Most of the land in the block belonged to rich households, so that poorer members showed little interest in the project. Since the land was not of the same level and the co-operative was unwilling to do anything about it, the area actually cultivated was only 10 acres. In the face of allegations that the land of the Hindus did

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\* In 1970, the IRDP covered only 23 out of the 400 Bangladesh thanas (GOBD, 1972, 65). The programme expanded rapidly after 1972. By 1978, there were 26,847 IRDP primary co-operative societies, covering 250 thanas (M.Abdullah, 1979, 82). A committee, appointed by the Government in 1975, reported thus on these co-operatives: "(i) Since membership was restricted, benefits of subsidised inputs reached only the richer landowners; (ii) by and large, co-operative management was monopolised by rich farmers; (iii) the co-operatives rendered no assistance to the poor and landless, and in effect, sharpened the disparity between the poor and the rich farmers, and even if well suited for a 'green revolution', these could not ensure equitable distribution of the social product" (GOBD, 1975, 6, 10). Similarly, in the assessment of the Planning Commission, "these co-operatives have turned into closed clubs of the Kulaks", and elsewhere, "the entire structure of the IRDP co-operatives seems to have become dominated by rural elite...in conspiracy with the urban elite" (GOBD, 1974, 11 and 4).

\*\* Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation.



TABLE 2 : Class background of General Members and Office Bearers  
of Agricultural Co-operative, 1977

Category	Total Number	Hindu	Muslim	Class Background						
				LLH	PH	LMP	MP	UMH	RHI	RHII
General Members	39 (55)*	13 (20)	26 (35)	2 (5)	5 (6)	11 (15)	6 (10)	5 (7)	7 (9)	3 (3)
Office Bearers	6	1	5	-	-	4	1	-	1	1

\* The figures in parentheses are for 1974.

The present office bearers consist of a President (RHI), a Manager (LMH), an "ideal farmer" (LMH) and 3 Directors (IRHII, IUMH and ILMH). Of three LMH office bearers, one is from the fishing community, while two are sub-Matbars and related to rich households.

not receive as much water as that of the Muslims, there was considerable friction, misunderstanding and even withdrawal from the co-operative. The diesel oil required to run the power pump was to be bought through subscriptions by the landowners of the block. Subscriptions raised were small and irregular; as a result, the supply did not match the demand. Moreover, the manager of the co-operative allegedly sold some of the diesel oil procured at subsidised rates on the black market. Finally, the land was cultivated individually and the boundary lines in the block land were maintained.

In 1974, both president and manager of the co-operative were from rich households (AW<sup>1</sup> and CCK<sup>2</sup>). The area to be cultivated was set at 42 acres; ultimately only 35 acres were cultivated and the actual cultivation was carried out on a share-cropping basis involving 15 share croppers. A number of difficulties were faced that year. Firstly, the co-operative members did not pay their subscriptions regularly, so that the diesel oil supply was short of requirement to a considerable degree (in fact, two quotas of diesel oil could not be lifted owing to fund shortage). Since many of the owners of block land failed to pay their subscription, six members (four RH and two PH) raised subscriptions among them and bought one quota of diesel oil. They used the oil for irrigating only their own land. This was contested by others, resulting in friction and misunderstanding; later, subscriptions were raised from other members and their lands were also irrigated. Secondly, this year also, the boundary lines were kept intact and cultivation was carried out on an individual basis through share croppers. Thirdly, the BADC officials had to be bribed for the inputs supplied.

In 1975, against a target of 35.0 acres, only 13 acres were actually cultivated. The office bearers of the co-operative remained unchanged. The difficulties faced in 1975 were:

- a) The poor members paid their subscriptions regularly, but the richer ones defaulted. It was decided that the land of only those members who paid their subscriptions would be irrigated. However, when eight members (four PH and four MH) did buy the diesel, the RH members forcibly used the power pump to irrigate their lands. This resulted in severe friction and oil purchase was discontinued.
- b) The manager CCK<sup>2</sup> (son of NK<sup>2</sup> the big landowner-cum-moneylender-cum-speculative trader of the village) left for India in April 1975, leaving the responsibility to MBM<sup>1</sup>. After CCK<sup>2</sup> left, it was discovered that he had sold four barrels of the diesel oil on the black market and taken the money. Similar behaviour was repeated by the next incumbent, MBM<sup>1</sup>. While a van was carrying diesel oil to Magura, one barrel suddenly disappeared; the general suspicion is that MBM<sup>1</sup> must have sold it on the black market.

In 1976, the new manager JUM<sup>1</sup> (LMH) called a meeting; the co-operative members refused to be drawn in block cultivation any more, in the light of their bitter past experience. Since then, the co-operative has not been engaged in production directly, its productivity being confined to disbursing IRDP loans among its members. Thus, it is now a credit rather than a production co-operative. From time to time, IRDP officials exhort the co-operative members to increase production and savings. Nothing of the sort seems to have happened. Since the loans come through the office bearers of the co-operative, some of them not only take some advantage from the members before giving them any loans, but also distribute among themselves the lion's share.

In 1977, of the total outstanding loan of Tk.16,000, only Tk.7,000 had been recovered. Members from richer households and office bearers defaulted much more than those from poor, lower-middle and middle households, because the former could get away with it through their good connections with loan disbursing officials. It was also noticed that most loans found their way into trading activities and various consumption needs. The "production plan" submitted in respect of a loan application was a mere formality, and production followed the usual traditional methods of cultivation (i.e. lacking investment in modern inputs). In a few cases, such loans obtained at a relatively low interest rate were being recycled into high interest rate money-lending.

There are 111 households in Magura with agriculture as the main occupation. Of them only 39 (i.e. 35.1 per cent) households are now represented in the co-operative. The rest (i.e. 64.87 per cent) did not join or dropped out of the co-operative for reasons enumerated in Table 3 below.

The discussion on agricultural co-operation may be summed up thus. Firstly, over the years, the co-operative degenerated from production to mere credit distribution. Even when production was carried out, it was on an individual basis, lacking the spirit of co-operation and plagued by friction, nepotism, non-payment of subscriptions, misappropriation, etc. As a result, yield per acre, cropping intensity, area under cultivation, etc., remained very low. Secondly, the richer members made the most out of the co-operative through misappropriation, nepotism, links with IRDP officials and tight grip over co-operative management. Thirdly, very little of the disbursed credit has gone into agricultural production. Finally, the co-operative had little place for the landless and the near landless. On the other hand, owing to poor performance, leadership

TABLE 3 : Extent and Causes of Non-participation in Magura  
Agricultural Co-operative, 1977

Reasons for not joining/ dropping out	Total Number	Class background						
		LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RHI	RHII
No land/asset	17	17	-	-	-	-	-	-
Little land/asset	12	-	9	3	-	-	-	-
Cannot save to buy share	10	-	2	8	-	-	-	-
Corruption	7	-	1	2	4	-	-	-
Poor performance	8	-	-	3	5	-	-	-
Land outside scheme	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
General dislike of Co-operative activity	10	-	-	-	5	3	1	1
Leadership conflict	6	-	-	-	3	3	-	-
All reasons	72	17	12	18	17	6	1	1

conflict, corruption, etc., the present co-operative could not attract sufficient membership even from middle and rich households.

#### Fishing Co-operative

There is a fishing co-operative for the entire Maizpara Union. This was again established (in 1972) through governmental intervention. After independence, the Sub-Divisional and the Thana Co-operative Officers advised fishermen to form fishing co-operatives in every union, and a directive to this effect also came through the UP Chairman. As incentive, the government promised regular supply of fishing net and thread through co-operatives, their exclusive leasing rights in open fisheries (as mentioned earlier, before 1972 fishing right went to the highest bidder, who in turn, sub-let these to individual fishermen at exorbitant rates) and cash loans.

Four fishermen of the Union took the initiative, and the co-operative came into being. It automatically became affiliated to the Central Fishermen Co-operative Society located at Chittagong.

TABLE 4 : Class Background of General Members and Office Bearers\* of Maizpara Union Fishing Co-operative, 1977

Category	Total Number	Fishing Gear Ownership Position		
		Poor (no fishing gear)	Middle (with insufficient fishing gear)	Rich (with sufficient fishing gear)
General Members	100	59	25	16
Office Bearers	9	4	4	1

\* Of the nine office bearers, there is one President, one Secretary, one Manager and six Directors. One of the Directors is from Magura. By landownership criterion, the class positions of the nine office bearers are as follows: four RHI and II; four UMH, and one LMH.

Of the 100 members, 23 were from Magura covering 16 fishing households, i.e. five households were outside this co-operative. The major reason for their not joining was that they were too poor to pay the initial membership fee; while, even if they could pay the fee and become co-operative members, they did not have the money to buy thread supplied to the co-operative at subsidised price. Of the 16 households in the co-operative from this village, seven were from LLH, eight were from PH and one was from LMH. In terms of their occupational assets, two had sufficient, 12 had some and two had no fishing gear. (See Chapter 5).

#### Performance of the Fishing Co-operative

Since ijaradari was abolished and the co-operative became the sole bidder, since 1972, the co-operative was able to obtain fishing rights in all the open fisheries of this Union.

TABLE 5 : Receipts\* of Fishing Net Thread by Maizpara Fishing Co-operative, 1972-77

Year	Amount Received	Percentage of the Requirement met by Government Supplies .
1972	73 bundles + 123 lb of nylon	50.00
1973	26 bundles + 12 lb of nylon	15.00
1974	4 bundles	1.00
1975	12 lb of nylon	0.5
1976	-	-
1977	-	-

\* No cash loans have been received  
Source: Co-operative Records.

There were two main causes for this extremely meagre supply. Firstly, government supplies were very inadequate to begin with, and came as a once-and-for-all rehabilitation measure in the wake of the 1971 war. There was no attempt made to find out the real requirements. Secondly, government supplies were channelled through the central co-operative (whose office-bearers were neither fishermen nor persons directly elected by the fishermen) which then distributed these to the regional co-operatives, and finally the regional co-operatives distributed the thread among Union-level co-operatives. In the process, there were not only delays, but also a substantial portion of the supplies were misappropriated and diverted into the black market.

As pointed out earlier, the representation of the rich fishermen in the co-operative managing committee was disproportionately higher. And it is they who have reaped the benefits, for whatever these were worth. There has been no increase in membership during the last five years. The management was, in fact, nominated in the meeting of general members and no voting took place.

The co-operative had no collective fishing gear. Fish catching was strictly on an individual basis and no pooling of available assets took place. In other words, it was an input distribution co-operative rather than a production unit. Consequently, the deteriorating situation in respect of both fishing gear and fish catch could not be checked. Also, owing to backing by powerful people, the co-operative was helpless against forcible catching of fish from fisheries on which it had exclusive fishing rights.

TABLE 6 : Capital Accumulation by Magura Fishing Coperative, 1972-77

Year	Total of Shares and Savings (Tk)
1972	1,265.00
1973	1,700.00
1974	1,700.00
1975	1,730.00
1976	1,730.00
1977	1,730.00

Source: Cop-operative records

Of this amount, perhaps Tk.1000/- has been misappropriated (the ex-secretary has so far failed to submit any account in respect of this amount, and has successfully doged any public hearing on the matter, despite the agitation among general members). This means that the actual saving is no more than Tk.730/-.

#### Weaving Co-operative

The weaving co-operative was first established in 1945. Following the war there was a general scarcity of yarns, and supply through the dealers was insufficient. Government decided to supply yarn through weavers' co-operatives. Three rich persons of the village took the initiative and formed the co-operative. The arrangement with the government was that the co-operative would lift its quota of yarn from the government office at Narail at a controlled price, and in return the weavers would sell the finished cloth to the government who would then sell it to the public.

This arrangement was very favourable for the weavers in that their looms did not lie idle and as such they were saved from unemployment. In 1945, there were 45 co-operative members from among the 60 weaver households of the village. The co-operative was then able to sell 40-45 pieces of cloth to the central office in Narail daily. In 1945, SSK<sup>2</sup> was the President and his brother NK<sup>2</sup> the Secretary of the co-operative. In 1948, the government dissolved the co-operative on charges of rampant corruption. By showing 40 extra looms in operation on paper, the two brothers were able to obtain a higher quota of yarn. This they sold in the black market at exorbitant prices, given the high demand for yarn. Every month they sold about 40-50 bales of yarn, and earned a handsome profit. However, they violated their promise to share 40 per cent of these profits with other co-operative members. They were able to continue with their blackmarketeering up to 1948, and in this they were protected by the then Sub-Divisional Officer of Narail. Since the dissolution of the co-operative more or less coincided with the abolition of the control system (in view of the greater availability of yarn in the open market), those involved in the corruption did not lose much.

In 1973, the weaving co-operative was re-established and it also became affiliated with the Momin Nagar Co-operative Society, which is at the apex of about 175 village-based primary co-operatives. The co-operative formation this time was also motivated by government supply of yarn at controlled prices, which became essential after 1972 in view of the paucity of supply in the open market.

As an apex co-operative, Momin Nagar Society also became a distributor of yarn received from the government. The terms of supply were: for every bale of yarn supplied, the primary co-operative would have to sell four pieces of cloth to Momin Nagar at a fixed price (one

bale of yarn is sufficient to produce 12 pieces of cloth). However, such supply was short-lived, and the crisis in supply took a serious turn, especially after 1975.

TABLE 7 : Performance of Magura Weaving Co-operative, 1973-77

Year	Number of Members	Shares and Savings in Tk.**	Percentage of Total Yarn Requirement met by Government Supplies
1973	32	4,610	35
1974	26	2,833	10
1975	26	338	4
1976	26	338	2
1977	36	806	3

\* The co-operative requirement/year is 1,476 bundles of yarn

\*\* The co-operative has not so far received any cash loan

Source: Co-operative records.

The co-operative has no office; records are not properly maintained, savings are withdrawn at the end of the year and not deposited with the co-operative fund; meetings are held only when yarn has to be distributed; the members, in general, have poor knowledge of co-operative laws and bye-laws.

Owing to inadequate yarn supplies, 20 out of 41 looms are not in operation. Present output is far below the 1945 production level (see Chapter 4).

The class background of members, on the basis of agricultural land and looms ownership, is as follows: 19 poor, 10 middle and 7 rich. The present office bearers were elected by consensus and consist of one president, one vice-president and seven directors. Their class back-

ground is as follows: three MH, two LMH, one PH and three LLH. This is then one co-operative where persons from richer households are not on the managing committee. Two factors explain this situation. Firstly, yarn supply being insignificant, RH weavers are not interested in the co-operative. Many of them have given up weaving for all practical purposes. Secondly, the reputation of the richer weavers, and particularly of NK<sup>2</sup>, is very poor owing to his past corruption and breach of promise. Consequently, corruption has not been reported in this co-operative and distribution of whatever materials received appear to have been fair.

#### Land Reforms

##### 1) Reaction to Past and Proposed Land Reform Measures (Table 8)

While 80 per cent of respondents supported the 1950 land reforms, the degree of support decreased with increase in landownership. It was quite possible that support by the richest was because the 1950 land reforms were now a matter long past, and directed against only statutory landowners (i.e. zamindars) and intermediary rent-receiving interests.

Only 18 per cent of respondents supported the 1961 legislation enhancing the ceiling limit from 33.3 to 125 acres per family. The degree of support decreased, however, from 30 per cent with Category I to 25 per cent with Category II to 8 per cent with Category III. The implications were clear.

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\* For a detailed study of land reforms in Bangladesh during both the post and pre-independence period, see Siddiqui (1980).

TABLE 8 : Reaction to Past and Proposed (hypothetical) Land Reforms in Principle by 50 Selected Respondents

Response Classification	I (2)	II (3)	III (4)	Number responding from all Categories/ (2)+(3)+(4)/	Percentage of the Total Respondents responding $\frac{(5)}{50} \times 100$	Percentage of Category I responding $\frac{(2)}{17} \times 100$	Percentage of Category II responding $\frac{(3)}{8} \times 100$	Percentage of Category III responding $\frac{(4)}{25} \times 100$
(1)				(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Fully supported 1950 Land Reforms <sup>2</sup> (henceforth LR)	12	6	22	40	80	70	75	88
Fully disapproved of or only peripherally supported 1950 LR (Bordering on disapproval) <sup>3</sup>	5	2	3	10	20	30	25	12
Fully supported 1961 legislation enhancing the ceiling from 33.3 acres to 125 acres/family	5	2	2	9	18	30	25	8
Fully disapproved of the 1961 legislation	12	6	12	41	82	70	75	92
Fully supported the 1972 LR <sup>4</sup>	10	6	22	38	76	58	75	88
Fully disapproved of or peripherally supported 1972 LR (Bordering on disapproval)	7	2	3	12	24	42	25	12

TABLE 8 (cont'd)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Fully supported the proposed (hypothetical) LR	2	6	17	25	50	12	75	68	
Fully disapproved of or only peripherally supported (bordering on disapproval) proposed LR	15	2	2	25	50	88	25	32	

Notes:

1. The total number of respondents was 50. The breakdown, by landownership, was as follows:  
 Category I (Rich Households I and II and Upper Middle Households) - 17  
 Category II (Middle and Lower Middle Households) - 8  
 Category III (Poor and Landless Households) - 25.  
 Of the 17 Category I respondents, ten were Matbars and sub-Matbars.
2. The salient features of the 1950 land reforms were:  
 i) abolition of statutory intermediary rent receiving interests;  
 ii) fixing of ceiling at 33.3 acres per family;  
 iii) redistribution of land among the land-poor classes on payment;  
 iv) rent reduction.
3. Peripheral support (bordering on disapproval) means opposition to the most important aspects of land reforms, namely, ceiling lowering and distribution of the resulting excess land among land-poor classes.
4. The main provisions of the 1972 land reforms were:  
 i) lowering of ceiling to 33.3 acres per family;  
 ii) exemption of land revenue for families with less than 8.3 acres;  
 iii) Free land distribution among agricultural households with less than 1.5 acres of land;  
 iv) as may be noted, while the 1961 legislation was a blatantly pro-rich measure, the 1950 and 1972 legislations were at best directed towards maintaining the status quo. For example, in a country where the average holding of a household is 2.8 acres, lowering the ceiling from 125 acres to 33.3 acres per family does not mean much.
5. The provisions of the proposed (hypothetical) land reforms are:  
 i) lowering of ceiling to 7.5 acres/family  
 ii) abolition of absenteeism in land, i.e. confiscation of land from those who cultivate through share croppers;  
 iii) free redistribution of excess land among landless and poor households.

Seventy-six per cent of all respondents supported the 1972 land reforms, the degree of support increasing as one moved from Category I to Category III. The support by the richest might have again been linked with the fact that these reforms were not implemented anyway. However, while 70 per cent of Category I supported the 1950 land reforms, the support from the same category dropped to 58 per cent with respect to 1972 reforms, although in the most important aspect, namely the ceiling limit, both the legislations had the same provision. Thus, their real attitude became apparent when confronted with questions on a more recent land reform.

Only 50 per cent of respondents supported the proposed (hypothetical) land reforms. Eighty-eight per cent of Category I disapproved of the proposals. While 75 per cent of Category II respondents were enthusiastic about these radical proposals, the support from Category III (i.e. the poorest who would have been the real beneficiaries of these changes) amounted to only 68 per cent. This perhaps indicated that Category III respondents had not as yet become fully conscious of their objective interests as a class.

Disapproval of 1950, 1972 and proposed (hypothetical) land reforms rested mainly on the argument that it was "unfair"/"morally indefensible" to give away one person's land to another. On the other hand, those who approved of the above and disapproved of the 1961 legislation generally felt that both social justice and increased production would have resulted from a lower ceiling and land redistribution.

It is quite possible that at both ends of the spectrum some of the responses might not have represented what the respondents actually thought. This seemed, however, more true of Category I than of any other.

TABLE 9 : Reaction of Mode of Implementation in Principle and Past Implementations of Land Reform Measures by 50 Selected Respondents

Response Classification	Number responding from Categories			Percentage of the total Respondents responding
	I	II	III	
Thought that 1950 LR were fully implemented	-	-	-	0
Thought that 1950 LR were not implemented or only peripherally implemented (bordering on non-implementation)	17	8	25	100
Thought that 1972 LR were fully implemented	-	-	-	0
Thought that 1972 LR were not implemented or only peripherally implemented (bordering on non-implementation)	17	8	25	100
Supported land distribution through the Union Parishad	12 (70%)	2 (25%)	9 (36%)	46
Disapproved of land distribution through the Union Parishad	5 (30%)	6 (75%)	16 (64%)	54

2. Reaction to Mode of Implementation and Past Implementation Performance (Table 9)

All respondents thought that both 1950 and 1972 land reforms were only peripherally (bordering on non-implementation) implemented. Answering more specifically, many of them pointed out that only two provisions, namely (i) abolition of statutory intermediary rent receiving interests from among 1950 land reform measures, and (ii) exemption of land revenue for families with less than 8.3 acres of land from among 1972 reforms, were implemented with any success. This was also corroborated by selected informants: in 1950, at least 4 households and in 1972 at least one household, had land above the ceiling. But none of them surrendered any land. Of the available khas (government) land, nothing has so far been distributed. In fact, most of it is under unauthorised occupation of the village rich in collusion with local revenue officials. Category III respondents complained that although they did not have to pay land revenue any longer, various cesses and rates had still to be paid, and since these were on the increase, the effect of land revenue exemption stood to be largely neutralised. Also, since they were still required to visit the Tehsil office (i.e. to pay the cesses), they could not, either, escape the traditional extortions by the Tehsildar and his staff. Refusal to pay bribes was countered by non-receipt of the cesses, and this could then easily lead to auction sale of property for "default".

Forty-six per cent of respondents approved of land redistribution through the Union Parishad.\* The degree of approval was 70 per cent

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\* In 1978, the Union Parishad was, in fact, vested with this power.

with Category I, obviously because they were the ones who dominated the rural power structure. Interestingly, while 75 per cent of Category II respondents disapproved of land distribution through the Union Parishad, the degree of disapproval dropped to 64 per cent with Category III, which was perhaps indicative of the greater dependency of Category III on the richer people. Those who disapproved thought that the Union Parishad was corrupt and tended to uphold the interests of the rich, and hence no land reforms implementation should take place through it. Those supporting the Union Parishad considered it better than the central government apparatus on the grounds that the Union Parishad was an elected body and was fully conversant with local problems.

TABLE 10 : Reasons for Poor/Non-implementation of 1972 Land Reforms

Response Classification	Number responding from Categories			Percentage of the total Respondents responding
	I	II	III	
Pressure by the rich on the Government	1	6	10	34
Government did not want/try to implement	3	-	7	20
Government was sincere but constrained by short stay in power, lack of competent and honest staff, etc.	10	2	8	40
Government abandoned its reforms because it later realised that these were not in the best interests of the country	3	-	-	6
	17	8	25	100

3. Reasons for Poor/Non-implementation of 1972 Land Reforms (Table 10)

While the majority in Categories II and III squarely blamed the government and the rich for non-implementation, the rich people, in general, explained non-implementation in terms of technical constraints such as short stay in power by the government undertaking reforms, lack of competent and honest staff, etc.

Compared with the poorest, Category II respondents explained non-implementation more in terms of fundamental constraints, which again showed that the poorest were not necessarily conscious of their objective interests.

TABLE 11 : Implementation of Proposed (hypothetical) Land Reform -  
Response of Those who supported in Principle

Response on the best implementing Agency	Number Responding from Categories			Percentage of total Respondents responding
	I	II	III	
1. Through combining association of the poor and the landless with Central Government	2	3	10	60
2. Through Central Government only	-	1	4	20
3. Through combining Central Government with the Union Parishad	-	-	1	4
4. Through the Union Parishad	-	-	1	4
5. Through combining Union Parishad with association of the poor and the landless	-	2	-	8
6. Through village factional leaders	-	-	1	4
	2	6	17	100

#### 4. Mode of Implementation of Proposed Land Reforms (Table 11)

Sixty per cent of respondents thought that land reforms could best be implemented through combining the central government apparatus with associations of poor and landless people. However, some respondents pointed out that although this was an ideal way to implement land reforms, it was still a very hypothetical proposition since, by implication, the central government had to represent the interests of the poor, and the association of poor and landless peasants had to be formed, before putting this combination into practice.

Very few respondents thought that either the Union Parishad or the Matbars (village factional leaders) should be entrusted with the work of implementation. On the other hand, 20 per cent considered the central government as the only machinery which could possible implement these radical proposals. This perhaps betrayed a "looking upwards" mentality, and hence lack of faith in their own ability, among a considerable number of respondents.

#### Family Planning

It was around 1966 that some people of Magura first learned about modern family planning methods and governmental family planning programmes. Following independence, government emphasis on family planning increased considerably, and by 1975 it was declared as the government's top priority. The entire media were mobilised for propaganda, and a massive programme for bringing down the population growth rate was launched. The target was, "Boy or girl, two are enough". At the organisation level as well,

several significant changes occurred: a separate family planning division was created within the Health Ministry, the Directorate of Family Planning was reorganised and expanded, and massive staff recruitment at the lower-down units was undertaken to intensify pill/condom distribution, IUD insertion and vasectomy operations. Provision was also made for substantial incentives to family planning organisers and doctors and persons undergoing IUD/vasectomy. It may be mentioned here that since its inception, the family planning programme in Bangladesh has been financed, planned and advised by foreign organisations like the USAID, World Bank, World Population Council, ODM, etc.\*

Despite the existence of government family planning programmes for over a decade, as well as recent intensification of family planning programmes, the actual performance in this village remains at a negligible level (although awareness about family planning methods and programmes has increased significantly since the 1960s), and this is brought out in Tables 12-14 below. These tables clearly show that despite the wide awareness of family planning methods and practices, the actual acceptance of family planning by the villagers was insignificant. In fact, the number now practising family planning is slightly less than the number who ever practised family planning. Of the 22 persons who now practise/ or ever practised family planning, 15 belong to LLH and PH classes. It is, of course, unsafe to generalise on the basis of such a small sample. However, it can be said that as far as this village is concerned, the richest and the educated were not necessarily the most family planning conscious.

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\* See World Bank (1978a, 29-30) for details on foreign financial commitment in this regard since 1975.

TABLE 12 : Extent of Family Planning Practice, 1977

Religious Group	Number of married persons in the reproductive age group <sup>1</sup>		Number now practising FP		Number ever practised FP	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Muslim	98	115	1(1.02)*	4(3.48)*	1	4
Caste Hindus	11	13	2(18.18)*	1(7.7)*	2	3
Scheduled Caste Hindus	36	39	-	2(5.12)*	-	2
All Villagers	145	167	3(2.06)*	7(4.19)*	3	9

\*The figures in parentheses indicate percentages with reference to the corresponding number in the reproductive age group.

<sup>1</sup>For females between 14 and 45, for males between 16 and 55.

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TABLE 13 : Class background of Persons Practising Family Planning, 1977

Category	Number	Class Background						
		LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RHI	RHII
Males ever practised FP	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Males now practising FP	3	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
Females ever practised FP	9	3	4	1	1	-	-	-
Females now practising FP	8	4	3	-	1	-	-	-
All categories	22	8	7	1	2	-	2	2

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TABLE 14 : Family Planning Awareness among Married Women below the age of 45\*

Response	Total	LLH	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RHI	RHII
Aware of family planning practices	46(90.2)**	12	7	11	5	4	4	3
Not aware of family planning practices	5(9.8)**	-	1	3	1	-	-	-

\* 51 respondents were chosen on the basis of stratified random sampling.

\*\*Figures in parentheses represent percentage of total respondents.

In order to understand the ineffectiveness of government family planning programmes and the consequent results thereof, two sets of factors need to be considered:

- a) socio-economic structure and the ideology underlying the existing reproductive pattern, and
- b) bottlenecks associated with the family planning implementing agency.

The existing reproductive pattern in this village is brought out in Tables 15-17 below.

TABLE 15 : Family Size Distribution, 1977

Size of Family (in number of persons)	Number of HH	Percentage of HH
1-3	29	18.50
4-6	65	41.67
7-9	42	26.92
10 and above	20	12.82
All sizes	156	100

TABLE 16 : Family Size, Classwise, 1977

Class	Number of HH	Number of Persons	Average Family Size
LLH	41	201	4.90
PH	29	172	5.93
LMH	34	199	5.85
MH	26	168	6.46
UMH	11	88	8.00
RHI	10	78	7.80
RHII	5	55	11.00
All Classes	156	961	6.16

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TABLE 17 : Distribution of Youthful Population, Classwise, 1977

Class	Number of HH	Number of Persons in the 0-16 age group	Number of Persons of age 16 years and below per household
LLH	41	124	3.02
PH	29	89	3.07
LMH	34	102	3.00
MH	26	100	3.84
UMH	11	46	4.18
RHI	10	43	4.30
RHII	5	26	5.20
All Classes	156	540	3.46

Thus it is clear that (a) family size and (b) number of persons of age 16 years and below per household at Magura increase with increase in household landownership. Although this correlation must take into account a greater tendency towards nucleation and a higher child mortality rate among the poorer households, it at least indicates that the poor are not necessarily the most reproductive group in the village, as is popularly held. However, the fact that the proportion of youthful population in the poorer households is quite high (three and above; Table 17) shows that they have not, either, become family planning conscious. This is also clearly brought out in the response to son preference and the number of children considered desirable. A total of 132 respondents drawn on the basis of stratified random sampling (see Chapter 7) were interviewed for the purpose. Their responses were solicited on the following: (a) desirability of "too many" children; (b) the most desirable number of children that a couple should have, and (c) desirability of son preference. All respondents considered "too many" children as undesirable. However, their concept of "too many" children differs significantly from the official policy of promoting no more than two children.

TABLE 18 : Attitude towards the most desirable Number of Children

Number of Children considered most desirable	Percentage of total Number of Respondents (132)	Percentage of Category I Respondents (18)	Percentage of Categories II & III Respondents (114)
1-2	31.9	29.4	4.9
3-4	45.5	45.1	45.6
5-6	22.6	34.5	20.5
7 and above	-	-	-

Cross-examination of selected informants confirmed the validity of the above data. Table 18 clearly shows that although, in general, the poor, compared with the rich, preferred a smaller number of children, the majority among them (66.1 per cent) were in favour of more than two children (which was in contradiction to the official policy). On son preference, 90.2 per cent of respondents considered it desirable and justified.

On the basis of personal observations as well as cross-examination of selected respondents, a number of factors were found to be working behind the above reproductive pattern and behaviour. Firstly, the poor clearly understood the dire implications of too large a family, and yet they were caught up in a situation which did not allow them to accept the official prescription of two children only. More children, especially sons, meant cheap and easily disciplinable labour and old age insurance. As far as they were concerned, their children needed only the barest minimum of food and clothing, and as such their upbringing, provided they survived, was as cheap as possible. Secondly, for the village rich, the poverty implications of a large family appeared as a false alarm, not to be taken seriously. On the contrary, more children (especially sons) meant scope for proliferating kinship ties with other rich households and in this way extending power and influence and deriving economic gains out of these. Then there was also the question of inheritance. Sons were necessary to keep the property within patrilineal channels. Finally, given their command over and access to resources, they could increase the value of their children through education and thereby strengthen their social and economic positions, as the latter obtained employment in urban/rural professional positions (i.e. teachers, civil servants, doctors, engineers, etc.).

Thirdly, son preference among both the poor and the rich was also influenced by the preponderance of the dowry system, which affected the father of a daughter as badly as it benefited the father of a son. The strong son preference meant that a couple would continue trying to have a son if the first few children were female.

Fourthly, religious propaganda against family planning methods also had an influence, even though only peripherally. About 10 persons, all Muslims, belonging mostly to middle and above households were openly resentful of family planning practices on religious grounds. Since some of them were connected with this or that religious institution, their voices did not altogether go unheard. In the last Waz Mahfil (religious meeting) held at Magura, strong words were used against modern family planning methods.

The above analysis thus bring out the structural impediments to family planning and shows that the relationship between high population rate and poverty was not a one-way traffic as the Neo-Malthusians\* would want us to believe.

At the implementation level, a number of bottlenecks were encountered in Magura and the region. Firstly, family planning materials were either not available or available extremely irregularly. Secondly, there was little pre-family planning check-up and post-family planning follow-up. Two women of this village had bitter experiences in using the plastic coil. In one case, it was inserted two months after she became pregnant and the doctor did not bother to carry out a pregnancy test before inserting the

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\* For a critique of the Neo-Malthusian position and alternative explanations, see Mamdani (1972), Hofsten (1974, 17-30), Valenty (1978, 23-48), de Janvry and others (1977, 212-5).

coil. As a result, the child died an hour after its birth. The other woman became sick and anaemic soon after coil insertion. She took out the coil later, but she is still bedridden and in fact, Tk.1,500 has already been spent for her treatment. The family planning staff never followed up the post-family planning developments in her case. These two negative examples have seriously affected the villagers' attitude toward family planning. Thirdly, family planning motivation work was organised as a top-down process with a government functionary in charge. There was no one from among the villagers doing this work within the community. In 1976, there was only one male Family Planning Assistant (FPA) for the entire Union. He was able to visit Magura only four times in the year. His general complaint was that villagers were generally non-co-operative, while interested villagers complained about his failure, despite repeated requests, to maintain a regular supply of family planning materials.

In 1977, three female FPAs were recruited for this Union. They are all local girls (one of them is married). Their recruitment story revealed corruption and nepotism of various kinds. Officials in charge of recruitment took bribes from several candidates in the process of filling the same post. One of the three female FPAs for this Union paid TK.500/- as bribe to the relevant official. The male FPA was recruited in 1976 because of strong recommendations by a senior army officer. It is generally believed that one of the recruiting officials seduced a number of female candidates for the FPA vacancies on the promise of giving them jobs. Finally, one of the female FPAs got the job because her husband is the local UP member, and as such well connected with the local

bureaucracy. Thus, recruitment was decided by bribes in cash and "kind", and links with the administration, and not according to any rational criteria.

There are three wards in this Union, and each one of the three female FPAs is assigned to a ward. They are required to visit 20 households in a day and motivate a certain number of females into accepting FP methods in a month; they are unable to fulfil the targets, and for this they are often threatened with dismissal. In drawing their salaries, they have to travel to Narail (8 miles) at least three times a month, and as if this is not enough, they have each to pay "baksheesh" (tips) of Tk.5/- per month to the disbursing staff before they can put their earnings in their bags. Given such recruitment and work conditions, the performance of the FPAs can easily be deduced.

The family planning drive is concentrated in the winter when roads are dry and the village is conveniently accessible for the FP officials. But this is also the peak agricultural season, involving harvesting and post-harvesting operations. A visit by family planning personnel now is a waste of time and annoying to the villagers.

#### Promotion of Education

Both the primary and the high schools of Magura were established (in 1947 and 1972, respectively) at local initiative. Over the years, government measures for development of these two institutions have been rather intermittent and insufficient, depending more on the ability to lobby the bureaucracy than as the outcome of a clear-cut educational policy. The following is an account of the grants received by these two institutions so far.

TABLE 19 : Assistance Received by Magura Schools, 1947-77

<u>Year</u>	<u>Magura Primary School</u>	<u>Magura High School*</u>
1947-56	Nil	-
1957	SDO provided one bundle of CI sheet for construction of the roof	-
Since 1962	**Government is paying the salaries of the teachers (salaries were doubles in 1973 and certain fringe benefits were given)	-
1965-68	UNICEF provided free milk for the students	-
1970	Education Department provided Tk.700/- for shifting the school to the present site	-
1972	***Government provided text-books for free distribution (discontinued in 1974)	-
	UNICEF provided: i) Tk.3,600/- for construction of tin shed ii) Clothes for free distribution among students	-
1973	Government provided Tk.1,000/- to purchase furniture	-
1977	UP provided 10 mds of wheat to pay the labour charges of constructing the school wall. The wheat was given to the UP by the Central Government out of assistance received under World Food Programme,	Government provided Tk.2,300/- as one-time lump grant

For Notes see following page

Notes on Table 19

- \* Government recognition of the school came four years after its establishment. However, the situation was quite different when an educational institution was backed by an Awami League MP or local Awami League boss. In fact, following independence, a large number of educational institutions came into being overnight, and were recognised by the government without any verification as to whether or not they met the minimum conditions set by the government. In a large number of cases such institutions were mere sign-boards for building up political image rather than an honest attempt at promoting education. The reason why Magura school obtained government "recognition" (recognition ensures yearly government grants) so late, was that it was opposed by the power elite or Maizpara (See Chapter 7).
  
- \*\* According to the primary school teachers of this village, unless the Education officials were regularly bribed, salaries were held up for months at a stretch.
  
- \*\*\* The textbooks did not reach their destination in time, were full of mistakes and there was great bungling in their distribution. Nevertheless, free textbooks distribution was a positive incentive for increased enrolment. However, this programme was suspended in 1974 owing to lack of funds, corruption, inefficiency and delay in printing and distribution.

As will be evident from the above table, foreign resources figure prominently in the help received from the educational institutions. It may be mentioned here that apart from UNICEF and WFP help, the free textbook programme was entirely financed out of USAID grants.

There has so far been no governmental effort toward promotion of adult, agricultural and vocational education in this village. Briefly, governmental efforts at educational development in this village have faced the following constraints:

- a) Government help has been meagre, intermittent and has followed no clear-cut policy;
- b) since teachers and students of these institutions are mostly from the rich class, the benefit, if any, of government and foreign help has gone towards "oiling the oily heads";
- c) since the help has been directed toward an education devoid of any technical content, useful for agriculture or any other productive vocation, it has, in fact, promoted the proliferation of a group of "educated" youths who can be of little use to the society (see Chapter 6, Table 18).
- d) There has been no effort at mobilising local resources (which is, of course, dependent upon structural transformation of the rural society). In such circumstances, help from the government and particularly from foreign sources, however meagre, has only inculcated despondency and a beggar mentality among teachers and students, and in the long run their pernicious effects are likely to more than neutralise whatever little good they may appear to have done in the short run.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Two roads connect Magura with the outside world: (a) the Narail-Magura road via Maizpara, and (b) the Magura-Kalukhali road. Both are non-metalled. The former is far more important because (i) it connects Magura with the township of Narail, and (ii) the Chitra, connecting Narail with Magura, is properly navigable only during the high monsoons owing to silting, and preponderance of water hyacinth and underwater foliage. However, the condition of this road is far from satisfactory. During the monsoons, it becomes very muddy and as such negotiable only on foot. In the winter the rickshaw van is used extensively for carrying both goods and passengers. At this time motorcycles and jeeps (driven mostly by government officials) can also run on this road.

Earth work on the Narail-Magura road first began in 1932 under the auspices of the Union Parishad (then known as Union Board) using both government funds as well as local contributions. Earth work was completed between 1935 and 1938 by bringing it under test relief work schemes. This simply meant that the government provided food as a relief measure, but this was not given away completely free to the rural poor, but in exchange for earth work on this road. In the sixties, the road was repaired twice under the Works Programme.\* In 1978, the road was once again repaired, this time with wheat provided by the US and other Western countries under the so-called World Food Programme. The Magura-Kalukhali road was built in 1913-4. The central government provided most of the funds, while work was supervised by the local government. In 1962-5,

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\* The fund for which was created by selling wheat donated by the US under PL-480, in the open market.

certain improvements such as construction of a culvert and a kettle drum were undertaken under the Works Programme. In 1975, the government provided TK.1,000/- for repairs on this road.

Like most roads in rural Bangladesh, these are highly circuitous. Two factors appear to be prominent in this respect. Firstly, Union Parishad Chairman and members, actively involved in drawing up the road plan, belong to or are supported by the rural rich. Since the latter are physically located in various villages in the Union, the road actually built can never be straight, and the windings, to a considerable extent, reflect the outcome of their contentions and compromises. Secondly, if the planned road is to pass through the land of a rich man, it is only obvious that the actual road will consume the land of a less powerful neighbour. As such, these roads have taken up more space, distance and consequently more funds than they should have.

These roads have served the rural rich and the bureaucrats in several ways. Firstly, these have given them the scope to amass government funds through outright corruption. This is as old as government-sponsored road building in this area, and is clearly illustrated by what happened during the latest repair work on the Narail-Magura road in 1978, with wheat provided under the World Food Programme. The responsibility for repairing four miles of this road (i.e. the portion passing through Maizpara Union) rested with three of the Maizpara UP members. They had before them three specific tasks: (a) to lift wheat from the CO's office at Narail; (b) to pay out, at the rate of one maund of wheat for 1,000 cu ft of earth work, to the construction workers through a proper muster roll, and (c) to organise and supervise the work. The four miles were divided into three sections. There was, for each section, a

Project Committee headed by one of these three UP members. Eighty per cent of the UP and Project Committee members were drawn from RH to UMH background. In all, 2,300 maunds of wheat were received by these Project Committees. About 500 maunds (woth<sup>r</sup> about Tk.20,000) were misappropriated<sup>A</sup> outright by the Project Committee through submission of false muster rolls. In fact, this story was leaked by those very coolies who were employed to carry this wheat at dead of night to the purchasers' godown at Maizpara market place. Later the UP Chairman also confirmed this story. His explanation was that this had to be done in order to bribe relevant officials since otherwise they would have withheld either wheat or bills submitted in respect of the wheat drawn. Secondly, when these roads were completed and became negotiable, maximum benefit was derived by the local rich because it is they who frequent Narail, Maizpara, Kalukhali and other important places in this thana and sub-division for jobs, trade, social visits, etc. Thirdly, the roads have been useful to the state in its "law and order" pursuits. The villagers, in fact, thought that but for these "roads built by Ayub Khan", the Rajakars\* and the Pakistan army could never have penetrated deep into the countryside in 1971. Similarly, during the 1978 "combing-out operation" asainst the "Maxalites", these two roads must have proved very useful to the police.

On the other hand, the village poor benefited from these roads, if at all, only marginally. During the construction phase some of them were provided with employment, but then it was a one-shot affair. After construction, a few persons of this area were employed as rickshaw pullers on these two roads, but since these are not all-weather roads, such employment almost ceases during the monsoons. Therefore, the employment generated by these roads is extremely meagre compared to the

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\* Para-military forces raised by the Pakistan army in Bangladesh in 1971.

actual needs. During construction, the government prescribed wage rate was one maund of wheat for 1,000 cu ft of earth work. As it is, this is very low compared with peak season wage rates. Given the misappropriation, the actual rate was even lower (there was no overt protest because it was the lean employment season and many of the construction workers would have starved without the work). Thus, in effect, the two roads have been built by the cheapest possible labour of the village poor to serve the interests of the rural rich and the state machinery. Since construction work is supervised by the rural rich (i.e. the Project Committees headed by UP members), it provides them with the opportunity to distribute patronage selectively, and in this way their stranglehold over their poor clients is strengthened. Although the actual employment benefit derived out of these roads is insignificant, these have acted as a palliative in the sense that road construction and repair take place in the post-harvest season, when, given the lack of employment avenues, the discontent potential is very high among the poor villagers. On the other hand, road construction and many other infrastructure building work could have been performed through the organisation of massive voluntary labour, since labour supply is relatively abundant and such work requires little capital investment. But this also assumes a radical restructuring of rural society (for example, thoroughgoing land reforms) so that the rural poor have a real stake in the outcome of activities for which they were rendering voluntary labour. In so far as road building in rural Bangladesh has been and is being financed mainly out of foreign aid (as illustrated in these two roads), the latter is doing positive disservice to the Bangladeshi rural poor in two ways: by helping the maintenance of a status quo that is highly detrimental to enhanced production and equitable distribution of the social product, and by

stifling the potential for self-reliant economic development through organised voluntary labour, in the countryside. There is, moreover, no reason to assume that foreign assistance for rural road building does not contribute anything to metropolitan economic interests. Under the present national and international order, there is a net outflow of resources from the developing to the developed countries. Various mechanisms are operating to ensure this, and one of the major methods is unequal trade (i.e. through a worsening of the terms of trade; see Chapter 11). Therefore, in so far as road building serves to mobilise the export sector, it also helps net outward transfer of resources from the country.

#### Compulsory Paddy Procurement from surplus Producers

Compulsory paddy procurement at fixed government rates from surplus producers started in 1953 (although the levy laws were enacted in 1948). The idea was to build up government stocks for release at lower prices in times of scarcity. It is plausible that the 1943 famine and the chronic food deficit in the post-1947 period prompted the adoption of this policy. However, as with any policy with the slightest possibility of hurting the rural rich, the levy system simply could not work.

The Union Parishad Chairman was entrusted with the task of drawing up the list of surplus producers, and one of the thana-level officials was designated as the levy officer whenever government decided to go in for compulsory paddy procurement. At the time of the first levy fixing, BB<sup>2</sup> was the UP Chairman. He was himself a surplus producer. As such, far from drawing up the list, he collected Tk.500/- from the Union's surplus producers to bribe the levy officer. Thus, in that year, no one in this Union was declared a surplus farmer, and hence nobody had

to sell paddy to the government at "unfavourable" prices. The second time that levy law came into operation was in 1959. On this occasion, also, the surplus producers obtained exemption by donating to the so-called "Jinnah National Defence Fund". In 1974, i.e. during the famine year, levy was again imposed. Since the paddy price in the open market was very high, those likely to be included in the list of surplus producers once again took to bribing the levy officer and, in the process, got off lightly. For example, NK<sup>2</sup> paid him Tk.500/-, and he was required to sell only ten maunds of paddy to the government. According to selected informants, in that year he sold at least 200 maunds in the open market at prices ranging between Tk.200/- and Tk.300/- per maund. Owing to the rich peasant pressure on the government, the levy has been abandoned and instead the government now builds up its food stocks through price incentives to the rural rich. This means that the government's purchasing prices are higher than its selling prices, and it incurs thereby considerable losses in its present paddy procurement programme.

There is no government paddy purchasing centre in the Maizpara Union. The nearest one is located in Narail town, so that producers interested in selling paddy to the government have to travel about 11 miles with their loads. This acts as a strong disincentive to the small producer, since it is generally not worth carrying small amounts so far, although the price offered may be lucrative. There is also the corruption of the government purchasing agent to put up with. His modus operandi is generally as follows: he lines up with a trader. When a small producer approaches the purchasing centre with his paddy, he is told either that his paddy is not up to the standard quality, or that purchase is over for the season. It is no small inconvenience for him to return home with the load on his back, especially after having

already undertaken a long and tedious journey. Moreover, his staying power is low, and he must sell paddy to meet many of his pressing requirements. Thus, he ends up by selling his paddy at much below the government price to the government agent's trader accomplice, whose job is to tap those turned down by the government agent. The trader then hands his purchases over to the government agent, and the margin is shared between the two.

Relief and Rehabilitation

Soon after Bangladesh's independence, the government took up a massive relief and rehabilitation programme for the country devastated by nine months of war. About 90 per cent of this aid was provided by the Western countries (mainly the US) through the United Nations Relief Operations Bangladesh (UNROB). Relief committees were formed at District, sub-Division, Thana, Union, and even village level. The Relief Committee for the Maizpara Union came into being in January 1972, and it was composed of the influential members of the Union, who had links with the Awami League. For Magura village, the relief committee consisted of a chairman (RHI), a secretary (RHI) and five members (one RHII, two RHI, one UMH and one LMH). Thereafter, relief committee membership underwent several changes, but it was always a case of one upper stratum household member replacing another. The village relief committee worked under the supervision on the Union Relief Committee.

Up to 1974, Magura residents received the following goods through the relief committee:

Wheat	12.25 mds	Dhuti	11 pieces
Rice	25.50 mds	Lungi	20 pieces
Sugar	0.65 mds	Shirt	33 pieces

Paddy seeds	2.88 mds	Trousers	4 pieces
Jute seeds	0.38 mds	Mosquito nets	3 pieces
Blankets	17 pieces	Utensils	10 pieces
Sari	35 pieces		

Eightyone Hindu returnees (i.e. refugees who had taken shelter in India in 1971) and affected Muslim households were each to be provided with Tk.300/- and one-and-a-half bundles of CI sheets. Corruption took place in several ways:

- a) Some committee members, for example, MZ<sup>1</sup> and CCK<sup>2</sup> (son of NK<sup>2</sup>), misappropriated relief goods openly, despite public confrontation on this account;
- b) an amount of Tk.25/- was deducted per household receiving the cash and CI sheet to establish a college at Maizpara and for "expenses" at the Development Circle Officer's office. In effect, it was divided between the CO office and some of the union and village relief committee members;
- c) nepotism was rampant in the selection of recipients. The relief committee members freely utilised the distribution in helping their kith and kin, and in strengthening the factions they led or were members of.
- d) Muster rolls were freely manipulated. For example, the amount of cash grant for distribution to one person was actually given to two persons, but the recipients signed or placed thumb impressions for double the amount received. Corruption was at a low level during the tenure of the first relief committee chairman (a school teacher and reputed to be honest); however, his tenure was very short, for only three months; following him CCK<sup>2</sup> became chairman. He was notorious for all the corruption noted above. After his

resignation at the end of 1972, he was replaced by DM<sup>1</sup> (RHI).

He was an incompetent man, and the village touts got the upper hand.

- e) A good portion of the materials meant for Magura never reached the village; it was misappropriated by some thana-level officials, Union Relief Committee members and local Awami League bosses.

In the UP election of 1974, JUS<sup>1</sup> of Charikhada (RHII) became the Chairman of Maizpara Union. During his tenure of office (up to 28 February 1977), Maizpara Union received a good quantity of relief goods. Even after searching the UP office thoroughly, no accounts of these could be traced. According to the villagers, at this time misappropriation and nepotism in regard to relief goods reached an all-time high level, and there was no remedy. For example, in 1975 some Magura villagers complained to the UP Chairman against corruption by LR<sup>1</sup> (UP member from Magura) in respect of relief wheat. The Chairman took no action, ostensibly because he was also a party to the misdeed.

At the end of 1974, a severe famine swept across the country (the last famine was in 1943). Although there were no deaths (in 1943 two villagers died of starvation), about 100 households (mostly landless and poor peasants, weavers, fishermen, etc.) were on an inhuman diet, consisting of a gruel of wild leaves mixed sparingly with flour, for more than three months. This was a time when cloth prices had also rocketed, and some women could not come out into the open owing to lack of clothes. There were also widespread distress sales. A gruel kitchen was opened by UP from supplies provided by the government. But it was closed down within two weeks owing to corruption by those responsible for running it (in 1943 the Narail Zamindars opened a gruel kitchen in Magura for three days).

Between January 1976 and April 1977, CARE, a private foreign relief organisation\* distributed wheat, powdered milk, powdered fish, etc., among the relief-deserving children of Magura:

Wheat	30 lb per head per week
Powdered <del>Milk</del>	0.66 lb per head per week
Powdered fish	0.44 lb per head per week

Relief was given for about 60 weeks. The number of recipients was 12 (four from LH and eight from PH backgrounds). Children did not take the powdered fish owing to its bad smell.

There was no corruption, because the list of recipients was drawn up by CARE officials themselves, and not by the UP, and there was also CARE supervision during distribution.

On the basis of personal observations and cross-examination of selected informants, these relief distributions were found to be harmful in the following ways:

1. Relief strengthened the rural rich in several ways: first, they appropriated to themselves the lion's share of the relief. Second, they used the relief distribution to strengthen their exploitative relationships with the poor people. On the other hand, relief made them more anti-productive in that it gave them a good opportunity to increase their resources without having to pay any price for it, which they could not escape in a productive activity (where they had to put in labour, capital, management, etc.).
2. Relief helped demobilisation of the rural poor. Although the relief ultimately trickling down to them was insignificant in comparison with their needs, it acted as a palliative by taking the steam out of a difficult situation, and at the same time

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\* In 1975 there were over 100 such "relief"-giving organisations operating throughout the country.

inculcating a "beggar mentality" among the recipients. This also means loss of faith in themselves and contamination by corruption and nepotism generated during relief distribution. This loss of faith is accentuated when relief distribution is supervised directly by a foreign organisation (CARE, for example).\* We were, in fact, appalled by the extent of a beggar mentality among the poor villagers. Not one day passed during our stay in this area when someone did not turn to us either to beg directly, or to enquire if we were a government relief agency.

#### Modified Rationing System

Government first introduced a rationing system in Maizpara Union in 1942. It was the year preceding the Great Bengal Famine: government's massive food procurement for troops fighting the Japanese on the Burma front, together with the "denial policy" (i.e. seizure and destruction of country boats so that in case the Japanese occupied Bengal they were to have no access to the indigenous riverine transport; in effect it played havoc with the distribution of food grains, especially on the normal outflow of food grains from "surplus" districts to areas of scarcity) and rampant hoarding and black marketeering by traders soon became the order of the day.\*\* It was against this background that the government introduced a rationing system in Bengal's countryside. Rice, salt and kerosene were supplied by the government through the Union Parishad (then known as the Union Board) appointed dealers at fixed prices.

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\* It was found that most local and central government officials were vociferously opposed to direct distribution of relief goods and developmental inputs by foreign organisations on "nationalist" grounds. On the other hand, they were equally ardent supporters of foreign aid so long as responsibility for distribution was with them. The underlying "logic" is not difficult to deduce.

\*\* See Akhter Hamid Khan (1973, 3-5) for a fuller account.

The "deserving persons" (popularly known as DP) list was prepared by the Union Parishad Chairman in consultation with his Parishad members. Union Parishad tax payment was the criterion used for preparing such a list. Taxation was based on a household's economic position, to be assessed by the Union Parishad. The households were thus classed as follows:

<u>Class</u>	<u>Annual Tax</u>
A	Tk.0
B	Tk.0.50-3.00
C	Tk.3.01-8.00
D	Tk.8.01 and above

The first two categories (A and B) were entitled to receive rationed goods and this arrangement, with some modifications, still applies.

In the sixties, the government directive in regard to UP tax was to fix it according to valuation of the household residence. The UP Chairman and members were entrusted with the task. This practice still continues. However, several changes have taken place in the DP list. Firstly, the tax rate has increased considerably. The total Union tax collected from Magura in 1930 was Tk.100/-. At present it is Tk.1,075/-, i.e. almost eleven times more. Thus, 35 families who were eligible to receive rationed goods three years ago have now been dropped from the DP list since they were assessed for a higher tax rate, while the criterion for inclusion in the DP list remained unchanged. Secondly, the DP list does not reflect the actual poverty situation (this is because the criterion for taxation is not valuation of total assets, but of the residence, and also malpractices are quite common). This is reflected in the class backgrounds of the households included in the DP list.

TABLE 20 : Class Background of "Deserving Persons" at Magura, 1977

Category	Total Number of Households	LL	PH	LMH	MH	UMH	RHI & II
Category A	23	15	5	1	2	-	-
Category B	23	15	3	3	2	-	-

There are 41 landless and 29 poor households in Magura. The DP list includes only 30 landless and eight poor households, although it contains four lower-middle and four middle households. The implication is obvious. According to government directive, both A and B categories are eligible to receive rationed goods in times of normal supplies. In case of insufficient supplies, only category A households are entitled to receive goods. When supplies are abundant, C and D categories can also buy these goods. The items generally supplied are paddy/rice, wheat, sugar, cooking oil, salt, etc. Disbursement depends entirely on the supply by the food office at Narail, since it decides how much of what items will be allotted per Union. The Union Parishad Chairman distributes the quotas decided by the food office among the appointed dealers, and the latter lift the goods from the food godown at Narail accordingly. There is no ration shop at Magura and the relevant dealers/ration shops for Magura area are located at the Maizpara market place. Preliminary selection of dealers is done by the UP Chairman and members and the final approval is given by the food office. Various corrupt practices could be detected in the rationing system. All the seven dealers for this Union are rich and influential people (two RHI, four RHII and one UMH). All of them bribed the UP and food office functionaries in order to obtain a dealership. They are also required

to bribe the food office functionaries at the rate of Tk.50/- per normal allotment, and Tk.100/- per special allotment. Consequently, the dealers generally sell most of the allotted goods in the black market, distributing only a fraction of these among the "deserving". The poor are not even informed of the availability of the goods, and if they do not avail themselves at the first opportunity, they are usually told that supplies are exhausted. In these activities, connivance of the UP functionaries is quite explicit, and in return for this they receive a share.

This is clearly a case of chain corruption in <sup>which</sup> UP functionaries, food department officials and rich dealers are closely linked. As is evident, the modified rationing system caters very little for those for whom it was introduced.

#### Swanirvar (Self-reliance) Movement

In 1975, the government launched the so-called "Swanirvar" (i.e. "self-reliance") movement. The moving spirit was an ex-Foreign Service officer who gave up his job in 1965 to take up farming in his home village (at this time he added the title "Chashi", i.e. farmer, to his name). Later he came to hold, the new title notwithstanding, important government positions such as Foreign Secretary, Secretary of the Rural Development Ministry, Vice-President of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Principal Secretary to the President, etc. At the time of launching the "Swanirvar", the government created a new post for him - "Special Secretary, Swanirvar".

The movement aims at increased agricultural production and self-reliance. As the posters indicate, its main motto is "convert the beggar's hands into those of the worker". However, it is conspicuously

vague on its notions of self-reliance. Thus, it is totally silent on Bangladesh's ever-increasing dependence on foreign assistance. It considers massive co-operation and rural mobilisation as the only means of enhancing production, but never even discusses the role that land reforms can play in this strategy. It did not arise from the masses, but came from above in the form of directives, and to be manned by existing central and local government functionaries whose pro-rich bias, corruption and apathy for the common man are well known (see Chapter 9). And yet the "Swanirvar" envisages massive rural mobilisation for development work through these very elements.

In early 1975, S.D.O.\*Narail asked the present and the outgoing UP Chairmen in writing to become members of the Sub-Divisional Swanirvar Committee, which is, of course, headed by the S.D.O. himself. Later, as per the directive of S.D.O., Narail and Development Circle Officer of Narail Thana, the Maizpara Union Swanirvar Committee was constituted. Of the twelve Committee members (Chairman, BB<sup>2</sup>), one was from a middle household, one from an upper-middle household, and the rest were drawn from rich households.\*\* There was no member from Magura to begin with, but later NK<sup>2</sup>, a rich peasant-cum-moneylender-cum-speculative trader, was co-opted into the Committee.

The first Swanirvar workshop in Maizpara was held in April 1975. It was attended by the A.D.C.\*\*\* (General), Jessore, the Swanirvar Co-ordinating Officer, all thana and sub-divisional level officers and representatives from all Unions of Narail sub-division. In all, 225

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\* Sub-Divisional Officer, head of the administrative unit Sub-division, which is below the District, but above the thana.

\*\* An in-depth survey of three Swanirvar villages in another area revealed that whereas Swanirvar leaders, on average owned around 8.0 acres of land, the average amount of land owned by all other households in these areas varied between 1.54 and 3.0 acres (Hossain, M., 1978, Table 5, 31).

\*\*\* Additional Deputy Commissioner, i.e. officer next to chief executive of the district, known as Deputy Commissioner.

persons attended the workshop. The senior officers all came in official jeeps and motorcycles (eight jeeps and five motorcycles). This meant considerable expenditure to the government exchequer on account of petrol, wear and tear on the vehicles, services of government drivers, not to mention the alternative uses to which these vehicles could have been put. Tk.5,000/- was raised by the local Swanirvar Committee to organise the workshop and to provide free food and accommodation to the officers. This was despite the fact that officers, when on tour, are provided with travelling and daily allowances, over and above their normal salary. According to BB<sup>2</sup>, this was raised through subscriptions from the local gentry. The workshop lasted for about four days. The leading figures made trite speeches, repeating the common platitudes they usually churn out when on tour: "hard work", "honesty", "increase production", "self-reliance", etc. And in turn, the local elite came up with a long list of demands and requested the "authorities" to sanction more funds in the future. Out of 225 participants, only about 5 per cent were from lower-middle to landless households. In any case, they were at best silent spectators at this "august" gathering of local and bureaucratic elites. The official attendance in the subsequent workshops at Maizpara (i.e. in 1976, 1977 and 1978) came down sharply and the local response also became limited to the Swanirvar Committee members. It was the same story all over again, raising funds to feed "distinguished" guests, speech-making, long meetings, and at the end of the day, a few more sub-committees and decisions for more future meetings. Local people complained that during the four workshops, some officers were more interested in procuring local specialities than in the workshop proceedings.

Apart from these "organisational activities", the Maizpara Swanirvar Committee can boast of very few concrete contributions in the field of rural development. In 1977, the Swanirvar Committee distributed improved

poultry among 60 households of the Union. Of the recipient households, 80 per cent (including the two Magura households) belong to the rich classes. Some Swanirvar Committee members claim that they were instrumental in the introduction of improved fish varieties in this Union. This claim was found to be completely untenable. In 1975, the Swanirvar Committee set up a night school at Kathalbaria (the village next to Magura). The school functioned for only three months, which was perhaps the limit of the rural gentry's enthusiasm for "self-reliance". In 1978, the Swanirvar Committee undertook the construction of the one-mile-long Hossainpur-Maizpara road. All villages within Maizpara Union, Maizpara High School, Narail Victoria College, all UP chairmen and members of Narail thana and all officers of Narail thana and sub-division, were required to participate in the construction of this road, and accordingly earth work quotas were assigned. The Sub-Divisional Swanirvar Committee contributed 100 spades and 100 baskets towards operational expenses. A special grant of Tk.5,000/- each was also made available to Maizpara High School and Narail Victoria College. These funds were ultimately provided by the Rural Development Ministry out of foreign assistance. Eight villages, including Magura, abstained from the work. The teachers, government officials and UP functionaries did not work either. Some of them got their share of the work done through hired labour, while others did not both <sup>er</sup> to do even this. Some students from Narail Victoria College and Maizpara High School worked, but their labour was hardly voluntary, because these institutions received special grants on this account. Finally, the work, on the whole, was highly disorganised and halfhearted and as such, although the road is "complete", its quality is very poor.

In short, despite catchy slogans, "Swanirvar" is at best old wine in a new bottle. It does not constitute, as is often claimed, a point of departure from past rural development ideas and programmes floated by Tagores and Gandhis, R.L. Braynes<sup>+</sup> and Guru Saday Duttas<sup>+</sup>, N.M. Khans<sup>+</sup>, Akhter Hamid Khans<sup>+</sup> and Nurunnabi Chowdhurys<sup>+</sup>, etc., in that these, in the last analysis, are all bound together by the common thread of social tinkering within the existing power and property relations in the society.

#### Development of Market Places at Gor and Maizpara-Urani

So far the government has spent nothing on the development of physical facilities at Gor market place. However, at Maizpara-Urani, the following development has taken place in recent years:

- a) between 1963 and 1965, the UP constructed three wharves\* on the river Chitra around the market place at a total cost of Tk.10,000/-, under the Rural Works Programme;
- b) in 1977, the Central Government (through the Land Administration and Reforms Ministry, which is the legal owner) sanctioned Tk.40,000/- for construction of two large sheds, a 500 feet-long, semi-metalled road and a metalled drain at this market place. Work on these projects was in progress even in 1978.

As pointed out earlier, in respect of leasing-out arrangements, toll collections, weights and measures, storage, licensing, hoarding, etc., either there were no government measures, or even if there were any, they were not implemented, so that powerful people continued to have a free hand over the market places.

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\* The wharves could not generate increased use of water transport because the river itself was becoming unusable for water transport in the dry season.

+ Members of the Indian Civil Service

### Changes in the Local Government System

Since 1977, Government has seriously been contemplating the introduction of village government, i.e. replicating the UP structure at the village level. The main argument in this regard is that the Union as a unit of area and population is too unwieldy to represent adequately the interests of constituent villages in the development effort through the local government system, and hence further decentralisation. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in this. However, it is a superficial view in so far as it fails to identify development obstacles properly, i.e. in the context of the class character of the power structure undertaking development programmes. Under the present order of things, village government is bound to have power structures exactly similar to those that one finds at the Union level: that is, the power and authority of the present village faction leaders (who are mostly from the richest households) will be legitimised through administrative fiat. Far from promoting "development", village government may ensure more organised and exclusive use of governmental resources by the rural rich, and tougher "law and order" at the lowest level.

In fact, steps have already been taken to fulfil the second objective, in that although the full village government has been formed in only some villages of Bangladesh on an experimental basis, village guards (Gram Rakhi Bahini) have been formed in all villages of Bangladesh, including Magura. There are now ten members in Magura's Gram Rakhi Bahini. Of them seven are from rich households, one is from UMH and the remaining two are from LMH. It is headed by MS<sup>1</sup> (LMH). He belongs to the Mollah Gushti, the most powerful patrilineal kinship group in Magura. Despite his lower-middle class background, he is a staunch supporter of

his Gushti and his faction leader. There are seven captains and two group commanders. The recruitment, conducted by the local police boys, was on the criterion that members were to be drawn from among "notables" of various religious communities and neighbourhoods. They now carry sticks, and when on training at Narail and Jessore, put on uniform. It has been suggested that they be given real weapons. The Home Ministry has the overall responsibility for their recruitment, training and utilisation. It is, therefore, quite likely that with the introduction of a full-fledged village government, the "law and order" arm of this government will be further strengthened and equipped.

It is also possible that beyond a limited period, village government may backfire. Thus, in the long run, it may also sharpen class contradictions in the village, in that it may demystify the poor peoples' illusions about their faction leaders once and for all, and drive them into an organised protest. And it is this long-term implication which might ultimately persuade the government not to go ahead with this plan.

#### Miscellaneous Development Efforts

Practically no governmental effort has been made for livestock improvement in this village. In 1972, 14 villagers received Taccavi loan (interest free, supplied by the government directly) for the purchase of improved foreign breed poultry from the livestock office at Narail. Twelve of them were from RH to UMH classes, and the remaining two were from middle households. There is no artificial insemination centre (i.e. cross-breeding arrangement for improving the existing quality of dairy and draught animals) in the entire thana. The government veterinary doctor is located at Narail, but he is available only when

paid a fat fee (although he is supposed to render free services), and the cost of medicine is also exorbitant. He has, in fact, set foot in this village only once so far, and that was when paid a handsome fee by KPD<sup>2</sup>, a rich person of this village.

The nearest post office is at Maizpara. This was established in 1900 at the initiative of a big gantidar of Maizpara. Until 1971, the post office was located in the residential premises of one or the other rich men of the village. In 1972, it was shifted to the Union Parishad building and a public telephone was also added to the post office. The latter could be obtained because of the good relationship between the present UP Chairman and the then SDO, Narail. A new structure for the post office at an estimated expenditure of Tk.6,000/- is now almost complete. This was financed out of BIDS donations, which came in the wake of the author's Rural Poverty Survey of this area in 1977. In the same year, a commercial bank (all Bangladesh banks belong to the public sector) opened a branch at the Maizpara market place. In the whole of 1977 only ten calls were made from the public call office at Maizpara. Eight of them were by bureaucrats on tour in this area, and the remaining two were made by UP functionaries. Most poor people of this area thought that this was necessary only for the rich and influential. The post office at present serves the rural rich exclusively, because it is mostly they who maintain urban connections in pursuit of education, employment, trade, etc., and who can communicate through the written word. The same is true of the bank. So far only 20 persons have opened accounts with this bank, and four of them are from Magura. All the account holders are rich persons of this area. On the other hand, some of these modern facilities, for example the telephone, under the present circumstances, can be effectively used for "law and order" purposes, and

hence also for demobilisation of the rural poor. Most villagers seemed to know that in case of "trouble", it now took only a minute to pass on the information to the "law and order" establishment at Narail.

At present a number of government/semi-government credit programmes are in operation in the rural areas. Those obtained through the co-operatives have been discussed earlier. Taccavi loan is administered directly by the SDO, but the UP selected the recipients within its area of jurisdiction. The operation of the latest Taccavi loan in Magura has also been indicated earlier. In 1977, the government suddenly announced its decision to disburse Tk.100 crore credit among the agriculturists. The government did not disclose the source\* of this credit, although it was an extra-budgetary allocation. The government directive was for speedy disbursement. Accordingly, every thana was given a quota, and even commercial banks were mobilised for this purpose. Our investigation revealed that it <sup>was</sup> mostly used either for consumption or trade, but only very little for the purpose for which it was provided, namely agricultural production. In all, six persons from this village have taken this credit so far (five RH, one MH). In taking the loan, they had also to "satisfy" bank officials at the rate of Tk.5/- for every Tk.100/- borrowed.\*\* There has so far been no governmental measures, even on paper, to set up any rural industries in this area.

From the above discussion, the following may be concluded. Firstly, central government efforts at rural development have consisted mainly in attempting to increase productive forces, with little or no emphasis on changing existing production relations, which are, in effect, holding back

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\* It is understood that this credit programme was financed out a grant from a certain sheikhdom in the Persian Gulf.

\*\* Commenting on this credit programme, the World Bank (1978<sup>b</sup>, 3) noted: "As usual for such programmes, the small farmers demonstrated a better repayment record but did not get a large share of the credit outlays".

the development of the former. Secondly, government resources have been channelled through the rural elite and local officials of the central government. There was no local planning, and the mass of the people had no say in either the formulation of a development programme or in its implementation.

Thirdly, the lion's share of these resources could not "trickle down" to "target groups" because of their rampant misappropriation by the rural rich and the bureaucratic elites. On the other hand, whatever measures were ultimately implemented benefited mainly the strong and the sturdy in the countryside. Thus, in the last analysis, government development measures, despite pious intentions, helped strengthen the political and economic stranglehold of an unproductive rural rich over the rural society. Fourthly, for the rural poor the outcome was further pauperisation, increased dependency on the rural rich, a "beggar mentality" and demobilisation. Finally, since the Western countries, and in particular the US, were involved in these efforts in both roles as providers of resources and as approvers of this particular set of policies,\* their complicity in this "development of under-development" in rural Bangladesh cannot be ignored.

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\* Multilateral aid is obtained on a year-to-year basis through submission of a detailed memorandum for aid to the Bangladesh Aid Club, consisting of the US and West European countries. In the case of bilateral aid also, aid agreement is preceded by threadbare negotiations and after donors are satisfied with the purpose for which aid is sought (interviews with officials of the External Resource Division, Ministry of Finance, in July 1979).

CHAPTER NINETHE RESPONSE OF THE POOR TO POVERTY

In this chapter, the response of the poor to poverty is discussed in some detail. In doing so, three levels of response have been identified, at the risk of some over-simplification: (a) individual, (b) collective, and (c) political. At the lowest level, such response consists of individualistic, spontaneous reaction to a reality that is instinctively unacceptable, and takes the shape of various social and economic adjustments, including what some Western sociologists describe as "socially deviant behaviour". At another level, the limitations of individual response are grasped and response flows into collective action around removal of immediate grievances. Collective bargaining by, say, a farm workers' union, for better pay and living conditions would be a good example in this regard. At yet another level, response assumes a definite political character under a vanguard party and seeks allies in other exploited classes in the society; it now becomes possible for the poor to link their objective reality with the fundamentals of the existing power and property relations in the society. At this stage, collective bargaining for immediate benefits may not altogether ruled out, but now it is essentially a tactic, a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. In Marxist parlance, this amounts to a transition from "class-in-itself" to "class-for-itself" position.\*

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\* For Marx's own writings on this subject, see Marx (1965a) and Marx (1967). For critical review and commentary, see Hal Draper (1978, 40-41), Westergaard and Resler (1976, 2-3) and Meszaros (1971, 104-115).

## Response at the Individual Level

### a) Occupational and Employment Responses

In the village, the normal options open to the rural poor within the agricultural sector are wage labour, share cropping in land and more intensive cultivation of one's own land. In the non-agricultural sector, the choice is limited to wage labour in fishing, weaving, trade, transport etc., and construction work undertaken sometimes by central and local governments during winter. It is the case that one occupation or one role within an occupation is simply inadequate. Hence, one major poverty response is multiplicity in roles and occupations. Thus, over 80 per cent of middle to landless households had either more than one occupation (for example, were engaged in both agriculture and fishing) or more than one role within an occupation (for example, share cropping in land as well as agricultural wage labour). The same was true of the rural rich, but for entirely different reasons, as discussed earlier. While such a response was logical, under the given circumstances, it acted against the division of labour and specialisation that characterises a more organised production system.

There is no scope for industrial work since there is no worthwhile industry within a 30 mile radius of this village. However, about 15 persons (background ranging from LLH to LMH) go out to South Khulna as wage labourers during the main paddy harvesting season (October-December). The wages they receive are almost double (i.e. Tk.10/- per day) what they would normally receive in the village, but after deducting transport costs and extra living expenses in a distant place, the gains are hardly spectacular. In any case, the demand for such labour is purely seasonal and insignificant compared to supply.

b) Raising Livestock on a Share Basis

This means that the calf or the kid has to be raised and looked after, and in return the person raising it is allowed to retain half the share of the milk, and when it matures and gives birth, one of its offspring. Although this is not very profitable in view of the scarcity and rising cost of animal feed, it is one way in which a poor villager can acquire some milk and livestock. About 20 HH of LM to LL background, are engaged in raising livestock on a share basis.

c) Child Labour

This is a normal affair with all poor households of Magura. Generally, all children of such households above the age of six have to work. In about 40 households, child labour involves cowherding, agricultural work, permanent hired agricultural labour in the rich man's household, carrying loads to the market place for sale, etc. In another 80 households, child labour is confined to household chores, which are also no less onerous. Such work obviously has unhappy consequences for their health, education and general upbringing. In one case, we found an eight year-old boy of a poor household being sent by his widowed mother to a far-off market place in preference to the local one because rice was selling slightly cheaper in the latter. His mother, of course, did not know that in terms of the calories that her young boy would lose walking such long distances, the gain from buying rice slightly cheaper may not, after all, be worthwhile. In another case, we found a 10 year-old boy from a landless family selling peanuts at the market place at Gor. His total capital was nuts worth Tk.5.0, and at the end of a busy market day, he had earned a profit of only Tk.0.50, which was perhaps insufficient even to regain the loss of energy from the continuous shouting he had to do in the course of selling his merchandise.

d) Female Labour outside the Household

In general, working outside the precincts of the household is considered degrading for women. However, poverty has by now driven the women of Magura's poor households outside their homes - to earn money in rice dehusking, hay and grain collection, jute processing, as permanent hired labour in the rich man's household, tending live-stock, work the vegetable garden, etc. The foregoing are the usual outside home activities of 90 per cent of poor women.

e) Collection of Grain, Hay Cow Dung, Firewood, etc.

After the harvest is over, children, old men and women of about 100 poor households go over the fields and collect every little bit of grain that is still lying about. On an average, a day's hard labour can yield no more than one seer (2 lb) of paddy. Similarly, husk, cow dung and firewood are collected for animal feed, fuel and fertiliser. In recent years, demand for these materials has registered a sharp increase, and rich people were themselves collecting them through their servants from their property. As a result, poorer peoples' access to these materials has declined.

f) Adjustments in Cultivation Arrangements

In general, share cropping out is resorted to only by richer households, but for about 2 poor households share cropping out is a necessity because they lack either the labour power (i.e. the household head is old and/or a woman, and family members are minors) or the necessary cultivation inputs (i.e. bullocks, plough, etc.) In the absence of the latter, five poor and landless households have also taken to what is known as "Anguri". Under this arrangement, they have to work in the owner's land for two days, and in return they are allowed to use the owner's cultivation bullocks and plough

on their own land (or share-cropped in land) for one day. This amounts to under selling their labour, given their weak economic position. But under the circumstances, this is a logical response.

g) Permanent Migration from the Village

Since 1947, permanent migration has been taking place to (i) India and (ii) other villages. Migration to India, consisting entirely of Hindus, was concentrated in three phases, 1948-54, 1954-71 and 1974-77. In the first two phases, migration was caused largely by lack of security, both real and imagined. After Bangladesh's emergence as a secular state at the end of 1971, the insecurity of the minority community was largely removed, so that their migration in the third phase constituted a clear poverty response. Of the ten households migrating at this time, eight were from lower middle to landless classes. They could no longer cope with the galloping prices in Bangladesh and their only hope was help from relatives who had migrated to India earlier. Between 1947 and now eleven households involving 46 persons migrated to other villages. Of them, nine were landless and one belonged to the PH class. In all these cases migration was caused by a search for better economic opportunity elsewhere. In the midst of the 1974 famine, one landless household left the village for the town in search of food. No one knows where or how they ended up.

h) Recourse to Lumpen Occupations

Theft, begging and prostitution were some of the important lumpen poverty responses at Magura. There were two types of thefts, namely (a) petty thefts carried out now and then (i.e. stealing vegetables, fruit, etc. of the rich whenever an opportunity arose. Such thefts were very common, and there were very few among the poor in Magura

who were not given to such thefts), and (b) theft as a profession. Three persons (two PH and one LMH) are considered to belong to the latter category. This means that whenever a big theft is committed in and around the village they become the obvious suspects. As is the case generally, they have the protection of one important matbar of this village. In the not too distant village of Charikhada another matbar is also notorious for receiving stolen goods and protecting such thieves through his excellent police connections. During the last five years (1972-77), five thefts were detected and brought before the village judicial bench (shalish), involving standing paddy crops, jute and household valuables of the village rich. Of the nine accused, five were from LLH, three from PH and one from LMH.

There are again two types of beggars in Magura:

- a) casual beggars, i.e. those who sought help from time to time - 15, and
- b) professional beggars - four (two women). For one household it was the main occupation.

Four cases are discussed below in order to illustrate prostitution as a poverty response:

Case I:

T', S' and M' are three sisters of a poor household. The brother G' is a professional thief. The father is dead. The mother, in her youth, was noted for extra-marital sex. All the three sisters are now engaged in prostitution as a means of livelihood. In ensuring this, some of the village powerful have to be quietened through providing them with free sexual pleasure.

Case II:

A.K.<sup>2</sup> is head of a poor household. He is an old man, suffering from TB. His land is of very poor quality and yields only one crop a year. He has no sons, and the land has, therefore, to be share cropped out. He has a bamboo grove and some fruit-bearing trees. The income from all this property is able to feed the family consisting of himself, his wife and his daughter N<sup>2</sup> (aged 20) for about only two-three months. Thus the family has to borrow from the village rich; in obtaining the loans, obviously N<sup>2</sup> had to go from door to door, and it all started this way. Some of the village rich took advantage of the family's helpless position and made a prostitute out of her. She was married for a brief period. After some time the husband deserted her in disgust and left for India. In 1977, she tried to obtain a family planning assistant's job. One official promised her the job in lieu of sex. She fulfilled her part of the bargain but the official did not.

Case III:

B<sup>2</sup> (aged 22) is the daughter of a landless household. At 16 she came to work in the house of NK<sup>2</sup> (RH II; also moneylender-cum-speculative trader). Taking advantage of her helpless situation, NK<sup>2</sup> forced her into a sexual relationship with him. In the process B<sup>2</sup> became pregnant. To save himself from embarrassment and at the same time to maintain his control over her, NK<sup>2</sup> forced her into "marriage" with JD<sup>2</sup>, an eighty year-old man (LMH). Since JD<sup>2</sup> is heavily dependent on NK<sup>2</sup> for his livelihood, his "wife", in reality, is NK<sup>2</sup>'s permanent mistress.

Case IV:

After being deserted by her husband in 1968, A<sup>2</sup>, along with her two children, started living with her father JD<sup>2</sup> (see Case III above). While at this house, she started visiting her brother-in-law RD<sup>2</sup> (PH) who introduced her to prostitution. In the process she became pregnant. She died while undergoing abortion. NK<sup>2</sup> rescued JD<sup>2</sup> and RD<sup>2</sup> from the law by bribing the police.

i) Borrowing at high Interest Rates

Loans among neighbours for daily necessities like salt, kerosene, rice, vegetables, etc. are quite common, but only when they are of equal economic standing. The rich are clearly reluctant to make such loans to their poor neighbours because of the latter's inability to repay. As discussed elsewhere, the scope of institutional credits for the poor is extremely limited. Thus, in a dire poverty situation, the poor's only borrowing source is the village moneylender. About 37 households are now indebted to various moneylenders. The rate of interest varies from 120-240 per cent. In most cases collateral consisting of a valuable asset (fishing net, utensil, gold, land, etc., to cite the most common collateral) has to be deposited before obtaining the loan (there are five moneylenders in this village). In most cases, the collateral cannot be retrieved from the moneylender.

j) Distress Sale

In 1977, about 400 maunds of paddy (i.e. about one-fifth of the gross marketed surplus) constituted distress surplus, i.e. forward sales (i.e. of standing crops - this was restricted to Aus Paddy) and sales immediately after harvest (when prices are low) in order

to repay outstanding dues and loans, purchase kerosene, salt, cloth and other essentials and to meet emergency medical expenses. In 1977, forward sale of Aus paddy took place at Tk.25-30/- per maund, i.e. Taka 75/- below the highest price obtained for a maund of paddy that year. Similar was the fate of sales immediately following harvest. About half the distress surplus was bought back later at higher prices. The entire distress surplus was marketed by middle, lower-middle and poor households. As with agricultural produce, distress sale of assets has also been an important poverty response in Magura. During the 1974 famine, nine of the houses, built with C.I. sheets given as relief in 1972 and eight acres of land were sold out by middle, lower-middle and poor households.

k) Pleading with the Rich

The village poor were found constantly appealing to the rich man's sense of justice and fair play to improve their terms as wage labourers, share croppers, creditors, etc., even though these yield them nothing or only peripheral concessions. In 1974, for example, when food prices soared, the wage labourers approached the landowners individually for an increase in their wages. The landowners' response was typical, "When the price of paddy was only Tk.100/- per maund we paid you these wages. We did not then resent your 'high' earnings and request you to return the excess". Similarly, the village poor have lodged many verbal protests in the past against misappropriation of relief goods and development inputs meant for them, without any effect.

l) Divorce and Wife-beating

During the last five years, there have been seven divorces on account of poverty. In all these cases the husband and wife belonged to below MH classes. According to selected informants, all these divorces were preceded by regular quarrels arising out of economic hardship. The typical story is: the husband is unable to provide for the family's bare minimum requirements, the wife reacts, the husband after a hard day's labour is already in a bad mood and beats her up. After this is repeated day in and day out for some time, separation and divorce are the obvious consequences, especially since in Islamic divorce the husband has only to utter the "Talaq" (the Bengali equivalent of divorce) thrice in front of a witness in order to execute a divorce.

m) Disintegration of Joint Families

During the last five years 16 joint families (ten Muslim and six Hindu) have disintegrated into nuclear ones. Of these 16 households, 13 belong to MH and below classes. This phenomenon at Magura is clearly related to poverty. Frequent quarrels among family members, sometimes on very petty matters, are beginnings of these break-ups. In reality, these manifest the differences in the contribution to the family income made by various members. As the quarrels intensify and real differences become obvious, the family breaks up and asset division follows.

A typical example is that of SM<sup>1</sup>'s household. SM<sup>1</sup> is a poor vendor. He is now 65, and severely handicapped by rheumatism. He makes, therefore, no contribution to the family's income. His son A<sup>1</sup> got

married about six months ago. He has recently separated from his father to form his own nuclear family, obviously because he wants to avoid maintaining his father although this means that SM<sup>1</sup> has to pass the last years of his life in utter destitution.

n) Change in Religion and Increase in Religiosity

JBD<sup>2</sup> (LMH) became a Muslim in 1968. This was not prompted by his love for Islam, but by his poverty situation. But for the trickery of his elder brother, SND<sup>2</sup>, his share of the landed property inherited from their father would have placed him in the upper-middle class. He tried to sort out the matter in the village judicial bench (Shalish). When this failed, he became a Muslim in order to increase his strength in the fight to retain his rightful share. At this turn of events, all the Hindus of the area assembled in a meeting and decided to persuade JBD<sup>2</sup> into reconversion. Accordingly, they approached him collectively and promised help in the restoration of his land if he agreed to become a Hindu once again. He yielded to their request, but the land was never recovered. Although Hindu to Muslim conversion is a rare phenomenon nowadays (there were a few forcible conversions in 1971), this is a reminder of what happened in Bengal a few hundred years ago, when as a protest against social and economic deprivation there was mass conversion of lower caste Hindus to Islam. The Christian missionaries operating from their regional headquarters in Khulna, are quite active in this area. In two villages of this thana (about 10-12 miles from Magura), some poor low caste Hindus have already become Christians. It seems that the present target of the Christian missionaries is the poverty-stricken fishermen community of this region. They have not so far made any overt moves in this respect.

Under the existing circumstances (i.e. lacking persistent efforts at making the poor conscious of the real causes of poverty), one of the obvious responses to poverty is increased religiosity and fatalism. It is retribution for sins committed in a past life for the Hindus, while for the Muslims compensation is sought in the good things that would follow in the life hereafter. In both cases, the purpose is the same: to rationalise existing objective reality. However, despite this religiosity, the poor are unable to participate fully in many of the religious rites like the Puja, Idd, etc., which demand considerable expenditure.

o) Role as Faction Followers

The structure and composition of the five factions at Magura have already been discussed. Their creation and continued existence can also be regarded as a poverty response in that in the absence of any other alternative, the poor people are driven into the role of faction followers (given the various ways in which they are economically dependent on their leaders) and in the process are manipulated for furtherance of economic and political gains of rich peasant/moneylender/trader faction leaders. In other words, their response to be faction followers leads them into a vicious circle of increased pauperisation and dependence, enhancing the political and economic power of those very people who live by exploiting them.

p) Consumption Response to Poverty

Consumption responses to poverty in Magura were of two types, namely recourse to cheaper alternatives and lowering the quantum of consumption to a bare minimum.

i) Recourse to Cheaper Alternatives

At present, for more than 80 per cent of poor households of Magura, wheat has replaced rice as the staple food. In the 1950s it was inconceivable that a Bengali peasant would regularly consume wheat flour "roti" instead of cooked rice. In the 1960s, government propaganda imploring a change in dietary habits was intensified. This had little effect. Those who could afford to continued their traditional diet. On the other hand, the poor could not afford to for very long. By 1974, rice prices had rocketed to staggering levels, so that the price mechanism was able to achieve what government propaganda had failed to do for so long. Similarly, there has been a change in clothing consumption as well. The traditional apparel of the rural poor consisted generally of the coarse products of the handlooms and the mills. The prices of these have also registered sharp increases. Meanwhile, imported secondhand clothes\* found their way into the local market, and many of the rural poor have switched over to these since they are relatively cheaper. Most of these are secondhand, synthetic materials, rejects from hospitals, prisons, asylums, old peoples' homes, etc., of Western countries, meant to have been converted into pulp for paper production. As such, these may be carriers of dangerous diseases, doing more harm than good to the poor in the long run.

ii) Lowering of Consumption

Normally, about 70 households take only two meals a day, 40 households only one meal a day, and the only daily meal of ten households consists of a gruel made of wheat flour, wild

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\* A large amount was imported under the Wage Earners' Scheme, introduced in 1974.

roots and leaves. (It is difficult to ascertain the extent of food intake in the 1960s, but indirect evidence points to a significant fall in the food intake since then.) The situation obviously assumed very serious proportions during the famines of 1943 and 1974. In 1943, more than 75 per cent of Magura people starved for more than three months, resulting in the death of two poor weavers. In 1974, about 100 households (60 Muslims) starved for about two months, eating wild leaves and roots, which were often unfit for human consumption. As has been brought out in Chapter VII, of late the poor are also responding to poverty by cutting down their expenses in cultural/religious rites/festivals to the bare minimum. Thus, no poor Muslim family in Magura can now indulge in new clothes, sweets, etc. on the occasion of Eid, and similarly, no poor Hindu family can perform Puja individually. Fifty years ago, most of the village poor could easily afford what are now "luxuries" for them.

q) Reproduction Response

The village poor were clearly caught up in a dilemma over the question of reproduction. 100 per cent of the 114 MH and below respondents considered too many children as a curse, and they were able to appreciate the poverty implications of a large family. And yet, their concept of too many children differed from the official line, "boy or girl, 2 are enough" significantly. 68.1 per cent of the MH and below respondents considered 3-6 as the desirable number of children a couple should have (see Table 18, Chapter VIII),

and the number of children in the 0-16 age group per household was above three for MH and below classes (see Table 17, Chapter VIII). 81.1 per cent of these respondents also considered son preference completely justified. Cross examination of selected informants yielded similar indications. During the last five years there were, in fact, three examples of poor people pledging animal sacrifice/special Puja if they were blessed with sons.

As discussed in Chapter VIII, the following reasons account for the poor people's son preference and desire for more than two children. Firstly, children, especially sons, meant increased earning capacity, help in agricultural/household work, old age "insurance", etc. With a son there would also be no dowry problem at the time of marriage. Secondly, for the poor, consumption by children was limited to the bare minimum requirements of food and clothing, and extra expenses on account of their education, recreation, housing, medical treatment, etc., were almost non-existent.

#### Response at Collective and Political Levels

For the middle, lower-middle, poor and landless people of Magura, the objective conditions required to generate response at the collective and economic level are more than fulfilled. In fact, the various acts of "violence" - overt, extra legal\* and structured\*\* - being committed on the poor constitute quite a list:

- i) highly unfair wages and terms of share cropping;
- ii) extraction of free services from poor and landless share croppers by jotedars;

\* I.e. against the law, but not necessarily overt - for example, hoarding and money lending.

\*\* Does not violate the law but imbedded in the existing socio-economic structure, for example, low wages.

- iii) non-access to institutional credit and reliance on the moneylender's credit at high interest rates and on deposit of collateral consisting of productive and valuable assets;
- iv) exorbitant prices of essential commodities bought by them owing to speculative trade and hoarding on the one hand, and low prices for the commodities sold by them owing to lack of staying power, on the other;
- v) Pilfering and maldistribution of relief goods and developmental inputs by the village rich and the bureaucracy;
- vi) extortion, bribes, etc., by various local officials, Union Parishad functionaries, etc., and
- vii) outrages on women belonging to poor households by the rural rich and officials, taking advantage of the former's helplessness.

If the poor co-operated among themselves by pooling their resources and carrying out joint farming, they could improve their economic lot substantially and increase their bargaining power vis-a-vis the rural rich. They do not, however, do so. And the reasons lie in the very structure of poverty in which they are enmeshed (as we shall suggest, briefly, below).

Let us now review their actual responses at collective and political levels. Narail sub-division has a long record in peasant uprisings and protests. As pointed out earlier, this sub-division was created in 1859, as a response to the outbreak of the so-called "Indigo Disturbances" in that year. In the 1930s, Narail witnessed two important peasant movements. The first was the "Hat-tola" movement directed against illegal exactions, especially from middle and petty traders by Zamindar's toll collectors at the market places. The second was a share croppers'

protest against the existing terms of share cropping. This was led by Congress leader Syed Nausher Ali, and followed Gandhi's "non-co-operation" tactic: the share croppers decided to withdraw from share cropping until the owners yielded to their demand. The movement failed miserably, and the landowners retaliated by refusing land to those who had withdrawn from share cropping earlier and later wanted land for share cropping. There was no evidence to suggest that Magura peasants were in any way connected with these movements.

Then, in 1946 the Communist Party of India organised the famous Tebhaga Movement.\* This was again a share croppers' struggle for a two-thirds share of the produce. This time, however, the share croppers were organised on clear militant lines and there were also some attempts to politicise the peasantry: the share croppers discarded the non-violent line to counter violence of the police, the Zamindar and the jotadar with revolutionary violence and forcibly to take away the share of the produce they considered as just and fair. Large areas of Narail sub-division were engulfed by the movement, and in fact, one of its storm centres was located at Raghunathpur, only eight miles from Magura. The Tebhaga did to some extent open the eyes of Magura's share croppers. Though late, they started organising themselves, pressing their demands and linking themselves with local Tebhaga leaders like Noor Jalal and Mudasser Munshi. However, the ten Gantidars, who among themselves then owned most of Magura, were equally adamant in their determination not to

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\* Literally, Tebhaga means three shares: the main economic demand of the movement was to ensure for the share croppers two out of the three shares of produce from share-cropped land. However, as the movement gathered momentum, other economic and political demands were also voiced. It may be mentioned here that the main demand of the movement had been recommended for implementation in the 1940 Land Reforms Commission's Report (popularly known as the Floud Commission Report after the name of the Commission's Chairman). For a detailed account of the Tebhaga Movement, see Dhanagare (1976), Umar (1974), Sunil Sen (1972), etc.

yield to the Tebhaga demands, and, in fact, threatened the share croppers with dire consequences if they took the "law in their own hands". Meanwhile, the Tebhaga was called off by the CPI leadership, following a mere gazette notification of the Bargadar's Control Bill in early 1947 (this recognised the share croppers' right to two-thirds share, but was never enacted, and was never meant to be; in effect, it proved to be a ruse to take the steam out of a difficult situation and apparently the CPI failed to see through this trick). As a result, a struggle with great promise simply petered out. In 1968, emboldened by the countrywide demonstrations, "Gherao" (i.e. to lay siege to), and "Jalao" (i.e. to set fire to), the Magura share croppers once again demanded a better deal from their landowners. When negotiations failed they (15 Muslims and 10 Hindus) collectively refused to carry the landowners' share of the produce from the field to the latter's house (which constituted one of the terms of share cropping). However, the latter part of this story is more or less a repetition of 1946. The 1968 movement started as an anti-Ayub agitation for "democratic rights"; but with the spontaneous participation of workers and peasants, the movement not only spread all over the country, but also radical demands and militant forms of struggle started to surface. This obviously frightened the rising Bengali urban and rural propertied classes. They were in the movement only to obtain the maximum concessions for their class from the Pakistani ruling class, but as things started to "slip out of control", they responded by crying for "law and order" and "constitutional" methods, and, in fact, came to an understanding with the establishment. Since the left was in disarray, it could not shape the discontent of the rural masses into revolutionary channels, so that 1968's promise for the

countryside was brief, and receded into the background with the clamping down of Martial Law for the second time. Thus, against the background of a countrywide political relapse, the share croppers' struggle in Magura failed to take off. The landowners, in their turn, retaliated by employing share croppers from the neighbouring villages and withdrawing land from the defiant ones. After a year of irregular wage labour and cultivation of their tiny plots of land for survival, the defiance broke down, and they fell on their knees to ask their landowners for land under old terms. The landowners agreed. In the words of one of the landowners, "we had to retaliate in order to teach them a proper lesson".

The left-dominated peasant movement in the meantime veered towards an extremist line, which included among others withdrawal from mass political actions in favour of secret physical elimination of perceived class enemies.\* In the absence of adequate political education, there were also serious gaps between the perception of party workers and that of the masses. Therefore, although the general objectives of the left movement had mass support, their methods were often not appreciated. The strongest position the leftists held in this village and area was during 1971 when a temporary power vacuum was created as a result of the retreat of the Awami League cadres to India and of the Pakistan Army to the cities. With independence in December 1971, and the subsequent

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\* In popular parlance, this is known as the "Naxalbari line", propounded, among others, by Charu Majumdar, leader of the CPI(M-L). For details on the Naxalbari uprising and subsequent political line pursued by the Naxalites, see Mohan Ram (1969) and Dasgupta (1974). Whatever might have been the compulsions for the Naxalbari line in the context of West Bengal, it had no relevance for Bangladesh, given that by 1970, West Pakistan-based domination had emerged as the main contradiction for the people of Bangladesh. It was thus a clear case of blind acceptance of a political line, formulated by a foreign communist party.

return of the Awami League-dominated Muktibahini (freedom fighters), backed by the Indian Army, the leftists were thrown out of their dominant position and subjected to systematic repression.

At present, most of the poor appear apathetic to any political activity and filled with despondency over what was to be done to achieve their economic and political emancipation.

This may be explained in terms of two factors. Firstly, inactivity and costly mistakes by the left, and failure to correct these in good time, along with continuous splits in their ranks, especially since the early 1960s, prevented them from emerging as a major alternative political force, from giving a concrete shape to the various spontaneous political responses of the rural poor and from providing the rural poor with genuine political education.

Secondly, in the absence of a visible alternative, dependence of the rural poor on village faction leaders, U.P. functionaries, central government bureaucrats, political parties like the Muslim League and the Awami League became unavoidable. These operated through raising false hopes in order to achieve their own class interests (for example, during both the Pakistan Movement in the 1940s and the Bangladesh Movement in the 1970s uplift of the poor was liberally promised). In the process, a great deal of apathy and frustration was generated among the rural poor, when the true colours of these parties on achieving political power became apparent.

In this regard, the attitude of two peasants of this village was quite revealing. The first one, about 65 years old, is a poor peasant who has never been politically involved. According to him Pakistan was better than Bangladesh, and British rule was still better because the poor

man's lot deteriorated progressively as one moved from independence in 1947 to independence in 1971 and the present time. The second one is a middle-aged landless peasant, who was at one time under the influence of the Naxalites. His understanding of poverty was as follows: "the rich are like the banyan tree. At one end there are strong roots spread all over to suck the juice of the earth, and at the other, there is the huge foliage to block sunlight for its exclusive use. You see, nothing can grow under a banyan tree. It has to be uprooted and removed if the smaller plants are to survive". He was, however, not sure of the strategy and tactics for its eradication. Of his political teachers from Pulum, he had the following to say, "when they first told us that there were countries in this world run totally by workers and peasants, I did not believe them. Then we hoped. But when real trouble came, some of them fled to the cities and took shelter with their relatives. I told one of them to think of us who had no place to go in this world".

A number of factors hinder the growth of co-operation among the village poor for increasing production. Firstly, in the existing circumstances their asset position was so hopeless that scope for co-operation was extremely limited. Secondly, the village poor were tied down to the rich through various dependency relationships (as discussed elsewhere), and these did not permit co-operation among themselves. Thirdly, so far government efforts at co-operation have been directed towards general co-operatives, membership of which, in practice, is limited to owners of land/asset. The experience of these co-operatives has been very negative for the rural poor, and as such they nurture an instinctive suspicion for any co-operative activity.

The only form of economic co-operation among the poor people of Magura is "Badli", that is, in peak agricultural seasons, the poor people help one another with their work. However, this practice is limited now to only four households.

CHAPTER TENTHE URBAN DIMENSION OF RURAL  
POVERTY IN BANGLADESHIntroduction

We have so far tried to explain rural poverty in Bangladesh in terms of the forces located within Bangladesh's rural society. However, it is our contention that one cannot understand fully the nature, determinants and implications of rural poverty unless one looks out of the countryside to both urban Bangladesh and beyond the confines to Bangladesh's borders. It is all the more necessary to conduct the former exercise, in as much as recently an influential attempt to "explain" the persistence and growth of rural poverty - which looks as if it is already becoming a part of the "conventional wisdom" throughout the Third World - has portrayed this as the result of "urban bias" (Lipton, 1977; for a critique see Byres, 1979). This chapter addresses the issues raised by such an explanation. The latter exercise is also necessary, however, if we are to comprehend adequately the co-ordinates of rural poverty in a Third World situation. It is all the more necessary because it is ignored so completely in Third World poverty studies. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

In the chapter on government response to rural poverty, it was observed, firstly, that in general the benefits of governmental anti-poverty and development measures in the countryside accrued mainly to the rural rich; and secondly, that in ensuring this, there was a distinct collusion between the rural rich and central/local government functionaries responsible for implementation of such measures at the lower levels of administration. In this chapter we propose to examine if there is a distinct "urban bias" transcending class bias, in the manner in which

resources ultimately get allocated between the urban and the rural sectors in Bangladesh. In so doing the following issues are closely scrutinised:

- a) agriculture's terms of trade vis-a-vis industry;
- b) the bias of (i) government developmental expenditures, (ii) government credit policies, (iii) government food rationing policies;
- c) the burden of taxation on the rural sector vis-a-vis the urban sector;
- d) the condition of the rural poor vis-a-vis that of the urban poor, and
- e) the bias of the highest policy formulators and implementors.

#### 1. Class Analysis of the Urban Sector

Before examining the urban dimension of rural poverty, it is in order to attempt a brief class analysis of Bangladesh's urban sector. However, given the lack of a clear-cut survey in this respect, it has necessarily to be constructed by mainly piecing together evidence from secondary sources.\* Between 1961 and 1974, the percentage of total population residing in urban areas increased from 5.2 to 8.78, which meant about a 138 per cent change in urban population during this period. The principal reason for this phenomenal increase was the heavy influx of rural population to urban centres (Choudhury, et al., 1976, 87.).

The urban population in Bangladesh may be divided into three main classes:

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\* Given the limited secondary evidence, some of the information stated in this section is based on interviews with urban sociological research workers and personal observations.

- a) the urban rich
- b) the urban intermediate classes, and
- c) the urban poor.

a) The Urban Rich

During the British period, the East Bengal economy was dominated by mostly mercantile capital, British, Marwari and Bengali Hindu. The same groups also owned the meagre industrial capital that was developed in this region (sugar, textiles and tea plantations). In the urban sector, it was only in the petty bourgeois class\* and below that Bengali Muslims were numerically significant (Mukharjee, 1973, 405-6). The 1947 partition replaced British by Pakistani colonial rule. This meant, among other things, a general neglect of industrialisation in East Bengal because of West Pakistan-based development with surplus extracted from East Bengal; and the gradual displacement of Bengali Hindus and Marwari interests by most <sup>ly</sup> West Pakistani or Muslim immigrant bourgeoisie now settled in West Pakistan. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, West Pakistan-based capitalists owned most of the fixed assets in whatever manufacturing, financial and foreign trade sectors that existed in East Bengal.\*\* A section of the Bengali Muslim petty bourgeoisie was, of course, able to reap some benefit from the post-partition vacuum created by the mass exodus of Hindu and Marwari traders and professional (Sobhan and Ahmed, 1979, 14; . . . Mukherjee, 1973, 408). However, it was during the Ayub decade, especially

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\* Small traders, businessmen, professionals, government officials, etc.

\*\* According to Umar (1974, 388), about 70 per cent of industrial and business interests belonged to the non-Bengalis before 1971.

during the latter part, that there was a conscious effort by the Pakistani ruling class to create a big bourgeoisie out of the Bengali petty bourgeoisie in order to counter the tide of discontent among the Bengali masses, and to ensure exploitation of East Bengal on a sounder footing. This was achieved, inter alia, through "contacts and contracts", a proliferation of local agencies for West Pakistan-based industrial and commercial houses, opening the doors of the civil-military bureaucracy to the educated Bengali youth, the introduction of a large dose of unaudited PL480 funds in the countryside in the name of a rural works programme, liberal credit facilities for Bengali entrepreneurs by banks in general, and government credit organisations in particular (Alavi, 1973, 168-9; Nations, 1971, 5-6; Abdullah, A., 1972). Thus, on the eve of independence, the Bengali urban rich consisted of the following (Sobhan and Ahmed, 1979, v15-16): 81 "industrialists", owners of 16 big jute exporting and 12 water transport firms, big shareholders of 12 insurance companies and one bank; 39 large importers; successful contractors, indentors and commission agents; top civil servants and professionals, owning cars and houses, and generally enjoying the social standards of the upper bourgeoisie.

The last category was more numerous and perhaps more able because given a colonial situation of limited opportunities, government service and professional jobs attracted the best talents of the petty bourgeoisie. They, especially, the civil servants, were an extremely important group, and they were able

to enhance their economic position far beyond legal emoluments because of their control over state patronage. Most of them also became owners of several houses in the best urban areas, and as such, rentiers. On the other hand, the upper bourgeoisie in industry and commerce were drawn for the most part from that section of the petty bourgeoisie which was either given to surplus extraction, but little interested in enterprise, innovation and production, or which had been unsuccessful educationally and had failed to get into elite administrative/professional positions (Sobhan and Ahmed, 1979, 5-17).\* In any case, they were more involved in trade and commerce than in actual industrial production (Blair, 1978, 67), and were only small to medium entrepreneurs even by Pakistani standards, often lacking financial viability. Despite these differences there were several common factors binding the entire upper bourgeoisie together. Thus, firstly, they came from the same origin, i.e., the petty bourgeoisie, and were closely tied to one another by birth and marriage. Even as a petty bourgeoisie, they were relatively new in the urban sector. They had strong rural ties, and owned landed property in the rural sector (Ahmad, Q.K., 1979, 11). Secondly, they were all comprador in character, i.e., they were created through patronage, goodwill and collaboration with the Pakistani ruling class,

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\* This situation, it may be noted, is quite opposite to the case obtaining in advanced capitalist countries. See also Siddiqui (1975, 42-4) and H. Papanek (1969). The latter study refers to an earlier period in the development of the Bengali upper bourgeoisie.

whether in business or government. (Sobhan and Ahmed, 1979, v-17). Thirdly, they had little association with production, and they had graduated to the ranks of the upper bourgeoisie overnight and effortlessly. (See A Correspondent, 1976 15-9 for details on the anti-productive modus operandi of the Bengali rising bourgeoisie after independence.) They now constitute no more than three per cent of the total urban population.

b) The Urban Intermediate Classes

Between the urban rich and the urban poor, there were various layers of occupations similar to the urban rich, but differing from them in access to capital, incomes and political power. Thus, they were lower government servants and small businessmen who had not benefited from state patronage, district court lawyers who had not shared in the patronage of Pakistani business firms, school and college teachers who had not been sent abroad under government scholarships, etc. In other words, they were so far less successful in deriving benefits out of the narrowly-based colonial patronage. Like the urban rich, they were mostly divorced from production. In aspiration, they generally looked upwards, possibly because they had seen before their very eyes the spectacular rise of a section from their own class to the top of the social ladder three times within a span of 25 years. (This was, of course, not true of the lowest layers among them.)\* They were obviously far more

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\* This was because inflation had badly corroded their standard of living after 1972, and they were generally in such occupational positions as did not permit unearned income through graft, pilferage, kickbacks, etc.

numerous than the urban rich, and very roughly they consisted of about 21 per cent of the total urban population, given that urban rich and urban poor comprised respectively 3 per cent and 76 per cent of the population (see below).

c) The Urban Poor

According to Alamgir (1978, 15) about 76 per cent of the urban population lived below the "poverty line" (based on a minimum consumption basket satisfying the requirements of 2,100 calories and 45 grains of protein. At 1966 prices, the value of this basket was Tk.298.0 in 1973-74). In the absence of any other estimate, this may be accepted as the percentage of urban poor in Bangladesh. According to another survey (Centre for Urban Studies, Dacca University, 1979-18-9), the main occupational components of the urban poor are as follows: day labourers (mostly in construction work); transport workers (generally rickshaw and cartpullers); lower-class government/semi-government/private firm employees (e.g. messengers, nightguards, peons, etc.); domestic servants; handicraftsmen; hawkers, vendors and very small shopkeepers and shop assistants; factory workers; skilled/semi-skilled persons; a lumpen proletariat consisting of beggars, prostitutes, vagrants and the generally unemployed. Except for office and factory workers and the skilled/semi-skilled group, they belonged to the so-called "informal sector", with no guarantee of either permanent employment or livelihood, and the percentage of the urban poor employed in the formal sector was far less than that of the urban poor belonging to the informal sector. In times of

crisis, they provide the most visible spectacle of poverty in urban Bangladesh (Khandker, 1978, 18).

## 2. Bias of Government Development Expenditures

In the context of Bangladesh, one major piece of "evidence" cited in favour of "urban bias" is the wide urban/rural disparity in public development expenditures (Vylder, 1979, 26). Closely allied to it is the argument that income distribution being less egalitarian in the urban sector, such "bias" further accentuates the poverty situation in the economy (Lipton, 1977, 17).

Let us consider the first point. The following table provides two estimates of the intersectoral distribution of government development expenditures.

TABLE 1 : Public Development Expenditures, 1973/74-1977/78 (in m Takas)

Year	Estimate I*		Estimate II**		Total Expenditures
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	
1973-74	1547	1570 (50.3)	1359	1758 (56.4)	3117
1974-75	2276	2005 (46.8)	2007	2274 (53.1)	4281
1975-76	3923	3292 (45.6)	3454	3761 (52.1)	7215
1976-77	5047	4133 (45.1)	4463	4717 (51.3)	9180
1977-78	6398	5209 (43.4)	5658	5949 (51.1)	11608

Source: GOBD (1979e, 302)

Figures in parentheses represent rural development expenditures as percentages of total development expenditures.

\* Rural Sector = Agriculture, rural institutions, flood control and half of the expenditures in transport and communication sectors.

\*\* Rural Sector = Agriculture, rural institutions, flood control and half of expenditures in all sectors except industry, power and natural resources, physical planning and housing.

The above table clearly reveals that over time, on a per capita basis, development expenditure has been lower and declining for the rural sector, although it has not been as low as shown by Vylder (1979, 28) according to whom, only 29-30 per cent of the total development expenditure went to the rural sector. In fact, this raises the problem of estimation. Government statistics are not broken down by urban and rural sectors. Also, it would be difficult to decide the criteria for such a breakdown. Although we have used physical location of expenditures as the criterion, it is insufficient because it disregards various important urban-rural links. Agro-industries are a case in point. They could be included under both agriculture (hence rural) and industry (hence urban). However, it is safe to say that Vylder significantly underestimates the rural share of development expenditures, since he confines himself to expenditures on agriculture, flood control and rural institutions only.

Estimation problems notwithstanding, how does one explain the clear urban/rural disparity exhibited in our estimated? More importantly, is this evidence of "urban bias"? Firstly, such aggregates cannot (and do not) show which classes benefit from these expenditures. Thus, for example, in the education sector, given the urban location of universities and other higher institutes of learning and a far higher expenditure on these than rural education, comprising primary and secondary level institutions (for details see Ahmed, S., 1978a, 20-5), an "urban bias" would seem only too obvious. However, when this information is combined with the fact that about three-quarters of university students in Bangladesh are from rural areas (Jahan,

1972, 44; Talukder, 1973),\* it becomes clear that despite the location, the benefits of such education accrue to only the urban and rural rich, given the high cost of higher education, even after subsidies. Similar conclusions can be drawn also for urban located expenditures on health, social, welfare, transport and communication. Secondly, as Vylder (1979,28) admits, on the average about 40 per cent of agricultural expenditures are subsidies on fertiliser and pesticides, and that this exclusively benefits the big farmers (as also corroborated by Blair, 1978, 71, and our own findings, Chapter 8). This means that even with a higher urban share, the interests of the rural rich are well taken care of in the development budget. Thirdly, a major portion of urban expenditure is in industry, where capital intensity is necessarily higher than in agriculture, and as such, these expenditures are not strictly comparable to those in the rural sector. Finally, to prove an "urban bias", it also needs to be shown that the burden of raising such expenditures is more on the rural than the urban sector.

On the second aspect of the higher urban expenditure, Byres (1979, 219) cites the wellknown "green revolution" experience in the distribution of gains to show that even if the more egalitarian intra-rural income distribution assumption is true, it does not follow, ceteris paribus, that a shift in resources from town to country will increase welfare. The table below presents the intra-sectoral indices of income inequality in Bangladesh.

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\* The former refers to a survey carried out in the early 1960s on Dacca University and Polytechnic students, while the latter is the report of the survey conducted on Rajshahi University students in 1972.

TABLE 2 : Indices of Inequality in Bangladesh

Year	Gini Coefficient
<u>Rural</u>	
1963/64	0.33
1973/74	0.38
<u>Urban</u>	
1963/64	0.41
1973/74	0.39

Source: Alamgir, M., (1978, 15)

It seems clear from the above table that the very assumption (i.e. greater inequality in the urban sector) on which the Lipton argument rests, does not hold good, at least in the case of Bangladesh.

### 3. The Bias in Government

#### Credit Policy\*

The following table presents the urban/rural distribution of credit and deposits for three years.

TABLE 3 : Percentage Distribution of Advances and Deposits by Areas (urban and rural)

	As on					
	<u>31.12.75</u>		<u>31.12.76</u>		<u>31.3.77</u>	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Advances	96.61	3.39	96.53	3.47	95.50	4.50
Deposits	90.51	9.49	90.21	9.97	89.67	10.30

Source: A.M.A. Rahim (1978, 235)

\* In Bangladesh, the entire banking system is in the public sector.

Rahim comments on the above table as follows: "The net difference between deposits and advances in rural areas roughly measures the quantum of transfer of capital from rural to urban areas, and it has been around a stable amount of 6 per cent. The conclusion that our rural areas are being depleted of financial resources through intermediation of banks seems, therefore, to be well founded" (p.235). According to Vylter (1979, 29), "The entire credit system rather serves as a kind of vacuum cleaner which helps to transfer investible surplus from the countryside to the cities". Similar inferences are also drawn by a government document (GOBD, 1978d, 62).

Before ascribing "urban bias" to the credit policy, it is necessary to point out that the rural-urban capital flight through the banking system does not capture the reverse impact caused by urban-rural remittances, especially those of the "pull migrants" consisting of the rural rich. As Choudhury (1978, 16) points out, "an absolute majority (70 per cent) of the rural households from which someone has migrated claimed to have remittance from the migrant. On the other hand, outflow of cash from family to migrant is concentrated among fewer households". As such, it is doubtful if there has been a net outflow of capital from the rural to the urban sector, given that between 1951-61 and 1961-74, the percentage of rural immigrants in the total urban population increased from 15.56 to 40.82 (Choudhury, et al., 1976, 104).

Let us now delineate the beneficiaries of the government's credit policies. As shown in an earlier chapter, the lion's share of both credits and deposits in the country was due to the rural rich (rich peasants and rural traders) (see also Momen, A.K.A., 1977, 534-7;

Hussain, M., 1979, 58; Jehangir, 1979, 176). However, since the rural rich have strong urban connections for trade, employment and children's education, the capital transfer through the banking system represents their refusal to carry out productive investment in agriculture and rural industries, and their preference for urban-based trade and employment. Similarly, a sizeable section of the urban rich and middle classes are absentee landowners (Ahmed, Q.K., 1979, 11) so that some of the rural-urban capital movement must also be due to the pull effect exerted by them in obtaining rents and profits from the lands. Finally, the credit supplied to the rural sector is "sufficient" to the extent that this satisfies the rural rich requirements; on the other hand, articulation of poor and middle peasants' demands being weak, there is no pressure on the government to release further credits. Also, it is not in the objective interest of the rural rich to have the countryside flooded by cheap and easily available institutional credit. Without imputing conspiracy to anyone, it can safely be said that the level of institutional credit flow in the rural areas represents mainly the balance between the credit demands of the rural rich, and their necessity to maintain capital scarcity in the rural sector in order to reap super-profits out of high interest rate and non-institutional credit.

Between 1972 and 1977, about 60 per cent of the bank advances in the urban sector went to the nationalised industries (Rahim, 1978, 34). In the private sector by far the greatest share of credits was appropriated by big businessmen and industrialists, given the necessity to provide substantial collateral and also exert "influence" on the banking officials in order to obtain such loans. For the

urban poor, in 1978 only 2.5 per cent of their credit requirements were met by bank loans (Dacca University, 1979, 26). By Bangladesh government admission (GOBD, 1975b, 1-7), there was massive misuse and plunder of nationalised industries between 1972 and 1975, especially by "administrators" appointed for these enterprises by the then-ruling party. This meant that the high dose of credit injected into the public sector not only helped the creation of a "nouveau riche" overnight, rather than the urban poor, but also the resulting anti-production accentuated their poverty situation through hyper-inflation. Similarly, of the urban private sector credit, only 26 per cent went into manufacturing, whereas 32 per cent financed commerce, and the remainder was taken up in house construction, road building and other activities (Ahmed, S., 1978b, 30-2). In other words, not only did the urban rich appropriate most of such credits, but they also used them in activities with little relation to production proper, so that the urban poor, with the least purchasing power, suffered most from the ensuing inflation of such anti-productive activities.

4. Bias in the Food Rationing Policy

Provision of rationed food (i.e. at subsidised prices)\* in the urban centres of Bangladesh is also taken as major evidence for "urban bias". The table below presents the off-take of food grain from Bangladesh's rationing system over time.

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\* According to World Bank (1977, 87) estimates, the true costs of food grain subsidies ranged between 2.00 to 5.2 billion Taka annually between 1972 and 1977.

TABLE 4 : Food Grain Off-take from the Rationing System in Bangladesh, 1968/69-1977/78 (thousand tons)

Year	Statutory rationing (1)	Other priority groups (2)	Total priority groups (1) and (2) (3)	Modified rationing (4)	Relief (5)	Total (6)	Percent share of total priority groups (7)
1968/9	223	141	364	604	70	1,038	35%
1969/70	243	171	414	525	15	1,354	31%
1970/71	210	97	307	778	233	1,318	23%
1971/72	281	162	443	871	421	1,734	26%
1972/73	465	354	819	1,592	207	2,618	31%
1973/74	502	396	898	777	52	1,728	52%
1974/75	471	554	1,025	578	161	1,764	58%
1975/76	359	595	954	495	226	1,676	59%
1976/77	377	609	986	288	199	1,473	67%
1977/78	451	759	1,210	352	285	1,847	66%

Source: Clay (1979c, Table 3)

- Notes: 1. Ration card holders in six urban centres of Dacca, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Ranganati.  
 2. Includes police, armed forces, student hostels and government, mills, large-scale industrial enterprise employees outside statutory areas.  
 4. Distributed by local government (Union Councils) at half the statutory levels.  
 5. Domestic relief and food for work.

As may be seen from the above table, food rationing does not cover the entire urban sector. Secondly, the "other priority groups" in column 2 consist of the following: the police and the armed forces; white-collar employees of large-scale industrial enterprises outside statutory areas; students residing in university and college halls of residence; mills which sell flour to bakeries, and industrial workers employed by large-scale industrial enterprises. Thus, except for the last category, none can be described as belonging to the urban poor. According to Food Ministry sources, of the total food consumed by "other priority groups", about 15 per cent goes to mills and about 60 per cent accrues to the police and the armed forces, and only about 15 per cent reaches the industrial workers.\* In the case of private enterprises, this subsidy to the workers, in effect, represents a subsidy to the owners because in the absence of such subsidy, it would have been difficult to maintain the existing low wage level (Gisselquist, 1979, 13). Among the ration card holders (i.e. column 1) the proportion of the urban poor was far lower than their share of the urban population\*\* owing to the simple fact that procurement of ration cards is extremely difficult for those lacking influence with the bureaucracy, or without the ability to bribe their way out. This "structural" discrimination against the urban poor is also augmented by overt selective measures directed against them. Thus, the "anti-false ration card drives" and forcible eviction of squatter populations

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\* Interviews with Ministry of Food officials in August 1979.

\*\* Interviews with Ministry of Food officials, owners and employees of 20 Dacca ration shops in August 1979.

from the main cities since 1974, are two examples of government efforts so far to keep the urban poor out of the rationing system.

To sum up, the principal beneficiaries of the urban rationing system are (a) members of the state machinery; (b) urban rich, and (c) urban intermediate classes. As Clay (1979a, 129) and McHenry and Bird (1977, 75) point out, such concessions are politically expedient since they help to damp down the potential discontent of well-articulated and influential minority urban groups and government officials.

Columns (4) and (5) represent the amount of subsidised food meant for the rural sector. As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter (see also Mukhopadhaya, 1979, 5; Hartman and Boye<sup>e</sup>, 1978, 5) although these are specifically meant for the rural poor, the actual benefits are reaped by the rural rich in collaboration with lower level functionaries.

##### 5. The Bias of the Taxation Policy

From Tables 5-9 below, the following inferences may be drawn. In general, firstly, the incidence of direct taxes is low in the country. However, the share of rural direct taxes has not only fallen in real value over the years, but it has also been proportionately much lower than urban direct taxes. Thus, whereas, urban direct taxes as a percentage of total urban income have registered a clear increase between 1958/59 and 1976/77, the reverse is true of rural direct taxes as a percentage of total rural income during the same period.

Secondly, the urban rich pay more direct taxes than the rural rich, while the rural poor pay slightly more direct taxes than the urban poor. However, since the burden of indirect taxes is far higher on the urban poor, the latter end up paying more total taxes than the rural poor.

Thirdly, the direct tax rate is more progressive in the urban sector. However, beyond a middle income level in both the sectors it progressively tapers off. According to the Taxation Enquiry Report (GOBD, 1979d, V-13) this has been due to "allowances admissible to higher income groups, fixation of the maximum marginal rate at low income level and fixed land tax per acre beyond 8.3 acres of agricultural land". An internal government document also admitted the same: "The taxation system has not been able to capture the incomes of well-to-do farmers and urban property owners" (GOBD, 1978c, 12-13). Added to this also is the fact that the effective direct tax rate at the upper income levels is far lower than the nominal liability owing to widespread tax evasion by the urban and rural rich (GOBD, 1979d, IV-14; Ahmed, Q.K., 1979, 17). Fourthly, as with direct tax, the burden of indirect <sup>tax</sup> is proportionately higher on the urban than rural sector. Also, indirect taxes are far greater than direct taxes, consequently (i) the poor are proportionately more indirectly taxed than the rich, and (ii) the urban poor are more indirectly taxed than the rural poor (see also Ahmed, S., 1978a, 32).

Fifth, the net tax burden on the rural sector, after taking into account concealed taxes and public development expenditures, is either minimal or negative.

TABLE 5 : Trend in the Burden of Direct Taxes on the Urban and Rural Sector, 1958/9-1976/7 (in million Takas; in current prices except Column 3)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Year	Total Direct Taxes on the Rural Sector* 1958/59 constant prices	Col(2) at 1958/59 constant prices	Total Direct Taxes on the Urban Sector	Total Direct Taxes for the entire country (2+4)	Total Agri-cultural Income	Total Urban Income	Urban Direct Tax as per centage of Urban Income	Rural Direct Tax as per centage of Rural Income	Rural Direct Tax as per centage of Total Direct Tax
1958/59	149.7	149.7	30.00	179.7	7447	5265	0.56	2.01	83.3
1967/68	167.3	123.7	185.0	352.3	15516	11662	1.58	1.07	47.4
1973/74	56.3	12.5	333.5	389.8	41501	26210	1.27	0.13	17.0
1974/75	88.2	10.7	772.7	860.9	78823	44136	1.78	0.11	10.2
1975/76	170.2	34.2	1259.5	1429.7	57339	49740	2.50	0.29	11.8
1976/77	167.7	32.6	1098.4	1266.1	53315	51627	2.10	0.30	13.0

Source: (i) GOBD 1979d, Appendix, Table 10); (ii) GOBD (1979e, 298).

Column (3) was obtained by deflating the nominal taxes by general wholesale price indices, since cost of living indices were not available.

\*Rural direct taxes include land revenue and agricultural income tax, with the former being the dominant.

TABLE 6 : Urban and Rural Effective Rate of Direct Tax, 1973/4 (Tk)

Sector	Average Income (Monthly) (Tk)	Total Tax paid Monthly	Effective Tax Rate	Ratio of Effective Urban to Rural Tax Rate
Urban	629.59	1.97	0.31	2.21
Rural	463.73	0.65	0.14	

Source: GOBD (1979d, IV-10)

TABLE 7 : Urban/Rural Direct Tax Incidence by Income (Expenditure) Classes, 1973-74 (Tk)

Average Income per Household (Monthly) (Tk)	Urban Effective Tax Rate	Rural Effective Tax Rate	Urban/Rural
Less than 50	0.00	0.00	
50-99	0.00	0.00	
100-149	0.01	0.02	0.05
150-199	0.01	0.05	0.02
200-249	0.02	0.06	0.33
250-299	0.04	0.09	0.44
300-399	0.05	0.09	0.56
400-499	0.07	0.09	0.78
500-749	0.10	0.11	0.91
750-999	0.40	0.18	2.22
1000-1499	0.31	0.25	1.24
1500-1999	0.32	0.23	1.40
2000 and above	1.14	0.25	4.56

Source: GOBD (1979d, IV-10)。

TABLE 8 : Incidence of Indirect Taxes on Urban and Rural Sectors, 1973/74-1976/77  
(million Takas in current prices)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Year	Urban Indirect Taxes	Rural Indirect Taxes	Total Indirect Taxes	Rural Indirect Tax as percentage of Total Indirect Tax	Urban Indirect Tax as percentage of Urban Income	Rural Indirect Tax as percentage of Rural Income
1973/74	1532	1057	2589	40.8	5.8	2.5
1974/75	2462	1824	4284	42.6	5.5	2.3
1975/76	4135	2481	6616	37.5	8.3	4.5
1976/77	3778	2456	6234	39.3	7.3	4.6

Source: GOBD (1979d, Appendix Table 10.) for Column 4. For computing Columns 2 and 3, estimation method suggested by Hossain, et al., (1978, 17-20) was used

TABLE 9 : Estimated Net Tax Burden on the Rural Sector, 1973/74-1976/77  
(million Takas)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Year	Direct Taxes	Indirect Taxes	Concealed Taxes	Total Gross Tax Burden	Public Expenditure in the Rural Sector	Net Tax as % of Rural Sector Income	Per capita Net tax Burden (In Takas)
1973/74	56.30	1057	30.65	1143.95	1570	-1.27	-6.10
1974/75	88.20	1824	397.27	2309.47	2005	0.38	+4.26
1975/76	170.20	2481	-108.56	2543.64	3292	-1.30	-10.23
1976/77	167.70	2456	-136.67	2487.03	4133	-3.08	-21.95

Source: Column 4 from Hossain, et al., (1978, 22); Column 6 from Table 1, col.3; Columns 3 and 2 from Tables 5 and 8 respectively.

These inferences hardly support the notion of "urban bias". They bring out very clearly the class bias of the tax burden in both urban and rural sectors.

## 6. Condition of Urban Poor vis-a-vis Rural Poor

### a) Per capita Rural/Urban Factor Incomes

The first attempt to estimate the rural/urban factor income differential in the context of Pakistan from GDP figures was made by Keith Griffin (1965). He was criticised for equating rural income with agricultural income, and hence underestimating the former. Bose (1968) made another attempt to measure rural/urban income disparity for East Pakistan (i.e. Bangladesh before 1971). This time there was overestimation. The table below presents the series calculated by Sadiq Ahmed, avoiding both over- and under-estimation.

TABLE 10 : Per Capita Rural/Urban Factor Incomes (at 1969/70 factor cost; Taka per annum)

Year	$Y_R/P_R$	$Y_U/P_U$	Index of $Y_R/P_R$ 1969/70=100	Index of $Y_U/P_U$ 1969/70=100
1969/70	291.7	3093.0	-	-
1972/73	210.6	1421.6	72.20	45.96
1973/74	243.6	1387.1	83.50	44.85
1974/75	252.0	1291.0	86.40	41.76
1975/76	252.9	1632.6	86.70	52.78
1976/77	246.3	1614.4	84.40	52.20

Source: Ahmed, S., (1978a, 8)

$Y_R = Y_A + Y_{S1}$ , i.e. rural factor income series are derived from GDP figures by adding agricultural income to income from small-scale industries;  
 $Y_U = GDP - Y_R$ ;  $P_R$  and  $P_U$  are rural and urban populations, respectively.

The table clearly shows that while both rural and urban per capita factor incomes have fallen after independence, per capita urban income has fallen at a faster rate than per capita rural income. In other words, the disparity between urban and rural per capita income was reduced after independence. A closing-up of the urban/rural per capita income gap does not, however, mean that personal income distribution improved. It simply indicated that while the urban poor and the rural poor have both become poorer absolutely, the urban poor have now moved closer to the rural poor. This point is confirmed by Table 11 below on the movement of real wages of industrial and agricultural workers in Bangladesh during the same period.

b) Movement of Real Wages of Industrial and Agricultural Workers

Table 11 below clearly shows that while urban (industrial) and rural (agricultural) workers have both become poorer, the standard of living of the urban workers has moved closer to that of the rural workers. As brought out in a recent study (Dacca University, 1979, 25), 94.39 per cent of the urban poor households are unable to meet the minimum nutritional requirement.

In the light of the above trend, any suggestion of an alliance between the urban poor and the urban rich against the rural sector (as suggested by Lipton) would appear as a cruel joke. In fact, following independence, there have been savage direct attacks on the urban poor, especially those belonging to the informal sector. In 1974 and 1975, the Bangladesh government set about "cleaning up" Dacca, the capital. This meant, more exactly,

forcible "removal" of shanty town and slum squatters to three barbed wire "camps", ten to fifteen miles outside Dacca, and allowing them to "live" there, according to OXFAM "In some of the worst human conditions we have seen anywhere in the world" (Guardian, London, 20 September 1975; see also Clay, 1979a, 130). The change of government <sup>in</sup> August 1975 did not improve matters for the urban poor. Scenes of their forcible eviction from the cities were as commonplace as before, and in any case, those evicted during the Mujib regime continued to be restricted within the "camps". Added to the eviction is the constant harassment that they have to suffer at the hands of officials, particularly the police, in the course of their economic activities as vendors, petty shopkeepers, rickshaw pullers, etc.

#### 7. Bias of the top Policy Formulators and Implementors

One way of delineating the bias of governmental development policies is to examine the socio-economic background of topmost policy makers and implementors, although as Dasgupta (1979, 48) argues quite legitimately, such bias needs to be evaluated, in the last analysis, from the socio-economic background of the beneficiaries (see also Poulantza's criticism of Miliband on this point in Blackburn, 1972). However, the divergence between the two (i.e. class character of policy formulators or implementors on the one hand, and that of the beneficiaries on the other), cannot be very wide in the long run, if the Marxist position\*

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\* "...it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness..." (Marx and Engels, 1950, 329).

TABLE 11 : Indices of Real Wage Rates in Bangladesh (1969/70=100)

Year	1 Wage Rate Index of General Manufacturing	2 Country CLI* of Industrial Workers	3 Real Wage Rate Index of Industrial Workers	4 Wage Rate Index of Agricultural Workers	5 CLI* of Agricultural Workers	6 Real Wage Rate Index of Agricultural Workers
1972/73	134.4	198.5	67.7	128.8	210.4	61.2
1973/74	161.2	268.0	60.1	185.6	327.8	56.6
1974/75	192.4	447.6	43.0	261.4	443.2	86.7
1976/77	222.4	354.0	62.8	267.8	310.2	86.3

Source: Columns 2, 3 and 5 taken from GOBD (1978F); Column 6 obtained by using methodology outlined in Alamgir (1974).

\*Cost of Living Index.

that, in general, actions of individuals are bound to reflect their objective socio-economic standing, holds good.

In the light of the above, two groups have been chosen for close examination from among the top policy makers and implementors. The first is Members of Parliament (MPs) who have so far legislated on various policies and from whom the top executives of the government have been chosen since Bangladesh's independence in 1972. (In this respect, three general elections, i.e. of 1970, 1973 and 1979 are relevant. In the 1970 general elections, the Awami League obtained an absolute majority in then-East Pakistan for both the Pakistan National Assembly and the East Pakistan Assembly elections. After the 1971 war of independence, the Awami League members of both houses constituted the first government of independent Bangladesh. In the 1973 elections, the Awami League once again swept the polls with a massive majority, conceding only a handful of seats to the opposition. Following the coup of 1975 and subsequent martial law, general elections were held once again in 1979. This time the newly-formed Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by the present President, General Ziaur Rahman, won the elections with a big margin and formed the government.)

The second group is Bengali members of the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP),\* who have been occupying the most dominant positions in the permanent civil bureaucracy of Bangladesh since independence.

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\* For evaluation and details on the Civil Service of Pakistan before the breakup of Pakistan, see Munir Ahmed (1964), Ralph Braibanti (1966), Goodnow (1964), M.A. Choudhury (1963), and K.B. Sayeed (1967).

(According to the formal rules of government business, they are basically implementors, and are supposed to advise the elected representatives holding ministerial position only when asked. But as has been pointed out by Nurul Islam (1978, 52-62), Emajuddin Ahmed (1979), Salim Yunus (1976) and Talukdar Maniruzzaman (1979), their actual role in the decision-making process has always been far greater than allowed by their formal powers. It would have been desirable to include the officer cadre of the Bangladesh armed forces in our analysis, given the predominantly military character of the Bangladesh government since August 1975. However, owing to "security" considerations, it was decided to leave them out of our purview.

The following tables provide the socio-economic background of MPs and Bengali members of the erstwhile CSP.

TABLE 12 : Principal Occupations of MPs

Year	Professionals*	Trade & Commerce	Agriculture	Industry	Politics	Others**
1970	48.9	26.9	16.7	-	5.2	2.3
1973	41.4	23.6	17.6	-	12.4	5.0
1979	43.3	28.1	16.3	1.8	4.3	6.2

Source: 1970 and 1973 data from Raunaq Jahan (1976). 1979 data from a survey carried out by the author in July 1979.

\* Professionals include lawyers, teachers, executives, doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, journalists, etc. The most prominent among the professionals are the lawyers. Thus in 1978, about 50 per cent of the professionals were from the legal profession.

\*\* Includes, among others, housewives.

TABLE 13 : Annual Income and Agricultural Land Ownership of MPs

Year	Owning more than 10 acres of agricultural land	With annual income of TK20,000/- and and above*	Owning urban property**
1970	54.0	60.0	n.a.
1973	60.0	70.0	n.a.
1979	70.9	89.3	54.9

Source: 1970 and 1973 data are from Raunaq Jahan (1976).  
1979 data were obtained through survey carried out  
by the dauthor in 1979.

\* For 1979 the figure indicated is actually the percentage of MPs with income of Tk40,000/- and above at current prices. Given the hyper-inflation since 1972, this may be taken as roughly equivalent to Tk20,000/- at 1973 prices. Tk20,000/- represents the annual income of about only one per cent of the population.

\*\* I.e. located within the limits of the municipal areas. The most important among their urban property is land and house.

TABLE 14 : Occupation of Father/Legal Guardian of Bengali Members\*  
of the Erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan at the Time  
of their Entry into the Civil Service

Category of Occupation	Percentage
I a) Jotedar/Zamindar/Rich peasant	16.75
b) Top government/non-government professional job	31.80
c) Big businessman	4.20
II a) Mid-level government/non-government professional job	8.40
b) Medium businessman	1.05
c) Middle peasant	5.25
III a) Poor peasant/menial jobs in rural area	7.35
b) Petty government/non-government professional jobs	25.20
All occupations	100.00

Source: Survey carried out by the author in 1979.

\* Total number on whom information was collected was 187. This also includes those who have retired, died or were thrown out in 1971 and after.

TABLE 15 : Main Occupations of Fathers-in-law of Bengali Members of the erstwhile Civil Service of Pakistan at the time of Marriage

Category of Occupation <sup>1</sup>	Percentage <sup>2</sup>
I	
a) Top government servant/politician/ non-government professional job	63.1
b) Big businessmen	16.5
c) Jotedar/Zamindar/Rich peasant	10.9
II	
Urban mid-level Government/non-government professional job/businessmen	6.8 <sup>3</sup>
III	
Petty government/non-government professional job	2.7 <sup>3</sup>
All occupations	100.00

Source: Survey carried out by the author in 1979.

1. Several of the CSP bureaucrats have been married more than once. In their case, the background of only the first father-in-law has been taken into account.
2. In calculating the percentages for this table, unmarrieds and those marrying foreigners have been excluded (i.e. 11 out of 187).
3. Most marriages in categories II and III were not arranged marriages, and as such, parental background of the bride did not matter.

From the above tables, the following inferences may be drawn.

Firstly, if we assume that about 50 per cent of the professionals (for example, school and college teachers in the rural areas) and 25 per cent of traders and businessmen from among the MPs were located predominantly in rural areas in the pursuit of their respective occupations, then it would appear that about 40-45 per cent of the MPs of all three years were from the rural sector. On the other hand, the percentage of MPs owning more than 10 acres of arable land increased from 54.0 in 1970 to 70.9 in 1979, suggesting that the overwhelming majority of the MPs had rural interests despite their occupations, and were at the top of rural society in terms of the amount of land owned; and since only about 16 per cent of the MPs were engaged in agriculture as a main occupation, the majority of them were absentee agricultural landowners, which also meant they perhaps share-cropped out their land rather than cultivate it through wage labour. Fifty-five per cent of the MPs owned urban property. This suggests that the majority of the MPs had both rural and urban interests to look after.

Secondly, the percentage of MPs with annual incomes of Tk20,000/- and above (which represents the income level of one per cent of the population) increased from 60 in 1970 to 89.3 in 1979. On the other hand, the percentage of MPs with industrial interests increased from nil to only 1.8 during the same period. Similarly, the percentage of MPs with trade and commercial interests also increased from 26.9 in 1970 to 28.1 in 1979. It is, therefore, quite legitimate to infer that the MPs of Bangladesh, by and large, originate from the ranks of the urban and rural rich, and hence are hardly expected to pursue the interests of the urban and rural poor either as parliamentarians or as government Ministers.

Thirdly, Table 14 shows that whereas about 53 per cent of the top bureaucrats came from (urban and rural) rich families, only about 32 per cent were of lower-middle to poor (urban and rural) background, thus belying the findings of Jahan (1972, 96) and Ahmed, E.U., (1978, 435-6), that the reverse was true.\* On the other hand, if the backgrounds of fathers-in-law of these bureaucrats are taken into consideration, their actual class situation becomes even more prominently visible. Thus, as Table 15 clearly shows, 90 per cent of these bureaucrats married into rich (urban and rural) families, suggesting that most bureaucrats originating from poor and lower-middle class families more than made up their initial class disadvantages through the institution of marriage. Although no data could be obtained on their rural land, it seems quite certain that they (as members of the "extended family" consisting of parents, brothers, sisters, in-laws, etc.) were not significantly different from the MPs, although given their predominantly urban location, they themselves were more owners of urban than rural property. However, as noted in Chapter 8, the background of central government bureaucrats at lower levels is more rural than urban. Thus, the class background of MPs and bureaucrats suggests a marriage of urban rich interests with rural rich interests (see also Blair, 1978, 69-70). In any case, there is nothing at all to suggest that either the MPs or the top bureaucrats separately or together, represent the combined interests of urban rich and urban poor against the rural sector.

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\* One reason for such a finding is that their sample was very small and included mostly senior members of the service.

8. Agriculture's Terms of Trade vis-a-vis Industry

A clear test of the "urban bias" thesis may be obtained by examining agriculture's terms of trade vis-a-vis industry over a sufficiently long period of time. If there is an urban bias (more appropriately industrial bias), it must necessarily be reflected in a secular deterioration in agriculture's terms of trade vis-a-vis industry. However, even when agriculture's terms of trade show an improvement, their effects are likely to be different for different rural classes. Thus, in the case of an improvement, a most likely outcome is a net gain for the large farmers as sellers of food grains (and raw materials) and a deterioration in the wellbeing of poor and landless peasants as purchasers of food grains. It can, of course, be argued that an increase in the real income of large farmers owing to this improvement may cause an increase in the demand for both manufactured goods as well as services performed by the poorer sections of the peasantry. However, where the supply of agricultural produce is not very income or price elastic, and where the demand of large farmers is restricted to durable consumer goods as part of a wasteful consumption pattern, the demand for additional labour may be negligible (see Byres, 1974; Mitra, 1977; Khusro, 1967; Thamarajakshi, 1969, for detailed theoretical discussion and Indian empirical evidence in this respect). In fact, as will be argued later, it may even depress employment and wage levels. Unfortunately, empirical work on the terms of trade for Bangladesh is limited, and

in any case, only net barter terms of trade\* data are available.

Table 16 below presents the net barter terms of trade for Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan) for the period 1958-69.

TABLE 16 : Index Numbers of Agricultural Manufacturing Prices and Agriculture's Terms of Trade (three year moving averages) for Bangladesh, 1958-69

Year	Agricultural Prices	Manufacturing Prices	AGR/MFG
1958/61	107.24	99.15	108.14
1959/62	111.34	100.01	111.41
1960/63	112.36	100.66	111.78
1961/64	101.93	100.57	101.35
1962/65	105.46	100.11	105.37
1963/66	112.91	101.38	111.19
1964/67	129.10	104.67	123.07
1965/68	134.03	108.62	123.41
1966/69	140.79	111.68	126.13

Source: S.R. Lewis (1970b, 385)

The above table clearly shows that despite a downward trend for a few years, (a) the terms of trade always remained in favour of agriculture (i.e. its value never fell below 100), and (b) it showed a clear increase for the period as a whole.

The only work that has been done on Bangladesh's intersectoral terms of trade since the Lewis study was by Atiqur Rahman (1979, 286-88)

\* I.e. prices received by agriculture for its marketings of commodities relative to prices paid by agriculture for the purchases it makes of manufactured goods, and the weights are the estimated sales and marketings of agricultural output and estimated purchases of manufactured goods by the agricultural sector. However, the income terms of trade are more appropriate than barter terms of trade for comparing welfare at different periods of time. It is obtained by correcting net barter terms of trade for changes in values of agriculture's "exports" and "imports" vis-a-vis industry.

He took up two rural areas (Phulpur and Comilla), and estimated for these (with appropriate weights) not only overall terms of exchange series, but also terms of exchange by class\* for the period 1952/53-1974/75. Since it was not possible to infer anything clearly from these series directly, he fitted linear time trends of the type  $Y = a+bt$  in order to examine goodness of fit and sign and magnitude of coefficient b for trend analysis. From the results obtained he concluded the following:

- a) "Over the greater part of the period we are concerned with, all terms of exchange of the rural households were gradually moving in their favour", and
- b) "In the face of an overall betterment in the terms of exchange for all households, that of the small farmers nevertheless deteriorated over time".\*\*

Thus, the above evidence not only explodes the "urban bias" hypothesis, but also lends support to the argument that overall improvement in agriculture's terms of trade may be harmful to the rural poor. Also, as Khan (1976, 32) points out, in the specific context of Bangladesh, "The improvement in the sectoral terms of trade for agriculture was due mainly to a sharp rise in the relative price of rice. Within agriculture, the rise in the price of rice was much higher than that of jute, the competing cash crop. Labour input per acre is much higher for jute than for rice. There was a sharp shift in acreage away from jute and in favour of rice which resulted in a lower aggregate demand for labour. For the year

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\* He divided owner-farmers into three classes, namely small, medium and large, and tenants into two classes, pure tenants and owner-cum-tenants.  
 \*\* Similar results have been reported also for India by Bardhan (1970, 132). He found that over the period 1954/55-1964/65, the average price of cereals paid by the bottom 10 per cent of rural population increased faster than that of the top 10 per cent.

as a whole, jute acreage is small but for the mid-monsoon season it is nearly a quarter of the total". Thus, while the overall demand for labour for the year as a whole may have declined only modestly, the effect on employment and wages in the mid-monsoon season as a consequence of improvement in agriculture's terms of trade, must have been very significant. On the other hand, as Byres (1974, 139-40) argues, in the context of India, such improvement may be detrimental not only to the urban poor (as net purchasers of food) but also to that section of the urban rich interested in industrial production. Indeed, the preponderance of merchants and traders as distinct from industrialists among the Bengali urban rich (as the urban class analysis in a preceding section showed) is quite consistent with this finding.

#### Summary

From the foregoing discussion, it is possible to establish a distinct class bias in state economic policies and the manner in which these are ultimately implemented, since the principal beneficiaries of such policies are the urban and the rural rich, to the almost total exclusion of both urban and rural poor. In so far as these state policies support a basically anti-productive urban and rural rich, these also have clear adverse implications for increasing production, and consequently also for the total social surplus that can be made available for distribution.

CHAPTER ELEVEN  
THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION  
OF RURAL POVERTY IN BANGLADESH

This chapter deals with the external dimension of rural poverty in Bangladesh, particularly since 1972. More specifically, an attempt is made to assess firstly, the extent and mechanisms of resource inflows to and outflows from Bangladesh, and the level and implications (particularly for the rural sector) of net outflows, if any, and secondly, the effects of resource inflows on production and distribution, particularly in the rural sector.

Direction and Level of Resource Movement

The major resource inflow mechanisms for Bangladesh are three: foreign aid, private foreign investments and remittances of Bangladeshis working abroad. On the other hand, the principal ways of resource transfer from Bangladesh are debt servicing; repatriation of profits by foreign investors and earnings of foreign personnel working in Bangladesh; unequal (but legal) foreign trade; smuggling; brain drain, and plunder by foreign troops stationed in Bangladesh.

Foreign Aid

The following table provides an idea of the level of aid flow into Bangladesh since her independence in December 1971.

TABLE 1 : Extent of Foreign Aid Flow into Bangladesh 1971/72-1977/78  
(million dollars, current prices)

Year	Total Amount Committed	Total Amount Disbursed	Col.3 as percentage of Annual Development Expenditure
1971/72	627.1	243.5	n.a.
1972/73	940.8	558.7	n.a.
1973/74	553.5	480.6	60.7
1974/75	1282.4	919.2	134.0
1975/76	930.4	813.9	86.5
1976/77	657.0	502.2	87.4
1977/78	1159.0	796.7	76.5
Total	6150.2	4314.8	-

Source: GOBD (1978a, 12) and GOBD (1979a, 89-90)

Thus on average, Bangladesh has been receiving foreign assistance worth \$616.4 million yearly since independence. The importance of foreign aid is brought out sharply in the above table: on average, it has accounted for above 75 per cent of the yearly development expenditures. It has been observed, "Since the latter (i.e. development expenditures) normally include several items that should be regarded as current expenditures, the true figures are even higher. According to World Bank estimates, in which corrections have been made for this and several other factors that distort the real size of both revenues and expenditures in Bangladesh budgets, public savings have actually been negative during the last few years, which implies that external assistance has not only financed total public investment, but also some public consumption. In other words, foreign aid actually finances over 100 per cent of public investment or almost 10 per cent of GDP" (Vylder, 1979, 35). As one government document also admitted, "Bangladesh has remained under an 'oxygen tent' far too long" (GOBD, 1975a, 28).

However, it will be noticed that there is a significant gap between commitment and actual disbursement, the shortfall being to the tune of about 30 per cent. As will be observed from Table 2 below, the developed capitalist countries (i.e. USA, West European countries, Japan, Canada and Australia) and multi-lateral organisations financed mainly by them (e.g. World Bank, UN system, Asian Development Bank, etc.), provided 82.3 per cent of the aid received by Bangladesh so far.

#### Private Foreign Investment

The level of private foreign investment (hereafter PFI) is very low in Bangladesh. According to one estimate, it accounted for only two per cent of the industrial capital of Bangladesh (Ahmad, Q.K., 1978, 411). This was mainly because before independence, almost all foreign investment was located in the Western Wing of Pakistan, and West Pakistani capital, in turn, dominated commerce and industry in East Pakistan. The main areas where PFI is at present concentrated are motor assembly, pharmaceuticals, shoe making, banking and insurance, tea gardens and tobacco. The value of these investments is estimated to have totalled less than US\$30million (NMJ, EPW, 25 March 1978). The owners of this capital are mostly US and UK citizens.

After Bangladesh's independence, fresh inroads of PFI to Bangladesh were blocked by deliberate government policies aiming at sweeping nationalisation (however, interestingly enough, these did not touch the existing PFI in Bangladesh in any way. According to Umar (1975, 3,) this was because of aid suspension threats from the USA, under the Hickenlooper Amendment), a very low ceiling for private investment and the requirements for PFI to be associated with the public sector

TABLE 2 : Sources of Foreign Aid Committed to and Received by Bangladesh up to June 1978\*

Source	Aid committed	Percentage of total Aid committed	(m.dollars, round figures)	
			Aid disbursed	Percentage of total Aid disbursed
Developed capitalist countries (DCC)	3339	52.3	2447	53.8
Multilateral organisations financed by DCC	1920	30.1	1295	28.5
USSR and East European countries	461	7.2	261	5.7
OPEC and members of OPEC	242	3.8	200	4.3
India	311	4.9	291	6.6
Others	105	1.7	48	1.1
All sources	6378	100.0	4542	100.0

Source: Compiled from GOBD, 1978b, 19-28.

\* Includes \$227million of the aid burden for the pre-1971 period accepted by the government of Bangladesh.

and under a minority equity participation of 49 per cent and below (Nurul Islam, 1977, 220-2). However, since August 1975 (i.e. after the fall of the Mujib regime) not only have these restrictions been scrapped one after another, but also a number of positive incentives have been offered in order to attract PFI to Bangladesh. Among others, these include guarantees against future nationalisation, tax holidays, a free trade processing zone at Chittagong, free repatriation of profits and other earnings, and unrestricted entry into any industry and activity (GOBD, 1979b, 14-5). However, despite these attractions, the PFI response so far has been negligible. Thus, between 1975 and 1978 the sanction of foreign investment proposals amounted to about TK130.8million, but very little of it has actually come in. According to the Director-General of Industries, Bangladesh Government (interview with the author in August 1979), this situation has been caused by Bangladesh's weak industrial infrastructure and tradition and administrative bottlenecks and also competition from other Asian countries in attracting PFI. This list will obviously remain incomplete unless it is added that PFI's shy response in Bangladesh is to be primarily accounted for by Bangladesh's lack of "political stability" and lack of mineral raw minerals. Thus, the only big deal in which PFI shows an interest in Bangladesh is the construction of a massive liquified natural gas complex for the exclusive purpose of exporting liquid natural gas. In fact, in 1979, the government entered into agreement with a multi-national corporation to this effect. To sum up, during the period under study, the flow of PFI to Bangladesh may be taken as negligible.

cheap  
unskilled  
labour

### Remittances of Bangladeshis Abroad

There are, at present, two kinds of remittances, namely remittances for family maintenance and remittances under the Wage Earners' Scheme, introduced in the latter part of 1974. The latter consists of importing certain goods into the country instead of sending cash. The flow of remittances is ensured by allowing these to be exchanged at free market rates, which are appreciably higher than the official rate of exchange. The following table provides an idea of the level of such remittances since 1972.

TABLE 3 : Level of Remittances to Bangladesh, 1972/73-1978/79

Year	Amount Received	(million £s)
Year	Amount Received	Monthly Average
1972/73 (11 months)	6.90	0.63
1973/74	4.35	0.36
1974/75	4.10	0.39
1975/76	25.53	2.08
1976/77	30.90	2.57
1977/78	54.30	4.52
1978/79	63.82	5.32

Source: GOBD (1976a, 10-12) for data up to 1975/76; the rest from DG Manpower Directorate

Thus, on average, Bangladesh has been receiving about £28.5million or \$71.25million yearly since independence via remittances. One notes that the remittance flow has increased sharply since 1975, and in 1976/77, exceeded the government's yearly target of Tk200 crore (i.e. £50million), and that this has constituted invisible transfers which are second only to jute as a foreign exchange earner. This

became possible owing to the introduction of the Wage Earners' Scheme in the latter part of 1974 and the enhancement of the exchange rate for these remittances to the free market level in 1976.

#### Debt Servicing

The extent of aid indicated in Tables 1 and 2 consists of both grants and loans, and it is in respect of the latter that debt servicing is required. The table below indicates the relative shares of grants and loans in the aid received.

TABLE 4 : Share of Loans and Grants in the Foreign Aid received by Bangladesh up to June 1978

Source	Loan/Total aid Ratio
DCCs	0.57
Multi-lateral countries financed by DCCs	0.49
USSR and East European countries	0.86
OPEC and members	0.59
India	0.42
Others	0.27
Total	0.56

Source: Compiled from GOBD (1978a, 12-14)

The table below shows the alarming growth of the debt burden on Bangladesh since independence.

TABLE 5 : Outstanding Amounts of External Public Debt (million dollars)

Year	Debt Outstanding at Beginning of Period	
	Disbursement only	Including undisbursed
1972/73	36	130
1973/74	228	668
1974/75	500	1097
1975/76	1366	2351
1976/77	1812	2712
1977/78*	2079	3060
1985/86*	-	6000

\*Provisional; also includes \$375million debt liability that Bangladesh Government had to assume in respect of pre-1971 foreign aid visibly utilised in Bangladesh

Source: Vylder (1979, 38)

Debt servicing terms have generally been soft and medium. However, as of December 1977, about 8 per cent of the committed loans was in hard terms, i.e. the interest rate was 5 per cent or more (GOBD, 1978c, 7).

The following table provides an estimate of the debt servicing burden on Bangladesh in respect of the loans contracted before and after 1971.

TABLE 6 : Extent of Debt Service Burden on Bangladesh 1973/74-1979/80 (million dollars)

Year	Debt Service (Interest + Principal) (2)	Total Export Earnings (3)	Debt Service Ratio (%) (2÷3 x 100)
1973/74	17.50	372.91	4.69
1974/75	70.87	391.98	18.08
1975/76	55.62	382.88	14.53
1976/77	98.71	422.00	23.39
1977/78	115.00	493.74	23.29
1978/79	131.00	600.00	21.82
1979/80	135.00	n.a	n.a

Source: GOBD (1978c, 13)

Thus, on average, \$89.1 million has been the yearly debt service burden on Bangladesh. The debt service ratio has been on a steep increase, reaching nearly 25 per cent in 1977-78. A government document states, "This is surely not a comfortable situation" (GOBD, 1978c, 5). That this is a gross understatement is borne out by the fact that between 1973 and 1977 the debt service ratio for non-oil-producing developing countries remained between 8.5 per cent and 11.5 per cent (Seira, 1979, 130).

Repatriation of PFI Profits and Earning of Foreign Personnel working in Bangladesh

This is an area where hard statistics are difficult to come by. The Government of Bangladesh have no consolidated statistics on these matters. An attempt by the author to peruse the audited accounts of some of the foreign firms in Bangladesh failed owing to non-co-operation on the part of the management of these firms. However, in 1977 the Government of Bangladesh (Ministry of Commerce) computed the profit levels of foreign pharmaceutical companies operating in Bangladesh for 1975 and 1976 from audited balance sheets of the respective enterprises. These are presented below.

TABLE 7: Profit Levels of Foreign Pharmaceutical Companies in Bangladesh (millions takas)

Name of Company	Equity Capital	Post-tax Profits		Annual Profits as % of Equity Capital	
		1975	1976	1975	1976
M/S Hoecht	1.137	10.955	9.821	800	717
M/S Fisons	2.100	13.855	13.657	660	650
M/S Squib	2.378	12.137	5.546	510	233
M/S Pfizer	17.250	28.780	32.477	167	188
M/S BPI	7.500	11.393	9.876	152	132
M/S Pharmadesh	1.000	1.135	1.286	115	129
M/S Albert David	3.200	3.729	2.222	114	68
M/S Square	0.423	n.a.	0.257	n.a.	61
M/S Nicholas	1.075	0.653	0.596	61	55
Total	36.376	82.637	75.738	227	208

Source: Obtained from Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh in July 1979.

It may be pointed out here that the maximum profit proposed by the Cost and Price Consultative Committee of the Bangladesh Ministry of Commerce for the pharmaceutical industry was 35 per cent on equity capital:\* and that in India, the maximum profit allowed for pharmaceuticals is 14 per cent on equity capital (Moinuddin Ahmed, 1978, 25 and 41). Also, as pointed out by the same author, the rate of profit shown above may reflect only the tip of the iceberg in view of the unified costing system followed by these companies, whereby some of the head office and parent company costs are charged to the account of the local subsidiaries; and raw materials, packaging materials, plant/machinery, patents, management and expatriate staff are imported from fixed sources (i.e. parent/associate companies) and as such, their costs are heavily padded.\*\* It was mentioned earlier that total PFI in Bangladesh amounted to about \$30million in 1972 and that there has been a negligible inflow of PFI subsequently. Now, assuming that on average the yearly profit rate of all PFI in Bangladesh amounts to 200 per cent, and that about 75 per cent of the profits are repatriated (allowing 25 per cent for capital replenishment), on average the amount of profit repatriated from Bangladesh comes to \$60million per year. We are also assuming here that this figure includes the earnings repatriated by foreign expatriates employed in the foreign enterprises located in Bangladesh.

\$60m  
less  
25%  
X

Let us now consider the earnings (and their repatriation) of foreigners obtained from public foreign aid received by Bangladesh. There are generally two ways in which such earnings are derived. Firstly, most

\* In one typical drug company, 76 per cent of the shares are owned by Americans, with 6 per cent of the shares distributed to local elite doctors and businessmen, thus ensuring both sale and a stake for influential circles in Bangladesh (Briscoe, 1977, 2).

\*\* For discussion in this respect in general see Jalee (1969, 116), Sau (1978, 62).

foreign grants/loans have a component for financing shipping charges, employment of foreign "expertise" for actually running and planning projects and carrying out evaluation and feasibility studies, etc. Secondly, for certain projects/schemes whose major costs are borne by the loan/grant provider, the Bangladesh Government is required to meet, out of its own resources, "matching" costs to maintain foreign experts coming under such projects/schemes.

Except in the cases of private voluntary organisations like OXFAM, CARE, IRC, Seventh Day Adventists, World Council of Churches, Food for the Hungry, etc., the involvement of foreigners in day-to-day administration of projects is minimal. They are employed mainly for providing "technical assistance". In recent times, with the growth of "project aid", they are also increasingly coming as members of foreign consultancy firms (such as M/S IECC of the USA, M/S P. and A. Management Consultants, and M/S EIU of the UK, etc.) since prior feasibility and evaluation studies and getting such work done through international tender are generally insisted upon by the aid providers.\* Matching funds of the Bangladesh government spent on acquiring foreign services and expertise are much less than those provided by foreign grants/loans for such purposes. However, that portion of the foreign expertise/services funded out of foreign loans may be considered as derived from Bangladesh government resources, since such loans have to be repaid with interest.

It may be argued that in so far as these services/expertise could not have been provided by Bangladeshis, earnings of foreign personnel on

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\* Interviews with Planning Ministry officials in June 1979.

account of these should not be deducted from the gross foreign aid in calculating the net foreign aid received by Bangladesh. However, except in the case of shipping, such an argument is hardly tenable for Bangladesh, since she is herself, as discussed later, an exporter of highly-skilled manpower. Thus, a 1976 government document claimed: "...Bangladesh is fortunate to have a vast reservoir of qualified manpower to man all activities normally undertaken in a modern economy" (GOBD, 1976b, 1). According to one estimate, it costs the Bangladesh Water Development Board about Tk200,000 per foreign expert per month, and not only could such work have been easily performed by Bangladeshis, but also at less than Tk4,000 per expert per month, i.e. at one-fiftieth of the rate enjoyed by foreign experts (Karim, 1980). Shipping is obviously one area where Bangladesh could not possibly have provided the required services, given her present tonnage. But, on the other hand, Bangladesh has little manouverability in acquiring the cheapest services from the international shipping market, in view of the tied nature of foreign aid. Thus, although US shipping charges are considerably higher than international market prices, the Bangladesh Government is required to hire US shipping companies for the huge food shipments to Bangladesh from the United States.\*

Government statistics on foreign aid utilisation do not provide any breakdown which might allow one to estimate the amount spent out of foreign loans/grants and domestic resources for hiring foreign

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\* Interviews with officials of the External Resource Division, Ministry of Finance, Government of Bangladesh, in July 1979.

services/expertise that could have been replaced by those of Bangladeshis. However, according to one rough estimate, which includes the differences between actual and ruling international freight and insurance costs, about 12 per cent of the total foreign aid received by Bangladesh is spent on hiring foreign expertise/services (Hossain Kasru, 1979). Even if we make a highly unrealistic under-estimation based on the assumptions that (a) the amount spent out of domestic resources for acquiring foreign expertise/services is negligible, and (b) 40 per cent of the earnings of expatriates from out of foreign aid/grants are spent within Bangladesh, the amount repatriated by these expatriates annually comes to about \$44million, which is slightly above 60 per cent of the annual remittances sent home by Bangladeshis working abroad.

#### Unequal Exchange in Foreign Trade

In order to evaluate the level of resource transfer through unequal exchange in Bangladesh's foreign trade, it is important first to locate the trend in the time series of Bangladesh's terms of trade. These are presented in the table below.

TABLE 8 : Terms of Trade for Bangladesh, 1972/73-1976/77

Period	Commodity Terms of Trade*	Income Terms of Trade**
1972/73	100.00	100.00
1973/74	62.53	63.38
1974/75	60.06	46.67
1975/76	52.19	50.57
1976/77	63.00	56.48

Source: Rahim and Haque (1978, 157) and GOBD (1979c, 38).

\* Ratio of prices of exports and imports, and measures the trend of the physical amount of foreign goods received in exchange for one physical unit of export goods.

\*\* Measures changes in income earned on account of exports through changes in commodity terms of trade.

It is clear from the above table that Bangladesh's terms of trade have severely deteriorated over the years. Two sets of factors explain this trend. Firstly, as is the case with most Third World countries, Bangladesh's main trading partners are the advanced countries of the world (of both Western and Eastern blocs) and this places Bangladesh in an inherently weak bargaining position vis-a-vis the monopoly power of these advanced countries (for details on the actual mechanisms of unequal exchange between developed and Third World countries, see Ranjit Sau, 1976, Ch.3; Emmanuel, 1972, 160-3, and Braun, 1972).\* The second set of factors relate to the following specific situations pertaining to Bangladesh: currency devaluations, over-invoicing of imports and under-invoicing of exports, tied nature of foreign aid and barter trade, and direct political pressures. We may consider each of these in turn.

#### Currency Devaluations

The first devaluation came immediately after independence, lowering the value of the Taka by 53 per cent. The second devaluation took place in May 1975, this time slashing the value of the Taka by 58 per cent with respect to the pound sterling. This turned out to be 90 per cent with respect to the US dollar due to the deterioration of the value of the pound sterling (World Bank, 1976, 234-5). There were four small revaluations in 1976. Despite these, the Taka-pound exchange rate in 1977 was 121 per cent lower than it was in 1972. There were basically two reasons behind these devaluations. Firstly, heavy deficit finance, smuggling, plunder and anarchy in the economy following independence sharply eroded the actual value of the Taka (there

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\* For empirical evidence in the context of Third World countries for the 1950s and 1960s, see S. Dell (1963, 184); Frumkien (1969, 132-6), and Jalee (1968, 45).

being an abnormally high margin between black market and official rates of exchange) so that either economic management had to improve, or an administratively less demanding option like devaluation had to be sought. Secondly, there were serious pressures from the Bangladesh Aid Consortium (consisting of Western countries) and the IMF in favour of the 1975 devaluation (Shafiqul Islam, 1978; Lindquist, 1978), and Bangladesh, being entirely dependent on aid from the West, could not but yield to such pressures. The actual effect of devaluation on foreign trade was that while the volume of exports increased marginally owing to cheaper export prices, the terms of trade sharply deteriorated since imports became costlier and exports became cheaper.

#### Over-invoicing of Imports and Under-invoicing of Exports

Under-invoicing of exports and over-invoicing of imports are the two major techniques of resource transfer through official trade in Bangladesh (Rahim, 1977, 115; Faruque, 1976, 171; IMF, 1974, 35). For both these operations, the main purpose is to hoard foreign exchange abroad, and obviously these cannot be carried out without the active collusion of foreign suppliers/importers (GOBD, 1979d, VII, 10). Such practices are not new to Bangladesh; they were quite rampant during the Pakistan period, and as Winston (1970) pointed out at that time, such a tendency was augmented by the Bonus Voucher Scheme under which industrialists were allowed to import certain machinery and goods at an official exchange rate which was much lower than the black market exchange rate. An exactly similar situation prevailed in Bangladesh between 1972 and 1975; despite the 1972 devaluation, the

differential between official and free market exchange rates was considerable. However, the exchange rate differential is not the only reason in this regard. As in the case of smuggling, consumption sprees, educational expenses and greater security of capital abroad and tax evasions of black money at home are some of the important motives for such activities of Bangladeshi exporters and importers. However, it is difficult to agree with Rahim's (1977, 116) assertion that "with the nationalisation of jute export and handling of the bulk of imports by the TCB,\* the scope of such clandestine transfer of resources is vastly reduced". On the contrary, nationalisation might have enhanced this tendency. The government bureaucracy taking over the export-import trade could be as (if not more) corrupt as private exporters and importers, especially since their formal pay was disproportionately lower than their effective power and the fact that there was little public accountability for the trade negotiations they entered into with foreign suppliers and importers. It is impossible to quantify resource transfers on account of such under- and over-invoicing, given its highly clandestine nature. However, what is important is that it is ultimately reflected in the terms of international trade.

#### Tied Nature of Foreign Aid\*\*

An internal government document reports: "Commodity aid is usually tied to sources of procurement except in the case of IDA funds and some allocations from FRG, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

The tying of aid creates two kinds of problem. First, the prices

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\* Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, which is state owned.

\*\* As will be detailed later, there are three kinds of aid: Project aid, food aid, and commodity aid (i.e. commodities other than food).

turn out to be too high and uncompetitive...Secondly, knowledge of the market of the individual countries becomes very important in deciding the shopping list" (GOBD, 1978a, 3). This is also corroborated by the candid admission in a recent British government statement on overseas aid: "The greater part of our bilateral aid is tied to procurement in the United Kingdom, and so provides valuable orders for British firms" (Guardian, 24 February 1980). The effect of such aid on increasing import costs and hence depressing terms of trade hardly needs any elaboration.

#### Barter Trade

Bangladesh has considerable barter trade with India, the USSR and East European countries. As Rahim and Alam (1977, 42-5) argue, not only was the main objective of quick imports not met, but also such trade is detrimental to Bangladesh's interests: barter trade includes items which could have been readily sold in the international market; the prices offered by Bangladesh's barter trade partners, in comparison with international market prices, are disadvantageous for Bangladesh in respect of both exports and imports. Thus, in 1974, green chillies bought by the USSR under barter from Bangladesh were resold to Iraq at much higher prices and, similarly, there are reports that pesticides and chemicals sold to Bangladesh under barter were bought from third countries at lower world market prices.

#### Direct Political Pressures

Two well-known cases may be cited in this respect. Immediately after Bangladesh's independence, China offered to lift 40,000 bales of jute from Bangladesh at about 40 per cent above the international price. The deal failed to materialise owing to

Indian intervention (Sen, A, 1974, 202; Ali, 1973, 168). In the 1975 Indo-Bangladesh trade negotiations, the Bangladesh delegation was forced to agree to import Indian coal at \$47 per ton, when only a year previously Bangladesh obtained Indian coal at only \$12 a ton, and that also not in hard currency. A year later, with the displacement of the pro-Indian government in Bangladesh, renegotiation led to fixing the price at \$29 a ton (interview with the then Coal Controller of the Bangladesh Government in August 1979, and Evening Post, 18 February 1976).

The deteriorating terms of trade as presented in Table 9 thus represent the cumulative effect of the factors enumerated above. Below we present an estimate of the deterioration in the balance of trade of Bangladesh (i.e. transfers through unequal exchange) due to adverse movement of the commodity terms of trade.

TABLE 9 : Transfers from Bangladesh owing to Adverse Movement in the Commodity Terms of Trade, 1973/74-1975/76 (million dollars)

Period	Deterioration in the balance of trade due to price movement	Foreign economic assistance received by Bangladesh	Col.2 as % of Col.3
1973/74	-167.76	480.6	34.9
1974/75	-366.68	919.2	39.9
1975/76	-527.43	813.9	64.8
Total	-1061.87	2213.7	47.9

Source: Col.2 from Rahim and Haque (1978, 162) Col.3 from Table 1.

The above table suggests that, on average, the yearly outward transfers owing to deterioration in Bangladesh's terms of trade constitutes about 48 per cent of the yearly foreign aid actually received. However, as Rahim and Haque, i.e. the authors of these estimates, point out: "Since the commodities covered in this analysis constitute about 89 per cent of total exports and 64 per cent of total imports, the actual deterioration in the balance of trade due to price movement will be estimated around 70 per cent of the total disbursement of foreign economic assistance to Bangladesh" (p.161). In other words, on average, the yearly outward transfers due to deteriorating terms of trade amounts to about \$431.48million, given that the average annual receipt of foreign aid amounts to \$616.4million.

#### Smuggling

It is often argued that smuggling which is, in fact, free trade, must improve welfare since exchange takes place free of tariff and quantitative restrictions. However, in a situation of legal trade existing side-by-side with illegal trade (i.e. smuggling), government loses scarce foreign exchange and import duties. But this, in itself, may not constitute resource transfer, merely more profits for a country's traders at the expense of that country's government. In order to understand the unilateral transfer of resources from Bangladesh through smuggling across the Indo-Bangladesh borders after 1972, it is necessary first to locate the main compulsions of such smuggling. Firstly, owing to the looting and plundering of the economy by Pakistani and Indian troops during 1971 and after, scarcity and resourcelessness became the dominant characteristic of the economy.

Consequently, demand for consumer goods from neighbouring India rose sharply and Indian goods became over-priced in relation to Bangladeshi goods being exchanged. Secondly, after assuming power, the ruling party cadres and bureaucrats, and traders supporting them, took to "primitive accumulation": hoarding, currency racketeering, speculation, reselling permits and licences obtained through political patronage, large-scale pilfering and forcible confiscation of aid and relief goods, assets of the nationalised sector, abandoned property, evasion of taxes and excise duties, taking "cuts" out of the state's foreign purchases, etc. (Siddiqui, 1975, 42-3; Umar, 1974, 186-91).\* In this way, vast quantities of "black money" were accumulating in the country (Mazumdar, E., 1976). Considerations such as tax evasion, security (this was particularly important in view of the deteriorating law and order in the country and increasing armed political opposition to the ruling party), conspicuous consumption requirements, fear of further fall in value of the local currency and higher bank rates abroad (Rahim, 1977, 11) created conditions ripe for capital transfer out of Bangladesh's boundaries. Given the ruling party's patronage (Umar, 1975, 142), this black money thus became the chief financier of smuggling, with the result that most of the proceeds of Bangladeshi goods sold in the Indian market found their way into Indian banks rather than returning to Bangladesh in the form of equivalent Indian goods. Also, since the capital transfer motive was very strong and the capital being transferred

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\* See also Emajuddin Ahmed (1979, 38).

was in any case "easy money", the terms of transfer were found to be very adverse. Thirdly, India used various means to depress the staying-power of Bangladesh's exports, consisting mostly of agricultural products (some of which were perishable commodities such as fish, milk, eggs, vegetables, etc.). Thus, as pointed out earlier, India prevented Bangladesh from selling jute to China at highly favourable prices. More important, India failed to lift Bangladeshi goods she had agreed to import under the official trade, and Indian officials were stiff-necked in buying jute from Bangladesh, offering a price much lower than the international market price (Hindustan Standard, 24 September 1974). This glut also created favourable conditions for smuggling of Bangladeshi goods to India at throwaway prices. The abiding Indian interest, particularly in jute smuggling, was revealed by the fact that although for several decades India was neither able to export raw jute nor produce enough jute to feed her own industries, in 1973 she exported one million bales of raw jute, and by 1974, not only were her existing mills running at full capacity, but she had also started to set up new jute mills (Bongo Barta, 24 November 1973; Amrita Bazar Patrika, 5 September 1974). Fourthly, devaluation of the Bangladeshi currency in 1972 at par with the Indian rupee, and printing of huge amounts of counterfeit currency by Indian businessmen\* crippled the purchasing power of the Bangladeshi taka. Finally the Bangladesh government deliberately fixed the minimum price of jute at a level much lower than the Indian minimum price, so that, given the administrative laxities, it became more profitable to smuggle

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\* The Groone Amsterdamer (Dutch Weekly), 15 August 1973; Naya Yug (Bengali Weekly) 6 April 1973; Gano Kantho (Bengali Daily), 11 March 1973.

jute across the border than to sell the same to Bangladesh's nationalised jute industries (Siddiqui, 1975, 32).

Thus, smuggling in the specific context of the Indo-Bangladesh border implied, by and large, a one-way resource transfer from Bangladesh. After the displacing of a pro-Indian government in August 1975, smuggling was reduced to a trickle (Clay, 1979a). However, by the beginning of 1977, smuggling had again begun to pick up, although it never came anywhere near the staggering proportions of the pre-1975 period. The Hindustan Times (overseas) reported on 24 January 1980: "Meanwhile, Mrs. Gandhi's victory has softened the stern attitude of the Bangladesh Rifles and their tight grip on the border has all of a sudden become relaxed. Fish and other perishable commodities which used to come to the border markets in India have again started coming in full measure and freely".

What has so far been the resource transfer level through smuggling? Rahim's (1977) estimates of outgoing smuggling for 1972-73 and 1973-74 based on the value of goods seized by the Bangladesh Rifles are as follows:

TABLE 10 : Estimates of Outgoing smuggling

(P=0.0007=probability of failure) (million takas)

Year	Total outgoing goods seized by the Bangladesh Rifles	Total attempted (2%P)	Total smuggled out successfully (m.Tks) (3-2)
1973-73	4.756	6794.29	6789.53
1973-74	6.388	9125.71	9119.33

Source: Rahim (1977, 124-5).

After the change of regime in August 1975, a government handout stated that between December 1971 and August 1975 (i.e.  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years), goods worth Tk60,000million were smuggled into India (Holiday, 28 March 1976). In other words, according to this calculation, the average yearly value of out-smuggling amounted to about Tk14,280million during this period. On the other hand, according to Rahim's estimate, the average yearly value of such smuggling is about Tk7,954million, almost half of the official estimate. Let us accept the lower estimate. If we now assume that the average value of smuggled-out goods during the subsequent  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years was one-tenth of what it was during the first  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, then the average value of the yearly out-smuggling during the first seven years of Bangladesh's independence comes to about Tk8,750million or \$437.5million. If we accept Dahar's (1974, 25-40) estimate that goods worth only half the value of out-smuggling goods came back through in-smuggling, then the net outward transfer per year through smuggling works out at \$218.75million.

#### Brain Drain

Immediately following Bangladesh's independence, the brain drain took a serious turn. Although there were formal restrictions on the exit of professionals (especially doctors and engineers), the exodus was quite widespread. Also, many Bangladeshis who had gone abroad before and after 1972 for higher education on scholarships arranged by the government through foreign "technical assistance", did not return home on completion of their courses. The main factors operating in this regard were deterioration in law and order, a drastic fall in the standard of living, gross political patronage and interference, an inability to absorb

trained manpower, etc. internally, and the attraction of better pay and facilities externally. In early 1976, i.e. after the installation of the military regime, formal restrictions on brain drain were withdrawn; in fact, a Bureau of Manpower was specifically created to handle manpower export, the grounds being that, "Manpower export, in addition to easing pressure on the home labour market,\* has good foreign exchange earning prospects by way of remittance by those working abroad" (GOBD, 1978d, 271). Between April 1976 and August 1979, 61,769 persons left for abroad on jobs arranged either by the Manpower Bureau or manpower export agencies recognised by the government (i.e. at the average rate of 1,544 persons per month). Of these, only 17,232 (i.e. about 28 per cent) could be described as "unskilled".\*\* The main countries absorbing Bangladeshi manpower at this time were Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Nigeria, Uganda, Malaysia and the Gulf States. The Manpower Bureau has no records for the legal/illegal exits taking place before 1976 (although it could confirm the widely held notion that it was between 1972 and 1976 that the best of the professional skills were drained out of the country and that during this period, the main direction of flow was towards Western countries). Also,

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\* Implicit in this statement is the hint that there is "surplus" trained manpower in the country. Nothing could be further from the actual situation. Thus, Bangladesh was exporting doctors to the Middle East, although her doctor/population ratio was one of the lowest in the world and her health care system was in an appalling condition (Briscoe, 1977, 1). Similarly, as a 1977 report points out, "Due to the unrestricted export of skilled manpower to Middle Eastern countries which the government has been encouraging over the last year, areas like Savar thana are suffering from a shortage of carpenters, plumbers, blacksmiths and electricians, to name but a few" (Gono Shyastha Kendra, Progress Report No.6, December 1977, mimeo).

\*\* Statistics supplied by Director-General, Bangladesh Manpower Bureau in September 1979. According to a World Bank report, the present rate of manpower export to the Middle East alone is 3,000 per month (World Bank, 1978b, 49).

there is no detailed information on private and public costs of education and training by different stages, courses and years, so that at this stage it is quite impossible to calculate the magnitude of the brain drain undergone by Bangladesh so far, especially in relation to remittances sent by exported manpower.

#### Plunder by Foreign Troops stationed in Bangladesh

According to a UN report, damage to the Bangladesh economy owing to the 1971 war amounted to \$1.2 billion (UNROB, 1972). These damages may be classified as follows: physical transfer of public and private sector assets by respectively the Pakistani occupation administration and the individual West Pakistani industrialists and merchants who virtually controlled commerce and industry in Bangladesh before 1971; physical transfer of goods looted from the general population by the Pakistani occupation army, and materials destroyed as part of the denial policy, but not transferred. In so far as the last category amounted to a dead loss to the economy, this may also be treated as amounting to transfer.

The Indian occupation army remained in Bangladesh between December 1971 and March 1972. The most damaging aspect of its presence, apart from casting serious doubts on Bangladesh's sovereignty, was its involvement in the wholesale plunder of Bangladesh's material resources and their organised transfer across the borders in collusion with the Indian business class. Martin Woollacott reported in the Guardian of 21 January 1972: "Systematic Indian Army looting of mills, factories and offices in Khulna area has angered and enraged Bangladesh civil officials here. The looting took place in the first few days

after the Indian troops arrived in the city on December 17". In a protest note sent by the then Deputy Commissioner of Khulna to Mrs. Gandhi, then India's Prime Minister, the estimate of the Khulna loot was put at \$30million. Later, on it was found that most district administrators had similar stories to tell.\*

According to one estimate based on actual deployment of the Pakistan army during 1971, Indian troops transferred arms, including 87 tanks, worth \$750million (Sen, 1974, 202). An Indian weekly puts the value of the entire Indian loot consisting of arms, resource food grains, raw jute, cotton yarn, vehicles, ocean-going ships, industrial plant, machinery and spare parts, durable consumer goods, etc. at \$1billion (Aneek, December 1974). Although this appears as an underestimate, we may accept this figure in the absence of any other estimate.

On the basis of the above, the value of the total ~~took~~ by foreign troops may be put at \$2.2billion. Spreading it over seven years in order to facilitate comparison, the average ye<sup>r</sup>ly value of the direct plunder comes to \$314million.

#### Balance Sheet of Inflows and Outflows

On the basis of the above discussion, we may now draw a very rough and ready balance sheet for the average yearly outflows and inflows of resources for Bangladesh between 1972 and 1977. This is presented below.

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\* Interviews with the Deputy Commissioners posted to Chittagong, Dacca, Jessore and Comilla immediately after Bangladesh's independence.

TABLE 11 : Balance sheet of Average Yearly Inflows and Outflows  
from Bangladesh between 1972 and 1978

Inflow/Outflow Mechanisms	Amount gained/lost (million dollars)
	+      -
Foreign aid	+616.40
Private foreign investment	nil
Remittances of Bangladeshis working abroad	+71.25
<hr/>	
Debt servicing	-89.10
Repatriation of profits by private foreign investment	-60.00
Unequal foreign trade	-431.48
Smuggling	-218.75
Repatriation of earnings by foreign experts and difference between actual and international freight and insurance costs	-44.00
Brain drain	Indeterminate
Plunder by foreign troops stationed in Bangladesh	-314.00
<hr/>	
Net outflow	-469.78
<hr/>	

Thus, on average, it is quite plausible that Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries of the world, has been financing someone somewhere to the tune of \$500million every year since 1972. Obviously, no claims can be made about the accuracy of the calculations made above in view of the paucity of relevant data. However, it may be noted that I have erred on the side of underestimating the outflows, so that the actual net outflow is likely to be higher than the amount indicated above. Another striking feature of the net outflow is that the principal beneficiary of outflows from Bangladesh since 1972 has been India, and between Bangladesh and developed capitalist countries, inflows and outflows may have just cancelled each other out.

Although very little is known about Bengal's economy before the British period, available evidence suggests that throughout history Bengal has experienced a net outflow of resources, and that it was by no means confined to the British and post-British period. In fact, during Mughal rule, the Bengal tribute and land revenue\* constituted a most important source of income for Delhi. As J.N. Sarkar (1948, 401) suggests, but for the staggering Bengal tribute (i.e. Rupees 10 million per year for three years) it would have been virtually impossible for Aurengjeb to finance his Deccan campaigns. A similar situation seems to have prevailed for most of

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\* The revenue from crown lands went straight to the royal exchequer at Delhi, while revenue from Jagir lands went into the maintenance of imperial officers and troops stationed in Bengal. From 1627 onwards, a direct tribute to the emperor was also made compulsory (Roy, 1968, 326 and 338).

the Sultanate rule in Delhi in the earlier centuries.\* In addition to the tributes to Delhi, Bengal, from time to time, was also susceptible to plunder by Mogh, Portuguese, Arakanese and Maratha brigands during the pre-British period (Faruque, 1974, 30-2; Roy, 1968, 209 and 236-40).

In the mid-eighteenth century, the British defeated the troops of the ruler of Bengal and the French, and took control of this region. In fact, Bengal was the first British possession in India, and this does not appear to be a mere historical coincidence. At once the economic drain through outright plunder, rack renting and monopoly trade increased sharply. Various documents and authors have tried to evaluate and quantify this drain (Maddison, 1971, 63; R.C. Dutt, 1902, 47; Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Vol.25, 181; Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates, 1806, Vol.6; Levkovsky, 1966, Ch.I; K.K. Dutta, 1961, Ch.5, etc.). It can be said that it was so enormous that it might have constituted an important ingredient of Britain's industrial revolution, and that, if these funds had been invested locally, they could have made significant contributions to raising income levels. Brooks Adams (1918, 254) wrote, "Very soon after Plassey (i.e. the battle that led to British rule in Bengal), the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London, and the effect appears to have been instantaneous, for all authorities agreed that the 'industrial revolution', the event which divided the 19th century from all antecedent time, began with the year 1760".\*\* As the

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\* This is well expressed in the poetry of the contemporary Kankan Chandi (Calcutta University, 1956, 13 and 16). See also Chicherov (1971, 81).  
\*\* The importance of the Bengal drain has been subsequently challenged. For details please see Bagchi (1973, 44).

industrial revolution began to take root in England, "free trade" became the principal method of resource transfer whereby mass-produced goods of British industry could command complete sway over a captive and systematically de-industrialised economy (Lekovsky, 1966, 1-41; Marx, 1965a, 451; Lamb, 1955, 468). By the beginning of the twentieth century, repatriation of profits from British capital invested in India also came to augment resource transfer through free trade (Dutt, R.P., 1947, 129-44; Bagchi, 1973).

Apart from metropolitan transfers, British rule also paved the way for East Bengal's peripheral status within the Bengal economy. On the one hand, colonial, uneven development ensured limited commercial, industrial and cultural concentration in and around Calcutta (GOEB, 1954, 3). On the other hand, British land policy (i.e. permanent settlement) generally displaced Muslim with Hindu zamindars (Hunter, 1891; Mullick, 1961, 27-65; Qureshi, I.H., 1962, 212-24). The urban middle class of Calcutta had strong connections with these zamindars. Also, there was no economic compulsion on the zamindars to invest in agriculture, so that most of the surplus appropriated by the zamindars and their employees in East Bengal ultimately found its way into Calcutta (Mukherjee, 1973, 402-5; Qureshi, I.A., 1978, 158). As pointed out in Chapter 2, after Pakistan<sup>was</sup> established in 1947, resource transfer from East Bengal did not cease. Gradually, its direction changed from Calcutta to Karachi and Islamabad. To sum up, as far as East Bengal was concerned, outward resource transfer, in the broad historical perspective, had both regional and metropolitan dimensions. While it is easy to explain the drain to the metropolis in terms of the early dissolution of feudalism and the growth of the capitalist mode of production in Europe and its

compulsion for ensuring profits and markets on a world scale, at the present level of our knowledge of pre-British South Asian economy, the regional aspect of the Bengal drain is difficult to comprehend. It would be no more than tautology to suggest that this must be due to regional variations within the pre-British mode of production and superstructure of South Asia, unless these variations can be categorically pin-pointed with the help of concrete empirical evidence. However, it seems that the answer to Bengal's continued drainage has to be sought mainly within the internal context rather than in external compulsions.

Whatever the explanation of such net resource transfer, its effects on production and distribution, in general, and on rural poverty in particular, are crucial. Firstly, it hinders capital formation within the country and thereby reduces production and employment potentialities. Secondly, the depletion of internal resources strengthens scarcity responses like hoarding and speculative trade, usurious money lending, rack renting, and accentuates the fall in real wages, etc. Since the rural sector occupies the commanding position in the economy in terms both of contribution to GDP as well as in the share of the total population, the poverty accentuating effect of such transfers is likely to be felt more acutely in the rural than urban sector.

Effect of Resource Inflows on Production and Distribution  
(with particular reference to the rural Sector)

A. Foreign Economic Assistance

The following table provides a breakdown of foreign assistance received by Bangladesh between 1971/72 and 1976/77 by use.

TABLE 12 : Breakdown of Foreign Aid Actually Received by Bangladesh by Use  
(million US dollars)

Year	Food Aid	Non-food Commodity Aid	Project Aid
1971/72	113.3 (113.3) <sup>+</sup>	123.3 (123.3) <sup>+</sup>	6.9
1972/73	183.2 (182.3) <sup>+</sup>	291.5 (286.5) <sup>±</sup>	84.0
1973/74	233.2	109.4	138.0
1974/74	374.9	399.1	145.2
1975/76	305.9	378.1	129.1
1976/77	106.5	248.6	147.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1317.0</b>	<b>1440.0</b>	<b>650.3</b>

Source: GOBD, 1978,12.

+ The figures in parentheses indicate grant components.

Thus, of the total foreign aid received by Bangladesh between 1971/72 and 1976/77, the shares of food aid, non-food commodity aid, and project aid were respectively 38.6 per cent, 42.33 per cent and 19.07 per cent. It may be noted that for the first two years, over 95 per cent of both food and non-food commodity aid consisted of outright grants, directed towards the post-1971 relief and rehabilitation programmes.

Food Aid

The United States provides roughly one-third of Bangladesh's Food aid; the remainder is derived mainly from Canada, Australia

and the EEC countries. In Chapter 10, we <sup>showed</sup> that (a) although about 90 per cent of Bangladesh's population live in the countryside, they received only about one-third of the government-rationed food grains, which is almost entirely dependent on foreign food assistance, and (b) it was the upper and middle classes in the urban areas who reaped the maximum benefit from the subsidised food, delivered through the rationing system. In Chapter 9, it was observed that of the food going into rural areas through modified rationing, outright relief and food for works programmes, the major beneficiaries (both directly and indirectly) were the rural rich and the bureaucracy, although such food, in theory, was meant exclusively for the rural poor. This finding is also corroborated by other recent studies (Clay, 1979a; Hartman and Boyce, 1978; Stepanek, 1979, 60). The Hartman and Boyce study, based on field investigation, reports thus on modified rationing: "The rural ration dealers siphon off a substantial portion of the food grains and sell these on the black market. For this reason, a dealership is a key form of political patronage. The local dealer in our area received the job because his father-in-law had been head of the local administrative body, the union council" (p.5). Similarly, Asplund (1979, 191-212) in a detailed study shows that the maximum benefits of the food-for-works programmes accrues to the rural rich through development and higher productivity of their lands, salaries and profits through their roles as contractors, misappropriation of rural works funds as union parishad/project committee members, etc. In other words, such

foreign food assistance has ensured that the "higher the income, the less price one pays for food in Bangladesh" (FAO/UNDP Agricultural Mission, 1977, Food Policy, Working Paper II, p.21).

The effect of food aid on domestic agricultural production is viewed thus by the Dacca Embassy of the United States, the largest single provider of food aid to Bangladesh, "The incentive for Bangladesh government leaders to devote attention, resources and talent to the problem of increasing domestic food grain production is reduced by the security provided by US and other donors' food assistance" (quoted in McHenry and Bird, 1977, 79). In fact, as suggested by Vylder (1979, 45) and Clay (1979a) food aid has not only failed to meet its distributive objective, but also may have helped to hold back measures like land reforms and progressive agricultural taxation, geared towards domestic resource mobilisation for greater agricultural production. It has been suggested by Rahman Sobhan (1980) that in 1974, the United States used food as a political weapon against Bangladesh. His main contention is that the USA coerced Bangladesh over her jute trade with Cuba at a time when floods had caused serious crop damage in Bangladesh and that the consequent delays in food shipments contributed to the 1974 famine. It is difficult to agree with such an assertion because one could equally argue that famine might have been averted if massive leakage through smuggling had been plugged and a more equitable distribution practised. However, the arm twisting incident of 1974 clearly demonstrated that within the existing structures of property and power in Bangladesh society, heavy padding of food aid simply postponed rather than solved any problem.

### Non-food Commodity Aid

As mentioned earlier, food and non-food commodity aid in 1971 and 1972 came as part of the post-1971 relief and rehabilitation programme, and was meant specifically for the weakest sections of the society. However, as seen in Chapter 8, the lion's share of what ultimately reached the rural sector was appropriated by the rural rich and the local bureaucracy, while the rest trickled down to the rural poor in a manner which only strengthened their dependence on the rural rich. It is worth quoting here Lifschultz (1979, 41) on the "use" of relief goods in general: "The most notorious example of the style of primitive accumulation indulged in by members of the new regime was that of Gazi Ghulam Mustafa, MP, President of Dacca City Awami League and Chairman of Bangladesh's Red Cross Society. Mustafa established a multi-million dollar black market operation in relief goods.... At one stage, the Director of the United Nations Relief Operation in Bangladesh (UNROB) observed that it had become so bad that only one in seven tins of baby food and one in thirteen blankets donated to relief ever reached the poor." Similarly, the Far Eastern Economic Review (September, 1974), reported that one European official from the United Nations' transport division, which at one point controlled the import and shipment of millions of dollars' worth of goods into the country, was himself reported to have made over a million dollars and to have purchased an hotel in Sardinia from Bangladesh earnings.

Of the "developmental" non-food commodity aid, the most important items are fertiliser, oil, cement, cotton and other industrial raw materials (Clay, 1979b). The main non-food commodity going

to the rural areas is obviously fertiliser, which like food, is also heavily subsidised. In 1977, urea, triple super-phosphate and maureate of potash were subsidised by respectively 32 per cent, 71 per cent and 64 per cent (BRRI, 1977, 263). As shown again in Chapter 8, like food it is the rich farmers who have exclusive access to fertiliser and other agricultural inputs. This finding is corroborated also by Stepanek (1979, 82-3) and Clay (1979b). And as Hartman and Boyce (1979, Chs. 5 and 7) correctly argue, this means not only inequitable distribution, but also inefficient use of such inputs since small farmers use capital, land and labour more intensively than rich farmers.

#### Project Aid

As may be seen from Table 12, project aid has been steadily increasing over time. Table 13 gives a breakdown of project aid provided by the World Bank's IDA, the foremost donor of project aid to Bangladesh.

TABLE 13 : IDA Project Aid to Bangladesh (as of December 1977)  
(million dollars)

Agricultural and rural development (of which irrigation is)	215.9 (113.9)
Transport and communications	67.1
Industry	28.0
Cyclone rehabilitation	25.0
Education	22.6
Urban water supply	22.1
Population planning	15.0
Miscellaneous	49.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>444.7</b>

Source: IDA, statement of Development Credits,  
30 November 1977.

As may be seen from the above table, the major portion of IDA project aid was directed to the rural sector. The following passages from the Hartman and Boyce (1978, 6-7) study illustrate the actual use of project aid: "Project aid reached our village in the form of a deep tube well, one of 3,000 installed in north-western Bangladesh in an IDA project. The tube well, designed to produce enough water to irrigate 60 acres of land, is a valuable asset....On paper, the tube well will be used by a farmers' co-operative formed especially for the purpose. But in reality, the tube well in our village was considered the personal property of one man, Nafis, the biggest landlord of the area. The irrigation group, of which Nafis was supposedly the manager, was in fact no more than a few signatures he had collected on a scrap of paper....Though each tube well had cost the donors and the government more than \$12,000, Nafis paid less than \$300 for his, mostly in bribes to local officials. The tube well sits in the middle of a thirty-acre tract of Nafis' best land. Since it will yield enough water to irrigate twice the area, Nafis says that he will rent out water to the smaller farmers adjacent to his land. But the hourly rate he intends to charge is so high that few of his neighbours are interested. As a result, his tube well will not be used to its full capacity. The inefficiency of this arrangement is compounded by the fact that large landowners like Nafis tend to cultivate their land less intensively than small owners". Similarly, a SIDA (1977) evaluation of the tube well project, after examining 270 tube wells, concluded thus: "It is not surprising that the tube wells have been situated on the land of the well-to-do farmers, or that it is the same well-to-do farmers who are the chairmen and

managers of the irrigation groups, It would have been more surprising if the tube wells had not been located on their land, with the existing rural power structure, maintained largely because of the unequal distribution of land".

The village potentates were not the only beneficiaries of the tube well project. Corrupt officials took their share in the form of sundry bribes and kickbacks (SIDA, 1977). However, according to Hartman and Boyce (1978, 9) and the Far Eastern Economic Review, 7 February 1977), the main beneficiary of the tube well project was a private businessman named Islam, reputed to be Bangladesh's richest citizen. He won the contract for supply of pump sets for the IDA tube well project at \$12million, although another company had reportedly offered to provide them at the World Bank's original cost estimate of \$9million. At this point, the Dacca staff of the World Bank urged that the project be postponed or cancelled altogether, but they were overruled in Washington, so that Islam's extra \$3million was "easier than robbing a bank". To sum up aid utilisation in Bangladesh, it is worth quoting a Government White Paper published in September 1975, "Unfortunately, much of the aid and grants were not properly used. Corruption and nepotism were so rampant that many donor countries insisted on their own arrangements for distribution" (GOBD, 1975b,2).

B. Remittances by Bangladeshis working Abroad

There has so far been no comprehensive survey on the utilisation of remittances. However, interviews with Bangladesh Manpower Bureau officials (see also Ahmad, Q.K., 1979) suggests that most of the

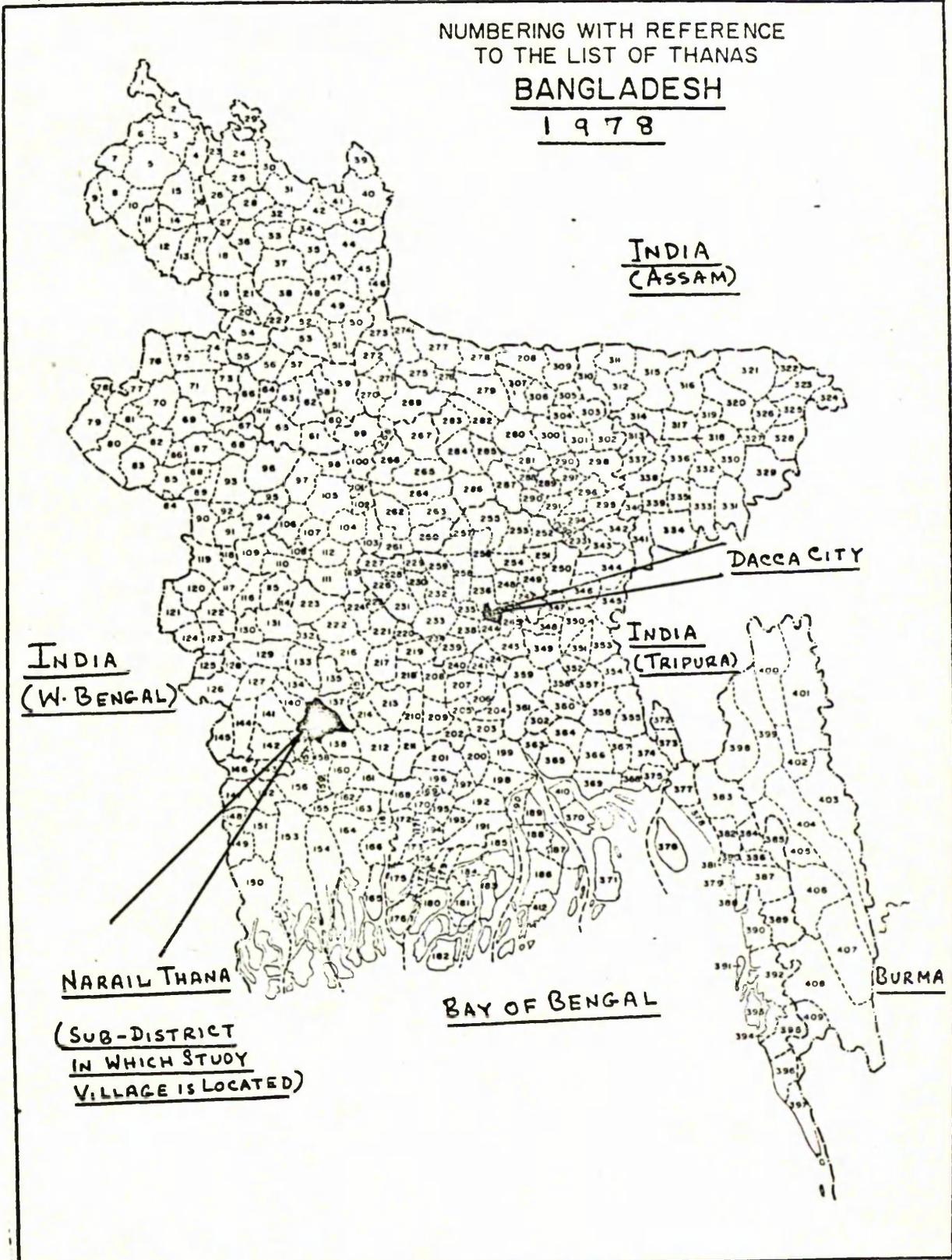
remittances were going into acquisition of real estate property, import of luxury goods, commerce and family maintenance, so that these might have simply contributed to price spiralling (with adverse consequences for those who have the least purchasing power) besides aggravating the already skewed income distribution in the country. Referring to Bangladeshis working abroad for a couple of years, a Dacca weekly (Illustrated Weekly of Bangladesh, 13 August 1978), reported thus: "These people who have become rich almost overnight are purchasing huge agricultural land, residential land in Dacca and other towns, erecting magnificent buildings, collecting valuable immovable properties of modern civic life and thus they are leading a very sophisticated life in this poor country....This is surely an economic injustice of a grave nature". Moinul Islam's (1976, 301-11) study of the Bangladeshi immigrant workers in the UK also points to a highly anti-productive use of remittances sent to Bangladesh.

We may conclude by positing that resource flows between Bangladesh and outside - official and unofficial, legal and illegal - have served to underpin the structures within which rural poverty is maintained. Where their express aim has been to diminish rural poverty (as in the case of foreign aid) far from achieving that aim they have served to exacerbate poverty. Our analysis of rural poverty in Bangladesh cannot be complete without explicit consideration of this crucial point.

NUMBERING WITH REFERENCE  
TO THE LIST OF THANAS

BANGLADESH

1978



INDIA  
(ASSAM)

DACCA CITY

INDIA  
(W. BENGAL)

INDIA  
(TRIPURA)

NARAIL THANA

(SUB-DISTRICT  
IN WHICH STUDY  
VILLAGE IS LOCATED)

BAY OF BENGAL

BURMA

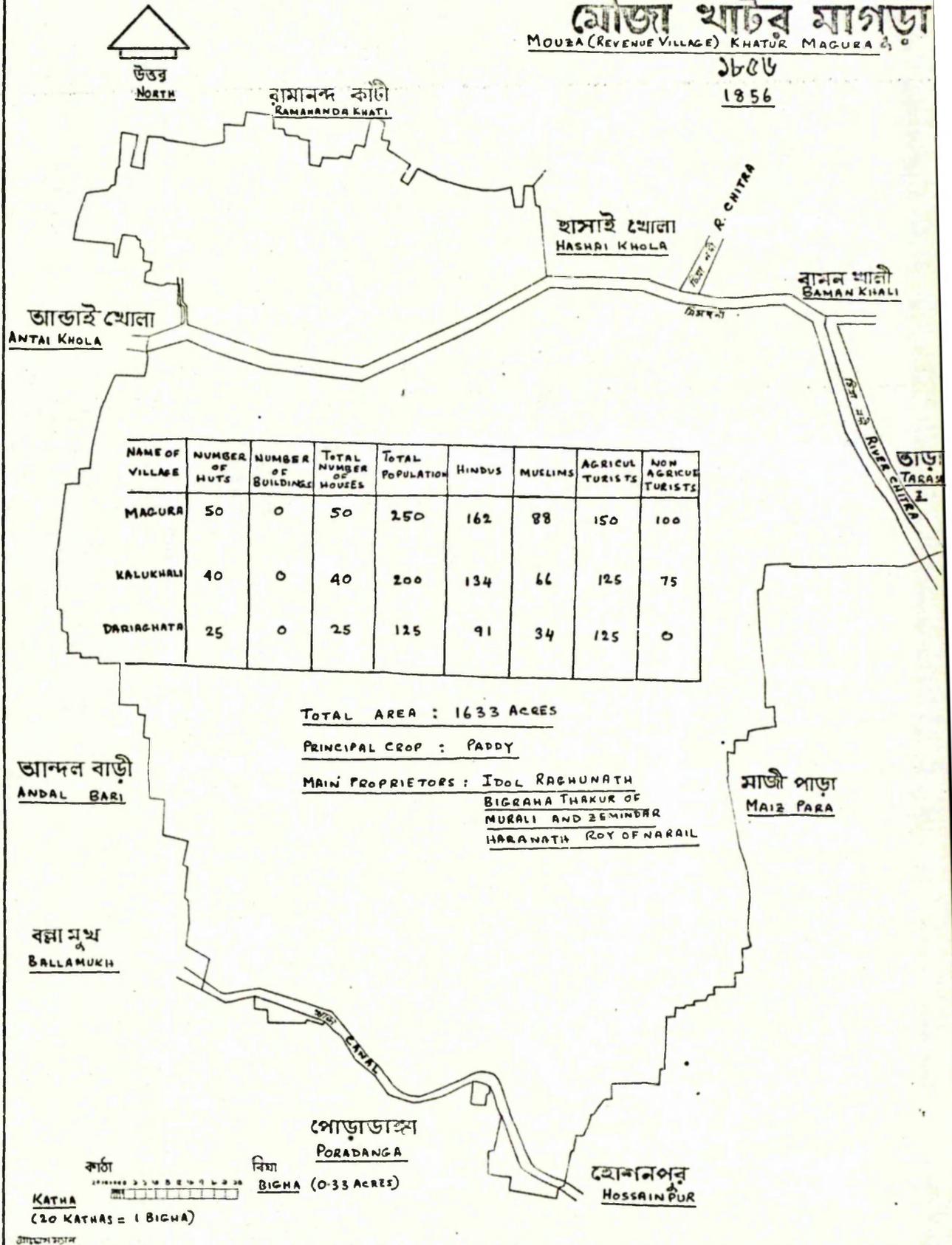


APPENDIX-C

REPRODUCTION FROM THAK SURVEY OF 1856

মৌজা খাটর মাগড়া  
MOUZA (REVENUE VILLAGE) KHATUR MAGURA

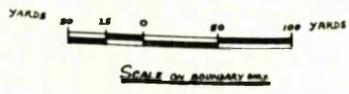
১৮৫৬  
1856



SOURCE: District Record Room, Jessore Collectorate, 1977

# MAGURA

A VILLAGE MAP.



	VILL. BOUNDARY		TEMPLE
	MAIN ROAD (ARABIA)		T TUBEWELL
	MINOR ROAD		TANK
	SCHOOL		GENERAL HOUSE
	MASQUE		MATBAR'S HOUSE (Fashion leader) M.H. HOUSE
	NEW HOUSEHOLD		P.H. HOUSE

- LL : Landless
- P : Poor
- LM : Lower Middle
- M : Middle
- VM : Upper Middle
- RI : Rich I
- RII : Rich II

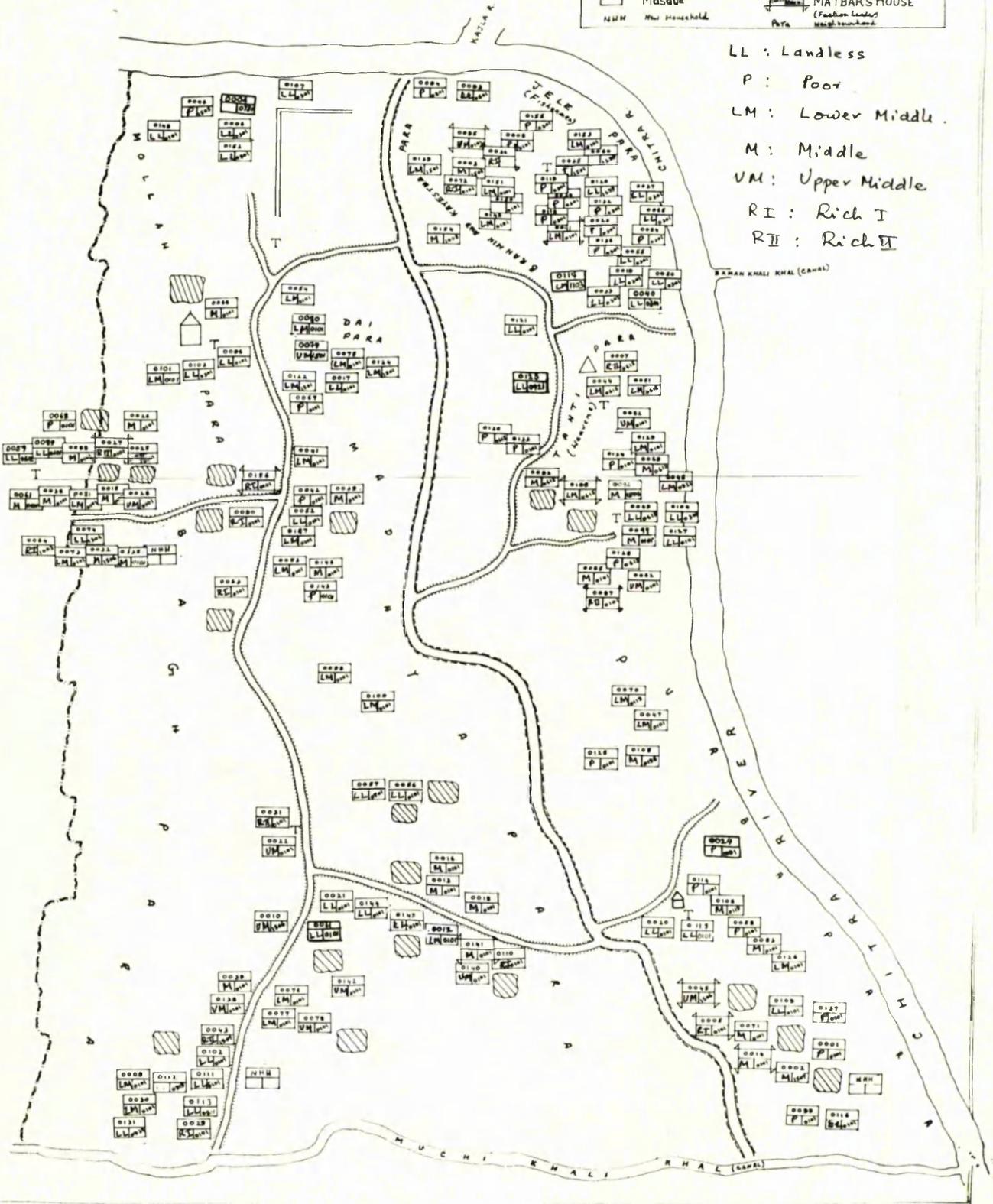


TABLE I : Bangladesh: Estimates of GDP, Per Capita GDP and Growth Rate 1969/70-1978/79

	1969/70	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75	1975/76	1976/77	1977/78	1978/79
GDP at 1972/73 constant factor cost (million Taka)	51830	45300	47755	50600	54569	56440	60890	63360
Population (millions)	67.3	74.0	76.4	78.2	79.9	82.7	85.4	86.9
Per capita GDP	770	612	617	647	682	682	612	729
GDP growth rate		-12.6	5.4	5.9	7.8	3.2	7.9	4.0
Per capita GDP growth rate		-20.5	0.08	4.8	5.4	0	4.4	2.4

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Economic Survey, 1978-79, p.1.

TABLE 2 : Estimate of Agricultural Production\* and Per Capita  
Agricultural Production 1969/70-1978/79

Year	Gross value of agricultural (million Tk.) production at 1972-73 constant prices	Col.2 as percentage of GDP	Per capita agricultural production (in Tk.)
1969/70	32352	62.42	480.7
1972/73	26100	59.40	352.7
1973/74	28827	58.50	377.3
1974/75	28537	56.00	364.7
1975/76	31865	55.20	398.7
1976/77	30899	52.60	373.8
1977/78	33823	53.4	396.1
1978/79	34993	55.23	402.6

\* Includes crop production, fisheries and forestry.

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh, Bangladesh Year Book, p.149, and Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh, Economic Survey, 1978/79, p.1.

TABLE 3 : Output of Nationalised Industries (at 1973-74 constant prices, in million Tk.) and Indices of Total Industrial Production, 1969-70 to 1977/78

Years	Value of NI output	Index of NI production	Index of total ind. production	Per capita value of NI output (in Tk.)
1969-70	5660	100.00	100.00	84.10
1972-73	4446	78.55	80.87	60.08
1973-74	5220	97.52	94.70	72.25
1974-75	5463	96.53	85.98	69.83
1975-76	5536	97.82	93.86	69.25
1976-77	6074	107.33	99.69	73.44
1977-78	6664	117.74	106.50	78.32

Source: Columns 2 and 3 from Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Finance, Bangladesh Economic Survey, 1977-78, p.113 and Column 4 from Government of Bangladesh, Bureau of Statistics, Bangladesh Year Book, 1979, p.236.

TABLE 4 : Livestock Population, 1972/73-1976/77 ('000)

Type	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
Cattle	28,247	28,552	28,851	29,054	29,331
Buffalo	1,279	1,291	1,305	1,320	1,335
Goats and sheep	12,019	12,150	12,280	12,412	12,544
Poultry	76,884	77,786	78,615	79,537	81,323
Total livestock	118,429	119,779	121,051	122,423	124,533
Per capita livestock	1.6	1.56	1.54	1.53	1.50

Source: Director of Livestock, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock,  
Government of Bangladesh.

TABLE 5 : Fish Production, 1972/73-1976/77 ('000 metric tons)

Type	1972-73	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77
Inland	731	732	732	734	736
Marine	87	88	89	89	90
Total	818	820	822	823	826
Per capita fish production (in kg)	11.05	10.7	10.5	10.03	9.9

Source: Director of Fisheries, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries,  
Government of Bangladesh.

TABLE 6 : Bangladesh's Per Capita Availability\* of Selected  
Essential Commodities, 1973/74-1977/78

Commodity	1973-74	1974-75	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78
Food** (1b)	360.72	336.89	359.30	324.99	352.00
Onions "	4.10	3.86	3.92	3.40	3.60
Pulses "	5.54	5.76	5.54	5.68	5.40
Sugar "	3.62	2.74	4.32	3.98	3.34
Salt "	18.44	19.16	18.16	17.52	18.08
Meat "	7.36	7.28	7.16	7.10	7.24
Milk "	16.34	26.98	16.62	26.26	26.72
Molasses "	14.82	15.21	13.49	12.65	12.00
Newsprint "	0.47	0.58	0.42	0.19	0.53
Paper "	0.60	0.76	0.46	0.62	0.76
Mild steel "	3.67	3.06	2.09	2.64	3.90
Electrical energy (kw)	10.84	10.71	11.66	12.79	13.37
Eggs (number)	15.71	15.55	15.35	15.51	15.64
Cloth (yds)	7.06	6.68	6.71	6.71	7.44

\* Domestic production plus imports

\*\* Wheat, rice, millet and other cereals

Source: Government of Bangladesh, Bureau of Statistics, Statistical  
Year Book of Bangladesh, 1979, pp.463-8.

## APPENDIX F : A Synopsis of Survey Questionnaires

The major survey questionnaires administered in the village were as follows:

### I. Community Survey Questionnaire

This was the first questionnaire to be administered and concentrated on aggregate data (e.g. total village land) and information of a general nature (e.g. links of the village with the outside world). It was divided into two parts, one to filled in through interview of males and the other through interview of females. In each case, the investigators sat with a large assembly of males/females assembled for the purpose, so that cross-examination could take place.

### II. Preliminary Household Questionnaire

This was again divided into two parts, one to be filled through interview of the household head (generally male) and the other through interview of the most important female of the household. The first part consisted of questions on family structure, education level, ownership and use of land and other assets, occupation (and role within occupation), housing, asset transaction, migration, wage labour share cropping, indebtedness, involvement in litigation, etc., while the part filled in through interviewing females concentrated on marriage, divorce, death, disease, female labour, family planning, durable consumer goods in the household, institutional education and drop out, etc.

III. Income-Expenditure Questionnaire

This contained questions on all incomes, operating expenses, debts, investment/disinvestment, production and exchange, distress and forward sales, consumption (especially in respect of what are described as "basic human needs") etc. This was filled in through interview of only the household head.

IV. Fertility Questionnaire

This contained questions exclusively on fertility and family planning, to be completed in respect of every married female and females above the age of 14 in the household. It was administered at the very end because of the resentment it was likely to generate.

V. Questionnaire on Money Lending, Share Cropping, Wage Labour and Factions

This was filled in through interview of moneylenders, loanees, share croppers, sharecropping-out persons, wage labourers, wage labour employers, faction leaders and faction followers.

VI. Questionnaire on Attitude Toward and Extent of Importance of Various Social, Religious, Cultural Practices in the Village

This was filled in through interviewing a group selected on the basis of stratified random sampling, taking into consideration age, sex, class and religion.

VII. Nutrition Survey Questionnaire

The sample consisted of only 21 households, with three households drawn from each of the seven land-holding categories (see Chapter 5). Two points in time were chosen, namely February, that is harvest time, and June-July, the leanest period of the year in respect of food availability. The survey consisted of recall of food consumed by household members a day earlier.

VIII. Family History Questionnaire

This was administered to one-third of the households in each of the seven land-holding categories, subject to a minimum of three households from any category. The questionnaire was mainly concerned with the economic position and activities of the household over three generations.

All questionnaires were pre-tested, so as to minimise errors and omissions of important information. Pre-coding was limited to Preliminary Household, Income Expenditure and Fertility questionnaires only. However, computation of the data for this study was carried out manually since the computer used by the BIDS was not in working condition at the required time.

Together, the questionnaires (and codes) run into no less than 200 pages. Also, these were prepared in Bengali, in order to facilitate data collection. As such, these have not been included as appendices.

APPENDIX GGlossary of Local Terms and Abbreviations Used in the Text

A.D.C.	Additional Deputy Commissioner, i.e. Officer next to head of the District administration.
A.L.	Awami League; one of the dominant political parties in Bangladesh.
Akika	Muslim equivalent of christening.
Anna (As)	1/16th of a Rupee, the unit of paper currency in India and Pakistan.
Anna Prarsanna	Hindu equivalent of christening.
Aratdar	Stockist.
Atiya-Shajon	Relatives.
Badli	Labour exchange.
B.A.D.C.	Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation.
Bakhsheesh	Tips.
B.A.R.D.	Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.
Barga	Share cropping.
Bargadar	Share cropper.
Bazaar	Daily Market.
Benami	Proxy ownership.
Bepari	Merchant.
Bhumi Hin Chashi	Landless peasant.
Bhai-Phota	Occasion to mark brother-sister relationship.
B.I.D.S.	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.
Bigha	$\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre.
Brahmin	The topmost Hindu caste.
C.A.R.E.	Foreign voluntary relief organisation.
C.E.S.I.	Cross Examination of Selected Informants.

Challisha	Commemorative feast to mark death.
Chandni	Toll for occupying a place in the market place.
Chashi	Farmer.
Chauhuddi Samaj	Greater Samaj.
Chotolok	Lowly person.
Chowkidar	Village police under the Union Parishad.
C.O. (Dev.)	Circle Officer (Development) of Thana.
C.P.I.	Communist Party of India.
C.P.I. (M-L)	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist).
C.S.P.	Civil Service of Pakistan.
Dafadar	Village messenger employed by the Union Parishad.
Dal	Faction.
Dalal	Broker.
D.A.N.I.D.A.	Danish International Development Agency.
D.C.	Deputy Commissioner, Head of District Administration.
D.I.	Direct Interview.
District	Administrative Unit above the Sub-Division.
Division	Administrative Unit above the District.
D.P. list	Deserving Persons list.
E.B.S.A.T.A.	East Bengal State Acquisition & Tenancy Act, 1951.
"Enemy Property"	Property of Indian nationals seized by the government after the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War.
F.A.O.	Food and Agriculture Organisation (U.N. body).
Fakir	Faith healer.
F.P.A.	Family Planning Assistant.
Faria	Itinerant trader.
Gantidar	Stratum below the zemindars.
Garib Chashi	Poor peasant.

Gherao	To lay seige to.
G.O.B.	Government of Bengal.
G.O.B.D.	Government of Bangladesh.
G.O.E.B.	Government of East Bengal.
G.O.E.P.	Government of East Pakistan.
G.O.I.	Government of India.
G.O.P.	Government of Pakistan.
Gram Rakhi Bahini	Village Guards.
Guru	Hindu religious teacher.
Gushthi	Patrilineal Kin group.
Hat	Bi-weekly market.
Haj	Pilgrimage to Mecca.
Haji	Pilgrim returned from Mecca.
H.E.S.	Household Expenditure Survey.
I.C.S.	Indian Civil Service.
Idul-Fitr	Muslim festivity following month-long fasting.
Idul-Azha	Muslim festivity involving animal sacrifice.
Ijaradar	Lessee; also intermediary.
I.L.O.	International Labour Organisation (U.N. body).
Imam	Person who leads congregational prayers in the mosque.
I.U.D.	Intra-uterine Device.
Jalao	To set fire to.
Jamai Jashhti	Occasion to honour son-in-law.
Jamat-i-Islam	Right wing religious political party.
Jatra	Open air theatre.
Jharu Bakhsh	Part of toll meant for maintaining sweeper in the market place.
Jele	Fisherman.
Jotedar	Large landowner.

Kaestho	Caste below the Brahmin.
Khal	Canal.
Khas	Belonging to government.
Khatna	Circumcision.
Kishen	Landless agricultural worker.
Krisak Sramik Party	Right of the centre political party.
Lakh	One hundred thousand.
LLH	Landless household.
LMH	Lower Middle household.
L.R.	Land reforms.
Madhobitto	Middle class.
Maghipurnima	Bathing in the Ganges.
Mahabharata	Hindu epic.
Mahajan	Money lender; trade financier.
Mahat	Rich peasant.
Maktab	Religious school.
Maulvi	Muslim equivalent of Priest.
Maund	Unit of weight; 1/27th of a ton.
MH	Middle household.
Mela	Fair.
M.L.	Muslim League, right wing political party.
M.R.	Modified rationing.
Muazzin	One who calls for prayers.
Mujib Bahini	Paramilitary force raised by the Awami League in 1971.
Naib	Rent collector.
Naxalite	Popular name for adherents of C.P.I. (M-L).
Nichu Bangsha	Low family.

O.D.M.	Overseas Development Ministry.
Oxfam	Foreign Voluntary Relief organisation.
Para	Neighbourhood.
PH	Poor household.
Pie	1/12th of an Anna.
PL 480	Public Law 480 of the U.S.A. (with respect to food aid).
Prayaschit	Penitence.
Puja	Hindu worship of deity.
Purohit	Hindu equivalent of priest.
Q.S.O.C.E.C.	Quarterly Surveys of Current Economic Conditions.
Rajakar	Paramilitary force raised by Pakistan army in 1971.
Ratha Jatra	Occasion to mark the chariot ride of Radha and Krishna.
RH I	Rich household I (up to 12.5 acres of land).
RH II	Rich household II (above 12.5 acres of land).
Rishi	The lowest Hindu caste in this region.
Roza	Fasting.
Rupee	Unit of currency.
Ryot	Peasant.
Samaj	Society.
Sayyar	Levies/tolls imposed on goods brought to the market place.
Scheduled caste	Low caste.
S.D.O.	Sub-divisional Officer.
Seer	1/40th of a maund; two lbs.
Shabe Carat	Muslim religious occasion.
Shad Bakhan	Occasion to mark pregnancy.

Shalish	Dispute adjudication.
Shuparish	Advocacy.
S.I.D.A.	Swedish International Development Agency.
S.S.C.	Secondary School Certificate ('O' level).
Sub-Division	Administrative Unit below the District.
Swanirvar	Self-reliance.
Taccavi loan	Government interest free loan.
Taka	Same as Rupee.
Tanti	Weaver.
Tebhaga	Three shakes, literally.
Tehsil	Land revenue collecting unit.
Tehsildar	Land revenue collector.
Thak Survey	Survey carried with bamboo pole.
Thana	Administrative unit below Sub-Division.
Thana Council	Local government body at Thana level.
Tolah	Toll.
U.F.	United Front.
UMH	Upper Middle household.
U.N.I.C.E.F.	United Nations Childrens Emergency Fund. (U.N. body)
U.N.D.P.	United Nations Development Programme (U.N. body).
Union	Administrative unit below Thana.
U.N.R.O.B.	United Nations Relief Operation in Bangladesh in 1972.
U.P.	Union Parishad; also known as Union Board. Local government body at Union level.
U.S.A.I.D.	United States Agency for International Development.
W.A.P.D.A.	Water and Power Development Authority.
Waz	Religious meetings.
W.F.P.	World Food Programme.

W.H.O.	World Health Organisation (U.N. body).
Zakat	Muslim poor tax.
Zemindar	Landlords created by Permanent Settlement in 1793.
Ziafat	Same as Challisha.

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