

CHAPTER - III

THE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE AND THE PEASANT SOCIETY

This chapter is beginning with a brief discussion on the agricultural production of some rural areas of Bengal and the way of life of the cultivators. It also takes into account the control and distribution of agricultural pattern, landholding, unevenness of the control of land and instruments of production with an unequal distribution of income, system of labour exploitation, indebtedness and its causes together with the associated problems of various tribal and non-tribal communities within the villages of our universe. The system of inequality and exploitation is practised by the hands of a particular group of people with a different mode of persecution under the same socio-economic and political order of the society. Considering all these aspects we find various classes the peasants are forming in the village economy sharing different points of view. Analysis of classes and class relations with a trend of polarised class formation within the same social system is also being considered.

The Village Agriculture and the Economy:

India is a classic land of agriculture, and cultivation differs from region to region and from place to place. Differences come from the quality of soil, climatic conditions, irrigation facilities and availability of manpower resources. The location of the villages we have studied are within the two blocks under the district of West Dinajpur, namely, Tapan and Balurghat. Except one village Berakuthi, Bhalkadaha, Kathalpukur, Ahira, Nimpur and Kamdevbati are

situated within the range of five to six miles apart and the other village. Khadimpur Dighipara is situated near about 20 miles away from the above mentioned villages we have referred to and stands adjacent to urban vicinity. Productivity differs not only within the two distant places but within the different village lands also, because of the variations in the conditions and facilities within the village.

A substantial portion of cultivable land of Berakuthi, Bhalkadaha and Dengapara is under the dry land and productivity completely depends upon the nature under the timely appearance of monsoon. All the villages of the area depend upon the nature and timely appearance of monsoon, but other village lands are able to produce a minimum quantity of crops with a slight variation in the timely appearance of monsoon, in the area because of the quality of the soil. But the lands we refer to under the area completely depend upon timely and proper rain for the quality of soil and for the lack of scope for watering facilities from the indigenous varieties of irrigation sources like ponds and wells or of a river basin.

The sources like ponds and wells which are available within the area can not reserve much water for irrigation purpose. A rivulet flows down at some distance but does not retain water in dry season from which people can get water for cultivation purpose for other seasonal crops, besides rainy season, it can not provide assistance by supplying water to the peasants of the area for cultivation, if rain comes late. Paddy is the main crop of the area and depends totally on nature. Besides, a minimum amount of rabi crops grow in and around the area where a portion of wet land is available

like the surrounding places of a pond or on the banks of the rivulet passing through the area where water stays at rainy season. But the amount of the producing crops are less and also troublesome according to the village people's statement.

Another branch of the rivulet has passed through the villages of Nimpur, Ahira, Gorenda and a portion of the Kamdevbati village where a large portion of cultivable land is under the low land; and in rainy season usually a portion of the villages where cultivation is generally not possible goes under the water. If in any year rain appears with excessive quantity, then an additional portion of the village land comes under the water which normally destroys agricultural production of seasonal paddy cultivation. But the cultivators of the area generally cultivate a rather different quality of paddy which is generally known as bona chan (sown paddy) in that portion of the land which may come under the flood waters. This paddy is generally grown in the waters and produces a lower quantity of crops for the lack of proper maintenance and lower productivity. Harvest generally occurs in November just before the normal harvesting time. This type of paddy cultivation is generally found in both the lower part of the villages from where the two rivulets flow down. But the cultivators generally try to avoid this because of uncertainty and lower productivity. Both the rivulets ultimately have gone through this territory into the territory of Bangladesh. The former rivulet at a place demarcates the border line of the two territories where one bank is Indian territory and the other bank, Bangladesh.

During rains, both the territories go under water which hampers seasonal paddy cultivation due to excess of waters. Besides, a little portion produces bona chan in a lower quantity. If in any year rain pours heavily in an excessive amount it normally hampers the productivity of paddy in the area. Naturally, cultivation in adjoining areas of these rivulets depend upon nature and people generally cultivate these lands depending upon their fortune standing on the gambling board of the nature. So the portion of this cultivable land generally produces normal crop of paddy production if rain is usual and normal. Other portion of the village land besides the area we have mentioned, generally comes under paddy cultivation in a normal procedure where the cultivators also depend upon nature where production goes on in its normal way by the blessings of the nature and timely arrival of the monsoon. Besides being the major abnormalities of the arrival of monsoon and natural calamities, the cultivators generally do not find any hindrance in production but the productivity varies for timely ploughing sowing and seedling in consistence with the timely rain and other situation. So, the productivity of the land may vary in accordance with the situation we have mentioned; but the total destruction of crops like those of areas of adjoining rivulet basin is normally absent. The statement we find from the cultivators of the area about the paddy cultivation which is the major crop of the universe we have studied.

Moreover, in dry season, the cultivators have little scope of providing these rivulets' water in irrigation purposes for the lack of proper irrigational facilities for the distant existence of

cultivable land. The traditional method of irrigational system is the only source of cultivation which is time consuming and a laborious one. Any poor peasant of lower economic capacity who wants to avail himself of this scope of cultivation by using traditional method, hampers his daily economy of employment e.g. daily wage earning scope of exchanging labour power for livelihood ultimately gets shrunk. Besides, these rivulets have little supply of water in dry season; we find only narrow existence which is unable to provide much water for cultivating a large portion of barren land in the area in lean season mainly for the lower quality of the soil where production from dry season cultivation is much more expensive. Consequently, a few rich peasants try to produce little amount of rabi crops like wheat, mustard, potato etc. and all other peasants from lower income groups stop to cultivate in the area for higher productivity cost which is beyond their capacity. Naturally, cultivation in the area at the season is generally left either for the lack of proper irrigation system or for the existence of the lower quality of unproductive land which needs much expenses for production. Ultimately a large portion of the land in the area has been converted into a grazing field for the cattle.

A few portion of the village land from Berakuthi, Bhalkadaha, Dangapara, Kamdevbati and Nimpur are possessing lower quality of productive land; besides these lands, all the possessing quality land for producing crops like rabi and kharip. The production of crop like jute which depends on the seasonal rain, is also there. The peasants of the area are highly dependent on the nature for producing cash crop like jute and kharif crops. Aus and Aman paddy

are the main crops of the area for consumption and other economic activities. So the economy of the area varies every year accordingly to the seasonal and timely arrival of the monsoon and other natural assistance. But the production of rabi crops like wheat, mustard, boro-paddy, potato, chily and other vegetables is dependent on the peasant's personal effort, proximity of the land and financial condition also. Besides, the production of rabi-crop needs proper irrigational facilities for which our universe is proverbially poor. Only a few rich peasants possess pumping set for their own irrigational purpose. Naturally village irrigation system is till now depending on the traditional way like carrying of water in the field from ponds, rivers and other reservoirs like wells etc. They sometimes use jat (traditional instrument for irrigation) in any reservoir like ponds or others if such facilities in the nearby area to send water in their field by a narrow drainage system. These types of traditional irrigation for production are highly expensive and labcricious ones which are generally confined to the well to do peasants in the universe. Only a few peasants from small lend-owning group like marginal peasants are able to produce crops in this way. If any peasant possesses land in the area adjacent to pond or well like water reservoir then they engage them and their family members for irrigational purpose at off-time after doing their job of daily wage labour which is troublesome and problematic also for cultivating a large portion of land except for family consumption.

The major sources of irrigation in the universe we find are confined to the indigenous varieties of ponds and wells upon which the village peasants are mainly dependent for producing rabi crops

following traditional type of irrigational method. Only a nominal number of rich peasants are possessing modern types of irrigational instruments, like pumping set for production purposes where they confine their activities to their own land. It has also been found that few peasants in the adjacent land could avail themselves of the opportunity of irrigational facilities for production from the source of modern technology for irrigation of the rich peasants by way of contractual lease agreement of irrigation. In this contractual agreement the rich peasants generally invest their pumpset for irrigating others' land in exchange of all input costs of the machinery needs at that time of irrigation and a portion of producing crops after harvest which raises three mnds (one mand is equal to forty k.g) of producing crop. In this system a few peasants are benefited for the lack of sufficient number of pumpset owning peasants. Moreover, the small owner peasants of agricultural labourers are unable to supply input costs of the pumpset and other accessories, generally avoid this contractual agreement.

So, the major village agricultural production of rabi-crops generally comes from the traditional system of irrigational facilities available in the villages from village ponds and wells which are not sufficient for a large portion of village agricultural land under rabi cultivation. Naturally, less than one-third of the village land generally comes under rabi cultivation from different sources of irrigation which is not sufficient for village consumption and the people are till now depending on the major village production from the seasonal paddy cultivation for consumption and others which is even depending on the nature.

Various programmes of irrigational development are in progress from different sections of governmental departments for individual and community-wise benefit by the initiative of the village panchayat body in the area and adjacent villages. The major step of the village panchayat is generally coming from recommending name of the individual village marginal peasants and small peasants who are eligible under the programmes of Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) and Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) schemes for granting loan to purchasing pumpset for irrigational purpose. Besides, the Block Irrigation Department has also drawn a plan of reexcavation of the village canal which was unfit previously for irrigational purpose mainly at rabi season for the lack of water, by digging it in a new way to make it / connected with the perennial source of water of the nearby river. It is a massive programme of irrigational development in the area. But for the lack of proportional financial allocation of the department, the project is going on in a slow and tardy way. After the completion of the programme a large portion of the area will be benefited from the scheme of irrigational development for cultivation under which a large portion of the villages of our universe will be covered.

CROPPING PATTERN:

The major village agricultural production is depending on the paddy cultivation which covers more or less all the village people for consumption. Other subsidiary crops are also produced in the area but to a lesser degree which needs extra irrigational facility and wet land area for production. The quality of production of the subsidiary crops is less in the area for limited irrigational

facilities and lower amount of productive wet land under cultivation and for the lack of financial resources of the peasants. But a better trend is growing among the peasants of the area for cultivating subsidiary crops which have little facilities of production. Besides, various Governmental Schemes have been implemented to encourage the owner peasants of the area for cultivating subsidiary crops by lending finance and distributing various mini-kits of high yielding varieties of seeds for production. Now the village agricultural production pattern has been basically divided into three major cultivating seasons, viz, pre-kharif, kharif and rabi season.

PRE-KHARIF SEASON:

Pre-kharif season generally consists of aus paddy and jute cultivation which runs from the month of March-April to July-August. Directly sown aus paddy and jute cultivation begins in the area from the month of March-April in a full swing in upland with the help of 'Kal-Baishakhi' (cloud burst) because of non-availability of the proper irrigational facilities. Cultivation of Aus paddy and jute generally occurs by sowing seeds but transplantation of aus paddy is possible where plenty of water is available. The production of aus paddy and jute is generally lower in degree in the area, which raise less than 20 per cent of the total cultivable lands only for household consumption¹. Few peasants who cultivate these crops of aus paddy and jute in their lands in excess amount beyond their household consumption, have excess amount of up-lands in their possession and cultivate these crops for commercial purposes also.

KHARIF SEASON:

Kharif season is the main season of agriculture in the area where every peasant tries his utmost to cultivate his lands in a proper way either by self or borrowing cultivable materials. Every peasant who has land and who has no land in the area makes himself busy by performing the functions of agricultural labour who earn their livelihood by following agricultural job in the area. So the season is important in the area not only from the point of production but also from the view point of employment. The season generally spreads from June-July to November-December, a period somewhat longer than any other season.

KHARIF (AMAN) PADDY:

Aman is the most important cereal food crop and is the prominent crop in Kharif season. Neerabout 80 per cent of the total rice production of the area put under aman paddy cultivation. Though a number of new qualities of high yielding varieties of aman paddy are found, the peasants of the area are generally interested in producing traditional varieties of aman paddy in their land. So, at present about 70 per cent of the Kharif paddy area are covered by long duration traditional varieties. Selection of quality seeds of recommended varieties and raising of nurseries is normally done during the 1st week of June. During the last quarter due to good rains all over the area the transplanting of aman paddy would start from 3rd week of June onward according to the seasonal monsoon upto the end of August. In the month of September, after a careful transplantation of the kharif paddy, peasants generally pursue the inter-cultural operations of the plants, top dressing and need based

applications of irrigation and plant protection measures which comprise their main activities of operation. After a careful maintenance the aman paddy ripens for harvesting in the month of November-December².

BLACKGRAM/MOONG:

According to the season blackgram and moong (green gram) also come under the kharif production. These two crops are sown during the month of July and August. After harvesting aus paddy and jute, cultivators of the area generally sow these crops to their up-lands in this period of July and August³. It is matured in 80-90 days for production⁴. But the production of these crops is lower in degree in area and only a few peasants who have the capacity and provision for their own household inputs only, cultivate these crops.

RABI SEASON:

Rabi season generally turns up from the month of November-December to March-April. Within this period a number of crops are grown in the area which completely depends on irrigational facilities of the indigenous sources, among these traditional method of irrigation occupies the main position. Only a limited portion of cultivable land comes under the modern irrigational facilities available. Rich farmers have their modern power driven pumpsets. The traditional irrigational source of the area is depending on the existence of ponds and wells and water reservoirs which have the lower potential capacity of irrigation at a time, and are disadvantageous for producing more amount of rabi crops. Naturally, the peasants of the area generally cultivate crops of rabi varieties which need comparatively lower degree of watering for production. So the peasants generally

cultivate their small plots of land situated near the water reservoir, like ponds and wells from where they can use water for timely irrigation by adopting traditional method of even carrying water individually by their family members only. The peasants adopt this traditional method of irrigation of carrying water into the field in large scale for production that raises the cost of production higher than the production value and beyond the capacity of majority of peasants, and hence of forbidding nature. For these reasons production of rabi-crops in the area is comparatively lower than that of the other areas of the district which have higher number of modern irrigational instruments like pumpsets.

The modern High Yielding Varieties of boro paddy cultivation needs higher amount of irrigation than the other rabi-crops that are generally lower in the area for lower availability of modern irrigational instruments. The utmost efforts are going on from various corners of the society to make irrigational facilities for producing different crops in the area to emulate production varieties with that of the other parts of the district simultaneously. The natural varieties of rabi-production which is predominant at the time of our investigation, is the main point of our discussion where each variety of rabi-production is existing in the area, according to the peasants' own comments, differentiating only qualitative and quantitative variation. Now we would like to discuss the existing rabi-production of the area.

WHEAT:

Wheat may be sown in plains during the months of November-December, and sowing of wheat should be completed within November and in no case beyond the middle of December. During the month of January, important operations are top dressing and irrigation. A light irrigation after 21 days of sowing is essential. The wheat growing area is generally denoted in wet land with a light irrigational facilities of timely interval⁵. So the wheat growing area is generally situated in the proximity of water reservoirs or in a place where irrigation is available. The wheat growing lands are available in the area and persuance of wheat production by all types of peasants is found but in a lower amount. The peasants who have such lands and scope of production either for their own consumption or for commercial purpose, cultivate the lands according to the use value of the crop in the individual peasant family and society per se.⁶ The wheat is generally ready for harvesting from the month of March to April according to the variation of sowing and cultivation⁶.

MUSTARD:

The crop of this variety of rabi season is generally sown in the month of November and invariably should be completed by the middle of December in wet land. A minor irrigation would be provided if available particularly at the flowering stage⁷. The peasants of the area are generally averse to cultivate this variety of rabi crops because of its lower productivity and non-readymade consumption viability. Besides, most of the busy-prone peasants who are engaged in the activities of harvesting, threshing, storage and marketing of

kharif aman paddy, have little time and energy to renovate new cultivation at that time. Peasants generally make themselves ready to cultivate other varieties of rabi crops like wheat and boro-paddy cultivation with that of winter vegetables which provide them a little time of relaxation after being in a strenuous hard labour for kharif aman paddy production, a major crop of their life cycle and consumption makes them aversive to cultivate this variety of rabi crops. Only a few peasants of well to do economic condition and ownership categories who have such land of wet crop cultivation, generally cultivate this crop which is comparatively lower in cultivation and production than other varieties of rabi crops in the area. March and the first half of April is the peak time for harvesting and threshing of this variety of rabi crop^s. Though the market value of the crop is comparatively higher than other crops, it creates some difficulties for storage and preservation to the lower peasants ultimately forces them to sell early in the market. It deprives them of the reasonable market price and makes them inactive to cultivate the crop with care and energy. This motivation ultimately diverts them to cultivate other crops of the season providing them a little time of storing energy and courage after kharif season, kharif crop which for market value and consumption value for ready use is no more important to the peasants of the area. So the cultivation and production of crop like mustard is not remarkable in our universe.

POTATO:

The production of potato is generally treated as a main vegetable in the rural area where there is no regular marketing

facilities and other scope of getting extra varieties of vegetables for consumption, provide them more relief as a food for the peasants. The actual time of sowing this vegetable as well as crops starts from November and in no way could be permitted after December. Wet land is suitable for the production of potato where a little scope of irrigational facilities are available because the crop or vegetable needs light irrigation at 7 to 10 days intervals. We generally do not find a large scale cultivation of this crop in the area besides household consumption. Only a few peasants from economically well off categories are engaged in excess household consumption, if they have such land and scope of irrigation by employing extra man-days from their family labour or out side by hiring on payment wage. This crop needs much time of earthing up and inter-cultural operations with causes trouble to the cultivators for excessive cultivation. But more or less all the peasants generally cultivate this crop who have a little scope of producing this variety of vegetable, at least for their own consumption. The main activities during the month of January for the crop are irrigation at 7 to 10 days interval, earthing up and periodical spraying against blight, if necessary⁹. After various inter-cultural operations at periodical intervals the crop is ready for harvesting during the month of March. Other varieties of winter vegetables are also produced in the area like chilli, brinjal, cabbage, cauli-flower, onion, garlic, etc, at the time of rabi season. But there is no such remarkability of the production of these varieties of winter vegetables because of the lack of suitable land in the area. The production of these vegetables is generally persuaded for their own consumption at

timely intervals. Only a few of these generally go to the market for commercial purpose for the lack of suitable land for excessive production. But all types of vegetables are generally produced in the area by the peasants' own efforts which have no such importance from marketing point of view but the household consumption. But one thing we may refer to here is that the quality of production of rabi crops and vegetables is no more important. So for this reason we are somewhat bound to refer to these types of crop cycle in the area rotationally for its production value but not for commercialisation of production.

BORO-PADDY CULTIVATION:

Sowing of seeds should be completed within the month of December and major works of transplantation of boro-paddy start from the month of January. At the time of transplantation major works of irrigation are needed¹⁰, and the cultivation of boro-paddy should become meaningless if there is no such irrigational facilities. Naturally the cultivation of boro-paddy is generally covered in the area by those peasants who have a provision of sufficient irrigational facilities either from the source of modern irrigational implements like pumping sets or of the traditional source of irrigational facilities like existence of water reservoir near the cultivating land from which a sufficient amount of irrigational water can be had from time to time for irrigational activities by adopting any method of watering the land for cultivation.

In the month of February and March crop needs important activities like timely irrigation and plant protection measures etc.

where the timely application of varieties of fertilizer are also included. If the peasants have no knowledge of timely irrigational activities and application of various chemical fertilizers including that of plant protection measures and cultural operations with that of weeding and top dressing during the time of cultivation, growing the crop is generally hampered. Though the High Yielding Varieties of seeds are generally sown for boro-paddy cultivation yet the production cannot fulfil the peasants' total expectation if they do not care the plants at proper time. So the cultivation of boro-paddy needs special care of the peasants at its various stages like that of irrigation, cultural operations, application of chemical fertilizers or like and timely care for plant protection measures; without which the production is generally deteriorated¹¹. Irrigation is not required after the crop attains dough stage¹². Harvesting of early transplanted High Yielding Varieties of boro-paddy starts from the middle of the month of April.

The cultivation of boro-paddy of High Yielding Varieties is a recent phenomenon at the village agricultural practice which has been mainly introduced in the area after the seventies when the influence of the Green Revolution began to predominate in agricultural activities of the country. The proper practice of High Yielding Varieties of boro-paddy started its production in the area after the eighties when the peasants actually well-informed about the cultivation and gathered proper knowledge of various cultural operations of the crop at its various stages of growth and production, including that of irrigational requirement and application of various fertilizers for higher productivity. Among these irrigation is the

primary source of its cultivation without which no production of boro-paddy is possible; either by a source of modern irrigational implements like pumpsets or the indigenous varieties of irrigational practice of carrying water in the field by using traditional instruments like jat ^{or} lift water from tank with the help of manual labour. It has been found from our study that the village peasants are not well enriched with the modern irrigational instruments either from the governmental source or from individual initiatives for the lack of proper developmental planning from both the sources of governmental departments and individual planning for the existence of bad qualities of soil and layers in favour of installation of minor irrigational instruments like shallow machines in a vast area of cultivable land in our universe. So for that vast areas of the universe are being deprived of the irrigational source. In other areas peasants are using their own pumpsets or water reservoir for irrigational purpose. Peasants have the source and capacity to use it for agricultural purpose mainly for crop cultivation of rabi varieties which is completely dependent on irrigation according to the varieties of crops and cultivation. When we have seen that the irrigational system lacks in its proper implementation then the production of irrigation based crops of the rabi varieties are lower in the universe. Only peasants of the different villages are cultivating these varieties of crops. Peasants who have a little source of irrigation in any way, cultivate at least for their own consumption which we find from our following table of the Households Growing Different Crops in the Villages (Table No. 10). Peasants are cultivating various types of rabi-crops in their land but the quantity of cultivated land is small and is no

more important from the view point of production value. Production of these varieties of seeds preserved by themselves except a few use High Yielding varieties of boro-paddy and wheat which entails lower productivity.

Table No. 10

Households Growing Different Crops in the Villages

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Total No. of Household	Pre-Kharif Rabi-Varieties	Pre-Kharif & Kharif	Pre-Kharif Only Kharif	Non-owner of Land
1.	Berakuthi	45	2	-	36	7
2.	Bhalkadaha	63	11	1	44	7
3.	Dangapara	16	7	3	4	2
4.	Kathalpukur	68	23	8	35	2
5.	Shalukkuri	21	14	2	4	1
6.	Mallikpur	58	31	6	15	6
7.	Kandevbati	86	42	11	17	16
8.	Gorenda	24	6	1	12	5
9.	Ahira	31	21	3	2	5
10.	Nimpur	49	15	3	24	7
11.	Kartikpur	8	7	1	-	-
12.	Khadimpur Dighipara	33	5	5	2	21
		<u>502</u>	<u>184</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>195</u>	<u>79</u>
			36.65	8.76	38.85	15.74

The table mainly shows that the villages we have studied are basically the agricultural villages including that of single cropped varieties like Kharif Aman paddy to triple crops varieties of Pre-Kharif, Kharif and rabi where the sources are available. These production of crops are mainly on land and irrigational facilities. Major source of agricultural production comes from the natural

factors i.e. of seasonal rain and the existence of wet land. Majority of the cultivators are depending on natural sources because of their poor economic conditions. A few of them from the wealthy groups cultivate by using modern means of production, including that of High Yielding Varieties of seeds and chemical fertilizer where there is no absence of irrigational facilities available in the villages and is dependent on river canals and well. There are a few tanks in the villages and to lift water from tank either with the help of manual labour or with pumpsets is expensive. In the normal years, of course, the canal water is available in the fields of a few parts of the villages of Dangapara, Kathalpukur, Bhalkadaha in one side and in another river canal is available in the fields of a few parts of the villages Kamdevbati, Ahira, Kartikpur and a small part of the areas of Nimpur. The irrigation of other villages is dependent on tank water and to lift water from these tanks is done through the traditional ways of carrying water to the field by using jats and dungas (a type of manual irrigational instrument) through labourers is quite expensive also. Besides, the villages are not enriched with many tanks and in majority cases one must have a share in the tank for getting tank water. So, only a small areas of village lands are being irrigated by tank water. In addition to that the water content of a tank is dependent on monsoon which is always known for its unpredictability. So, the production of crops like rabi varieties are lower in the villages. Only peasants who have such lands and scope of cultivation produce for their own household consumption. Among these producing groups of the peasants are marginal and small

categories who generally contribute their own labour force and hire a few mandays from outside their family force. Only a few peasants of rich group produce these varieties of rabi crops who have such land and scope of somewhat larger amount than those of the household consumption either by using their own pumpset or hiring it in agricultural season on payment of money or a portion of produced crops or lift water from existing village tanks under their possession in one way or use canal water if possible by employing manual labour which is expensive and also beyond the scope of marginal and small peasants. These are the main reasons of the village crop cultivation of rabi varieties at a lower scale where irrigational problem is the main handicap for the cultivators in general.

The table shows only ^{36.65} 16.65 per cent of the total households engaged in crop cultivation of rabi varieties of boro-paddy, mustard, wheat, potato and winter vegetables. In this figure we find peasants of these categories who cultivate even a fallow land like a kitchen garden from which they can consume production for a few days' only. Naturally, the percentage of peasants producing rabi varieties are higher in a digital term. If we have a scope of measuring this amount of total cultivable land in this portion then we obviously would find that it never exceeds 10 per cent of the total cultivable land of the villages.

The villages we have studied are mostly the area of single crop cultivation like kharif aman paddy which is also dependent on the nature. If in any year monsoon arrives at proper time then production rises but in any year if it comes late or in an unusual way then the production is hampered. Many of the peasants are

completely dependent on this kharif paddy cultivation and have no other alternative than aman paddy for their consumption and other means of their daily livelihood. These types of peasants, who show 38.85 per cent of the total households in our universe, are highest in number. Among the peasants 8.76 per cent also cultivate pre-kharif crops like jute and aus paddy in the area. Peasants have source and energy for both the purposes of spending household consumption and commercialisation of production. Sometimes these productions of pre-kharif crops raise the maximum expectation of the peasants if pre-monsoon showers occur usually i.e. with the help of Kal-Baishaki (cloud burst). Particularly these crops are generally cultivated in non-irrigated up-lands of alluvial tracts and everybody tries to cultivate these crops. The cultivation of these crops is like a gambling, if in any year, nature favours, then production rises and if nature betrays then production falls. So, nature has a vital role of producing various crops in the area for the lack of proper mechanization of agricultural production. Though the agricultural departments are trying their best for producing higher amount of crops by distributing High Yielding Varieties of seeds to the peasants from time to time in the form of a mini-kit with nominal prices and sometimes they distribute it freely; the condition does not differ very much. They also instruct various modernized form of cultivation of various crops by using different types of chemical fertilizers and pesticides at various stages of the plants for raising higher productivity. But all these efforts are proving fruitless for the lack of a proper irrigational activities in the area which generally lower down the production if seasonal monsoon varies.

SEEDS, FERTILIZER ETC.

The principal crop cultivated in the area is paddy. Besides paddy, some grow wheat, mustard, potato, jute, vegetables and boro-paddy like rabi varieties according to the nature of soil, climatic conditions and regional cropping pattern in addition to that of the other sources available to them for crop cultivation. In addition to paddy only 36.65 per cent grow wheat, mustard, potato, vegetables and rabi-varieties of high yielding boro-paddy cultivation which we can see from our table No. 10 of Households Growing Different Crops in the villages where the preponderance of these varieties are mostly found in the villages of Dangapara, Kathalpukur, Shalukkuri, Mallickpur, Kamdevbati, Ahira and Kartikpur. These villages are shown in higher number of crop cultivation in addition to that of seasonal paddy because some irrigational facilities are available in the area from the canal water and tanks by the peasants' personal efforts, where the scope of irrigational facilities are somewhat more than the other villages where a limited facilities are provided by existing tanks of old types. The seeds they use are mostly of traditional variety; and the type of paddy grown varies with the type of land which differs from village to village. These tribal preponderant villages are mostly shown with the practices of a using seeds of traditional varieties they preserve from agricultural production of the previous year. There are a few peasant households that use high yielding varieties of seeds. It is the wealthy economic group of the peasants, including the well to do tribals. The high yielding varieties of seeds are not preferred first because of the scarcity of irrigational water. Though few

lands are getting water from river canals and existing tanks we have mentioned, the larger areas depend upon the good monsoon. Next, the cost of chemical fertilizer, pesticides and other materials are high and most of the peasants can not afford it. Naturally, the unavailability of proper irrigational facilities the peasants cannot take a high risk of using these modernised factors of cultivation which is disease prone. It stops most of the peasants of poor categories to take a high risk venture.

The fertilizer used by the peasants of the area are either chemical in nature like urea, phosphates etc. or cowdung. And the use of cowdung manure is mostly higher in number. Some of them who have no animals like cow, bullock or buffalo, use ash of burning crop roots left after harvest in the field and other plants and bushes including that of putrefied straw. The chemical fertilizers are mostly used by the wealthy peasants of the villages of irrigated area. Cowdung and other types of traditional varieties of manures are used by the poor peasants including that of irrigated and non-irrigated villages. In spite of significant development of agriculture in the adjacent areas of the district the tribal prone area of our universe still does not get advantage of governmental plans to improve the techniques of agriculture by providing facilities like good seeds and fertilizers. Even after a few decades of agricultural development, cultivation is still the major source of income and employment in the area.

Moreover, it has been found from our study that the tribal people own more or less nearabout 70% of the total household, whereas the other communities have the rest 30 per cent of the

household. But the developmental practices like high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides for agricultural production are being less used by them in comparison with that of the other peasants of non-tribal varieties because of ignorance and want. Besides, the higher productivity factors like high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers etc. are being used mostly in irrigated lands which are in a possession of non tribal peasants who are the outsiders in the area. The tribals were the only possessors of the total land cultivated in the area and the non-tribal have acquired it gradually in different situation and deprived them of their actual rights. The non-tribal people mostly acquired the land where have the facilities of existing irrigation in comparison with that of the other cultivated lands which are mostly the single cropped areas. The proposition will be clear from our table of the Communitywise Breakup of the Households Growing Different Crops in the villages (Table No. 11).

In the table we find three categories of peasant households who are possessing various qualities of cultivated land existing in the villages e.g. household cultivating Pre-kharif, Kharif and Rabi varieties of crops either in a small plot of land or in a large scale in addition to that of household consumption. Next we find households cultivating both the pre-kharif and kharif aman paddy where lies the same proposition like the former category, and the rest one is the owner of the household who are cultivating only single crop of kharif aman varieties depending upon the natural blessings. Categorically speaking, we find another group of the

Table No. 11

Communitywise Breakup of the Households Growing Different Crops in the villages.

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Household cultivated Pre-Kharif Kharif & Rabi	Household cultivated Pre-Kharif & Kharif	Household cultivated only Kharif	Household of non-owner of land
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Santal	193	35	14	89	55
2.	Oraon	158	60	15	66	17
3.	Rajbanshi	40	16	8	15	1
4.	Kshatriya	24	7	1	16	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	3	-	4	-
6.	Bhuimali	4	-	-	-	4
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	-	-	1
8.	Tili	1	1	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	1	-
10.	Muslim	<u>73</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>
		502	184	44	195	79
			36.65	8.76	38.65	15.74

households that have no land and is not considered in this portion for discussion because it has also been established that the tribal people are higher in number of non-owner of land which constitutes 20.51 per cent of the total tribal population. On the other hand, the non-tribals constitute only 4.64 per cent of the total non-tribals constituent is also a fact of agricultural blocking in production field because these non-owners group people are mostly engaged in the agricultural jobs. We may make an assumption of this point that if they had land in their own possession then they would direct all their efforts to their own production which would make them more happy and production oriented.

The point we like to discuss in this portion that the tribals are mostly the deprived section in agricultural development and other sides of the society we have studied. We find that the tribals are the older inhabitants of the area and presently they are in the majority also in our universe but in agricultural practices like higher productivity they are less advanced in comparison with that of the other inhabitants of the area who have come later and settled there for spending their livelihood. In the table we find that the number of households cultivate various crops like pre-kharif, kharif aman paddy and rabi varieties of crops in their land are getting somewhat irrigational facilities from any sources like canal water, tank or others for their own consumption or commercial purpose whatever we may say are comparatively higher in number than that of the tribal people according to their total strength of the population. In this field, the total number of the household possessing this quality of multi-varieties or irrigated land we find from

our survey are 27.06 per cent among the non-tribals in comparison with that of the total tribal and non-tribal population. The thing we find from our table in the column of double cropped land i.e. of pre-kharif and kharif aman paddy producing land which generally depends upon the natural blessings i.e. on proper appearance of pre-monsoon showers with the help of 'Kal-Baishaki' (cloud burst) or a little irrigation facilities where the tribals are again shown the less in percentage in comparison with that of the non-tribals according to their total number of households separately i.e. 8.26 per cent in case of tribals and 9.93 per cent in favour of non-tribals. The next column shows the total number of households in the area cultivating single crop in a year i.e. of kharif aman paddy where there is no scope of any type of irrigation and production depends completely on natural phenomenon. Production generally favours and disfavors on the natural whim and cultivators also depend on their fate in every year; naturally, the ups and down of their fate is going on in continuity with their life cycle. So they have no certainty of getting good crop in every year and the possessor of such types of lands are higher in our universe and constitute 38.85 per cent of the total households. Among these possessors of single cropped and tribals are more in number than the non-tribals according to their total population which constitutes 44.16 per cent and 26.49 per cent respectively.

From this picture, agricultural land and cultivation in our universe are not modernised or developed in the sense that when the majority of the peasants are depending on single cropped land in one side and productivity of those lands are depending on the natural

blessings or whims on the other there are nothing but of the existence of primary system of agricultural production in the area. In this perspective tribals are mostly the sufferers than the non-tribals in comparison with the total agricultural production and development in the area. In spite of significant overall development of the country in agricultural production shown in Official Reports, the statistical figures of our universe is most neglected for the lack of proper governmental plans to improve the techniques of agriculture by providing infra-structural facilities like a proper land reforms policy and irrigational development for overall cultivation in addition to that of the individual beneficiary scheme of distributing high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers etc. to the marginal and small peasants. They also adopt various plans to improve agricultural knowledge of the peasants about the modern techniques of cultivation for higher productivity as the majority of the peasants continue with agricultural practices in a traditional way which is less productive. So the picture we find from our study is neither up-dated nor improved from agricultural view point.

CHANGES IN AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

After the independence of our country the new rulers of both the State Governments and Central Government have taken a series of developmental planning to improve the lot of the various sections of the people in general and rural peasants in particular. The effects of the schemes are not found equal in all parts of the country for some administrative loopholes but the influence of development have touched more or less the minds of the people though they cannot realize it properly because majority of them are left

out from the mainstream of different developmental projects implemented for them. These types of developmental projects are not being implemented properly and equally for the lack of the allocation and proper distribution of the governmental funds in every financial year in different developmental schemes are also suffering from the negligence of different officials and sanctioning authority for their personal whim. After passing through all these hazards a project is implemented by the actual benefactors of the society which we expect should have a little benefit in the overall development of the society. Standing upon this situation of our society we find various developmental effects have touched the village people either individually or communally by which they are trying their best to improve their lots in the society. The peasants of our universe are not in exception where they are pursuing their life and struggle within the system of tradition and modernity. This is our point of discussion in this portion which will be dealt with the table No. 12 Tradition and Modernity in Agricultural other Services Among the Castes/Tribes.

The table shows that the total number of cultivating peasants in the villeges are 84.26 per cent from among the total number of households we have studied. The households have at least land for their own cultivation. In this group we find rich peasants of a maximum quantum of cultivating land in their own possession and the peasants of marginal denomination, have a small patch of land for cultivation. This ownership qualities vary in a sense that in one side the peasants of a minimum holding can not cover up their yearly consumption of minimum food from the production of their own land.

Table No. 12

Tradition and Modernity in Agriculture and Other Occupational Service among the Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of household	Total No. of Owner Cultivator	Landowner						Total No. of Sharecropper
				Traditional Bullock, Spade & Other Non-Mechanized Tool	Using Own preserved seeds	Cowdung as Principal Manure	Mechanized Tool	High Yielding varieties of Seeds	Chemical Fertilizer	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Santal	193	138	107	107	107	-	31	31	17
2.	Oron	158	141	85	85	85	-	56	56	5
3.	Rajbanshi	40	39	20	20	20	-	19	19	-
4.	Kshatriya	24	24	13	13	13	11	11	11	-
5.	Keyastha Ghosh	7	7	4	4	4	-	3	3	-
6.	Bhuimali	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	1	-	-	-	1	1	1	-
9.	Brahmin	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	72	69	20	20	3	52	52	-
		502	423	299	250	250	4	173	173	22
			84.26	70.69	59.10	59.10	0.95	40.90	40.90	4.38

Contd. of the Same Table

Sharecropper Traditional Old type of Distribution System	Modern New-type of Distri- bution	Total No. of Agri- cultural Labour	Agri. Labour			Total No. of Non- Agricul- tural Labourer	Non. Agr. Labour		Total No. of Trade Service
			Traditional Mode of Payment by goods	Modern Payment By Half-goods Half-Money	Payment in Money		Trad. Using Old types of Technolo- gical Know- how	Modern Using Modern type of Techno- logical Know-how	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
5	12	32	-	18	14	3	-	3	3
1	4	12	11	1	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	4	-	4	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
6	16	50	11	25	14	3	-	3	4
27.27	72.73	9.96	22.00	50.00	28.00	0.60	-	0.60	0.80

Contd. of the Same Table

<u>Professional Pattern</u>		<u>Trade</u>	
<u>Trad.</u>	<u>Modern</u>	<u>Trad.</u>	<u>Modern</u>
Traditional Calling	Modern Calling	Investing Old types of instrument	Investing New types of Technology
22	23	24	25
-	3	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	1	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	3	1	-
-	75.00	25.00	-

on the other hand these owners group also allow those type of owner peasants, who have a maximum land for cultivation and production in excess of their yearly consumption that makes them big producers of cultivable goods in the area. This excessive production is usually used for commercial purpose which makes them not only peasants of higher ownership classes in the society but also makes them advanced in all other sectors of the society like political, economic, educational and cultural fields where they ultimately create an importance and power in the activity. The middle order of the ownership peasants in the society are no more important because they are running their life and problems in a middle order system of the society where qualities of fluctuations are also found among them like the decline and upward tendencies of the life pattern and ownership qualities that are fixed within the limited layer of status in the society. Exception is also there but this Exception cannot come in the mathematical figures because of the rarity in the society. All these types of ownership-peasants, who have land in their own possession for cultivation, we have classified them economically for the conveniences of our discussion : namely, the marginal peasants, small peasants and rich peasants. On the other hand a section of the people who have no land, are generally excluded in this portion of ownership cultivation.

Now, we will see from our table that how many people are using modern agricultural implements in their cultivation. Among the total number of ownership peasants 70.69 per cent are using non-mechanized tools for their cultivation. Among these non-mechanized tools we find ploughs of the indigenous type. It is drawn

by a pair of bullocks or buffalos. It speaks of their economical position in this regard. Some of them have even no plough of their own and animal. They often borrow or hire for their cultivation. They also use other traditional types of tools like spade, pick-axes and sickles locally made by the different villages within the area or adjacent villages. Besides these, they also use some wooden implements for agricultural purposes like moi (ladder used to levelling cultivated land), joal (yoke), Bidha (wooden comb), harmer etc, for different types of work like levelling, breaking of earthen chunk weeding etc. These types of traditional materials are being used for village agricultural production which they know are less productive because they do not get any other alternative in the society they live in.

Among these cultivating peasants who are using old types of agricultural activities like plough cultivation are using own preserved seeds which are easily available to them for their cultivation. They are using mostly their own preserved cowdung as the principal manure for higher productivity and those who do not own any cow, bullocks or buffalos use ash and other country made manures from putrefied straw and the like. These types of cultivators who use traditional varieties of own preserved seeds and manure constitute 59.10 per cent of the total owner peasants. This percentage of owner peasants whose main production and maximum production come from using traditional procedure in agriculture, is shown in the table. Some of the cultivating peasants are using high yielding varieties of seeds and chemical fertilizer for their production but these modern factors of cultivation they do not use every time for

every production; they often use it for increasing higher productivity, mostly in irrigated land. These higher productivity seeds and chemical fertilizers are suitable for irrigated land and according to proportion of irrigated land these modern implements of agriculture vary. The peasants who are using these modern implements constitute 40.90 per cent of the total cultivating (owner) peasants. In this portion we would like to refer one thing that the cultivators we have identified in our universe are using modern agricultural implements for their production purpose. They never use these implements in their total cultivable lands they possess but are using it for a portion of their total ownership land they cultivate; but one thing is clear that they have a sense or capacity to apply these modern implements partially and proportionately. But the rest of the land they possess are cultivated in a traditional way of age old type from which they cannot differentiate them from the rest of the village cultivators. When total productivity of the area is going up ^{by} way of tradition and modernity, a little portion of the cultivating peasants i.e. 0.95 per cent of them are using mechanized pumpset for irrigation purpose which add a new dimension of using modern implements in cultivating purpose. They personally own it for bringing a larger portion under irrigation and raising productivity. These are from the peasants' class who have an average higher ownership and capacity from economic side. Besides these ownership peasants, some of the cultivating peasants occasionally hire pumpset from within their village or from adjacent villages for cultivation purpose in exchange of money or a portion of harvesting crops; but this is not of a regular practice. So it cannot bring them in

this section of our cultivating peasants identified for using mechanized tool for agricultural purpose. It has also been clear from our discussion that though the appliances of modern method of cultivation are used by the peasants of the area but this application is made only for a portion of their cultivable land both from the individual ownership and total cultivable area of the villages. So we may make a comment in this section that the modern agriculture is gradually being pushed in the area and the causes of this backwardness in agricultural practices owe their origin to economic causes. Because majority of the peasants are from the lower economic group of the society and possessing a small portion of land for their cultivation from which they cannot provide a major portion of their consumable goods they need yearly, naturally they divert their attention to other sources of income for their livelihood which ultimately stops them to spend more extra time and money for using modern appliances in cultivating purpose. So without any help or care from the proper channel no one is able to spend extra money and time properly for higher productivity by applying modern means of cultivation of this economic class of the peasants, who are in majority in the area. Among them tribal people constitute higher percentage.

Another cause of non-application of modern means of agricultural appliances like high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers etc. are lower for the lack of proper irrigational system in the villages we have studied. As these modern means need proper irrigational facilities for its usual growth and productivity,

which the peasants cannot provide from time to time the productivity will hamper. So the peasants of the villages who have no such proper irrigational facilities at hand restrain themselves from using these modern appliances in their land. It is, that we have found from our study that the villages are within the lower irrigational zone. Naturally the peasants of the area show lower percentage of using modern appliances of agricultural productivity. In addition to that "the cost in terms of fertilizer pesticides is prohibitive, which most peasant cannot afford. With uncertainty of water and disease proneness of high yielding varieties cultivating them remain a high risk venture for the tribals"¹³, and other peasants of lower income groups of the society.

The next group of the peasants we find in our table is the sharecropping unit of occupational peasant household who constitute 4.38 per cent of the total population. They are the group of peasants whose main income generally comes from those sharecropping land and their main agricultural activity is also confined to those barga (sharecropping) land. There are other bargadars in the universe but their barga activity like cultivation of their own land in respect of possessional differentiation, some take to agricultural labouring as in addition to that of cultivating barga (sharecropping) land. Naturally, the actual number of bargadars is more in number in our universe but these bargadars are also interlinked with other agricultural activities for their livelihood and are classified according to the ownership activities separately. If, we would like to have an enlightenment of total bargadars in our universe then we are bound to put another table in respect of barga and other business

or land ownership categories classified accordingly as the table of Landholding and Barga Record in the Caste^S/Tribes (Table No. 13).

The table shows not only the total bargadars in the society which constitutes 42.23 per cent of the total population but these bargadars have other business in addition to that of the occupational share-cropping business where there are bargadars of different ownership categories.

The West Bengal Land Reform Act has defined the Bargadar as a "person who under the system generally known as adhi, barga or bhag, cultivates the land of another person on condition or delivering a share of the produce of such land to that person" (vide S 2(2)). A system of Khaikhalasi which is somewhat similar to that of the barga system is also prevalent in our universe. In this system landowner leases out his land to a person for a fixed amount of money or goods for a fixed time. He may contract for a fixed amount before delivering the land or part repayment by every years' production. Here the lessee is bound to pay the contracted amount to the lessor within the contracted period. No mercy is shown for no production because of natural hazards.

Barga system is nothing new in the rural society and more or less we find bargadar in every village. This is an age-old system of cultivation that maintains absentee landlordism. The system of barga is constituting a remarkable figure in the village cultivable land and cultivators from every agrarian classes are performing this business, though the business of barga system is decreasing in the present day agrarian society, for some reasonable land reforms measure taken by the Government of West Bengal for the protection of

Table No. 13

Landholding and Barga Record in the Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Non-Owner of Land		Upto 2.5 Acres		2.5. to 5 Acres	
			Total No. of Bargadars	Recorded Bargadars	Total No. of Bargadars	Recorded Bargadars	Total No. of Bargadars	Recorded Bargadars
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Santal	193	18	7	51	34	23	18
2.	Oraon	158	7	4	38	32	23	20
3.	Rajbanshi	40	-	-	6	6	2	2
4.	Kshatriya	24	-	-	6	4	3	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.	Bhumali	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	-	-	11	10	3	3
		<u>502</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>86</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>43</u>
			11.79	44.00	52.83	76.78	25.47	79.63

Contd. of the same table

<u>More than 5 Acres</u>		<u>Total No. of Bargadars</u>
<u>Total No. of Bargadars</u>	<u>Recorded Bargadars</u>	
10	11	12
2	1	94
8	8	76
4	4	12
-	-	9
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
7	7	21
<hr/> 21	<hr/> 20	<hr/> 212
9.91	95.24	

of the interest of the poor peasants and bargadars in the present day society. But we cannot ignore the system from agrarian point of view. We divide our occupational classes accordingly. In an occupational class of landless peasants who have no land but are cultivating in others' land on the basis of barga system is constituting 11.79 per cent of the total bargadars, among the marginal peasants it constitutes 52.83 per cent of the total bargadars, moreover, ^{it} ~~it~~ constitutes 25.47 per cent and 9.91 per cent respectively among the small and rich peasants' class whereas both the systems of modern method of share-cropping cultivation and old procedure are going continuously side by side in the society we have studied. Following this system of continuity and change both kinds of bargadars i.e. recorded and non-recorded are found in the society even after the decade of the implementation of the 'Operation-Barga' system in the society.

'Operation Barga' is nothing but a slogan of recording barga (Sharecropping) land of the bargadars (sharecroppers). It is a name of creating an image of the programme and its acceleration. The programme has been implemented by an amendment of West Bengal Land Reforms laws in 1977. This programme is for recording the right to cultivation on barga land but not recording its ownership. This is an act of safeguarding their barga land with a view to keeping their broader interests about their cultivation. Before this act, eviction was the daily business of the landlord, if any bargadar failed to satisfy his landlord about the share of his production in barga land. Bargadars were evicted in most of the cases. Bargadars had no certainty over their barga land. The land owner appointed new

bargadar whenever he liked. This is a type of sheer exploitation by the landowners of the bargadars and they had nothing to protest against this exploitation for fear of eviction. Repeated eviction and transitory bargadarship of a land can never be effective for higher production for the lack of long term investment. No one can take the risk of applying anything on long term basis for the excess of production in barga land because of uncertainty over their barga land. But after the implementation of the 'Operation Barga', bargadars achieved certainty over their barga land which inspires production. Various survey reports show the excess of production from barga land after the implementation of the 'Operation Barga' programme"¹⁴.

The table of Landholding and Barga Record in the Castes/Tribes (Table No. 13) shows the concentration of barga land within the landless, marginal and small peasants groups. They constitute 90.09 per cent of the total bargadars and the next rich peasants group constitute only 9.91 per cent of the total bargadars. Among these bargadars from various classes 44 per cent of bargadars from the non-owners of land are recorded bargadars. The marginal peasants show 76.78 per cent of recorded bargadars, small peasants show 79.63 per cent of them are recorded and the next group of rich peasants constitute 95.24 per cent of recorded bargadars within the total number of bargadars in the group. The table states that the bargadars generally comprise the lower income groups of the villages. Among these groups whom we know as the lower income groups are the non-owners of land and the marginal peasants group both of them

constitute together 64.62 per cent of the total bargadars. Rich peasants are generally averse to cultivate others' land on barga basis because they have the maximum land for own cultivation. A nominal number cultivates others' land, who in most of the cases are either relatives or friends. A person generally cultivates others' land when he has nothing to cultivate or minimum which ultimately cannot provide livelihood, in a word, we may say, poor peasants. Tribals constitute highest majority among the bargadars and Scheduled Castes and Tribes together constitute 90.09 per cent, the great majority among the bargadars, whom we know as the backward communities and generally comprise lower income groups. They are the deprived class for years. But the proper investigation shows that they were original settlers and owners of the land. They were alienated from their original holdings and gradually others possessed the tribal land by adopting different tricky policies and made them landless agricultural labourers and bargadars.

'Operation Barga' has been implemented for the protection of the deprived groups of the peasants who ultimately did not have any certainty even over their barga land. And the Act mostly benefits the backward communities of rural Bengal. Not only it has paved the way for higher production, but also opens up a newer process of mutuality and understanding that looks like the formation of class from Marxian point of view. So the excess of production and enthusiasm for various productivity oriented cultivation in a newer angle, that are found in various fields are also the effect of the recent agrarian reforms like 'Operation Barga'. The excess of production in the district is shown by the Comparative Productivity Index,

which is going on in further progress by a reasonable laws.

Comparative - Productivity Index

(1971 - 72 = 100)

1983-84

Volume	- 106.72
Production of Crops	- 118.88
Productivity	- 111.39

Souvenir : West Dinajpur Zilla Parishad, 1986.

It is, however, been hampered by the lack of proper implementation of other schemes for the protection of the interest of the poorer and backward classes of the rural society by some influential village landlords and members of the panchayats in connivance with some money lenders. They influenced their bargadars not to record barga and also threatened if they did so they would be deprived of their future benefit. But only a few of them were influenced by the mischievous groups and only 24.53 per cent of the universe abstained themselves from recording barga land. Most of them have replied against my question that they did not record it because of the existing good relations between them and landlords. But analytical study shows that the system of exploitation by pressure upon the bargadars operate in the rural social life which the poor fail to understand simply for want of proper knowledge about the perspectives. Moreover, we have found from various studies that the two unequal classes can never exist in a mutual coexistence from the economic view point where the upper economic class of interest group will always try to exploit their subordinate and

the subordinate will always try to remove themselves from various barriers imposed by the upper interest groups within the existing system of the society when both the parties are well informed of their possessional differentiation in the society they live in.

Various plans are being implemented for giving assistance to the poor bargadars for their proper cultivation. Recently various plans have been taken by various governmental departments like Scheduled Castes and Tribal Welfare department, District Rural Development Agency and various money lending institutions like Banks giving assistance for providing agricultural production against their pattas of barga record with the assistance of panchayats. In this case recorded bargadars are getting facilities against their documents of barga record and non-recorded bargadars will be deprived of this benefit; this is an extra incentive to accelerate the programme of 'Operation Barga' - an indirect help of the scheme of rural development programme also with that of the growth of agricultural productivity in the country. Though a reasonable number of non-recorded bargadars are staying in the universe the programme has been responded within the poorer and backward classes in the society we have studied, and the programme shows a greater perspective of consciousness about their original rights and privileges, we may say, where both the systems of continuity and change exists within the society.

So, in the previous table of Tradition and Modernity in Agriculture and other occupational service among the Castes/Tribes (Table No. 12), we find 4.38 per cent of bargadars (sharecroppers) in the universe which indicates the household of spending their

major part of livelihood on the basis of occupational barga land in the society. The table also shows 27.27 per cent of them are till now obeying the rules of traditional barga system and other procedure in the society which deprives them of their original rights and privileges implemented by the laws of the original system of the 'Operation Barga' movement in the society from the fear of an unknown section of the society i.e. from the influential village landlords and members of the panchayats in connivance with some money lenders who assist them in their crisis period with a reasonable interest paid by those bargadars and create an unreasonable sense among them as they are safeguarding their interest in the society. But practically it is nothing like a farce in the society. The rest 72.73 per cent of the bargadars are following the procedure of modern methods of cultivation on the barga land where they follow the modern method of sharecropping system like distribution of the produce in the barga land and have recorded their name as bargadar according to the 'Operation Barga' system implemented in the society. The total record and other system and procedures about the bargadar and barga land we have discussed in our table of Landholding and Barga Record in the Castes/Tribes (Table No. 13), where we have shown details about the total bargadars in various sections of the society with their continuity and change i.e. of tradition and modernity in the present day social perspectives of our rural Bengal.

Next we find the occupational group of agricultural labourers who constitute in the society 9.96 per cent of the total household whose livelihood is generally earned by adopting the occupational

business of agricultural labouring in the society where each and every able bodied member including that of women is doing agricultural job in different agricultural periods according to the division of work in the sense of capability of working function in the society. In agricultural job, modernity is being measured by the system of the mode of payment and various working rule in the society like that of the duty hours non-differentiation of wage in respect of male and female workers and payment according to the governmental rate prescribed by them are nominally followed in the rural society. So we have measured tradition and modernity in this occupational group in the society on the basis of the mode of payment they follow like the mode of payment by goods, mode of payment by half goods and half money and the payment completely followed on the basis of total cash money and the duty hours. Equal wage for equal work is generally disregarded in the rural society even today. Payment in goods in exchange of foods or as wages of payment by goods is a traditional procedure even when the moneytory system did not develop properly in the rural society. From that period the payment of goods in exchange of labour power is continuing till now. In our universe we find 22 per cent of the agricultural labourers are till now accepting goods as exchange value against their labour power they invest in others' field. And the payment where moneytory system is related is somewhat modern from the point of exchange value, naturally the payment either through money or through half money and half goods are somewhat modern from the point of exchange value in the society. Though the payment of wages through half-money and half-goods is modern to us, it refers to the earlier system of

exchange and the village people generally prefer it because of getting readymade food for consumption and contribute 50 per cent of the total labour power which is accepting this type of payment in the villages. The traditional system only responds 22 per cent of the total population and the modern system of payment by complete money responds 28 per cent of the total agricultural labouring household. This modern procedure of payment by cash is not getting popularity in the village people because of the lack of proper marketing facilities at hand from which they can purchase any goods they desire by cash money whenever they need; and this inconvenience generally makes them prone to accept payment by both the goods and cash. Again the payment of goods by goods also creates difficulties because the employer generally pays them by a kind of goods like rice; but if they need dhal but if that dhal owner does not require rice then the owner of rice generally enquires of another person who needs rice but has dhal. This creates various types of inconveniences to the people for which the system is going to be discontinued in the rural society. The payment by money is achieving popularity day by day in the society because of easy convenience of marketing facilities and communication to the urban society through modern media.

Next, 0.60 per cent, we find in the table, are doing other than agricultural job in the society by performing special type of occupational business which is related to the wage system but is different from the nature of agricultural labour, a traditional type of wage labour system in the villages. These nominal percentage

generally come from the labouring system of mason, carpentry and Thala (hand cart) driver who generally perform the job in the villages of nearby urban areas. These types of occupational works are performed by the modern technological knowhow and they are doing these works by using modern instruments which need special type of attention and applicational procedure in the field of earnings. Before performing these business of occupational separation they have used various trainings and application of the instruments they presently work with. It is a type of special training and attitude made by them is different from the traditional type of occupational business like agricultural labouring system which is something symbiotic in rural poor. So these occupational separation that we have seen in the modern phenomenon in the society need a special type of attention and performance in the business different from the traditional occupation and old system of technological knowhow. Moreover, it is a system of modern calling in the society which they have achieved by a special attention to the system not ascribed to them from their hereditary traditional calling, that we may say, the impact of modernity.

The last one we find in the table is the professional pattern of occupation like Service/Trade and business which performs 0.80 per cent of the total occupational household. In this column we find a sub-section of occupational household who are performing Governmental service in the society which is a modern calling and separate from the traditional calling. In the traditional society, people of lower income groups generally attend a service like occupation in the rich peasant's household for which they receive monthly salary

like remuneration in the form of money or goods whatever they like or in both the form of money and goods where they have no security for their works and other benefit. In this service like occupation in the society, their traditional works relate to the cultivation and others of agricultural household occupation. This is the system we may compare to that of the Aristotolian theory of slavery. In the column we find 0.75 per cent among the total number are doing service where two householders are related with the occupation of physical labour in the Governmental department of P.W.D. (Public Works Departments) and Electricity Board where they are either performing the business by themselves or looking after the matter under one's supervision related to the works of physical labour in the department for which they are receiving regular salary and other benefits relating to the social security. These are completely separate from the traditional type of service or calling the village people generally perform. Another one is performing the occupation of service relating to technological knowhow of lorry driving under private ownership of a businessman for which he receives regular salary and other benefits relating to the similar type of occupation. This inhabitant performs a special type of perseverance for achieving this technical knowledge which is completely separate from the traditional type of occupation we find in the society. In this column of the table we find only one inhabitant who is till now performing the business relating to his traditional calling of boatmanship and has to stop for its non-congenial situation like insufficiency of water in the area to continue the occupation. More or less this

householder continues with his occupation of boatmanship in the area for 5 to 6 months in a year, later he performs the business of fisherman for livelihood. The occupation of boatmanship is primarily related to his forefathers' occupation which his forefathers also performed in other places of Bangladesh; but after migrating himself in the area he started his forefathers' occupation in the system of jajamani (clientee) on the yearly basis which was sufficient to him but later his family became larger with his children within the fixed income, but is ultimately forced to adopt other occupation to maintain his family smoothly. Without getting any other alternatives, he adopted occupational business of fishcatching in off-season to add extra income for his family maintenance by investing old types of instrument like thread net of individual use. In both places of his occupational division we never find modernity in actual life except exchange system mainly in the business of fish catching when he brings those caught fish in the market for selling which is generally sold in exchange of money, is a modern method of exchange. Like this, in every field of occupational pattern in our universe, we find a little modernity even in the field of agricultural production but we may say that the influence of modernity has knocked in the system of agricultural production and other system of occupational business, where everyone is performing his occupational business according to his choice and convenience without looking into his traditional occupation. This is a kind of modernity in professions.

The overall analysis of the table follows that a little response of modernity has occurred in the villages we have studied. The appliances of modern technological knowhow in productive purposes are rare in the field of agriculture and other business in the society which forces them to accept lower productive mentality and attitude. This mentality and attitude have predominated in the mind of the people from their poverty and illiteracy which forces them also to go in the way of conservatism. For this reason, people generally do not like to leave their traditional occupation and business which ultimately left them in an older way of activities in the society. Only a few persons who have been in touch with the out people of urban orientation are generally interested in modern occupational pattern and business for which a nominal per cent of people are going on in the business and occupation related with modernity in present day society.

Rural Employment Pattern of Agricultural Labourer:

In the production field of agriculture, agricultural labourers are playing vital roles. They are of two types: landless agricultural labourer and landed agricultural labourer. By landed agricultural labour we mean here the marginal peasants. Both of them are working in others' field in exchange of money or goods or by both. Wages generally vary in accordance with the nature of work and availability of total working days in comparison with total man power in the locality; the wages also vary in cases of female and child labour, who are unable to do every type of work including that of ploughing the agricultural field.

The average wage rate for different works, including that of agricultural works, is normally paid lower amount than that of the rate fixed by the government. The rate normally paid we find from our study is Rs. 8/- for male and Rs. 7/- for female and in case of attached child it is nominal amount, generally lower than both the categories. In majority of cases the labourers are paid in cash and kind where their wages are fixed for Rs. 3/- to Rs. 4/- and one kg. of rice per day for male members and females are generally paid less of Rs. 1/- from that of male members. Child members are generally paid less than both the two categories of labourers who generally do not follow any fixed rate and every employer uses it according to his own way. And this child labour normally is used for household works like maintenance of cows, bullock etc, for household purposes in well to do peasant houses. Ploughing is the most rewarding agricultural work that pays much attention to the male labourer and normally pays higher rate of wage, female and child are not suitable for the work. But wedding, planting and harvesting are paying more attention to the female workers because performance of female workers in this cases is not less than that of male workers for which the employers are paying lower rate than the male worker. Male workers are employed when a suitable number of female workers are not available at hand. Only a limited number of female workers mainly from tribal community offer themselves as wage labourers in outside field work, naturally employers are compelled to employ male members with a higher rate of wages even where female are suitable. Besides, the employers sometimes paid more wages to their wage labourers when a limited number of labourers are available at hand and the work needs a fixed time to finish.

Moreover, in our universe we find some female labourers who are not employing themselves against wages but are employing themselves in their own family agricultural field for the accomplishment of their own agricultural operations timely by performing outside homework by an active participation in agricultural field. Females generally employ themselves in others' agricultural field in exchange of wage when a family has no cultivable land and income generated by the male members of the family from various sources are not sufficient for total family maintenance and livelihood ^{they} ~~they~~ are generally forced to send female members out in exchange of wage i.e. we may say poverty breeds the acceptance of wage to the female members of a family. Various survey reports including our own survey states the fact that the number of female and child labourers are increasing day by day in various rural areas simultaneously with that of male agricultural labourers. Participation of female members in outside work in exchange of wage generally comes from the group of non-owners of land and marginal peasant classes whose average income are lower than that of the other classes in the society. Among them tribal shows majority. Participation of women members from other classes like small peasant is also found in our universe but they are doing agricultural works in outside for their own family purposes, but not for earning wages. Of every class the propensity of female participation in outside work either for earning wages or for family purposes is found more in tribal communities. This will be clear from our table No. 26 Woman participation in Outside Homework in the Castes/Tribes. With that of increasing female participation in outside

work, child labourers are also increasing for the poverty situation in the area. Where there is no such prescribed rate of wages for child labourer, because it is a serious offense to employ child labour in any field according to the country's Labour Legislation Act; but in every field we find child labourer which is a sign of poverty. That the household^{er} generally ^{Sends} sees his minor members to earn money for lessening his family burden is nothing but a commentary of poverty situation.

In this situation when a maximum number of family members are doing different types of agricultural or other works round the year for earning wages but they have no strong labour organisation for the protection of the benefit of the labourers, including the female labourers. The agricultural labourers in the area are not getting the minimum wages prescribed by the Government for the rural areas in both the cases of male and female. They are not only being deprived of the actual government rate but even they are not getting the reasonable amount. In maximum cases the rich peasants, including the large landowning peasants, are possessing maximum mandays to employ agricultural labourers in their fields round the year and they generally fixed the wages for labourers from the point of view of profit motive and try to give a minimum wages they can. Naturally the labourer are being deprived of their minimum wages without getting any other alternatives to them. They are unable to protest against this corrupt practice for the lack of a strong labour organisation. At present a labour organisation is being formed in the area with the help of the Revolutionary Socialist Party but they

are not organising themselves properly in a systematic manner by which they can protest against this exploitation for the lack of the growth of the consciousness they need for their organisation and safeguard against exploitation. But it is a thing which induces our satisfaction that they are organising gradually.

Peasant, An Economic Class:

This section presents an information about the peasants and their class formation in rural Bengal. Most of the information are presented on the basis of the ^{statistical} ~~statistical~~ data collected from our field survey. Before discussing in detail about the 'peasant', we would like to discuss briefly who are the peasants in our universe.

There is much discussion about the peasants in the discipline of sociology and social anthropology but the discussions are mostly on the basis of European and Latin American data on experience which is unable to define 'peasant' in original sense of the term we have used in our discussion on the basis of Bengal agricultural and allied field of activities. "Redfield the pioneer among the anthropologists in the field of peasant studies, urged caution in the formulation of the definition. He stressed their arbitrary nature as they were designed to comprehend clusters of real societies and cultures which differed somewhat among themselves. In other works, a definition of peasants formulated primarily on the basis of European experience would reflect European reality, and must therefore be used with caution in the study of Indian society. It is worth making this point because Indian anthropologists do not appear to have pondered sufficiently on the specific characteristics of

Indian peasants and have assumed that they must be the same as those of peasants everywhere"¹⁵. So the definition we find from Indian sociologists and social anthropologists is mostly related to the definition of European scholars and the like. From their definition we also find that a particular cultivating castes who are directly related to the tilling of land is also 'peasant'. On the contrary some castes who have land but never cultivate directly because of superior caste hierarchy whose main source of livelihood comes from the land are not 'peasants'. Some one again described that families of peasant castes who do not participate in the actual work of tillage even when they live in the village and own holdings of a moderate size but they cultivate their land either by sharecropping or by agricultural labourers. They withdrew themselves from the direct cultivation either for the lack of manpower of his family or of occupying higher status which debarred them from direct cultivation traditionally, and they ceased to be peasants. This type of partial and inappropriate definition continued in the field of Indian sociology and social anthropology since its inception.

We would like to define peasant in our discussion on the basis of economic criteria because the community oriented economy is being replaced by the economy of class orientation, a modern agrarian phenomenon we find everywhere in the rural areas of Bengal. By the emergence of such type of economy prevalent of caste, community and status is replacing day by day. In this situation we can never define anything on the basis of caste, community and status. So, in this case it is better for us to define anything on the basis of modern criteria we find from our investigation in the agrarian

economy of production and its relation in the field of rural society.

A similar type of definition we find in the study of J. Arens and J.V. Beurden in the village 'Jhagrapur', a village located in Bangladesh. They "suggest using the term 'peasant' both for people engaged in cultivation and certain others not cultivating in rural areas. Non-cultivating peasants are e.g. the carpenter, blacksmith, potter and so on. The term 'peasant' has been given such a broad meaning as, historically, cultivators, artisans and other village servants were indispensable members of rural society and often they still are. Who can imagine for instance, a traditional cultivator without a blacksmith who repairs his plough and other tools. Traditionally, cultivating and non-cultivating peasants have complemented each other. Villages such as chowkidar who prevents cows and goats from destroying the fruits of the fields and does so many other services, or the shopkeepers who supply villagers with simply daily necessities should also be included in the group of non-cultivating peasants"¹⁶.

Our definition of 'peasant' comes from a similar type of proposition where we define 'peasant' in a new context based on the notion of the ownership of the means of production and production relations in the rural economy we have studied. Here, by 'peasants' we mean those who are living in rural areas and whose main source of income and livelihood generally come from agricultural production either directly or indirectly. They may have a personal land or not for cultivation but are involved in agricultural work for their livelihood. Again, people who are living in rural areas and engage themselves in a particular field of occupation and sharing village

economy of agricultural production or its allied section either directly or indirectly by which all of them are jointly maintaining the system of production and production relations in the village economy and its allied section to maintain the infra-structural base of the society concerned.

Peasant as a Socio-economic Unit:

The universe we have studied is completely agricultural with the high propensity of tribal people of Santal and Oraon communities. But in the present situation it has been enriched by so many other communities of different agricultural orientation whether it is agricultural occupation or other traditionally vicarious occupations. Traditionally each community had its own production process separately as per its own community rule and maintain a systematic way of distribution among themselves where a less degree of inequality prevails in the society which we find from various studies. But after the advent of the British Colonial Administration with that of the emergence of the new method of cultivation following technological innovation in agricultural field community rule of the production process and its distribution gradually began to replace by a new method of production process and its distribution in a generalised way of activities following the ownership of the means of production and production relation in the society. Naturally, a new system of production and distribution has emerged in the society on the basis of economic rules of the class system in lieu of the community system of production and distribution on the basis of social rules of a particular community therein. But the present

system shows a different social and economic milieu of the modern rural society we have studied.

In the present situation, our study reveals that the system has been regarded as the majority of the peasants in the villages are merely depending upon 'the meagre source of livelihood for the mass of petty-peasants, who carry on production chiefly for subsistence and largely with family labour'¹⁷. 'They are of course known to be working under severe handicaps since the classes of landlords, moneylenders, and traders oppress and exploit them brutally and claim all their produce beyond a bare subsistence for the family'¹⁸. The study reveals that the village peasants are composed of several strata of cultivators, differentiated from each other in respect of size of land holding. In addition to rich peasants or well to do peasants there we find also 'the layers of intermediaries, moneylenders, traders, and at the bottom a mass of small peasants more or less equal and homogeneous in their land and produce and suffering from the burdens of rackrent, usurious interest rates, and middlemen's profit in trade'¹⁹. So the main basis of differentiation of peasants in rural areas is the ownership of cultivable land by which peasants are divided into separate units in economic field, rather separate classes in village agricultural field.

Moreover, we find that "in a social study the criterion to determine the economic structure should be such as that it will not merely segregate the people into abstract statistical categories of various "elements" of a society; it must express the social significance of the economic hierarchy the people of rural Bengal could easily be classified into distinct groups by their income

levels. Since rural Bengal depended essentially on an agrarian economy, landholdings of the villagers could also be used for this purpose"²⁰.

It is found from our study that the villages are composed of various strata of the cultivators which are highly differentiated from each other in respect of occupation, landholding and cultivation. "The first and foremost basis of differentiation amongst the peasants even in other aspects, is the ownership and cultivation of land. The distribution of owned land in present day India is extremely concentrated with a small minority owning most of the land"²¹. The distribution in owned land in our universe have been somewhat balanced by the implementation of latest Land Reform Act by the United Front Regime of West Bengal. By this reform they have acquired excess land from the big landowning peasants beyond the ceiling limit the law imposed i.e. of maximum of 25 acres of landholding by a single family and distributed those lands to the non-owning peasants for cultivation. But various reports of West Bengal reveal that this reformation is not sufficient to abolish the differentiation amongst present households in respect of their ownership of holdings for the lack of proper implementation of the policy. For a maximum number of big landowning peasants are keeping anonymous lands by resorting to various tricky deals. Besides, the land the Government acquired from various big peasants and distributed to the non-owning and marginal peasants is gradually lost to them as they are actually dispossessed gradually from their land for the lack of cultivable materials and money they need. So far they began to lease out their newly owned land to the landowning

peasants for a fixed amount of money for a certain period. In this relationship the poor peasants generally go to those leasee peasants for money when they need it at their crisis period which generally doubles up in a process of usurious interest in the land or leasee peasants impose for that and actually go beyond their capacity for repayment. In this way the majority of peasants have lost their actual possession of their land they owned from the newly reformed policies of the government. The ownerships remain in their name officially and in paper documents for which government is unable to take any legal action against these occupied group of the peasants we find in the rural areas. This is a discrepancy between the official documents and political situation for which till now we find a high degree of differentiation amongst present peasant households in respect of their ownership and economic holdings. We find from our table of Landholding class and marginal peasants class whose landholding stands upto 2.5 acres of land which shows nearabout 70 per cent of the total peasant households. This unevenness of the distribution of landholding is not sufficient for them and is added by a capitalist farming and commercialisation of production which shows the tendency of accumulation of wealth on the one hand and exploitation on the other. Before consideration in detail about the capitalist farming and commercialisation of production we would like to have a discussion on the categories of peasants we find in our universe according to their possessional holding, the main basis of the village economy and agriculture which differentiates them according to their economic position in the village from which each of the households derives most of their income. Then our discussion

will focus on the peasants who accumulating wealth gradually and becoming rich day by day in contrast with another group of the peasants, who are losing ground gradually that they possessed even after the impelentation of the land reforms Act by the United Front Regime of West Bengal which has gained its ground as the Left Front Government of West Bengal; so are they called the Government for the poor and they have taken so many other schemes of rural development in addition to that of the legislation of the Land Reform Act for eliminating rural poverty.

"In India a person living in rural areas is usually described as (a) inhabiting a particular territory or a village, or (b) belonging to a particular caste or community, or (c) living by a particular family or household occupation. The income of the people may be regarded as the simplest measure their economic condition on the basis of their household incomes"²². Moreover, the household income of the peasant family comes from their agricultural or allied occupation which is mainly determined by the ownership of property holding. In order to examine the socio-economic units of the village people, modern studies prefer homogeneous inequality rather than heterogeneous inequality of the village people of anywhere else which ultimately controls all other factors of inequality, the economy of land is also the basis of our discussion.

The total population of the universe is 2730 with 50.88 per cent of male and 49.12 per cent of female. Besides, the sexual division we find the division of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the general mass according to the constitutional provision. Constitutionally these divisions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

have been made on the basis of their backwardness in the society. This backwardness of the society has been made on the basis of economic development in the society where they are identified not only as backward but also as the depressed section of the society as a whole in the interaction of economic development which made ^{them} ~~them~~ more prominent in the society than other sections of the people; and they are predominating in the rural areas we have studied. In addition to that a separate yardstick of division of the rural people is in existence like ethnicity, community, caste and religion where each of the people have a separate social entity in addition to that of the economic entity, i.e. of the predominance of heterogenous division of inequality. But this heterogenous inequality of the rural society is decreasing day by day by the appearance of the homogenous inequality of modern time which has been highly influenced by the emerging technological innovations with the influence of industrialisation and urbanisation from the time of the British Colonial administration. This administration not only influenced the people with different aspects of innovative method of production system but also changed the system of production and production relations of the society which we identified as the capitalist mode of the system of production. This newly emerged system of production gradually began to disintegrate the rural people from the traditional heterogenous division of caste, community and religion. On the other hand, the people began to differentiate first from the view point of economic development in the society on the basis of their possessional qualifications. In the rural society this possessional

qualification generally come from the individual ownership of the cultivable land they possessed and the occupation they performed in the society on the basis of the production and relations of production in the village economy of peasant society.

This system of production gradually began to influence every society, including the rural society mainly after the emergency of the British administration and gained its proper ground in the Indian rural society after the independence of the country, when the system established its roots properly in the economic development of the society which began to integrate the village people in a single economic unit of production where the division of the society began to establish on the basis of the ownership of the means of production and production relations of the society. These new economic divisions of the society of homogenous unit began to replace gradually the system of the social division of the heterogenous unit on community based production system and its relations where people inherit their occupation by birth and every people shared a special type of occupation in the production process on the basis of his caste position in the society and community thereon. In this type of production system we find different types of inequality and exploitation by a caste of another caste or a community by another community, or by a religious group of another religious group; in addition to that of the exploitation and unequal treatment by powerful economic group of people in the society concerned where the unit of a society is marked by various characteristics and these characteristics are mainly subdued by the ascribed qualifications and the people could not ignore these qualifications in the maintenance of their social

and economic life, where upliftment was on the fixed boundary level of the society. This type of traditional system of heterogenous inequality is being replaced by the advent of the modern technology whose aim is to produce more and more in the society with a view to making higher profit in the production field which can be achieved by any section of the people in the society. There is no such ascribed demarcation of initiating any occupational business on the production system which at least is better and popular to the people because of single side inequality in the field of village production system rather than the system of heterogenous inequality of ascribed nature.

So the orientation of our study would be on the basis of economic division though we cannot ignore the traditional aspects of the society like caste, community and religion in our discussion; as these social phenomena are ultimately controlled by the economic phenomenon in the present day rural peasant society. In the village peasant society landholding is the main criterion of production and occupational basis of the society which maintains inequality among themselves. Our discussion in this portion of the socio-economic unit is being placed on the basis of the economy of landholding; and according to landholding we have divided the village people into four categories in the village economic unit: (a) landless peasants of agricultural labourer; (b) marginal peasant with a maximum landholding of 2.5 acres; (c) small peasant with a landholding capacity from 2.5 to 5 acres and (d) rich peasant with a landholding capacity of more than 5 acres of land. These divisions

have been made on the basis of our data collected in the universe which is homogeneous in nature. This homogeneous inequality has been discussed on the basis of the ownership of the means of production and production relations in the society therein; and all other inequalities of heterogeneous types come in our discussion; and mostly these inequalities are also being maintained on the basis of the ownership of economy in the rural socio-economic life as the principal unit of the society.

So the discussion on the division and development of class structure in our study is practically depending upon the existing system of production in the society; and if we examine carefully then the class structure will reveal a clear picture where economic factors are playing important role in the society and the other factors of the society more or less depend upon that structure. But the existing system of production in any society bears some aspects of the previous system of production without being a revolutionary change which is totally absent in our society. Naturally before discussing in detail about the present system of production we need a brief reference to the previous system we followed in the society without which the proper discussion on the production system and its relation as unit of the society will be incomplete.

Production Relations or Relations of Production

In every society we find its own system of production, affected by its diverse history, institution, culture and ideology which ultimately mould influence every sector of the production of a country. "Ethnically the historic caste ridden social pattern of our country is conspicuous by its rural and village context. It is true to the conditions of the largest part of our territorial and social reality. It is more true to the backward communities consisting of the tribals and de-tribalized Chhotoloks, as they are called by the Upper strata engaged in agricultural productive activities organized in different types of units of varying production relations"²³. When we are dealing with the agricultural production and its structure of the villages we have studied in this section, then apparently we may leave the other factors of the village life except an interdependent matter of existence and development of the economic structure of the village society. Rural India is mainly based on agricultural production and the Bengal villages are not an exception to this context. So in discussion the rural economic structure and production relations we would mean this relations in agricultural field. Till now India is a country of agricultural based society and the agricultural production and relations of production controls the other aspects of the society in the rural socio-economic and political structure of the society.

²³ Marx and Engels made the scientific discovery that in producing their material goods men also produce and reproduce the whole

structure of their life, and that in production they are moulded as social beings"²⁴. Man can not get all the materials he needs to live as a readymade product, so he has to make it. When we go to produce or make a material we need, we enter into a system where we get an activity of the individuals related to the production of the material together with a bond of economico-social relationship within the system, which we call the mode of production or the relations of production. According to Marx and Engels the mode of production is "a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production"²⁵. So, a definite mode of production determines the socio-economic conditions of a society.

Historically, we find various types of societies ^{like} primitive, slave-holding, feudal, capitalist and the last stage socialist. This division is based on the mode of production of a particular type which differentiates each of them. "Economic relations of production are just as necessary an aspect of production as the productive forces, because men are unable to produce without combining in a certain way for joint activity and for exchange of activity"²⁶. The mode of production or the relations of production are owned by the society as a whole and the individuals are the part

of a total whole, "where the means of production are owned by individuals, where the principal means of production are in the hands of some one section of society, while the other is deprived of these, property acquires a private character and relations of domination and subjugation inevitably arise in society. The forms of these relations likewise differ and depend on the type of private property which dominates a given society"²⁷. And according to this domination and exploitation on the basis of production relations we get "three basic types of private property in history - slave holding, feudal and capitalist"²⁸. The structure of a society can, however, be determined by the distribution in society of ownership rights over persons and productive forces. "It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure " (Marx, 1971 : 111-791). As relations of production refer to the mode of appropriation of surplus labour which distinguishes the different economic forms of society (Marx, 1961 : 1-217) - and the specific form of social distribution of the means of production corresponding to it, an enquiry into how different groups of people produce and reproduce their social existence means investigating the structure of the social formation. In this connection an awareness of distinct properties of different modes of production is essential to understand any social formation, and to locate the forces for its transformation"²⁹.

We can define a society's structure and its relation with various classes and strata on the basis of not merely the production relations but other factors as well. But "the economic structure of a society, however, is not revealed merely by segregating the people into homogenous units of similar economic status, for man is a social producer of his means of livelihood and therefore the operation of an economy is the total manifestation of the inter-relationship of the people with regard to the production of wealth in society. Consequently the composition of the economic structure should be the total representation of the different types of production-relations which the people have entered into in course of their economic activities. This means that the economic structure must reflect the way in which the means of production own and reveal the social relations between men that have resulted from their connections with the process of production"³⁰. Again, "the relations of production are determined by the productive forces and the productive forces are the content of social production, and the relations of production in its necessary material form..... The productive forces characterise the principal type of human activity, which aims at the maintenance of the human existence. It is quite natural, therefore, this activity serves as the basis for relations between men within whose framework the productive forces can function and develop. After all, men enter into definite relations in order to maintain their existence, while the mode in which their existence is maintained, happens to be production, which is changing its nature by using the means of labour"³¹, "... the functioning of the productive forces, that is, the process of labour, is actively influenced

by the relations of production, which invest the productive forces with a definite social quality, so that production appears, for instance, as slave-holding or feudal, capitalist or socialist³². Man is always free; and the property or the owner of the means of production makes a man either a slave or wage worker or an owner of a farm. They are forced to enter into a definite relations of production which exists in a definite society. We find it from our village study in the rural areas of Bengal. So every society possesses a definite form of economic structure under its production relations with a definite social character which we find from its total population analysing various data. We also find that the other phenomena of a society is connected with the relations of production, that is, indirectly the economic relations determine the factors of social and political aspects of a society.

Pre-independence Period:

Before considering the present production relations of the universe, we take a birds' eye view of the past history or the transition by which the present position of the relations of production has come to the existing system. In the Asiatic mode of production, which characterizes the self-sufficient and autonomous village units, we find the communal ownership of land and subsistence type of village economy. Gradually, the system of tax emerged where the ownership of a plot of land in lieu of a nominal tax to the king or landlord or any other superior authority recognized by the people, they pay tax or cess for assuring their

ownership either individually or communally. Though most of the cases we find communal ownership of land, the communal headman collected taxes from individual household for paying tax to the authority. The system we find that there was no such division of supervisory farmer, share-cropper, absentee landlord or non-cultivating land owner agricultural labourer etc; save the only one category i.e. cultivating peasants. So the people had the direct relation with the land. Gradually the system changed and land became a commodity of exchange of ownership through market by means of 'purchase' and 'sale' which "generally means the purchase of the exemption from the King's tax demand and the sale or transfer of the right to collect taxes from the area 'sold' "³³. Here, one thing we would like to refer that the cases of land transfer do not refer to an inherent right vested with a private "ownership" to buy and sale land freely. On the contrary, these land holdings were usually given "in charity" by the king, that is, without payment, probably signifying thereby that land had not become a coveted commodity. And it is also important to note in this connection that such holdings were for no other purposes than possession and use, and, therefore, were with the stipulation that like other landholders, the new possessors will also have to pay a land-tax, although land transfer and a alienation sometimes took place in the villages, the entire system worked in such a way that it "discouraged absentee landlordism"³⁴.

The transfer and alienation of land can not be made only by the two parties of transferer and transferee, "one should bear in

mind the important fact that disposal of any land within a village was quite out of the question without village council or assembly, virtually land was then only for possession and use by the rural households for subsistence production, and, in a broad sense at least, the self-sufficient and autonomous village communities were based on "possession in common of the land"³⁵. So the village community system of production relations by a self-sufficient cultivator, was the dominant form of producing agricultural goods and services for the society as a whole. This system of production relations was prevalent in the agrarian society of Bengal "whereby the self-working, self-possessing and self-sufficient type of a cultivator represented the characteristic form of production-relations"³⁶. In this type of community ownership of land there is little scope of developing different possessional classes or strata among the cultivators. The system of community ownership of production relations began to disappear after the emergence of the Permanent Zamindari Settlement in 1793 by the British rulers in India and feudalism began to emerge as a new form of the economy of production relations. But the community ownership was prevalent among some tribal communities in our universe upto the early part of the 19th Century when they first came and settled in this part of the district. Their community ownership began when they first introduced cultivation of land after reclamation but the tax-collector of the British ruler under the Zamindari system began to penetrate the idea of private ownership and possession by implementing different systematically introduced land tax on the basis of possession of land. The system which we may call the ryotary system of production relations where the full fledged feudalism emerged.

"As a result of this reform, vast tracts of land (pastures, meadow and other community lands in joint use) were deprived of the right of the ownership and turned into land tenants"³⁷. The agrarian reforms of the colonial authorities led to the mass pauperisation of the peasants. The land tax reforms dealt a serious blow at the community system in India. The greater part of the peasants who "were in effect and turned into tenants of Zamindari or state land without any rights, lost their economic independence and were forced to produce what they were ordered to by the landlords, money-lenders and colonial administrators. The independent community broke up into small peasant holdings"³⁸. The British imperial rulers began to follow the policy of producing raw materials for their industry on the one side and rent collection on the other, both the policies together began to form a peculiar system of exploitation and profit which gradually led to the system of production of capitalist form. Consequently, the feudalism began to break down and effected the relationship of the peasant-class stratification which sprang up from property inequalities and class differentiation in rural areas. At this moment everybody began to think agriculture as a profitable business and profit comes in the forefront, consequently the classes like absentee landlord and non-cultivating landownership began to prevail; and some money lender and petty businessman also entered into the agriculture as a new force of exploiter to the original peasant community. As a result land was being transferred from bona fide cultivators to moneylenders and other non-agricultural classes.

The then colonial policy maker of the British began to make rules for their own interest by adopting any means, they had, with no ideology of serving the destitute of the rural poor peasants who were the original cultivators. They adopted the policy for imposing more tax day by day on the cultivator who had land but gradually were unable to pay these heavy burdens of the taxes. Sometimes they borrowed money from the moneylenders, rich landowner or petty businessman to pay their taxes, against producing crops on land and if they failed to repay their debt in time the money lenders class took their possession over the land from the cultivating peasants. In this way the original cultivating peasants who had direct relation with the land began to lose their possession over the land they had; and a new class of non-cultivating land-owner group of people began to dominate over the rural society. As a result, a peculiar type of economic relations began to develop among the newly originated owner of the land and the original cultivating peasants who were the former owners of the land- "were nothing but a product of a peculiar development of commodity farming and capitalism, and, indeed, peculiar type of class stratification of the peasantry"³⁹. So a peculiar type of exploitation began to grow among the different classes of the landowners and cultivating peasants in rural areas and this exploitation was more prominent among the tribals of the universe because the outsiders began to settle in the neighbouring areas from various parts of the country and began to pursue various policies by which they can accumulate wealth by taking advantages of the crisis period the tribal peasants faced in their daily life. The

outsiders began to penetrate the tribal areas gradually by taking advantages of their naivety and illiteracy and began to exploit the tribal peasants adopting different means and later on it extended to the general rural peasants of the universe and surrounding areas. Consequently, along with the former grow-up of exploiters a new group of exploiters began to emerge with the development of capitalism in the agrarian sector. "This small group of exploiters monopolises the production and sale of farm produce and thereby is able to exercise a considerable influence on the dynamics of prices for raw materials and food"⁴⁰. In a word they were the sole authority in the village affairs. So, the peasants grew their production chiefly for the interest of the landowner and to pay their rent and debts to the others. So anybody can imagine the depth of exploitation among the rural peasants; and the Tebhaga Movement in this area was just a protest against the exploitation of the rural peasants by the group of the feudal landlords, traders, money-lenders etc. After that movement the rulers of the country began to think about them and attempted to implement agrarian reform. At such a juncture the country became independent.

Post-Independence Period:

After independence a new group of rulers came to power in Indian politics with a view to establish a 'socialistic pattern of society' where policies should be adopted for the well being of all the sections of the society including the vast number of

rural people of the depressed section. As a result the newly adopted policies were implemented for changing the then existing production relations of the rural society, where the means of production was captured by a few landowning groups of the people. Few movements led by the productive forces against the owner of the means of production just before the independence bears a testimony to resentment against existing production relations of the country. So the rulers of the independent India assumed that if they did not adopt any measures for the benefit of the productive forces in rural areas then they would be ousted from power by the sheer number of the poor. Consequently, the policies of the abolition of Zamindari was the first reform, making the goal of decreasing disparities between the owner of the means of production and the forces of production seeming possible. But the adopted policies did not help the original beneficiaries in the long run and a new type of disparities began to emerge among the rural people who ultimately showed the legacy of the British colonial system of production relations made a new setting. The Telengana movement and the rise of Naxalism in the late sixties show the evidences of injustices against the policies of the government in power rather resentment of the existing system of production relations.

The rural economy of Bengal was not different from other states and the rise of Naxalite movement started from Bengal at the time of United Front ministries which consisted also of the political parties of Marxist orientation. After that movement the rulers began to think anew for the well being of the originally depressed section of the rural society or the forces of production.

Consequently, the policies of land distribution and 'Operation Barga' began to be implemented with a view to decreasing disparities among the rural people. Various other schemes have been made both by the central and state governments for the eradication of rural poverty. But in the net result we find a particular section of the society garner the benefit through its tie-up with the political and civil administrators at the grass root level. As a result we find various classes among the rural people and the system of inequality in the existing production relations in the field of agriculture in our universe increased to new high.

The acquisition and redistribution of excess land have been implemented by the Left Front Government, in addition to Barga Operation. But our survey reveals the instances of eviction not by legal action but by tricky means and the tenants leave it for assurance of getting further benefits at his crisis period. Again in cases of acquisition and redistribution, a considerable quantum of surplus was acquired and redistributed but the redistribution never solves the problem because of mismanagement and mal-implementation. As a result a section of the rural poor peasants are deprived of getting a plot of land for cultivation; on the contrary, a few peasants of land owning groups are being benefited from the scheme. In addition, the situation arises in, the rural areas which attracts the moneylenders, petty-traders and middlemen to participate in the newly emergent production relations where they get personal benefit as a result a peculiar type of stratification and production relations. It strengthens inequality in the field of agrarian production relations through newer forms of exploitation.

The agriculture based production relations of the villages we have studied, are more or less similar with other villages of Bengal situated in the remote areas. But the basic criteria of the pattern of production, using various instruments by the cultivators, quality of land i.e. productivity, living pattern and activity related to economic power may slightly differ but the real pattern of production relations in economic-social and political order of the society, are more or less similar. So it has been shown that the socio-economic hierarchy which is segregating the people into different groups of similar economic status into the field of agricultural population are depending on land-holding i.e. the means of production in the rural areas. So the degree of participation in the field of agricultural production by the owner of the means of production and forces of production ultimately lead to the formation of class system. "Persons and productive forces are the only terms bound by production relations. All production relations are either between a person (or group of persons) and another person (or group of persons) or between a person (or group of persons) and a productive force (or group of productive forces). Production relations are either relations of ownership by persons of productive forces or persons. By ownership we here mean not a legal relationship but one of effective control. Since relations of production constitute the economic structure of a society, that structure is determined by the distribution in it of (effective) ownership rights over persons and productive forces"⁴¹. So the discussion involves the persons, i.e. peasants of landowning group the owner of the means of production and the peasants of non-owner of land, i.e. the productive forces and the using of land, irrigation system, application of fertilizer, seeds,

plough, bullock cart etc. These are the factors of production by which the owner of the means of production and productive forces are taking part in the field of agricultural production. And in maintaining this system of production by the owner of the means of production and productive forces a particular type of differentiation is generated. It varies their relationship with each other economically in the field of production which ultimately creates a group of identified section of society or class described by different names in different discipline.

In our villages we find various groups of peasants in the socio-economic and political field but our study is confined to this portion with economic relations among various groups of peasants. But modern sociology defines 'group' in the field of economic structure in terms of groups rather classes and we will try to analyse different relations in terms of various classes we have categorized according to our data investigated by us.

Classes and Class Relation:

Here, we find a question among the inquisitive latent mind that there are so many studies which have covered the rural socio-economic field in Indian rural sociology then why recapitulation? There are various studies in rural sociology in India on the basis of caste and class. But those discussions are confined to the relation of particular area of the society where caste system got more prevalent than the class system. And the discussion of class got its attention to the basis of caste or community. But the rural sociology in the later part of the twentieth century

attains dynamism in the third-world countries like India where class system becomes more articulate than any other system which diminishes day by day. Naturally any discussion on economic field pursue class system, which ultimately controls the other sections of the society like social, political and religious on the basis of its economy of class possession in the society as a whole. "There has hardly been any attempt to develop a systematic theory of class in response to the large body of available empirical material describing the relations centering around the ownership of land. There has been very little general discussion on the applicability to rural India of the different conceptions of class that are present in sociological literature. In short, among working in the rural Indian context there are very few who have been confronted with the question. 'What should we mean by class?'"⁴² So, in contemporary period, class is more appropriate for studying rural society economically, politically and socially than any other phenomena. Besides, the class system itself has a broader perspective, rather, we may say, global perspective than any other existing phenomena of rural societies in the third world countries like India.

Before discussing in detail about the classes we find in our investigation as its relations with various classes in rural areas, it is pertinent to discuss something about class. Class is nothing but division of people on the basis of their socio-economic conditions they are possessing in the production relations in various field of action. This division of society into classes

was first discovered by the scholars of the classics of English political economy (Adam Smith and David Ricardo). The French historians of the Restoration also referred to 'class' in society's political system and change. The pre-Marxist sociologists failed, however, to create a scientific theory of classes. The proper theory of class got its full shape by the analysis of Marxist scholars. They discussed class on the basis of production relations.

Soon on the basis of requirement, needs and achievement some people equalize themselves within a particular group and differentiate themselves from other groups of the society, on the basis of their way of life in the field of ownership and control of the means of production in the rural social life is a class. "Usually in sociology, class refers to relative differences in wealth of various strata within a territorial unit, without any indication of criteria by which the strata may be distinguished from each other as classes. The Marxist concept of class is distinctive in that it cannot be defined by reference to internal attributes. It is a relational concept i.e. existing in relation to another class(es), either through struggle and opposition or through domination and bondage with it"⁴³. Marx never gave a clear definition of class. But the class has got its full shape in the writings of Lenin, he gave the classical definition of classes. "Classes," he wrote, "are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organisation of labour, and consequently, by the

dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy"⁴⁴.

So the class has got its shape from the classical English economists but its importance has increased in Marxian era and achieved its importance in global perspective. Sometimes we find discussion that Marxian concept of class is applicable only to Western industrial society but Lenin's definition of class is appropriate in all types of societies. Village society we have studied is no exception to this. The classes we have defined in our study on the basis of possessional differentiation rather than occupation. "The Marxian concept of class assigns priority to property over occupation. To the extent that land and other form of property are far more significant in most Indian villages than either the occupational or the income structure, class would be an important tool in the analysis of their social systems. It may appear ironical that while the architect of the concept of class believed it to be particularly suited to the study of industrial societies, the experience of sociological research may well suggest that it is in fact more useful in the study of agrarian rather than industrial communities"⁴⁵.

In modern sociology the term "social class" loosely refers to the horizontal stratification of a population by means of factors related in some way to the economic life of the society. However, within this general delimitation the concept of class has no precise meaning and often used as an omnibus term designed

to designate differences based on wealth, income, status, occupation, level of consumption, family background or some combination of these. The obvious defects of class analysed in terms of status group⁴⁶ But in our scheme of study we try to follow the scientific approach of correlating the class structure with the pre-eminence of economic role in the solidarity of groups, which we have referred to earlier. In this approach of study material condition gets prevalent over variables in the analysis of the structural system of the society.

"The most common types of class analysis of the Indian peasants have followed landownership as the sole defining criterion. The basic difficulty in this type of analysis is the problems posed by the questions like : How big is Big? How small is small? The definition remains arbitrary without any analytical or structural significance whatsoever. Nor is there an agreement among sociologists or economists about the precise landholding size and the class to which it relates for different regions in India. The other type of analysis involving occupational groups, ownership of assets, subsistence etc"⁴⁷, lack two important criteria of division of classes, viz, the hiring in and hiring out of labour and participation and non-participation in labour. Even those, like Daniel Thorner, "who have included criteria of labour participation have arrived at a simplistic scheme of classes because of their exclusion of the factor of hiring out and hiring in of labour"⁴⁸.

In our present scheme of study we have followed mainly the class division which refers to three cross-cutting dichotomic

divisions : "(a) those who possess and those who do not possess means of production, (b) those who work and those who do not work, and (c) those who employ hired labour and those who do not"⁴⁹.

Following this system of approach of the existing production relations in the field of agriculture our discussion will also focus on the gradual disorganisation of the intermediary classes and formation of two dichotomous division of higher income group of peasants on the one side and lower income group of peasants on the other by way of exploitation. Our data show that the upper group of rich peasants is growing richer day to day and the lower group of poor peasants is becoming poorer gradually. Other way, we may say that they are forming gradually the groups of 'haves' on the one side and 'havenots' on the other.

According to the findings in our villages where ownership, control and using of land generate important social relations among the village people and differentiate them on the basis of possessional holding which ultimately determines the direct participation in the agricultural field and employment in others' ^{land} land for selling labour power focus our attention because other field of production allied to the agricultural field is non-existence. And on the basis of this differentiation in the production relations, we have divided the village peasants into the classes of non-owners of land i.e. agricultural labourer in a complete sense, marginal peasants, small peasants and rich peasants on the basis of possessional differentiation and other criteria we have mentioned. The village people are completely dependent on agricultural production either as a

owner of the land or non-owner of the land. Those who have no land, employ themselves as agricultural labourers without having any other alternatives. The table of Landholding among Castes and Tribes shows the link of the people with land and agriculture (Table No. 9).

The table shows the land-man ratio of the universe and the division of four classes in the agrarian structure which has also been identified by the administrators of our country. Among the total people of the universe we get 15.74 per cent of the people are landless. They have nothing to cultivate. They are landless and do not own any farm implements. Their only source or main source of livelihood is the selling of their labour power. They are the lower income group of the villages. Though the table shows only 15.74 per cent of the village people are employing themselves as agricultural labourer because they do not possess any farm land, actually this figure never establishes the identity of village agricultural labourers because of the marginal peasants whose possession of land holding is limited within 2.5 acres of land. So their possession is not sufficient for their livelihood; as a result, the picture shows that more or less all of them are employing themselves as agricultural labour except few who are physically unfit for employment in field job. Female from tribal and some lower caste Hindu families also employ themselves as agricultural labourers in field job, in exchange of money or goods or both. Again a few people from small peasants group also

employ themselves as agricultural labourer partially according to the demand of labour power in the area. They employ themselves in most of the cases in their own field but it varies according to the demand. So we may find that near about two-thirds of the village people are employing themselves as agricultural labourer in exchange of money either full time or partially as per their requirement. They are the peasants of lower income group in the villages, rather we may say in the Marxian terminology the group of proletariat.

Marginal Peasant:

It is generally accepted that the peasants whose holdings are below 2.5 acres can be placed in the category of marginal peasants in the present discussion on agricultural holdings. This group of peasants constitutes highest number in the universe with 51.79 per cent of the total household.

It is normally found that majority of them possess a minimum of land for their own cultivation and the rest possesses the maximized limit of 2.5 acres or round the limit. They have insufficient cattle and instruments for cultivation. They also practise sharecropping and sometime it has also been found that they lease their own land to others for cultivation for the lack of agricultural implements. They sale their labour power for wage. Majority of them are no longer or little better than agricultural labourer in original field. In normal cases, they do not employ wage labour, but in special cases particularly for harvesting they may be forced to hire labour. But by closer examination it has been revealed that their former position in economic field

is decreasing day by day though various programmes of development have been adopted to ameliorate their conditions by the government, the benefit originally goes to the non-specified^d persons in most of the cases because of administrative mismanagement. In some cases the specified groups are getting benefit but the ultimate result show the reverse effect for practicing mal-process of sanctioning benefit on the basis of various commissions received by various functioning agents of the ill-minded administrators and field workers. As a result their normal condition is deteriorating day by day causing increase in the number of agricultural labourers. So "they are unable to reproduce themselves through household production, and therefore have to exchange their labour power on a regular basis. They are the biggest motive force of revolution, the natural and most reliable ally of the proletariat, and the main contingent of revolutionary forces in the third world"⁵⁰.

Small Peasants:

"They are independent small holders, owning no more land than they can cultivate themselves, and enough of it to make them self-sufficient. Sometimes, they may lease in a little land or even practise usury and employ wage labour to cope with peak agricultural operations. But this is irregular, and family labour predominates over wage labour. They are able to reproduce themselves either through adequate family labour and or land but not in specific relations with other forms of property"⁵¹. They constitute the second largest majority in the universe and constitute

19.52 per cent of the total population. It is defined in our study as the group of peasants possessing land for their own cultivation, a limit of 2.5 acres to 5 acres of land. They own land for their own cultivation and engage in essential labours. They generally do not depend on hired labour, but in peak season they hire wage labour. In normal time they engage themselves for agricultural works and in general cases they do not sell their labour power. "They do not generate much surplus to take part in usury; on the contrary they are themselves exploited by the money-lenders"⁵². From outside we may think that their position is superior to the former two categories of peasants and maintain their life smoothly. "But if we examine critically then we find that their position is marginally superior to the agricultural labourers class. The peasant of this category generally do not employ themselves as hired labour on the contrary they hire labour in agricultural season because of insufficient labour power including family members. Female members of this category are generally averse to employ themselves in outside field work except few tribal. Though previously the tribal females of all categories of landholding used to work both in fields and homes, but the females of sizeable landholding tribals do not undertake field jobs following other communities, mainly Bengalis, they avoid field labour for keeping their social status which is also remotely connected with urban culture and the impact of bourgeois educational policy"⁵³. They are the group of peasants who have the easy access to borrowing money from the moneylenders.

because of their security of land possession. As a result money-lenders class has nothing to protest against their requirement on the basis of their future production. In any year if they fail to ^{repay} replay the debt they borrowed it doubles up. In this way if someone fails to ^{repay} replay the amount, the money lender creates pressure for sale of the cultivable land of the borrower at a minimum of the market price and in most of the cases we find that the moneylender class purchases such lands by way of repayment made by the owner of the land. In this way some peasants from this group are losing their original possessional land and they move from their former category of small peasants to a category of marginal peasants day by day and, as a result, poverty increases in the villages of our universe.

Rich Peasants:

"The next position in the ladder of economic class structure in the universe we find the class of rich peasants who constitute 12.95 per cent of the total household. They are originally the peasants of combined categories of landowner, cultivator and supervisory peasants in the villages. Though a few in number their actual possession of landholding is more than the other peasants of the universe. They are in the group of peasants who cultivate their land only by employing hired labour throughout the year. Some of them use to cultivate their land where there is no facility of self-cultivation by employing hired labour or on share-cropping basis, ^{leased} leased it for season against a definite amount of

crops. On the sharecropping land they naturally do not contribute anything, on the contrary they take half of the total production. Sharecropper also distribute the crop at a 50 per cent rate for the fear of eviction and further protection. This group of the farmers is economically dominant and indirectly their dominance spreads over all sphere of the society, including the social and political⁵⁴.

This group of peasants is naturally called the well to do or affluent. They own the substantial portion of land in the rural areas and mostly employ hired labour. Sometimes they participate in production matter but the area of work is limited. "Though they accumulate sufficiently to invest in production, those who practise usury, ruthless exploitation of farm labour, and sub-letting, do not usually use the accumulated capital for improving the technique of production. In any case, in a backward economy their prosperity should not be overdrawn; their production often depends of the vagaries of Nature...."⁵⁵ ^{They} "They own adequate farm implements, cattle, etc., and practise moneylending which serves as a steady source of income"⁵⁶. Recently, the findings reveal, they are adopting the modern technological equipments for production purposes and gradually engaging themselves directly with agricultural production beyond the supervising activities, because of implementation of newly adopted policies about land reformation. Besides, the inhabitants of this group are predominating in all sections of the rural society like education, employment and business. The effects of urbanization and other aspects of

modernization have also been touched upon in the group relationship of the peasants because they have a link with the urban society of nearby areas. It has also been revealed that sometimes some of the family members are living in the urban areas for their further development in every aspects of their personal life which speaks of their affluence. Not only they live by conspicuous consumption but also often participate in the socio-political institutions, simultaneously with the economic interest building activity of the class they belong to.

The classes have been defined on the basis of the social relations of production and not access to the means of production, since the classification of different classes in the villages is connected with the occupation of agriculture. Besides, landownership system using labour and its exploitation is also a significant aspect of our discussion. "The quality of land in these villages not being homogenous, the ownership of the same amount of land may compel one to hire-out himself and put him into a different class than another who owns a superior quality of land⁵⁷. Sometimes it has been found that the rich peasants possess land little higher than the small peasants but raise themselves to a stratum other than that of small peasants because of the surplus generated by moving to any job or petty-trade available at the rural areas specially in moneylending business. Hence, each class for us is a composite category based on all factors in the relations of production in the rural areas we find.

Class-Consciousness:

No definition and discussion of class is complete unless we discuss about the objectivity of the class situation in the productive system. The objectivity of the class structure and its situation would be completed on the basis of the discussion of class consciousness among the rural peasants class structure. There is no class consciousness among the rural poor peasants because of the days of formation and disorganization of classes which operate in dysfunctional situations. So the proper formation of the class is incomplete and most of the poor peasants are in a state of sub-conscious level. "Marx differentiates the two different situations in two different terms - 'class in itself' and 'class for itself' where the former signifies the classes as they are constituted objectively and the latter the class is conscious of their common interests and aware of their class positions. Class consciousness has different gradations and levels and to understand the level of consciousness properly each level has to be clearly identified"⁵⁸. But the proper identification of the class status in rural scenario is going on where there is an admixture of different social criteria of caste and ethnic identities is seldom effaced within the rural peasantry. But the identification of two classes, namely, poor peasants of agricultural labourers class and the rich peasants of having the means of production has been identified even within the situation of even the sub-conscious level of the people. As a result, the formation of different

Kishan (peasants) organizations have been established for the protection of the interests of the poor peasants of the group of proletarian class. So the different types of movements, strikes and tensions are going on within the rural peasantry as an instance of growing consciousness. But in our universe there is no such organized group of peasant organization for the protection of the interests of the poor peasants of agricultural labourers. Though there is no such organization of the poor peasants, most of them are aware of their situation and are exploit it profitably to the contrary, the rich peasants group of owner of the rural means of production are also aware of their position they hold and have perceived that they are the opposite group in the rural socio-economic scenario.

The middle classes are identified as transitory classes and they are diverting from their original class position either on the group of the rural poor peasantry or one may call, the group of the proletariat, on the one hand and some are mobilising into the rural rich peasants group or the rural bourgeoisie on the other. The consciousness will grow properly when the political determinants will perceive the matter properly and their presence according to the nature of conscious efforts of the parties that will unite the groups against one another of the owners of the means of production and the exploited poor for abolition of exploitation. Though the peasants of the universe are affiliating themselves to different political parties, among them the Marxist oriented political parties are also there and in some areas we

find the majority of them are Marxist oriented groups, this affiliation proves futile without the backing of state administration. So the leaders are casual in developing consciousness among the poor peasantry because, it has been found that the leader of the political parties, both Marxist and non-Marxist, belong to bourgeois cultural orientation that operates to the detriment of class homogeneity. The consciousness of the poor peasants grows gradually and they somewhat perceive their position in the villages. They are able to understand who are their welwishers and who exploit them.

RURAL INDEBTEDNESS AND RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION:

The peasants of the lower economic rungs now have begun to understand their position in the society for which they are exploited in the totality of the production system of lower economic possession. This lower economic possession ultimately leads them to the condition of indebtedness which makes them poorer in the society and in repaying their debts they are bound to be in a position of the lower economic class through deterioration of their possessional condition in the society. This deteriorating condition occurs because of the need which they cannot meet with the help from any corners of the society they live in. It ultimately forces them to go to the money lender or professional agents for borrowing the amounts they require for meeting the demand of the hour. And once they fall to the clutches of the money lenders or professional agents. They are never able to overcome the situation, and even when overcome they have nothing they possessed previously because of the system of the capitalist nature of the production relation in the society. Though a little attention has been given by the administrators of our country for helping those classes of the poor peasants in need so that they stop to go to the money lenders or professional agents, the procedure is not simple enough for easy availability of assistance in time for which the intention has lost its proper significance.

This is due to the system of "primordial forms of slavery, continued indebtedness of the small peasants and farm works for consumption loans, forcible restriction to the capital market,

primordial attachments, reciprocal exchange of labour and instruments of production, as well as absence of tenancy, extensive use of free wage labour, expansion of trade persistence of small and unprofitable holdings, migration of labour institutional credit and some commodity production"⁵⁹. Naturally, the poor peasants are unable to overcome the situation they face in the practical life in their society for which a genuine picture of indebtedness is going on in the society besides the acceptance of various schemes of development for the rural poor peasants. This is due to the system of unchanging conditions of the production system that prevails in the society as a whole. Without taking any major initiative of changing the structural process of the system of production no schemes of development will be successful and the system of indebtedness will continue in the society. A system of indebtedness we find in our universe which is nothing new in the society predominated from the past to the modern changing perspectives where the principle of attitudinal developments moves at a snail's speed practically invisible for the society as a whole.

So, indebtedness is nothing new in Indian rural society. "The peasantry of the Indian sub-continent was heavily in debt during the British period. It is rather difficult, however, to find reports with exact and detailed information about debts"⁶⁰. Though the peasantry of Bengal was heavily in debt during the British period, it existed in Bengal before the arrival of the British Colonial administration. But the "system" had never dominated in the sphere of the village life, and such perfect

conditions had never been created for it to flourish as after the colonial enslavement of the country. The most important condition for the flourishing of usuary is the existence of small holdings, which, by their very nature preclude the free and rapid development of the productive forces of labour of their social form and the concentration of capital and which inevitably lead the peasant to beg help from money lenders, regardless of the size of the harvest. Under conditions of comparatively high commodity farming combined with the domination of landlords' property, as the peasant resorts to usuary credit, the small peasant holding falls ^{firmly} into the clutches of the creditor. It sinks in the process of ruin as far as the debt slavery of the creditor and his dependants for many years, often for life and equality frequently, the payment of the deceased peasant's debts devolves on his relatives, so they form the basis of debt slavery. These were not just individual cases. The situation lasted until the 1970's, in spite of all the reforms, decrees and transformation. It was most widespread among the harijans, the lowest untouchable caste or field labourers, farm servants and share-croppers⁶¹. So the system of indebtedness is predominating in the lower income groups of the peasant society. "The indebtedness of agricultural population is linked up with their poverty as such as growing poverty drives them more and more to incur debts and the increased indebtedness further aggravates their poverty"⁵².

The predominance of lower income groups of the peasants in our universe is found because of the existence of usurious loans

the peasants take from the village money lenders to meet the demands of life and productivity in their holdings. The peasants of lower income groups not only took usurious loans for meeting productivity demands but they occasionally took it for meeting their personal requirements like consumption purpose and social needs. To repay this debt, they lost a major portion of their possessional holdings because the money lenders never show mercy upon the debtors in case of repayment. At any time the money lenders neutralize it by accepting principal with interest they impose. If, at any time peasants are unable to repay it in proper time for crop failure through natural hazards like flood or draught they are bound to repay it in next time with an extra interest. In any case peasants are unable to repay the debt then the creditor i.e. the money lender generally takes an occupancy right of the debtors' land until the loan is repaid. This occupancy rights gradually transforms into a possessional rights because the peasants did not repay their debts at the time when they possessed the land and its production then how are they able to repay the debt by missing a portion of their source of the income? Naturally, once they lost their occupancy rights from their land, they never got back their possession. In this way, the peasants have come in a position of the lower class peasants i.e. in the class of marginal and landless agricultural labourers. The history of exploitation of the lower income groups of the peasant by the money lenders is well known and this exploitation is much higher among the ^{tribals} ~~tribals~~ and lower castes people in the society because

of their illiteracy, naivety and ignorance. That the money lenders took an advantage of their illiteracy and ignorance, the high interest rates they charged against their borrowings, the illiterate peasants were cheated by way of borrowings and were unable to repay it for complex accounting procedure the money lenders maintained and gradually dispossessed of their land are also mentioned by various authors in the field of rural economy.

The gradual alienation of peasant cultivating land to the money lenders generated hatred and discontent among the peasants in the area and it gave rise to the peasant movement is the later part of the British administration which is broadly known as Tebhaga Movement. After independence various reforms have been implemented by the administrators of our country for the development of the conditions of the poor peasants but due to some administrative loopholes, few are being benefited and the money lending business is going on in the rural areas without any abatement. The difference we find that previously only professional money lenders gave loan to the peasants but in present time besides this professional money lenders some rich peasants from every community are engaging themselves in money lending business. It is an economic fall out of mal-development.

Indebtedness in rural society increased after the independence because peasants of rich economic classes began to engage themselves in the moneylending business with that of the professional moneylenders and petty-traders who were outsiders in the peasant society. When the moneylending business began to originate within the society it was easily accessible to the village peasant

society for borrowing according to the most needs where peasants from all classes, even landless agricultural labourers, could avail those opportunities with a view to repay it by engaging themselves as a physical labour when the rich peasants needed particularly at the time of plantation or harvesting the crops. The rich peasants generally do not deny to assist them in their (agricultural labourers) crisis period because of the surity of getting labour force at peak season at a cheap rate because of the debt-bound obligation of the debtor-labourers. The marginal and small peasants also frequently go to the rich peasants for borrowing either in kinds or in cash they need at any time against their crop or labour power which is easily available to them. For this borrowings the borrowers are sometimes bound to pay higher charges as interest. The poor peasants generally borrow it at every occasion because of the easy availability of the scope even for consumption and ceremonial purposes. Naturally the propensity of indebtedness began to increase at a higher rate after independence whose effect we find from a greater number of exploitation and land alienation from the original peasants of landholding classes from among the small and marginal peasants which aggravates the situation more worse. The intensity of the situation generally came to the knowledge of the administrators of our country from sporadic peasant uprising in different parts of the country the Naxalite Movement and Telengana Movement are a few to name. Consequent upon the Naxalite movement, the Government of West Bengal began to initiate laws for land reforms in a scientific manner and

tried to tie-up credit facilities by establishing various Co-operative societies and arrangement of Banking loans to the poor peasants for short term. They also widened the credit facilities to the poor peasants by establishing Regional Rural Banks in the remote part of the society. But the intention of the easy credit facilities to the village poor peasants did not succeed properly for the handicapped administrators bound by procedural paraphernalia. Besides, these institutions never grant any consumption loan at their crisis period which ultimately force the poor peasants to go to the village money lenders aligned to the rich peasants. Again, various credit facility programmes are initiated on the recommendation of various village based officials who take in a part of the fund as a commission against his recommendation made the development prospects very dim. Though land reform measures have also been taken up by the Government and granted land to the landless and marginal peasants by acquiring excess land from the rich peasants, the social situation through economic laws gradually alienated those land again from the village peasants and the society never abolishes its extremity but gives a new dimension to the situation in a separate and moderated way in the society concerned.

In our universe the tribals are economically more weak in total percentage of the village peasants because they are majority in the total village peasant population. Consequently, the position of indebtedness is comparatively more in the village population.

The tribal peasants are comparatively more weak in economic position and socially they are exploited more than other community peasants by the middlemen, moneylenders and petty-traders due to insufficient institutional arrangements for providing credit and marketing of agricultural product. Besides, the position of the tribal peasants, majority of the village peasants, we find "being much below the economic unit and margin of solvency being narrow, even a slight misfortune can throw them into the clutches of the moneylender and once trapped they can hardly extricate themselves. The landless labourers, on the other hand for their more subsistence during the lean period, are always dependent on landowners-cum-moneylenders for the consumption plan"⁶³. Though the credit facility programmes have been implemented by various agency to the village poor peasants, no one is giving loan for consumption purpose when they face crisis. Besides, the credit facility programmes that are being implemented by various agencies are limited to a year and once it granted any loan to a peasant he is unable to avail the opportunity until he repays the amount within a particular period they mention. At anytime, a peasant is unable to repay his debt borrowed from government institution or any such agency for natural calamities he remains unable to avail himself of the opportunity further until any repayment. Naturally, next time the peasants go to the village moneylender or rich peasants and try to manage an amount for reinvigoration of the unit of production. So the village people cannot leave their traditional system of borrowing after an implementation of credit facility programme for the village poor peasants. The

programme has loopholes from structural and functional point of view, so it faces goal orientational problems as well.

This is the situation, when majority of the poor peasants unable to meet up their problems of credit facility brought by the Government for them, they go to the village moneylender, rich peasants, petty-traders for pursuing agricultural production, naturally the old system prevails in the society even after the implementation of various programmes for development by granting credit facility system and indebtedness is going on in its usual form. "One significant thing about these debt is that the peasant in lieu of the interest on debt which he cannot partially or completely pay or due to need for money to buy seeds and other, sells his crop in advance, even before to the moneylender. The latter most exploits this helplessness and necessity of the farmer and makes the advance purchase of the crop at a rate below the current or expected one. This precludes the peasant from realizing the value of the crop at the normal market rate. This only further increases his poverty and his not to be shaken dependence on the village Octopus within the present system"⁶⁴.

The indebtedness we find in the village society has been increased by way of modern industrial development. Previously, peasants were engaged in village cottage industries and handicrafts work at their leisure time when they had no work at hand because of limited scope of employment in agricultural production that absorbs them to a maximum period of three months. But in modern time it has been increased upto a six month in duration

inconsequence of implementation of crop rotation after the introduction of high yielding varieties of crops. On other side the village cottage industries and handicrafts have gone in ruination, which absorbed a large number of workers in leisure time providing their livelihood. Now the scope of employment in this field has lost its popularity because of the appearance of the newly mechanized modern industrial goods are getting popularity because of cheap market price and good finishing than the previously produced goods from the village industries. Naturally, a large number of village people engaged in village cottage industries and artisan goods are alienating themselves from the village production field because in competition and market selection the industrially produced goods are getting preference of the people because of its quality, quantity and cheapness. So, another face of employment opportunities has lost the village society after industrialization which proves a premium upon indebtedness.

The picture of indebtedness we find from our table of Classwise Indebtedness of Castes/Tribes which has been collected and compiled by our field survey (Table No. 14). The table shows 38.84 per cent of the total village population are indebted either to the Cooperative Societies or Bank in the schemes of village credit facility programme implemented by the Government for developing purpose of the village agriculture and economy. Among the total number of receiving credit facility families in the universe are as follows - 3.08 per cent are from the non-owners of land; 57.44 per cent of the peasant families are from marginal class i.e. whose land holding never exceeds 2.5 acres, the highest in

Table No. 14 Classwise Indebtedness of Castes/Tribes to Institutional Bodies (Bank, Cooperative etc. and Moneylenders)

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Non-owner of Land	Upto 2.5 Acres of Land	2.5 to 5 Acres of Land	More than 5 Acres of Land	Total No.
1.	Santal	6	33	10	4	53
2.	Oraon	-	43	24	10	77
3.	Rajbenshi	-	11	2	3	16
4.	Kshatriya	-	8	2	-	10
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	-	4	1	-	5
6.	Bhuimali	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	-	13	12	9	34
		6	112	51	26	195
		3.08%	57.44%	26.15%	13.33%	38.84%

number among credit programme or indirectly indebted families to the institutional bodies; next majority comes from the small peasant section of the society who constitute 26.15 per cent of the total indebted families to the institutional bodies; the indebtedness among the rich peasants shows 13.33 per cent of the total indebted families in the villages. The data show that the peasants from all categories are making debt for meeting their personal demand but the major difference is that the peasants from non-owner of land, marginal and small peasants are making debt for their livelihood in simple way. On the other hand the rich peasants are making debt for increasing productivity and profit. Besides, the debt among poor peasants are going on for consumption purpose but the debt among rich peasants are going on for increasing productivity. So two types of purposes are found in the society, one is for subsistence level and the other for professional gains. The poor peasants again go to the moneylender besides this credit facility programme for meeting other personal demands in everyday life because the credit facility programme cannot meet their demand. The question of paying commission to the persons in administration remains there. The majority of poor peasants also pay it as they think that they have received it as an extra gift from the party and government which will make no obligation in future for repayment because of the lack of the proper knowledge of credit facility programme and its purpose to the society as a whole. So in most of the cases the project initiated by various developmental agencies in favour of the poor peasant families of different categories through the process of credit

facility system for upliftment of the conditions of the farmers and village artisans are failing in actual practice. Only a limited number of projects are succeeding in practical life which are somewhat conscious about their actual fate. But in case of rich peasants who never go to the village moneylender or any other private agency for making any debt because they know the actual fate of this borrowing. So the indebted families of rich peasants avail themselves of credit facility programmes for development of production in village society that do not need any recommendation and correspond directly to the institutional authority for which they properly know the rules and procedures of any credit for their greater benefit. The development of agricultural production and other productivity increase of the society is found from an average data whose major portions generally come from this section of the society, naturally the development of poor families in the village society has so far been not developed according to the expectation of the planners of our country. But it can be said that the situation has begun to look green.

The development we find from our next table of Degree of Mortgage among Castes/Tribes to the Institutional Bodies (Bank, Cooperative etc and Professional Moneylenders) Table No. 15, where we find total number of indebted families among different classes within which the outstanding and repaid families are shown. Repaid column is shown because the tendency among the peasants have grown that if they repay their debt in actual way the institute imposes then they can get further loan or credit for investment of a project

Table No. 15 Degree of Mortgage among Castes/Tribes to the Institutional Bodies (Bank, Cooperatives etc.)

Sl. No.	Name of the Community	Total No.	Non-Owner of Land				Upto 2.5 Acres of Land			
			Non Own	Mort-gaged	Out-standing	Repaid	Upto 2.5	Mort-gaged	Outstanding	Repaid
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Santal	193	55	7	6	1	103	38	33	5
2.	Oron	158	17	-	-	-	82	50	43	7
3.	Rajbenshi	40	1	-	-	-	24	12	11	1
4.	Kshatriya	24	-	-	-	-	18	8	8	-
5.	Kayastha Chosh	7	-	-	-	-	4	4	4	-
6.	Bhumali	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	1	-	-	-	29	16	13	3
		<u>502</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>260</u>	<u>128</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>16</u>
			8.86	7	85.71	14.29		49.23	87.50	12.50

Table No. 15 (Contd..)

From 2.5 Acres of Land <i>15 Acres</i>				More than 5 Acres of Land			
Upto 2.5 to 5 Acres	Mort- gaged	Outstanding	Repaid	Upto 5 Acres Mortgaged	Outstanding	Repaid	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
26	11	10	1	9	4	4	-
37	29	24	5	22	12	10	2
6	3	2	1	9	3	3	-
5	2	2	-	1	-	-	-
3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	14	12	2	23	10	9	1
<hr/> 98	<hr/> 60	<hr/> 51	<hr/> 9	<hr/> 65	<hr/> 29	<hr/> 26	<hr/> 3
	61.22%	85%	15%		44.62%	89.66%	10.34%

according to their choice for improving their lot, either it may be for cultivation purpose or others according to the facility of the individual concerned. This tendency of repayment is found in every section of the society though the percentage is meagre in comparison to the total indebted families, a tendency has grown in them. It is helpful for the development of the society. These are what the repaid families told me against my question why have you repaid your debt? They replied that for getting further credit from the institute for another purpose which would be helpful for their livelihood and after all they needed no recommendation from any village authority at that time and no obligation would be there for the purpose. Moreover, the individual independence and activities will remain unaffected for this purpose.

In the table, we find the total number of indebted families who have taken loan or debt from the institutional bodies and professional moneylenders against pledging their goods they owned, either the land they owned or the articles they borrow from the institutional bodies, by hypothecation marking until the loan is repaid. In the case of institutional debt the landowner generally pledges his land against the security of the loan with that of the hypothecation bond of the article until the loan is repaid. But in case of the loan taken by them from the professional moneylenders they generally pledge their land, crops they produce or labour power in case of non-owner of land and no marking of hypothecation is there in such a case. So the table we discuss here the basis of the degree of mortgage in the Castes/Tribes.

In the table we have shown another column of repaid families who took loan from the institutional bodies and repaid with a view to take further loan. In the case of loan or debt from the professional moneylender no one needs clearance certificate for taking further loan. Obviously the repaid data are shown for the debt of institutional bodies. These families took loan from the institutional bodies and are now ready to take further loan from that institutions they repaid. On the contrary, the professional moneylenders pursue anyone (mainly landowner peasants) for a further loan or debt though he is already a debtor to him with a view to capturing his land or any other valuable goods he possesses, for the inability to repay the debt. So, two types of indebtedness are found in the villages, but in our table we did not differentiate the indebted families to the institutional bodies and professional bodies for ignorance of the village people about the institution and professional bodies. But it is a fact that the majority of the village people are till now indebted to the professional bodies other than the institutions. Both types of indebtedness are not unknown to them also.

In the non-owner group of the peasants we find 8.86 per cent of the total group are indebted either to village moneylenders or institutional bodies and among these indebted families 14.29 per cent have repaid their loan for a further loan and this percentage goes in favour of institutional loan. The 85.71 per cent are till now indebted to both the bodies of institutional and professional lenders. In the marginal peasant class we find

49.23 per cent of indebted families, among these indebted families 12.50 per cent have repaid their debt and the rest 87.50 per cent are bearing the burden. Small peasants class has shown 61.22 per cent of indebted families in the universe among them 15 per cent have repaid their debt; on the contrary 85 per cent of them are in debt, the quantum is not divulged because majority of them do not know the account they borrow from. It is generally maintained by the institution, in case of institutional loan, and moneylender in their own ways. So the account the moneylender maintains is always favourable to them and 100 per cent possibility of cheating the debtor looks under the debt. In the rich peasant class we also find indebted families, among these peasants 44.62 per cent are indebted and in this case majority of families are indebted to the institutional bodies, only a negligible portion of indebtedness to the professional moneylender is there. The peasants of this class are comparatively literate in relation to the other classes and they know the facilities of institutional debt and are eager for this type of institutional loan for increasing productivity by purchasing tractor, pumpset, powertiller and other agricultural implements or borrow crop loan for producing higher amount of crops by employing high yielding varieties of seeds and fertilizer. Naturally, the loan that is taken by this class is for investment in productivity because they are never bothered about consumable goods. In this class the table shows that 89.66 per cent are indebted families and 10.34 per cent have repaid their loan for further debt in time. In classwise indebtedness we find the

percentage is higher among the small peasants because peasants of this class are emotionally placed in the socio-cultural affairs and ownership of land which is neither meagre nor higher. In this situation the question of employing their labour power jointly with their female members in their own land and the male members employing their labour power in others' field in exchange of wage does not arise at all. On the other hand they require labour power for cultivation and are bound to pay the wages to the labour power they hire. The peasants are completely dependent on their agricultural production and if any year they fail to achieve the target then they are bound to borrow money or goods from any of the sources they have for meeting their personal demand or further production. The second major group of indebted families are found among the marginal peasants. They are the owner of the lower amount of cultivable land from which they cannot get a reasonable amount of product for their livelihood and they employ themselves in others' land in exchange of wages. Obviously they are unable to cultivate their land properly and timely for which productivity decreases. The crops they produce in their land only supply a part of their consumable goods, usually during the lean periods when they have no work in hand in exchange of wages then they generally borrow and in majority cases from the village moneylender or others. In case of non-owner of land, except institutional bodies which have the intention of developmental perspective in the areas for the implementation of governmental plan of the rural upliftment, moneylending persons show unwillingness to

give any loan because they have no source of repayment except physical labour. Naturally the peasants of this group generally go to the rich peasant for borrowing against their physical labour. The rich peasants generally give loan to the non-owner peasants, who need either goods or cash, with a view to employ them in peak season at a fixed rate which is normally lower than the market price. In this situation non-owner group of peasants avoids borrowing from them, if not in a serious crisis to overcome that brings the percentage of indebtedness among the non-owner peasants to a lower level.

In the former discussion we have discussed the indebtedness of the village peasant society to the institutional bodies of Governmental affiliation. In this system of indebtedness the peasants require recommendation of the village officials and other developmental agencies for primary demands. The schemes and projects are also determined by these village officials and developmental agencies and the amount of credit is also sanctioned according to the project and scheme. So the amount of credit varies from member to member and the amount they borrow varies according to their economic position in the society. It has also been found from our study that majority of the schemes and projects sanction after recommendation appears different to the peasants from their actual habit of work and occupation and the debtors have nothing to do against the scheme and start functioning but fail for lack of knowledge and habit. Besides, the amount they receive as credit after paying different commissions as contribution to the village

recommending authorities and other related to the programme obviously proves insufficient for the project or scheme for which they receive credit. Naturally, they again need money or goods at the time of investment to the agricultural production or the like; and without getting any other alternative they again go to the village moneylender, petty-traders or rich peasants for borrowing the amount they need either in cash or in goods for which they pay different types of interest, on the principal amount. So, one thing we find from our study that the peasants who have received credit from institutional bodies again go to the village moneylender for borrowing extra amount when they need. Because the institutional credit facility programmes have a particular duration and without covering this duration no one is able to get further credit. Besides, the institutions require some official procedure which needs extra time, for payment cannot meet the ready demand the peasants face. For this cause the peasants go to the village moneylender for meeting their urgent demand for which they are bound to repay a higher amount of interest and they cannot remain free from the clutches of the village money lenders. Consequently, a phenomenon of double credit system is also there in the peasant family, in one side, they are borrowing from the institutional bodies, if so sanctioned, and again from village moneylender within the period. The table in our discussion of Classwise Indebtedness in Castes/Tribes to the Institutional Bodies (Bank, Cooperatives etc) where we find the data of the peasants who have received credit from the institutional bodies along with the data of

peasants who have also borrowed from other village hawks like village moneylender, relatives, friends or rich peasants. We cannot ignore the role of the village moneylenders and other personnel. We find total number of indebted families from another table where the table shows total number of indebted families from all sources in the village society i.e. Agency/Agent-wise Indebtedness in Castes/Tribes (Table No. 16).

In this table we find the total number of indebted families from all sources. There is the column of indebted families who have received loan from the institutional bodies and the other column we find the indebted families who have received loan from other sources of non-institutional bodies like Landowner i.e. rich peasants, friends and relatives, whatever the source they find either by way of paying interest or through mutual contract. The indebted families who have received loan from the institutional sources, also take loan from the professional moneylenders for meeting extra demand because the institutional credit they have received are usually from the targetted purpose for which the credit has been sanctioned. So from the table, we can not assess the phenomenon of village moneylenders in the village economy. According to the data, though they have not been classified as to who have received institutional credit facility programme and among them how many peasants have again borrowed money or goods from the village moneylenders, in our survey we found it from the conservation of the peasants that majority of the marginal peasants

Table No. 16 Agency/Agent wise Indebtedness in Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of House-hold	Total No. of Indebred families	Indebted to Moneylender, Institutional Bodies, etc.	Indebted to the village people/land owner, relatives, etc.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Santal	193	125	53	72
2.	Oraon	158	115	77	38
3.	Rajbanshi	40	22	16	6
4.	Kshatriya	24	16	10	6
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	7	5	2
6.	Bhumali	4	1	-	1
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	1	-	1
10.	Muslim	73	54	34	20
		<hr/> 502	<hr/> 341	<hr/> 195	<hr/> 146
			67.93%	57.18%	42.82%

and few from the small peasants have again borrowed money/goods from the village moneylender for meeting their demands in agricultural production or for livelihood in the crisis period. A peasant of marginal category told me against my question, why are you again borrowing money or goods from the village moneylenders or rich peasants or others after receiving a pair of bullock from the credit facility programme as a loan from the bank that he had received a pair of bullocks for cultivation from the bank as a loan but he had no money to purchase seeds and other necessities

and he is the single earning member of his family. If, he engages his labour power in cultivating his own land then he would not be able to employ himself for earning wages for livelihood of self and his family members. In this situation if he did not borrow any money or goods for his consumption purpose then how would he be able to procure foods for himself and his family. This type of situation we find among the peasants for which they are bound to go to the other sources for collecting money or goods in the period they need most.

For the situation we find our village peasant society is more or less predominated by comparatively well-off farmers and money lenders. So the intention of the administrators to remove the indebtedness of the village peasant family to the village moneylenders, petty-traders, rich peasants etc. for which they are suffering much from the economic view point, by implementing institutional credit facility programme to the village poor peasants proves a doubtful starter. The programmes are not succeeding because of the lack of proper policy adoption for which the village money lenders continue to prosper. So, if the administrators really want to remove the situation then they must implement the programmes of infra-structural development of the society first through intensive credit facility ramification. By this system of programme implementation the results will be attained. In this system, the programme implementators would select a few families for one year or two years and try to meet the problems they face the year round by giving credit to them in their occupational business and would take initiative in purchasing the

product at a fair price through governmental institutions or agencies. In this way if they come in the cycle of production, selling and investment then the problem of indebtedness will gradually decrease in a steady manner. Before this policy implementation we need an infra-structural change of the society by adopting a reasonable land reforms laws and its implementation in the society as a whole.

The entire data show that the tribal peasants are comparatively more indebted to village moneylenders or others and they are the sufferer groups in the society as a whole than any other communities because of their illiteracy, ignorance and naivety. This indebtedness is somewhat responsible for their socio-cultural background of traditionalism they follow, besides their economic activities in the society they live in. In the socio-cultural process they maintain few customs in the society as a unit when some of them are forced to borrow to maintain their social life within the community in addition to that of the borrowings related to economic activities of agricultural production. Majority of the tribal population is maintaining a life in the village society according to their source and capacity in a tightfit way, in this situation if they need any extra money or goods for maintaining socio-economic life then they are bound to go to the moneylenders. In cultivation time majority of the village peasants including that of the tribal people need assistance for a further cultivation or production from any source and in majority cases village moneylenders and rich peasants meet this demand by charging extra interest for that. They are bound to borrow because they have

nothing extra source for cultivation. In this period the village peasants generally borrow money or goods like paddy for which differential interest rates are charged. Sometimes they need both money and goods. The peasants borrow this money or goods or both the things normally before cultivation and repay it after harvesting and interest is charged for this 4 to 5 months period. If anybody is unable to pay for non-productivity for natural calamities or others then the interest raises further for the next period in a double-up way.

The interest charged for the loans differs in case of cash money and in case of kinds according to the need of the borrower. In case of cash loans the interest rate raises from 10% to 20% per cent normally in a month e.g. if any one borrows Rs. 100/- for a period he repays after harvest if it covers 4 months, 140 to 180 rupees. In case of the borrowing of paddy it raises 100% to 150% interest e.g. if any peasant borrows one maund of paddy at the time of cultivation at the rate of Rs. 60/- per maund the maximum rate the lender fixes according to the then market price. The borrowers repay it after harvest when the price of paddy normally lower in the market e.g. Rs. 20/- per maund. Then the borrowers repay them either Rs. 60/- and one maund paddy or three maunds paddy at the rate of Rs. 20/- per maund the lowest amount of the then market price. The interest-free loan is not an exception in our universe which generally paid by the rich peasants to his tenants for cultivating his own land or at the time of his tenants

crisis period because if landlord do not give him any loan or assistance then it will hamper in the production of his own land. So in few cases interest-free loan is given by the rich peasants but in a limited case.

In the case of agricultural labourers, sometimes interest-free loan is given by the rich peasants and moneylenders who have land for cultivation. The landowner peasants sometime give interest-free loan to the agricultural labourer at their crisis period for which they can book those labour power in peak season for cultivation at a fixed rate. The loan is interest free directly but in indirect way it creates interest because at the peak agricultural season labour crisis arises for a short period when everybody needs labour power within a fixed time and the rate of wage also increases for that period. The landowner peasants assure themselves of giving loan to those agricultural labourers for the peak agricultural season at a fixed rate for the time and period until the loan amount is deducted. The amount of loan maximally raises upto two months of the labour power. We find that maximum indebtedness of a labour is Rs. 180/- in cash and 120 kg paddy in kind, which is approximately equivalent to 2 months' labour by the debtor. But the labourers generally avoid to take full amount of loan for their two months' labour power for being deprived of the original rate of the wages in peak season. The wages generally raise at that peak season and if they take an advance loan the rate is fixed by the landowner who gives loan, which is lower than

the actual rate of the wages at that period. "However, the debt is not always repaid by the debtor only but also by the members of his family; hence if husband and wife, both work as labourers, the amount loaned is equivalent to one month's labour. While lending money the moneylender is guided by such considerations, as: whether the family members of the borrower can accompany him or substitute for him if any when the need arises, and the amount loaned is generally limited to his requirement only"⁶⁵. The professional moneylenders who have no land for cultivation generally avoid to give any loan to the agricultural labourers who are basically dependent on their labour power. So the rate of indebtedness is lower among them.

It has been revealed from our discussion that few peasant classes are indebted to other class or classes for spending their livelihood for the lack of possessional holding or the wealth they have in their possession among them middle and poor peasants are more in number. "One of the major consequences of the indebtedness of middle and poor peasants is that they become increasingly disinclined to make any effort to improve their agriculture. They know that the fruits of their labour will go to richer classes, so why try to improve agriculture? Moreover, after repaying debt every year they do not have the means to improve their agriculture. The peasants through their long experience and suffering have found that everything apparently aimed to benefit them, has in fact been benefiting the moneylender, rich peasants and landlords. This has made them cynical, apathetic and unenthusiastic about any development whatsoever"⁶⁶.

Socio-Economic Cause of Indebtedness:

The tribal people mainly from Santal origin were brought in the land by the British administrators for their own conveniences e.g. to employ themselves in various construction works and others for their strong physic and labouriousness in nature. The administrators also encourage them to settle in the area by reclaiming jungle land. Another tribal group of Oraon community was also brought by them and settled in the area. Gradually, these tribal people began to cultivate by reclaiming jungle land in a traditional way which was less productive from economic point of view. Though they led a less productive economy of cultivation but their economy was substantial in nature. Forest products contributed something for their daily livelihood naturally it had also an important role. Gradually, more number of tribal people began to migrate and settle in the area by reclaiming jungle land which gradually decreased the forest contribution to their economic life but they began to fill it up by pursuing a method of somewhat productive cultivation following the Bengali peasants. Obviously they spent their life by employing themselves in cultivation selling their labour power to farms of individuals and various Governmental Projects on the basis of their wage labour. But their main part of the livelihood came from agricultural products which was at the mercy of nature and production varied according to the variation of nature.

The wandering traders arrived at the village for improving their lot by purchasing crops after harvest from the peasant directly and began to sell it in the urban areas or in distant market at a higher rate and created an artificial crisis in the village market mainly in case of food-grains for which the village people paid higher price at the time of their need. In this way an export import business started by the middlemen, petty-traders and Ferriahs who controlled the village market to their advantage. The village peasants began to undertake an extra load in economic life for the lack of preservation capacity and proper marketing facilities in the village areas. The impact of industrialization and urbanization began to spread to the village social life and people who felt the pulls but in agriculture traditional ways continued unabated and production did not increase though living appeared costly. So a gap began to widen between the life pattern and nature of the village economy for which the lower economic group of the people began to spread their hands to outer side for meeting their extra life pattern by borrowing.

In the meantime the country achieved independence by way of partition, ideology favouring community background. And a large number of migrants began to settle in the area from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), majority of whom were cultivators and began to settle as a cultivator and agricultural labourer. Naturally an extra burden of population was placed in the village economic life pattern of the society. Some of the migrants acquired cultivable land either in exchange of their cultivable property left in the East Pakistan against those of the Muslim peasants who also

decided to migrate for communal tensions and possible riots but the proportion of migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan was greater because of the severe communal problems than from Indian territory that has adopted secular democracy that assures equality of all religions and communities. So an extra crowd on the agricultural economy began to affect the variation in agricultural production. Besides that agriculture suffers for the lack of ramified irrigational facilities which make the people more dependant on the seasonal rain and cultivation which produces meagre sum of crops even in normal season faces difficulties in bearing an extra burden of the population whose total background we find agricultural in nature. So the situation of indebtedness is bound to come by way of spending normal life of the peasants. In this situation moneylenders, rich peasants, petty-traders and other profit motivated people began to operate by taking scope of poor peasants' poverty and illiteracy. The poor peasants, mainly lower income groups of the tribal majority, go to these profiteers at their crisis period for borrowing money or goods. Though the poor peasants know it well that they are being deprived and exploited still they go to them without getting any alternatives. The profiteering groups also know it and exploit them by taking scope of their poverty with a view to increasing land and wealth at the cost of hunger of the poor irrespective of caste or tribe. In this way indebtedness predominates in the life pattern of the lower income groups of the peasants comprising of both castes and tribes. Though some administrative measures have been taken to remove this

indebtedness from the village peasant society by giving institutional credit and other facilities, including that of the land reform laws but for the lack of proper implementation of the policy the programmes they prove an exercise in futility under the symbiotic machination of profiteers, politicians and their beater, the administrators.

Indebtedness is somewhat related to the ecological aspects of the area because the natural resources of an area are of primary importance and these resources determine the economic life of the area. "Man may grow rich in knowledge and intelligence, but however much he may have overcome nature ultimately he will have to depend on the materials available on the earth and beneath the earth for development of his economic life. The physical factors like topography, soils, climate and the flora and fauna constitute one of the basic influences which led to differences in land use, settlement, density of population, cropping pattern and the occurrences of minerals, water and power resources"⁶⁷. In this point of ecological aspect we find our universe is backward in nature and agricultural productivity suffers so much and consequently indebtedness prevails. Fragmentation of land holding is also a case of unproductiveness because of the lack of scientific application for production purpose which is available in the local area though meagre in action like installation of pumpset for irrigational purpose. In ^mmajority of cases no peasant holds land under his possession in a plot for which an individual peasant cannot instal any pumpset for his own purpose. So without taking

an initiative for cooperative system among the peasants technological application for productivity is not possible. The governmental assistance and initiative is also required because of the majority of peasants of lower income groups who are unable to invest any finance at a time for that purpose. Productivity and chain of production hampers because of the lack of natural irrigation in dry season production. Naturally single or double production cannot meet the demand of the actual problem raised by the peasants of the area depending on the natural help for production which never comes equally in every year. These type of unevenness of production and relations of production ultimately forces the lower income groups of the people for borrowing and for this reason indebtedness maintains its stranglehold over the tribals and their field ^e ₁ fellowmen of both Hindu and Muslim religious groups or communities.

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