

CHAPTER V

INEQUALITY IN PEASANT SOCIETY

"The idea of inequality is both very simple and very complex. At the level it is the simplest of all ideas and has moved people with an immediate appeal hardly matched by any other concept. At another level, however, it is an exceedingly complex notion which makes statements on inequality highly problematic, and it has been, therefore, the subject of much research by philosophers, statisticians, political theorists, sociologists and economists"¹. The term 'inequality' is in use in modern social sciences to indicate varying inter-human relations in the modern civilization divided in the "worlds". When we are dealing with the rural life of a particular area of the third world country, our study will be incomplete if we do not discuss about the inequality prevailing in that society. Besides, "the study of inequality occupies a central place in sociology and has, in a sense, provided the main impetus to the growth of the discipline itself. It is also of special interest to those concerned with the problems of contemporary India"².

Social scientists are discussing different phases of inequality existing in human society, but the sociologists generally discuss the social aspects of inequality, which ultimately is the product of the economic inequality. In a word the fact goes into the generalised sociological approach which we may say "the differences in life chances and life styles among people. It results from the different positions they occupy in society as landowners

and labourers, let us say, or as Brahmins and Harijans"³. Two types of inequality are existing simultaneously within the Indian rural society, one is ascribed and other is achieved, both of them influence each other, the condition of these two types of inequality differs from society to society. Achieved type of inequality is getting preference in modern sociological discipline which gradually replaced the ascribed inequality in the society.

Formerly, the discussion on inequality mainly confined to the idea of natural inequality but the notion did not get importance in various studies. The discussion of natural inequality also created ambiguity. "The ambiguity underlying distinction between natural inequality and social inequality"⁴. Hobbes and Locke, the notable English philosophers, stated that human beings were equal in their natural condition. But Rousseau the French philosopher, did not dispose this idea of natural inequality, on the contrary he proposed the idea of social inequality. He tried to prove that "natural inequalities do not really count, that every kind of inequality worth the name is social, not natural"⁵. After Rousseau many philosophers of different countries proposed the idea of natural inequality with different terminological concepts like 'distributive' and 'relational' aspects of inequality, 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' inequality, 'morphological inequality' inequality in respect of merit', inequality in respect of the 'division of labour' etc. Mahatma Gandhi, one of the noted social scientists and reformists in India, who dealt with the system of inequality from his perception of Indian society and Hinduism, argued that "the division of labour corresponding to varnashrama

is natural, hence good, whereas the division of labour corresponding to class is artificial, hence evil"⁶. But Gandhi, here recognized the social differentiation in the Indian varnashrama society which in a sense represented the division of labour, ultimately represent the inequality within the society.

Differentiation is another form of inequality which corresponds to the inequality of social class. "Soviet sociologists too maintain that the differentiation of their society into peasants, workers and the intelligentsia represents the division of labour which they are inclined to contrast with class. Inequalities associated with class are exploitative, and can and should be removed...."⁷ Marx and Engels highlighted inequality on the basis of class and they argued that "the division of labour, class and inequality are inseparably linked and they did not concede that the division of labour was a necessary condition of social existence; rather they believed that human society would recover its true nature only when the division of labour was abolished"⁸.

Inequality on the basis of class is more prominent than any other criteria in the rural society of our study. The society is no less different than other societies where community-wise inequalities are non-existence. Indian society is a classic example of inequalities on the basis of castes and communities and there we find people belong to different castes and communities. But the existence of inequality on the basis of class is more prominent than the castes and communities. But we can not ignore the existence of castes and communities in the universe though their activity has

been abolished which traditionally maintained social differentiation within themselves and each of them maintained separate occupation for their livelihood. Now we find that their existence is only a social category, which has little economic function. Social aspect and its dominance is increasingly losing ground in society. On the contrary the inequality on the basis of economic conditions is getting more importance which practically rule the income and occupation. The replacement of inequalities from hierarchical gradation of income on the basis of land and capital was first identified by F.G. Baily in his studies in highland Orissa. Following Baily A. Beteille also establishes the proposition but he highlighted much the previous system of inequalities on the principles and practices of castes and community hierarchies. He highlighted different aspects of inequalities in Indian scenario. His discussion of inequality covered much area of the traditional social principles but never neglected the inequalities on the basis of economic position in the society following Marx, the remarkable propounder of inequalities of modern time on the basis of economic division of the society, i.e., inequality on the basis of class. But his discussion of classes and inequalities on the basis of economy does not follow the total Marxian view point of classes and inequalities. He sometimes defines classes from sociological view point that "a class is a set of individuals or at least, families - sharing certain life chances in common that they may or may not owe to their ancestors, and that they may or may not transmit to their descendants"⁹. He also argued that "classes are economic criteria, and classes are made up of individuals who have only their economic conditions in common"¹⁰. So the discussion of

class is based on the principle of economic inequality in common, whose prevalence is getting more importance in the discussion on inequality in every type of society. Our study also highlights an important aspect of inequality on the basis of Marxian analysis of inequality depending on class relations in terms of the sole criterion of the ownership or non-ownership of the means of production"¹¹.

The analysis of inequality following Marxian principle i.e. on the basis of ownership or non-ownership of the means of production determines the class positions of the individual in every society and dominates inequality within the different classes of the society. Inequality of classes i.e. economic inequality, is maintaining its importance within the society which ultimately diverts other inequalities like the castes and communities which traditionally maintain inequality in Indian society. Now we identify people as a landowner, sharecropper, landless labourers etc. at first then we try to examine relations of caste groups or communities they belong to. They are generally the lower income groups of the society from the very beginning and are possessing lower class status in production relations and are getting exploitative benefit from the society.

Our study in this portion is related to the problems and prospects of peasants life and social structure on the basis of inequality and is related to various aspects; but our emphasis is on the inequality from economic point of view which replaces gradually the traditional inequality of castes and communities of hierarchical character which maintains traditional inequality in a

complex way. In the past castes and community maintained occupation of different people and maintained hierarchy among themselves in relation to that of the economy, the higher castes and community were basically wealthy or rich people from economic point of view, people from lower castes and communities were unable to change their occupation they possessed hereditarily maintained inequality among themselves. They are also unequal in relation to that of economy. The higher castes and community people were dominant economically where the phases of inequality were maintained on occupational division in the traditional society. But this system of inequality did not generate any changes in the economic structure of the then society in comparison with other societies. As a result the economy of the rural society was hampered in production system in totality besides being of severe inequality maintained in the in-built structural framework of the Hindu castes and community on occupational relations and its interactions on the basis wherein "the caste rank is conditioned essentially by interactions in the domain of property and power"¹². He also emphasises Bose's argument, whose writings "underscored the economic principles"¹³ and holds "the caste system in pre-British India was supported by an economic order in which a particular occupation was tied to a specific caste"¹⁴. The inequality of castes and community based principles of hierarchy maintained an economic order within the society. Double facets of inequality and exploitation were going on simultaneously with the society. But this system of inequality began to breakdown after the British advent who introduced a new system of economy of generalised structure, irrespective of castes and communities. In

this system of economy caste-free occupations prevailed gradually by an establishment of technological exploitation of the means of production which was uncommon to the traditional caste based occupation and a fresh occupational principle was adopted that ran counter to the traditional society. This development in the occupational field gradually led the people to an occupation of economic holding where inequality was not absent but established a new phase of unequal possessive feature of wealth. This inequality of wealth ultimately established class based inequality in place of caste and community based inequality of traditional society which is exploitative in nature according to economic condition of the society. The system of changes were introduced by the British and their effects were studied by N.K. Bose that "drastic changes were brought about in the basic design of traditional Indian society. The economic changes introduced by the British which included the introduction of advanced techniques of manufacture, the growth of caste-free occupations, the expansion of a cash economy and the development of new markets - eroded the traditional association between caste and occupation"¹⁵. "As a consequence, caste became gradually detached from the economic system and was confined only to the ceremonial aspects of social life. Thus, persons to whom a superior caste was attributable by birth could be found in the occupations of inferior castes and vice versa. Quite clearly, according to Bose, the economy hold the key to maintaining or destroying the caste-based distinctions between high and low"¹⁶.

The inequality of caste and community relationship was maintained not only in social and occupation field according to the ascribed norm of caste and ritual distance but it maintained an economic relationship within themselves on the basis of caste hierarchies in principle. This is a system of jajamani relationship where the material exchange occurred within themselves on the basis of inter-caste-community hierarchy which also maintained inequality of castes and community occupation according to the ritual distance in the field of traditional organisation of production. "The organisation of production and distribution on the basis of ascribed caste and occupation within a contiguous geographical area is known as the jajamani system"¹⁷. He also states, "The relationship between a jajaman and kamin is unequal since the latter is regarded as inferior. Though primarily an economic or ritual tie, it has a tendency to spread to other fields and become a patron client relationship. The relationship is generally stable, and usually inherited. The right to serve is hereditary, transferable, saleable, mortgageable and partible"¹⁸. So, the inequality in economic field was also maintained on the basis of hierarchical social division of caste.

Beidleman, for instance, views "the jajaman-kamin relationship as an unequal one, the superiority of the former being based on the power derived from control over land numerical superiority and political connections"¹⁹, has been modified by establishing an inequality on the basis of the ownership of the means of production after the arrival of the British capitalist system. This newly established system of production though abolished inequality on

the basis of hereditary ascribed occupation in the system of economic relationship within themselves but introduced another system of inequality on the basis of economic holding which created inequality of classes in the place of inequality of castes and communities where people maintained many stranded relationship of inequality within themselves. So the changes we find within the structural aspects of the society but not of inequality into equality.

Changing Attitude to Caste and Community Sentiments and Inequality:

Indian society achieved its greater inequality in the period when traditional caste system reached a point of hierarchical status where economic relations were not maintained according to the value of the services rendered. "While redistribution of goods, and gradation of means of production, are unequally divided among hierarchic castes according to their ritual status, the balance between those who give and those who receive does, in fact mean an inter dependence favourable to the latter"²⁰. Following these principle of inequality in social and economic functions in the society where the lower castes and being deprived of their actual values within the society. This system of inequality in the field of social and economic relations ultimately lead the higher castes to the acquisition of power. When all the privileges and positions of the society are vested in the higher castes with rite and rituals - and make a social distance within themselves a type of inequality socially sanctioned or recognized within the Hindu caste system which latter influenced the tribal people in the absorption to the

caste society by identifying themselves as Hindus. This absorption occurred in the society when tribal people began to follow the same system of organization of production for themselves because of the influence of majority culture. This culture contact occurred when the tribal people began to practise agriculture leaving their traditional primitive method of production. But they occupied the same status in every aspects of the society as the lower castes possesses in the hierarchical division i.e. of inequality in position and status of the society.

This inequality and discrimination led them into a sense of emulation, i.e., of mobilization of achieving higher status and privileges in the society following the habits and practices of the higher castes as they follow. This newly found of emulation among the lower castes and tribals is defined in a new concept of 'Sanskritization' by Srinivas. This form of limited social mobility was prominent in the beginning of the century. But these under-privileged castes have now realized that the acquisition of education, and economic and political power, are far more important than sanskritization in the struggle to move up. "The individual citizen and not caste was declared the basic unit of Indian society, with equality of all citizens before the law. The socio-economic structure was based in principle on agreement between free and equal individuals, not between one caste or sect and another"²¹.

"The principal changes of inequality from caste to class started its activities since the establishment of British rule and later of Indian rule. This changes brought its activities in the social reality when the security of private property began to

establish its activity in the position of property-holding classes; increase in the population and reversal of the ratio of ~~manpower~~ labour to cultivated land from one of labour scarcity to one of land scarcity; the introduction of a comprehensive land revenue system; development of the market economy; acceleration in productivity to feed the growing population and create a viable national economy; increase in the circulation of money in the rural areas; improvement in transportation and communication; gradual replacement of subsistence farming by cash crops; the advance of technology; increased power for the moneylender at the expense of the peasant; development of modern professions religiously neutral in character, with consequent scope for increased social mobility; accelerated urban development, with a mass exodus from rural areas; territorial unification and spatial mobility; and finally, the introduction of universal adult franchise. These gradual improvements have had a greater cumulative effect on the structure of the caste-system notably in the economic sphere, that the modern occupational pattern has disrupted the vertical structure of hierarchy and status. Similarly, there has been a decrease in the prominence of pollution rules, and greater permissiveness in dietary tabus²².

The improvement achieved its greater significance in our universe after independence when a large number of refugees came and settled there with various castes and community background. These latter immigrants just made speedy development of its activities of acculturation and inequality in economic field where an overt competition made the transformation more accelerated the inequality of caste system and occupation into an inequality of

modern occupational classes and independent mobility pattern. This system of inequality we recognized prior to our independence when our founding father M.K. Gandhi expressed his hope that India would return to the 'purity' of the varna 'class system'. True, there is an increasing tendency to use the terminology of the varna model in preference to that of the jati system, since the latter has derogatory connotations associated with the public's mind about backwardness. But it is hard to see how the professions of the skilled technicians, fit into the categories of priests, warriors, traders and cultivators. "Yet Gandhi was pointing to what appears to be the obvious evolutionary pattern of the caste system in a modern economic framework. For, in the long run, the consolidation of caste associations may bring about a modification in the varna system, based on modern occupational system"²³. So, we could not ignore this inequality of economic class and occupation after achieving massive liberalised policy of abolishing inequality of castes which has achieved more or less its liberal principle in our universe. We find opinion from our respondents and other activities through observation that the marriage rules, dietary pattern and other interactions are largely flexible.

The traditional dietary pattern in any village social function was so rigorous that arrangement of taking food was separate for separate castes according to their hierarchy in the society and no one from lower castes served food to upper caste people in social feasts. Each of the separate caste people will take food in a separate row. An inequality in social relations was much in practice

according to the hierarchy on the basis of the purity and pollution rules. In modern time though the social hierarchy of castes is not maintained in dietary habits of the village people but inequality of economic status is maintained in every village functions where a rich peasant generally do not take food with village agricultural labourer. It shows that the dimension of inequality has changed from caste and community rules to class rules in the society. No separate rules for using separate bathin ghat are found in the society like that of the traditional caste dominated society where the upper castes people used separate bathing ghat for maintaining their purity-pollution rules according to their Hierarchical rules of inequality. It has also been observed at the time of our study that village people are using common bathin ghat for their use according to their conveniences.

In present day society inequality is prominent in the process of using dress materials in normal and occasional life where no traditional pattern of using separate dress for separate castes and community people are found according to their social position in that society which was prevalent in earlier times. But in contemporary society common dress materials are used by every people according to different age-group in the society where the influence of modernization and westernization or urban orientation is found prominent. The principle of urbanization and modernization is followed according to their economic position in the society. The members of the rich peasant family use good quality of shirting, suiting, dhotis, sarees and ornaments in their daily

and occasional life. Where the lower income groups of the ^{peasant} present family members use coarse quality of the same in practical life. It has also been found that some people who cannot afford dress materials of nominal use for their family members roam openly covering their genital organs by a piece of loin cloth. They even use rejected cloths and rag-tags of the upper class people. The inequality is writ large in clothes and get-ups of the people.

The degree of inequality of the village people is changing gradually from the traditional to modern dimension which we can measure from our limited data assessed through observation in the activities of the life pattern and sentiment they express to the outsider. Castes and community rules are more prominent within their fellow members in case of arranged marriage rules they follow where inequality of caste status and hierarchy are strictly followed by the traditional minded people. They consider it a serious offense if any marriage occurs within an unequal partners between separate castes and community fellows who are socially unequal in position and status in society. The Santals used to punish the offenders and community fellows. This punishment was made in most cases by inflicting social ostracism. It was more strictly followed by the Santal community where punishment was made by adopting bitlaha to demolish the family where such offense occurred in their dwelling site. This strict rules of social punishment has been abolished by law in terms of the right to residence of the Constitution of the country. They established the system of legal monitoring principle in case of social injustice where people of different castes

and communities preserves their own customs creed and religion mutually and will not interfere in others' matter by adopting social force. It ultimately turned the traditional minded people into participants in the liberal process of culture.

The principle of inequality of castes and community sentiments have gradually been receded from its traditional moorings. The sentiment of traditionalism has gradually been eroded by the influence of modernism and westernism where education and other cultural activities of urbanism have played a greater role. At least the inter-economic activities have brought them closure to the atmosphere of abolishing social inequality of castes and community sentiments. Economic relationships are always class-oriented in every society. In these positional roles the inequality of classes generates different social attitude to life and living in society. These are generally more determinant than the caste and community sentiments in modern life of the peasant society. The data of our observation confirm it. The sentiment for inter-caste and community marriage prevails in the society which we find from our table (No. 24) on Attitude to Inter-Caste/Community marriage.

Table No. 24 Attitude to Inter-Caste/Community Marriage

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	No. of Res-pondent Dis-favour to Inter-Caste/Community Marriage	No. of Res-pondent Favour to Inter-Caste/Community Marriage	No. of Res-pondent Ambivalent to Inter-Caste/Community marriage
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Santal	193	103	88	2
2.	Oraon	158	73	82	3
3.	Rajbanshi	40	12	25	3
4.	Kshatriya	24	11	13	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	3	4	-
6.	Bhumali	4	-	4	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	1	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	1	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	1	-
10.	Muslim	73	23	50	-
		502	226	268	8
			45.02%	53.39%	1.59%

The table shows the attitude of the village people who normally show the sentiment of marriage within and outside the caste and community where majority people i.e. 53.39 per cent of the village people give consent to inter-caste and community marriages, if it occurs to their children. A percentage of 45.02 per cent show the negative attitude to inter-caste and community marriage. The majority percentage generally comes from the rich class of the society. People of ignorant tribals cannot accept the influence of modernity in practice. The rich show such an attitude because of

modernity in practice. The rich show such an attitude because of their affluent economic condition in life where they do not face any hardship in performing their social life of settling marriage of their sons and daughters. A nominal percentage i.e. 1.59 per cent show an ambivalent attitude to marriages in their society and within themselves and cannot give any consent in favour or disfavour in this field of social activities. They decide it in practical field if any situation arises. It is more in favour, we may say, rather than in disfavour because of their imbalances in practical life. We may say a majority portion of the peasant society have altered their attitude in practices of their traditional life pattern of matrimonial affairs. The attitude is noted in practical examples of inter-caste and community marriages in our universe which we find in our earlier case studies already referred to.

Marriage system is an institution which preserves maximum number of caste and community sentiment in every society from which we may conclude the society's actual attitude to modernism. Marriage forms of endogamy and exogamy within the caste and community have achieved their importance in a society from the notion of inequality of hierarchical position in the system. Here, by marriage system we mean arranged marriages where the settlement is generally made by the two parties of bride and bride-groom through the initiative of either of the two families in a normal condition. Other forms of marriages are also prevalent in the society where the personal choice of bride and bride-groom is effective that conforms to love marriage, marriage by elopement etc., of modern form where no strict

rules of caste and community practices are followed. It is an influence of modernism. But the practices of personal choice of bride and bridegroom also were there in the traditional society in respect of marriage system which was called Gandharva Bibaha but the system was prevalent in a limited section of the society of rulers and warriors. But the earlier social practices were confined to specific yama or occupational groups. In modern time the system of personal choice of marriages knows no bound in the society where the parties never follow any type of discrimination and inequality and if any problem arises in solemnizing the marriage then the bride and bridegroom generally follow the principle of elopment and get settled elsewhere. Sometimes they return to their original place after the tension is over through normalisation of the condition of life adjusted to the legal framework of the broader civil society.

This system of equality in marriage practices is being followed partly for economic hardship and partly for the influence of the factors of urbanism, including the educational influence and occupational similarities in practical economic life where the sense of akinness generally comes closer to the sentiment of equality in practice which removes the traditional practical barrier of caste and community. This type of inequality has lost its practical importance because of the absolute occupational division, which has an economic value in village production system and population growth and other related activities of emergence of modern means of occupational ways of life. The modern practice of love marriage and marriage by elopment is preferred to traditional practices for being

less expensive in cost. These modern values in practical life have eroded the system of traditional caste and community values of inequality in practice.

So the system of modern means of marriage practices has no such correlation with property holding and inter-connection with the tendency of inter-caste and community marriages. The majority section of the peasant classes give consent to inter-caste and community marriages which are found in every section of the peasant society; but a slight improved percentage is found in the rich peasants because of their practical sense in life and affluence in following both traditional rules and rituals and legal principles appear to be a fashion and status in the society. This sense of variations is found from the table on Property Correlation in Inter-Caste and Community Marriage (Table No. 19). In the column of the table of favouring inter-caste and community marriages, 15.67 per cent, 52.24 per cent, 19.78 per cent and 12.31 per cent respectively of non-owners of land, marginal peasant, small peasant and rich peasants are showing their consent to inter-castes and community marriages, if it happens within the society. Among them all types of peasant classes are inter related irrespective of their caste and community background. Here we may say that these classes of peasant are somewhat advanced from their counter-parts elsewhere. And these norms and values of the modern social practices are more influential in inter-castes and community marriages. Besides, the modern means of practical values influence a sense of class consciousness in attitudinal modes of life that makes them

more practical in every field of socio-economic and political adjustment. So the practical values of economic life are more fervent in making them equal within the society where other factors of the life are becoming nominal gradually. Inequality of traditionalism bore the characteristics of micro pattern where it maintains different multi-facets of inequality in practical life pattern of the society and social relationship. In that stage of the society social aspects of inequality maintained its sway in other fields of the society. But in modern time, mainly after the industrial reformation the pattern of inequality has changed its traditionalism and turns into an inequality of macro-pattern where inequality has achieved its easy process of differentiation and measurement from the view point of economic value of the society. So the inequality of micro-pattern has already accepted its transformation into a macro pattern of inequality of economic values.

Another column of the table shows the respondent of dis-favouring section in inter-caste and community marriages where total respondents constitute 45.02 per cent of the total population. Among them 15.49 per cent, 51.77 per cent, 19.02 per cent and 13.72 per cent respectively generally come from the non-owner of land, marginal peasant, small peasant and rich peasant sections of the society. This sense of non-acceptance generally goes on within themselves because of the ignorance which lead them to conservatism in practical life, for the existence of older inhabitants in the family in major cases where the incidence of other activities of modernism are going on in other fields like occupational variation and other inter-

castes and community incidence of accepting foods in social ceremonies and general interactions like that of using the same bathing ghat together for taking dip because of the geographical proximity. Marriage practice is the last resort of keeping the traditional values and inequality of caste and community sentiment in practical life where the ignorant people are marshalled for keeping it aloft. In the case of rejection of an inter-caste marriage the family members are generally satisfied over non-accepting the practical value of modernism. But the couple's decision to settle elsewhere may be treated as contributory phenomenon to modernism. So, for that reason a general statement may be made that inter-caste and community marriage practices and conservatism may create problem but cannot impede the growth of modernism.

This sense of inter-caste and community inequality is being eroded gradually because the majority of inhabitants are from the tribal groups and lower caste Hindus whose customary values and hierarchical status are not important in practical life of the Hindu hierarchical society where the importance of social inequality is so much prevalent in their life pattern. But the inhabitants of the area are mostly backward which consists of hereditary low-status groups of under privileged lower castes. The majority members of the society are economically and culturally disadvantaged. The differentiation in economic possession is getting prime importance in the society and inequality of economic status gets prime role in the society. Besides, these backward castes and community inhabitants are so busy in maintaining their livelihood that they

have little time to think about the inequality of castes and community. They just think it in response to my question and replied a readymade answer of disfavoured inter-caste or community marriage in practice though the other incidence of inter-caste and community inequality is not maintained in practical life in everyday activities. At this moment a nominal sense of inequality of inter-caste and community may have in mind but in proper perspective where economic crisis is deeper the differences melt away.

In the next column of the table a portion of only 1.59 per cent of the total households are ambivalent about the inequality of inter-caste and community marriage. People from economic class are there and among them 25 per cent of the total ambivalent respondents are from the non-owners of land, 37.50 per cent from marginal peasant, 25 per cent from small peasant and 12.50 per cent from the rich peasant class. In this case the peasants generally can not expect inter-caste and community marriage but if it happens within themselves then they will not be able to reject them for making an integration between the two-unequal castes or community because of the economic need of the society. In this society a majority people have a little scope of thinking about themselves if other issues like that of traditional values of castes and community customs and practices rather than the economic problems. Another thinking about the enquiry is that if the respondents were rigid minded about their caste and community inequality and its preservation then their answer might have been negative against my question and instances of punishment we would have in the society in

lieu of the inter-caste and community marriage example which is against the maintenance of caste and community inequality in the society. On the contrary the economic inequality is more showing prominence in the society where a large number of agricultural labourers of non-owner of land and marginal peasants are there. It shows a large gulf of difference about their every day life practice and way of life. These practices of inequality have a modern value in the society which is recently measured by the state practitioner from the possessional quality and quantity of wealth and a view of equality is shown from their activities in present day peasant society where the incidence of marriage between the landless agricultural labourers and rich peasants are absent in general. Though the state efforts to social equality is going on through various reformation, the economy has been retarded by its incompatibility with the old value system and work pattern which keeps the inequality in practice. These changes of inequality from the traditional pattern of micro-type into a modern macro-system of inequality bears an economic value of western industrial principle which gradually changed its nature in practice. The measurement of inequality in our society is of prime importance in our discussion.

Before discussing in detail about the inequality of the present day peasant society in practice and its adaptation in the village economy we would like to throw our attention to the practical matter of changing process of inequality in action from traditional community based inequality to a modern practice of economic

inequality in action within the society. Peasant economy in a sense is not an economy of existing individual community principle of cultivation and others in practice where the organisation of production does not differentiate themselves from each other by a separate production system. Traditionally, the tribals followed a separate system of production dissimilar to that of others but "they are now becoming increasingly articulated with a market economy"²⁴, which is similar to that of others as a whole in peasant economy. This notion of Indian tribes in transition was raised from a systematic enquiry by Prof. D.N. Majumder nearly forty years ago where he stated that "their isolation has broken down or been reduced. In many areas shifting cultivators have become settled agriculturists using the plough and plough cattle. With changes in technology there have come about corresponding changes in their organisation of production. The pattern of landholding has changed, the market economy is altering not only the relationship of the tribal villages with the outside world but also the economic and social structure of the village itself"²⁵. So, the reference of peasant is to an integrated whole which does not define an economy of a particular caste or community cultivators in practice but in organisation of production in a systematic whole. This is an economy where both the economy of castes and tribals have transformed into a separate economy in action which is not only a mixture of the two but "both the castes and tribes are being merged into a different system which is neither one nor the other"²⁶.

So, the economy we have studied, is a peasant economy in practice and principle where it differentiates its participants on the basis of the possessional holding i.e. of inequality on the basis of the ownership of the means of production and production relations in a Marxian sense of the terminology. It minimises the social group identity. Inequality in peasant society is mainly defined in terms of class categories of the peasants within a particular possessional section of the society, viz. landless agricultural labourer, marginal peasant, small peasant and rich peasant. The criterion of inequality is mainly determined by us in the following manner : the landless agricultural labourer is self-explanatory by the marginal peasants we mean those who possess landholding upto 2.5 acres of land, the possessional group of landholding from 2.5 to 5 acres of land is called small peasant, and the landholding group who possess more than 5 acres of land are the rich peasants at first sight. Another type of inequality is followed in practical life of the peasant economy in action through the constitutional provision in differentiating backward castes and tribals in relation to the forward or advanced section of the community. But this differentiation is no more an inequality for maintaining a perennial source of traditionality but a major step to abolish their inborn source of inequality and deprivation for an equality of the practical peasant life of society with that of the other classes who administer the present economic condition of the peasants with a view to establishing an egalitarian society. So, the maintenance of this type of inequality in practice by administering state principle in action is nothing but an effort at establishing a general

trend of economic activity in practice.

The present trend of the economy in village peasant society is more integrative in action where the conditions of economic inequality are prevailing more in action than that of the former inequality of diversification in every aspect of the society including the economic life. The effects of the modern reformative principles in action are not confined to the urban areas but also within the village peasant society for which peasants from different sections of the castes and community have come closer within the purview of the modern economic activities where the system of traditional inequality has loosened its principle and emerged as a basic entity of class feelings within themselves by maintaining a similar type of economic activities in practice. They also are going to organise themselves as a class for facing different problems and activities. This practical life pattern of the society has changed the traditional feeling and inequality among themselves, which nothing but modernism in action for which we find inter-caste and community marriages within the society.

This practical life pattern of the peasant society has emerged from the feeling of class consciousness whose basic perspective developed from the sense of economic inequality in practice where the aspect of a separate caste and community attitude and feeling began to wane out gradually by way of an organised economy in practice, namely, peasant economy. In this economy no such identification of tribal, Rajbanshi, Kayastha, Brahmin, Tili and Mohammedan economy are found separately but the economy of

landless labourer, marginal peasant, small peasant and rich peasants' economy operates wherein both castes and community are being merged into a separate system of economy where no such traditional inequality of castes and community is found. Though Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India thought of preserving tribal culture separately in an isolated way from the mainstream of the society, the policy "for the pressure inherent in their position made the tribes aware of the need for some form of change. Many, in fact, have been progressively integrated into the caste system through sheer economic necessity. The very fact that a significant number of tribes have been sanskritized, while others have been converted to Christianity during the last hundred years, is indication of their dissatisfaction with their status within the encircling social system"²⁷.

The present economic conditions, including that of reformative policies of adult franchise, interest in Sanskritization and other forms of emulation like that of maintaining traditional inequality within themselves have declined. The political leadership and other activities of castes and tribes are now more concerned "with the improvement of living conditions than with the questions of ritual and social status"²⁸, where the policy of isolation and cultural conservation i.e. of traditional social inequality is steadily on the wane and economic inequality is taking place in a steady way in the activities and the life pattern of the society.

Inequality in Agrarian Sector:

India is a country where agriculture occupies the main place in its economy and its business enterprise. "It has been looked upon merely as a source of meagre livelihood for the mass of petty peasants, who carry on production chiefly for subsistence and largely with family labour"²⁹. As a result, rural studies include agriculture and agricultural practices which occupy the discussion of inequality that can not ignore agricultural practices and life pattern of the society. Different types of inequalities and agricultural practices are found in that society. The inequality in agrarian sector is mainly combined with the system of property ownership, its uses and control. And the system is transforming in different periods. Here, the discussion of agrarian inequality is related to the modern system of production, its ownership use and control in action. The system of inequality in this portion is discussed first from the Marxian point of view that considers contradiction between unequals ends in equality of all. "The marxist approach considers that focussing on the type of property relations prevailing in Indian society as crucial axial element for properly understanding the nature of transformation that has been taking place in the country. This approach does not demand crude reducing of every phenomena to economic factor; it also does not deny the autonomy, or prevalence of distinct institutional and normative features peculiar to a particular society"³⁰. To understand the Indian agrarian society from the matrix of ownership of the means of production and its influences on the entire socio-economic formation within the rural social structure is an appro-

priate field of studying Marxian approach to differentiate inequality in the field of agrarian peasant society.

The major inequality of class phenomena has been divided in the universe on the basis of the ownership of the means of production, i.e., landownership are to be discussed in accordance with the governmental division of the peasant society where inequalities are found among the peasants of landless agricultural labourer, marginal peasant (whose degree of landholding raises upto 2.5 acres of land); small peasant (whose landholding stands within 2.5 to 5 acres of land); and rich peasant (whose landholding raises more than 5 acres of land). This inequality of class divisions is clearly found from our table of Landholding Among Castes and Tribes (Table No. 9), where the division has been determined on the basis of landownership of the society. Some of the social scientists raised their negative views about defining class and its existence in rural society, on the contrary, they lodged their views of 'class' in industrial society. But in modern time, the social scientists have proved it fruitfully that this notion is not only applicable in industrial societies but is also applicable side by side in the system of rural society which is now more prominent in action of discussion various phenomena in rural societies from which the Marxian concept of class has gained its overall accomplishment in the totality of whole as a theory and practice. A. Beteille, tried to discuss inequality in rural society in this studies on the basis of the ownership, control and use of land. He also said that, "historically the concept of class has been most closely associated with the institution of property, and if we define class in terms of

the ownership, control and use of property then surely it helps us to identify some of the most important features of those societies in which land is a fundamental basis of social cleavage"³¹. But from the Marxian standpoint the definition follows some limitations, though he emphasised property as the major means of defining class in rural society and its cleavage but he ignores other facets of Marxism which was developed by other theorists in defining 'class' and inequality in every society. They say, "Classes differs according to the place they have within the system of social production, some are dominant, others are oppressed. This condition of classes springs from their different status vis-a-vis the means of production, a most important feature which determines class distinctions, the interest and activity of each class, its relationship with other classes in the given society. Private property in the means of production is the economic basis on which society is split up into classes, the basis for the exploitation of the working classes by the owner of the means of production, and the basis for the social antagonism between the classes"³².

Daniel Thorner also identified three categories of rural people to identify rural inequality, namely malik, kisan and mazdur. "The principal short coming of Thorner's scheme is that it subsumes under the performance of labour both the labour or tenants and that of agricultural labourers. No attempt is made to separate maliks who live primarily on rent (by leasing most of their land out) from those who live primarily on profit (by cultivating most of their land through hired labour). Conversely, a mazdur who works for a malik as a tenant is indistinguishable from one who works

for a malik as a tenant is indistinguishable from one who works as an agricultural labourer. The scheme thus fails to distinguish rural classes on the basis of the character of the production relations they enter into³³, vis-a-vis the inequality in proper sense of the Marxian ideology.

Utsa Patnaik tried to study Indian rural society following the scheme of Lenin and Mao-Tse-tung where she attempted to analyse Indian agrarian classes, in other words inequality within the society. In this context, "She suggests that the degree to which non-family (or outside) labour is used relative to family labour (the one being expressed as a ratio of the other) would be the most reliable index for differentiating classes"³⁴. But she did not think it properly that a single criterion cannot be judged as a total system of the society according to its production relations with the means of production like Thomer as well as Beteille. So, we find that "the authors like Patnaik, are themselves concerned with class differences in terms of the exploitation of labour, their scheme necessitates the inclusion of a wider range of exploiters who depend variously on the control of land or trade or usury"³⁵. So, the authors have failed to highlight classes in rural societies properly on the basis of the Marxian notion of classes and inequalities. None of them have referred to the situation of conflict among the classes, one of the major aspects of Marxian definition of classes as well as of inequality in our discussion.

In our present portion of analysis of the peasant society we have tried to analyse classes and inequalities on the basis of

the Marxian theory in practice. Our first attempt is to classify peasant society on the basis of the ownership of private property where we broadly find four categories of peasants or of peasant class, such as, landless agricultural labourer, marginal peasant, small peasant and rich peasant, where the inequalities of land-ownership are found. According to the table of Landholding Among Castes and Tribes (Table No. 9), landless agricultural labourer possess the lowest position in the ladder of economic classes who comprise 15.74 per cent of the total household. They have nothing to cultivate as their own besides their physical labour. Their livelihood is dependent on the basis of selling their labour power, either in exchange of money or goods, or by both according to the practices of the society concerned. The next group of the peasants in our universe who differentiate themselves from other classes according to their ownership of the means of production whom we call marginal peasant whose landholding stand within 2.5 acres of land whether it is cultivable or non-cultivable or barren, they are defined as a landholding group. They constitute 51.79 per cent of the total household and constitute higher percentage to the universe which is more than the half of the total population, the largest class of peasants in the study. They are not the class of sole cultivators but are agricultural labourer too because of the meagre land for cultivation which may include a portion of non-cultivable land or a land of lower productivity and non-productivity at all. However, for the lack of self-sufficiency in agricultural practice they are forced to employ themselves as agricultural labourer in actual field of production and distribution in peasant society. The

class of small peasant comes next higher rung in the ladder of ownership of the means of production which comprises 19.52 per cent of the total household whose landholding stands within the span of 2.5 to 5 acres of land. This is a class of peasants which is more or less self-sufficient in production and livelihood pattern in the society from the view point of the ownership of the means of production. But critical examination reveal the phenomena that the two portions within the class are found where a portion of the class can hardly cover their average expenditure of livelihood from the land they possess. The reason behind this insufficiency is somewhat social and somewhat economic in nature. Social in a sense of aversion to direct participation in cultivation by their family members in response to their traditional caste customs and practices they followed, for which the total cultivation go through the hier in agricultural labourer and paid maximum amount from production. Sometimes production fails in its potentiality for various natural calamities that decreases production facility and makes deficit in self-sufficiency and also makes them bound to collect necessities to fill the deficit either by borrowing or selling possessional holding. Moreover, this ownership class is more prone to perform social function because of the traditional sentiment they bear for which they need some extra support from other sources of the society ultimately pull them from their position of self-sufficiency and make them insufficient gradually in the society. Economic aspect is noticed in the fact that a portion of the peasants in this class has been categorised as small because of the minimum possessional holding just above 2.5 acres of land and bear maximum family burden

for higher number of family members either for his irresponsible sexual performance or for carrying a burden of unproductive members of old age and distant relatives that forces him to perform socio-economic life in a worsening condition. Besides, barren and unproductive land make them more unequal within the class itself. Another portion within the class which possess the maximum limit of land for the class we have classified, i.e., 5 acres of land, with average irrigation facility is no less inferior in economic position than the rich peasant. This type of small peasants is not much in number within the class and our data are not sufficient to prove the matter in practice. So we have left them out of our discussion and devote to the activities of those small group of peasants and have tried to delineate the conditions and life pattern of those small peasant class in average activities and performances within the society. Where the peasant of this category generally do not employ themselves as hired labour on the contrary they hire in 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 tribals is a reason for their emergent deteriorated conditions within the society we may say. Though previously the tribal females of all economic categories of landholding used to work both in fields and homes, the females of sizeable landholding tribals do not undertake field jobs following other communities mainly the Bengalis, they avoid field labour for keeping their social status which is remotely connected with urban culture and the impact of bourgeois educational policy. Consequently, majority

of the peasants of this category hire agricultural labourers for productive purposes either for the lack of helping hand or for social prestrige they drain out a portion of their income and lives in a condition of insufficient life in the society. This insufficiency phenomenon forces them to borrow cash or kind to fill the gaps of the life pattern they maintain in addition to that of the social occasions they perform in the society and repay a higher amount of interests along with the principal after harvest make them tenuous because of the standing deficit in meeting the expenses. Moreover, if in a ny year they fail to repay the debt for deficit production caused by natural calamities or like that the interest of the borrowing amount doubles up and goes beyond their capacity to repay from the production only and generally forces them to make repayment by selling their possessional land. In this way the majority of the small peasants losses their land and gradually become poor. But in recent time various programmes from governmental agencies have been put in to operation to protect these peasants, including those of marginal and landless agricultural separately but cannot succeed properly according to the programmes' content because of some technical loopholes in the policy implementation. And the distance between the small peasant cultivators and rich peasant with that of other well to do sections of the society has greatly increased.

The next position in the ladder of economic class structure in our universe we find the rich peasants who constitute 12.95 per cent of the total household where we find another unequal class from the point of ownership of the means of production. The unequal

class dominates the other unequal classes by their ownership criteria and breed maximum inequality in the society. They are originally the peasants of combined categories of landowner, cultivator and supervisory peasants in the villages. Though they are a few in number, their actual possession of landholding is more than the other peasants of the universe. Our data are not sufficient to show their actual possessional holding with that of the other peasants in totality but that they are possessing more than others is palpable from different practical observation of fields. They are not unequal only from the sources of the ownership of the means of production but create other side of inequalities in the society from that source. They are the group of peasants who cultivate their land only by employing hired labourers throughout the year. Some of them used to cultivate their land where there is no facility of self-cultivation by employing hired labour, they cultivate those land on sharecropping basis or leased out it for season against a definite amount of crops. On the sharecropping land they normally do not contribute anything for production, on the contrary, they take half share of the production which is against the reformation policy of the government. Sharecroppers are victims of the circumstances and distribute half share of the crops to the land owners. The law becomes conspicuous by its ineffective role. The former system of leased type of production can not create any sympathy against non-productivity even for natural calamities or others but to pay definite amount of the contracted bond they agreed to pay from their production or other source. This

group of the peasants are economically dominant and unequal in action and indirectly their dominance or inequality spreads to all sphere of the society, including social and political participations.

The major sources of inequality in agrarian structure have been discussed. Their main source, in our view, is the ownership of the means of production which at least has categorised the whole peasant in a systematic class division in our universe. These class divisions have shown the first hand inequality in their primary source of the village economy. "But for more satisfactory method of studying inequalities in village India one is to categorise the population according to their ability to hire labour, by combining the two major bases of differentiation land and labour"³⁶.

This sources of inequality of the contribution of labour power in the process of production has been defined by the capacity to hire in and hire out of the labour power by the various family holders. So, the exploitation of labour power by hiring in and hiring out for production purposes have been classified in relation to that of the ownership of the means of production and inequality. Here the first category i.e. the non-owner of land are generally hire out themselves in year the round if so available and their livelihood totally depends on the selling of their labour power. The next group i.e. marginal peasant class are generally the owners of small plot of land where they need some mandays for production and engage themselves for the short time to their own land. At that time they generally abstain themselves from hiring out in employment. So the peasants of this class employ for lower mandays than that of the former, i.e. of non-owners of land, for their livelihood are somewhat possess higher status in the ladder of inequality, besides that hire

in of labour power is not absent in this class of peasants, though to a small degree. The next category of small peasants generally engage their labour power to their own land for production purposes and a major portion of them generally hire in labour power for their production in peak season, mainly at the time of sowing, seedling and harvesting period. But a major works of production are performed through their own labour power available in the family members. The instances of hiring out of labour power are not absent in this class of peasant proprietor but the normal phenomenon is that they mostly engage themselves to self-production. In this context, the next class of peasants we find, according to their ownership of the means of production, are the rich peasants. They generally do not employ themselves in production purposes but engage themselves in supervision. They are the employers of maximum labour power all the year round for their production purposes as majority of them do not engage themselves actively in agricultural production. They are the only class who never hire out themselves in agricultural production and possess higher status in the ladder of village class and inequality. These sources of inequality have been made clear by the data collected under the table (No. 25) on Hire in and Hire out of Labour Power by Various Classes in the Castes/Tribes. The table shows 64.16 per cent of the total households are employing themselves as hired out agricultural labourers and 28.69 per cent of the total households are used to hire in agricultural labourers for their production purposes and ^{10.15} per cent of the village peasant engage themselves in self-production by

employing their own labour power. It speaks of the agrarian inequality in practice where the hire out peasant section of the society are more unequal in status and ownership in agricultural practices than that of the self-cultivating section of the peasant society and hire-in section. The more illustrations are found in the latter column of our table of individual classes where the non-owners of land are employing themselves as hired out in agricultural practices to a maximum degree. In this field 98.73 per cent of the total non-owners of land are engaging themselves as hired out in agricultural labourer. It is the primary source of their livelihood and income. Only one respondent in this section is employing himself in the activities of ferry service (boatman uses his boat for carrying village people from one bank to other for their inter-village correspondence and activities) linked with the village peasant activity and economy. Within the marginal peasant class 75.77 per cent of them are engaging themselves in hired out in agricultural practices against wages which is lower than that of previous class in hiring out their labour power for earning wages because of ownership criteria they hold in their class position within the society. A few per cent of 9.23 within the class even hire in labour power for meeting extra mandays for their own production purposes either in exchange of wage or mutual reciprocity. It is also clearly measured by the criteria of using labour power in production field of the society.

Small peasant's class is our next attempt at measuring inequality. They are possessing higher status in the class position of the society than those two classes of non-owners of land and marginal

Table No. 25 Hire in and Hire-out of Labour Power by Various Classes in the Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Total No. of Hire-out Labour	Total No. of Hire-in Labour	Non-owner of Land		Upto 2.5 Acs	
					Hire-out	Hire-in	Hire-out	Hire-in
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Santal	193	161	19	55	-	93	2
2.	Craon	158	97	44	17	-	66	6
3.	Rajbanshi	40	15	19	1	-	13	5
4.	Kshatriya	24	13	97	-	-	12	4
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	2	5	-	-	2	2
6.	Bhumali	4	4	-	4	-	-	-
7.	Ghetool	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	15	47	1	-	11	5
		502	307	144	78	-	197	24
			61.16%	28.69%	98.73%	0.0%	75.77%	9.23%

Table 25 (Contd..)

2.5 to 5 Acres		More than 5 Acres of Land	
Hire Out	Hire-in	Hire-out	Hire-in
10	11	12	13
13	9	-	8
14	16	-	22
1	5	-	9
1	4	-	1
-	3	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-
-	-	-	1
-	-	-	-
3	19	-	23
32	56	-	64
32.65%	57.14%	0.0%	98.46%

peasant class. In this class of the peasants the percentage of hire out has decreased in number and on the contrary the percentage of hire in practices in production field has increased. It's aggregate we find 32.65 per cent and 57.14 per cent respectively. And rest per cent is more or less equally involved in self-cultivation or other practices where they do not need to hire out themselves for their livelihood and have no such sufficient capacity of hiring in labour power which is beyond their capacity to pay wages. Here we also find an inequality within the same ownership class where inequality distinguishes themselves not only in ownership criterion but in the nature of using of labour power in agricultural practices which is the main criterion of ownership production in village level peasant economy.

The next class we find from the ownership criterion is the rich peasant class which is possessing higher status in every respect of the society i.e. from the view point of economic power and strength in the society and shows higher degree of inequality from all other classes of the society we have distinguished according to their ownership and non-ownership criteria. This class of rich peasants has highly distinguished themselves at a higher degree of inequality from those of the other classes of peasants by the measuring criterion of using labour power in production purpose. Peasants of this class never hire out themselves in agricultural production. Within this rich peasant class 98.46 per cent of the inhabitants are busily engaged in agricultural production by hired in labour power of the society. Only one peasant family never hires

in any labour for his agricultural production because of the other business like moneylending and other petty trade in village economy and production and continues through the practice of lease-out system like that of Khaikhalasi and sharecropping for a temporary period for avoiding barga record. A new source of inequality with or without the ownership of the means of production is dominating in the village economy and this section dominates the village economy by making more capital that even made them aloof from the ownership of the means of production. Another type of occupational business like that of money lending and petty-trade have no direct relation with the ownership of the means of production because of separate existence outside our universe which controls major capital of the universe. Small ownership peasants are basically dependent on them for production because these small ownership peasants are mostly subsistence class and cannot save extra amount of money or crops for further investment or production. At every season they borrow money or crops for further production against a higher rate of interest and pay maximum of their product after harvest. The rich peasant of the universe who are the maximum ownership class of the villages are also involved in this type of capital making business but have somewhat liberal attitude to their clients in respect of repayment of loans and paid them somewhat fair exchange rate of producing goods in trade. But it makes an extra facility by using those peasants' labour power in their own production at a lower rate of wages.

Another criteria of measuring inequality in village production field is found from the woman's participation in outside home work for supporting family economy. This participation of woman

member in outside work is indicative of the distress in the family and its attitude to physical labour. This woman participation is linked with the ownership of the means of production because women members of the rich peasant family abhor the idea of working in the field side by side with the males. It shows inequality in the agrarian economic structure not only in the class position of the society but also in the class itself because some women participate or avoid it through their individual perception of status. This explanation becomes clear from our table (No. 26) on Women Participation in Outside Homework in the Castes/Tribes. Here the table shows that within the non-owner of land a major per cent of 94.94 are participating in outside home work and the rest 5.06 per cent have no such sheer economic needs for their family to participate in outside homework. This non-participation explains the phenomenon of economic sufficiency in the family where the male members are sufficient to bear economic burden either by hiring out themselves in wage earning or other activities related to income generating process in the universe. The next economic class of marginal peasants show 72.31 per cent of the female members in participation outside home work for meeting their economic demands in the family. Their participation generally comes from the activities of hiring out their labour power in exchange of wage and engagement in their own family land for producing crops in addition to that of wage earning for supporting economic needs of their family. The rest 27.69 per cent of the marginal peasants whose female members are kept aloof from outside homework show self-sufficiency in economic needs of

Table No. 26 Women Participation in Outside Homework in the Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Total No. of Women Participation in outside Home Work	Non-owner of land		Upto 2.5 Acres		From 2.5 to 5 Acres		More than 5 Acres	
				Total No.	Women Participation	Total No.	Women Participation	Total No.	Women Participation	Total No.	Women Participation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.	Santal	193	179	55	55	103	103	26	21	9	-
2.	Oraon	158	127	17	17	82	82	37	28	22	-
3.	Rajbenshi	40	1	1	-	24	1	6	-	9	-
4.	Kshatriya	24	-	-	-	18	-	5	-	1	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	-	-	-	4	-	3	-	-	-
6.	Bhumali	4	2	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	3	1	1	29	2	20	-	23	-
		502	312	79	75	260	188	98	49	65	-
			62.15%		94.94%		72.31%		50.00%		0.0%

their family where male members are actively participating in economic activities of income generating nature. Female partners of a family in this section show more status oriented in the society and require higher inequality than that of the former section whose female members are participating in outside homework whether in their own field or hire out them in exchange of wage in others' field. This hired out section of the female members, who are participating in wage earning activities, are possessing lower and unequal status than those of the families where they only participate in the family field work outside their home. So a broader perspective of inequality is found in the activities of female participation in outside homework where inequality shows a clear cut division even within the same class of the ownership of the means of production.

The next class of small peasants also shows the participation of their female members in outside home work where this participation identifies 50 per cent of the total female members. This female members generally do not hire out themselves in others' field in exchange of wage but they participate in their own family field for helping their male partners who are unable to hire in labour power for their productive purposes because of the lack of sufficient capital from their ownership of the means of production. The tribals are shown as the cent per cent belonging to this class. The females of the Hindu castes are apathetic to field work outside their homes. They are comparatively not higher than their tribal counter-parts in economic status but follow the traditional customs of social status which debar them from outside work. And in modern time some tribal females are also showing apathy to outside work

following those non-tribal family consequent upon the impact of education and urban culture. The rest 50 per cent of the female members of this class generally do not participate in outside work mainly for their economic status and possessional benefit from the ownership of the means of production. Some female members of the peasants family in this class are not possessing higher status than those of few families of this class participating in outside work are not of lower economic status but the participation and non participation are generally influenced by the traditional norms and practices of the society they live in. So, inequality in this class is somewhat different in attitude in proper sense of the term. An inequality is lying in the participation of female members in outside work in every class of the society whether it be in others' field or in their own field.

In the latter we find the class of rich peasants who are economically higher status group in the society whose ownership of the means of production is higher than that of the other classes in the society. And no single family shows any instance of female participation in outside work either in the tribals or in the non-tribals. Though traditionalism gave us a lesson of participation of female members in outside work in all economic classes of tribal societies, the modernised contemporary tribal families and show non-participation in outside work, if they are economically well off. The rich peasants class shows not a single family even in tribal people in the participation in outside work. In the former economic class of small peasants where a majority per cent of the peasants

belong to the tribal people the participation in outside work even among the tribals is lower than the non-participants. Our hypothesis of measuring inequality by female participation in outside home work proves factual. It is more distinguished than that of the measurement of inequality of the ownership of the means of production. In this field, hiring out of labour power in exchange of wage and hiring in of labour power by individual family is an appropriate measure of inequality but it cannot measure it to the point because a marginal peasant family may also hire in labour power for his own production for the lack of sufficient labour power in time. In this field, a hiring out labour first engages him in outside labour market for earning wages at first because the hiring in families never wait for late season cultivation which is somewhat less productive. So, if any, hiring out section engages him at first in his own land, then after finishing his cultivation he will not get any job outside. It is a phenomenon of accumulated measurement of inequality not a self-measured inequality. So, by various factors of measurement of inequality we come across in our study a pervading inequality. These various measurement and picture of inequality are appropriate to determine the class distinctions with the interest and activity of each class and its relationship with other classes in agrarian peasant society which has also similarities with that of the Marxian notion of the class and inequality.

Development of inequality:

Having presented the information on the different distribution of land in the villages and its use pattern by adopting various

measures of the ownership and its exploitation by both the hiring out and hiring in labour power, including that of the women participation in outside work, we affirm that it is nothing but the conformity to the general pattern of land inequality. Accordingly a very brief and modest attempt is made to review the available data where proper comparison is not made owing to small variations in time, quality of land, holding size etc. In this field of inequality we find "higher the size of land, there is a more or less proportionately higher control of livestock, agricultural inputs, marketable surplus, wage labour, income, consumer goods, better housing, and greater access to education, formal organizations and institutional credit"³⁷. So, the progressive increase of inequality is linked with the ownership of the means of production and its proper utilization, consequently, the lower landholding classes cannot exploit their land properly for the lack of cultivable material they need because of lower income. The higher ownership classes generally never feel any problem of cultivating their land because of the ownership of the cultivable materials and capital for proper utilization that ultimately increases their property in all respects which increases the gap of inequality with the non-owner or lower ownership classes of the peasants in actual field. And this ownership criteria also follows the use of labour per farm, "we find that both hired in labour and household labour days in own farm have increased while hireout mandays declined with the increase in land size. In case of hired in labour, the increase is phenomenal.

This means that the big-owners hire in more labour and also provide more days of labour in their own farms. Small farms in contrast though predominantly depend on household labour cannot utilise the full potentiality of the available labour of the households³⁸. Naturally, the progressive increase of per capita income is related with the size of landholding but in cases of few landless agricultural labourer and marginal peasants it varies, though the latter occupies a portion of land which rises his class position upper in the society than the non-owner of land. In actual field this small plot of land creates a burden to them, because of their land they cannot turn their attention properly to a whole time labourer in season and divert their attention to cultivate their land. Majority of them are lacking the materials they need for cultivation, even capital also is unavailable and in majority cases they borrow it from the others by paying interest after harvest. If production fails in any year either due to natural calamities or other, they fail to repay their debt that ultimately make them more indebted. For this indebtedness they are sometimes bound to employ themselves in those creditors' field at lower rate of wages and sometimes they are forced to employ themselves in landowners' land in season for liquid debt and in case of moneylender they seize their production right and cultivate upto the repayment of loan. In this case the earning and per capita income of the landless agricultural labourer are shown higher than that of the marginal peasants. They are unable to incur debt for the lack of movable and immovable property which may make security against the debt. The per capita incomes sometimes vary within the non-owner and marginal peasants, the latter

though possess ownership entails less per capita income for some practical problems of the agrarian economy that shows where the per capita income of non-owner peasants rises through their whole time job of wage labour. This economic phenomenon is quite hard to explain statistically in our study for the lack of proper data.

Statistically speaking the number of marginal peasants is higher in the universe which constitutes 51.79 per cent of the total population, whose ownership identification rises upto 2.5 acres of land but a few of them are possessing the higher quantum of land. Majority of them are the possessor of a small plot of land which is not sufficient for their livelihood, if they engage themselves in their family labour year the round. They are, the majority of them, are no more better economically than the non-owner of land whose occupation is quite similar to them, wage earner. The small peasants class, who are mostly the subsistence class in agrarian economy, though their holdings rise from 2.5 to 5 acres of land, constitute 19.52 per cent of the total household. They engage their self-labour power for cultivation and hire-in labour power in peak season cannot restore maximum capital for preservation their livelihood and meeting production cost that they can invest for further higher productivity by implementing scientific appliances in production. So for that reason they are not having comparatively maximum per capita income in agrarian economy but are possessing somewhat better position than the other two classes of the society through their subsistence economy.

Lastly, we find the rich peasants according to our division of the peasant society on the basis of the ownership criterion of landholding where the peasants hold more than 5 acres of land and constitute 12.95 per cent of the total household. These rich peasants constitute lowest percentage within the universe. They are the well to do peasants in the rural areas though we have not differentiated their individual holding separately but a general assumption may be made from their holding that they concentrate their hands "over half of the area cultivated, the crop area per household clearly indicating the commercial character of the farming done by this group"³⁹. Consequently, the well to do peasants or rich peasants engage in what is called commercial cultivation and begin to make profit. "This commercial cultivation then becomes capital farming, for the areas cultivated by the well-to-do peasants exceed the family labour norm (i.e. the amount of land that a family can cultivate by its own labour), and compel them to the hiring of workers. The poor peasants, on the contrary "provide workers", that is, resort to sell of their labour power"⁴⁰. They are the peasants who are generally aloof of physical labour in production and on the contrary, they are the supervisory peasant though only a few peasants of tribal origin have employed themselves in physical labour but they are also gradually avoiding this physical labour in production as they have a sufficient amount of wealth to engage hired labourer in agricultural production. Some of them who are educationally somewhat advance devote themselves to other activities of the society like politics and education that do good to them in their economic life. These peasants are not only rich from their landholding but

also get all the suitable conditions of production through the quantity of wealth. They are taking the scope of "do their sowing faster, make better use of favourable weather, sow the seed in more humid soil, and reap their harvest in proper time; they thresh their grain as it is carted in from the field, etc. It is also natural that the expenditure of agricultural produce diminishes (per unit of product) as the size of the farm increases"⁴¹. It is also quite natural that the well to do peasantry also employ farming technique much above the average.

These peasants are more unequal than any other classes of the peasants, so, on one side we find the peasants who are trying to accumulate more and more capital under their possession by adopting all types of existing conveniences, either fairly or unfairly, but are increasing their capital. On the other hand the lower income groups of the peasants who have no chances of adopting all the opportunities of production for the lack of capital retain their economic position in the society.

Land Reforms & Agrarian Inequality:

After independence various peasants' dissatisfaction and movement raised against this inequality which forces the government to attempt various measures to alleviate the inequality and dissatisfaction. They adopted various measures to iron out inequality within these peasant classes and implemented various schemes of assistance within the society. They also adopted the principle of acquisition of excess land for distribution it to the lower income group of the peasant of landless agricultural classes jointly by

both the State and Central government with a view to establishing a socialistic pattern of society. The Central Government implemented the centralised land reform law against the inequality but these laws were not sufficient to equalize the wealth in proper sense of the term. They also have undertaken a number of rural development programmes in the form of Community Development Projects and Intensive Agricultural Area Programme to abolish the inequality but it failed to achieve the result which causes more dissatisfaction among the lower income groups of the peasants whose consequences led to the great peasant movement in Bengal - Naxalite Movement, which in its programme was the movement of protecting the interest of the sharecroppers and the landless agricultural labourers. Soon after this movement the first United Front Ministry in West Bengal declared their new land reform policies and began to implement it among the landless agricultural labourers for protection against eviction of bargedars which has gained some momentum in the rural economic relations among the peasant classes.

These massive land reform policies have the supplemented schemes of rural development of both the Central and State government to decrease the inequality in rural society through the programmes like IRDP, SCP, DPAP, Small Farmers Development Agency, FFDA and ITDP, the last one exclusively for the tribal people. All these programmes have been designed to decrease the inequality among the rural peasant, and to protect the interest of the poor peasant as a whole. But these inequality based agrarian strategies for the poor have some disadvantages as well. It is true that as a

result of these programmes a few poor peasants have been benefited. But the richer classes could manipulate things with the help of the shrewed politicians in such a manner that the weaker sections of poor peasants could hardly move ahead.

Technological Changes and Inequality in Agrarian Structure:

"No discussion on economic inequality in contemporary rural India can ignore the effects of the introduction of a package of changes including improved irrigation facilities, high yielding varieties of foodgrains, fertilizers, pesticide, and modern farm machinery"⁴². These improved methods of agricultural appliances have been discovered to raise productivity in agricultural sector but little effect has been found in our universe because of the poor condition of the majority peasants. They are even unable to apply traditional method of cultivation properly for maintaining their productivity on a steady gear for lack of means. Majority of them lack a pair of bullock for cultivation and perform their production either borrowing it from their neighbouring peasants who possess either in exchange of money or in exchange of a share of crops after harvest. Small peasants are somewhat well to do section rather, we may say, subsistence section of the society. They perform their production only by adopting traditional practices, i.e., cultivation by plough with a pair of bullocks or buffalows, apply cowdung as manure and uses traditional implements like jet (irrigation pot) for irrigation. Application of modern method of cultivation for rising productivity is beyond their capacity. Only the rich peasants who possess extra capital, can

invest for further higher production. Their number is nominal in comparison with the other classes. Among the rich peasant we find few pumpsets for irrigation purpose which are completely their own. They are the class of peasants who apply chemical fertilizer, high yielding varieties of seeds and other factors for higher productivity because they do not feel any burden in purchasing those inputs for their affluent condition. So, from the natural point of view, only rich peasants are applying somewhat scientific methods in agricultural production and others are unable to apply for the lack of capital which shows inequality of the ownership of the means of production very blatantly.

The technological changes have influenced little our universe because of the propensity of lower income groups of the peasants who are unable to maintain it without any financial support from some external sources or agents as they do not possess adequate productive assets other than their labour power. After independence various land reforms programmes have been implemented, specially by the United and Left Front Governments of West Bengal to distribute excess land to the landless and poor peasants for cultivation and various programmes of rural development have been adopted to support them financially to cultivate their land properly for producing extra amount of crops for meeting their demand. Separate programmes have been implemented for separate class according to their source and capacity of wealth to uplift the condition of the rural under development and to decrease the gap of the inequality among various classes without adopting the massive programmes of achieving equality. So, the various programmes of rural development we speak

of are not only a mere scheme of assistance to various peasant classes but to implement various technological changes in production field by assisting rural poor peasants for increasing productivity as a whole. Along with the Government, various financial institutions have come forward to implement the programmes where banking like institutions are coming up with importance to implement the programmes. "At the initial stage it was felt that the appropriate development strategy for them must aim at creating new productive assets. Such assets could be sources of irrigation for those with some land, bullocks and implements besides inputs like seed and fertilizer"⁴³. The objects were very good to decrease inequality in rural sector for increasing productivity as a whole. But "unfortunately, the actual impact of IRDP has been far from satisfactory. Firstly, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that not all the beneficiaries of the IRDP actually belonged to the class of the poor, that is, those with annual income below Rs. 3500/-. A survey conducted by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) found evidence of widespread misclassification of households into poor and non-poor categories"⁴⁴.

All these programmes have been adopted to increase agricultural productivity mainly by adopting technological development in the society as a whole and individual benefit as a part to decrease inequality among the peasant classes in agrarian society. But all these high yielding technology based agrarian strategies have some disadvantages as well. It is also true that as a result of these strategies, agricultural productivity has shown an upward trend but soon it is noticed that these programmes are more favourable

to the big farmers than the weaker sections of the farming community. A majority of the people who are not in a position to undertake outlays required for these methods ever remain outside the purview of the modernization process. This is an overall picture of our society where the plans are implemented for the benefit of a particular section of the society but its ultimate effects are going to the same affluent section who dominate. No institutions are able to implement the programmes properly without changing the basic structure of the strategies we have adopted. So for that reason in agricultural sector in particular, a major part of finance are going to the more affluent sections of the peasants. They are emerging as a changed agents, quick to reap the benefits of the new technology both from the view point of rural development and higher ownership class in view of possessing higher capital. So with the technological development, the development of disparities and inequalities among the peasants are growing higher, besides the general dynamism in spatial mobility.

Inequality on the Basis of the Propensity of Total Labour Power and its Exploitation:

"In an agrarian economy where land is scarce, uneven distribution of land will normally speak for the agrarian relations. The bigger the landowner is, greater will be his need to employ outside labour to cultivate farm. Conversely smaller is the landowner, let alone the landless, the propensity to sale labour in order to subsist will be greater. Moreover, people with the same land size may cultivate their farms differently; some may use only family labour and even hire out a part of the labour power, while some others may use only hired in labour"⁴⁵. The inequality on the

basis of ownership of the means of production have been discussed where we have produced various data to support our study that the hired out section of the peasants are more unequal in economic position in comparison with the hired in sections of the society. Now, we would like to focus our attention on the total mandays of hired out section. Here one thing is certain that the more hired out of labour power in the lower ownership categories in the society and lower the hired out of labour power is in the higher economic position from the point of agrarian inequality. Moreover, a total view of the hired out section and their economic position will be found in the discussion on the table (No. 27) under the title: Immigration and Contraction of Labour Market in the Castes and Tribes. In this table we find a total per cent of 61.16 among the village peasants are hiring out their labour power on payment of wages or other things we may say. A section of the peasants naturally hire out their labour power when they have no such scope of employment in their own family production ventures. Poverty forces them to hire out their labour power and this poverty generally emanate from the unequal distribution of the ownership of the means of production and from this inequality varieties of hire out sections are found in the society that increases the man days of hire out classes. The sections that hire-in labourers appear economically solvent in the field of the production.

In this table we find 17.91 per cent of the total hire out sections engage themselves in works for a period of more than 6 months and above because they have no such economic support beyond their selling out of labour power for earning wages which is generally

the source of their livelihood and they are the most depressed section of the society from the economic point of view. The next group hire out their total man days for earning wages are 18.57 per cent of the total hire out section who are somewhat possessing a little better condition from the economic view point and inequality. The total 63.52 per cent are hiring out their labour power only at the peak season or they need it to fill the deficit of earning for meeting their livelihood. This section is somewhat higher in economic position than the other two sections of the

Table No. 27 Immigration & Contraction of Labour Market in the Castes/Tribes.

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of House-hold	Total No. of Hire Cut Labourers	Upto 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 months and above
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Santal	193	161	88	38	35
2.	Oron	158	97	73	13	11
3.	Rajbanshi	40	15	10	2	3
4.	Kshatriya	24	13	11	2	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	2	1	-	1
6.	Ehuimali	4	4	1	-	3
7.	Chatoal	1	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	15	11	2	2
		502	307	195	57	55
			61.16%	63.52%	18.57%	17.91%

hired out labour. Besides these hire cut sections, the rest are either self-sufficient in labour power, in production or hire in section of the society.

This picture of inequality we find after the implementation of the land reforms programmes where the distribution of excess land has been accomplished by protecting the sharecroppers' rights through 'barga operation' in action. Besides the land reforms programmes, various schemes of rural development have also been implemented in the society to uplift their economic condition with a view to decreasing the gap of inequality. But in actual practice we find even a large gap of inequality widens causing the failure in the actual development in the society. Recently, another programme has been adopted to supply more mandays of work among the hire cut section, namely, Jahaar Rojgar Yojana which will alleviate a little conditions of poverty within the hired out section by employing ^{them} ~~team~~ in structural development programme for which we look forward to the emerging activities and effect within the society.

Other Inequalities Related to Economic Inequality:

The major inequality on the basis of the ownership of the means of production and other accessories which come from that ownership quality, i.e., of the inequality of income and occupation ultimately leads to the other side of inequality like that of educational attainment - a factor of social inequality of the society concerned. Here we would take into consideration another study of the adjoining universe. The study, "Impact of Education on some Backward Communities of West Bengal", made comment on this perspective that, "the backward communities have their economically well-

off minority that lasts its lot with the well to do minority of the society so far as acquisition of riches and distinctions is concerned. This disparity with the communities is evident also in the progress of education and the concomitant effects thereof. Attitudes to and motives for social, economic and educational courses of progress have remarkable affinities with those of the affluent sections of the ethnically categories castes and communities of our society". He also has observed the facts that "the economically well-off families are advanced in the level of educational background than the families of the communities who are economically poor". His observation in this field of education though is limited to some backward communities of the district, the closer investigation will also show the observation like ours is true in the case of other communities and ownership classes in the society of the district. The author also comments, "on a closer look at the inter-relationship between the quantum of land owned and the level of education of each backward community one can easily find that the owners of large holdings have attained a respectable level of education"⁴⁶.

So, from the point of ownership of the means of production it has not only affected the level of village education and other criteria but "it has clearly demonstrated that the villages are internally differentiated with respect of landholding, rate of exploitation of labour, income, agricultural inputs and marketable produce, livestock, movable important assets, better houses, education, institutional credit and the ^{like} ~~is~~. All these together provide an idea of agrarian differentiation, and only practically refer to agrarian relations"⁴⁷.

Various attempts have been made to decrease the inequality which pervades in the rural social structure of the peasant society like ours but due to the lack of indigencous efforts to mitigate their actual problems, all efforts prove contributory to the economic deprivation of the small holders class like landless agricultural labourers, marginal peasant and small peasants. In actual practice the rich peasants draw the benefit through their in-built structural vantage position in the society. In this context we may say that the inequality arises out of a system or the social arrangements in the productive organization under which people live. If we have to end inequality in the sense of one class, it cannot be done separately for either the landless agricultural labourer, marginal peasants and small peasants, so long as the productive organisation itself continues to remain in its old condition. "So long as society itself is divided into those who labour and produce wealth, but not enjoys privileges in excess of what they contribute by means of their own labour"⁴⁸.

Political Inequality and Rural Elite Structure:

Political inequality is nothing new in any society but the dimension of that inequality is changing from time to time. In traditional period this inequality was based on the principle of upper castes dominance social hierarchy. But gradually the principle of inequality is changing through the activities of modern developmental agencies where the caste system is loosing ground of its primacy over other fields. Modern developmental activities are purely economic in nature. Consequently, the newly developed factors of inequality get its importance in other field of activities in

the society where political inequality is no more an exception even in rural peasant society. This newly developed inequality in the field of political structure is a dimension of our study. Inequality pervades in inter-relations ^{boam} ~~boam~~ of different factors and their users like the power wielders, party organisers, political leaders and other political activists of the society. It has been proved by various studies that the political inequality persists in the conditions consequent upon economic inequalities. We take it to be our hypothesis in our universe where our concern is to examine the basic pre-requisites of formation of elite principle and activities in the peasant society.

The basic structure of inequalities in the present day society is lying under the inequalities of income and occupation. This ^{basic} ~~basic~~ aspect of inequalities in our society is no more exception. In this connection we may say that the "inequality must however, be understood as a social relationship characterized by some form of a domination"⁴⁹. In the field of political power structure, "it is a type of relationship of domination by an individual group or class over others"⁵⁰. Though economy is the prime factor of inequality and domination in modern day society, "the pattern of power relationship in a society is the reflection of several social, economic and other factors in which cultural value standards represent only one strand. Thus, evaluation by men of other men, which shaped by the cultural values of a society is a contributory source of inequality, whereas the power relationship presented by organisations and structures is the very definition of the condition of inequality"⁵¹. An emphasis is laid on the relationship of inequality in the life

pattern in comparison with other sections of the society that are wielding political power of the society. In our discussion we have thrown our attention to that particular section where from the influence of power wielding quality develops. Traditionally, this power wielding people generally emerged from the upper castes people who were powerful in socio-economic field too from the possessional point of view in the society. But after independence this dimension of domination of power has turned into an another source of the power structure in the society. In the present day society, economy is getting prime importance irrespective of any caste or community background where the source is depending on the society's production system and its distribution in that society. As a result, the sections of higher ownership of the means of production are possessing other factors of the social domination from which the political domination is no more an exception.

Traditional inequality of higher caste and community domination in the field of socio-economic and political development began to achieve its major changes legally after independence of the country when a new group of administrators came to power. They adopted a new constitution to rule the country where their aim was to establish equality before every aspect of state policies and took steps so far legally. These reformative measures ultimately change change its traditional dimension of inequality based on the hierarchical division of castes and community backed principle. These traditional inequality faced the hindrances first from the principle of independent land reform measures adopted by them where the

landowning quality was achieved by every people irrespective of their traditional caste and community background and occupation. Though an independent land reform measure was adopted by the British administrators at first to establish independent land ownership quality legally but socially it proved a success in practice of the higher castes and community dominated principle of inequality of orthodox nature. So the newly adopted measures of land holding and cultivation brought some changes in the field of economic and political inequality where some lower castes and community people will also dominate by their economic position in the society but in actual practice the activities of domination yet to come from the so called traditional higher castes and community people which did not reflect so much effect in actual practice. These traditional inequality of higher castes and community domination began to change its activities properly after independence when these newly independent administrators adopted the principle of equality before law irrespective of any caste and community background and latter tried to develop the principle of rural development with a view to uplift the rural poverty whose principal aim is to decrease the gap of inequality in the society.

Moreover, the administrators adopted the principle of democratization in every sphere of the state activities where the policies of equal rights and duties are imposed irrespective of any caste or community or any class background. Only special emphasis have been added to the backward communities of under privileged class of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who are less advanced

than the other sections of the society or we may say unequal in maximum sphere of activities in the society. So the principle in a sense is nothing more than to achieve apparent equality in practice. Latter the principle of secularism has been added to these principle of state activities of equality breeding source to separate religious or other communal sources in the activities of socio-economic and political nature. But from various rural studies it has been proved that the inequality and differentiation are going on in practical field, specially in rural areas.

All these principles and practices did not respond so much in actual individual life pattern and its activities in the society and they adopted a package of developmental programmes mainly in economic field where inequality prevailed much in action through the principle of democratic decentralization, development at the grass roots level. To implement these plans and programmes they adopted panchayati raj and community development programme in action where every people, particularly village people would have equal rights to choose their representatives from among themselves to implement the welfare programmes for themselves to ameliorate the conditions of inequality in economic practice and consequently to that of political activities where they would have less possibilities of deprivation.

With a view to achieving these principle of equality, the introduction of local self-government at the grass root level started its function to abolish the upper-castes and economic class dominance in the socio-economic and political field of activities of the country. But various studies have been conducted in different

areas by the sociologists and anthropologists after a decade of the implementation of local self-government and other related developmental programmes to decrease inequality in practice showed the dominance of the upper castes and community people of well to do economic background. It is a continuity of the past tradition. We are practically unable to cite less example of lower castes and backward community people of weak economic background have induced their primacy over the others in the field of power politics and leadership activities though they are numerically more powerful in the area. "Two sociologists, M.N. Srinivas and S.C. Dube, have made specific contributions to the study of leadership, both in terms of concepts and methods. Srinivas regards the concept of dominant caste as crucial for the study of leadership. He observed the dominant caste is functional for the maintenance of village community and also works as a reference point for the lower castes to improve their position, both social and economic. On the other hand Dube feels that the concept of dominant caste is not of much help, since only a handful of individuals or families in a caste hold the prestige of status symbols, financial resources and position of influence within and outside the caste group which gets further weakened in the wake of village factionalism"⁵². W.H. Wiser, also studied the rural leadership where he shows that "if caste precedence and economic power rest in the same men their leadership is assured"⁵³. Even Andre Beteille, in his study of a village in Tanjore district of Tamilnadu has observed the bases and behavioural pattern of rural leadership and power, where he shows that the traditional leadership was provided by the high caste Brahmins who simultaneously happened to be landlords as well as power wielders. "With

the technological revolution in agriculture and land reforms, the middle castes are also assuming leadership positions on the basis of their numerical strength and their newly acquired wealth. In fact, the new peasant proprietor class now wields political influence"⁵⁴. He also shows that "lower castes will not acquire a position in the elite group until the agrarian structure is throughly transformed"⁵⁵. All the studies we have referred to, are dealing with caste dominance, either upper castes or middle castes. The difference we only find in the place of castes inequality that the upper castes were traditional dominant group but their traditional dominance is being decreased gradually after taking some reformative measures in land reforms and political field after independence where the middle castes and lower castes people even of backward identity will emulate themselves in the position of higher status by acquiring wealth and popularity in modern society. But practically the concept and principles are less developed in the field of equality where the traditional principles of inequality are more effective in practice even today.

In our universe, we find from our study that these types of traditional inequality are also practised but it is hopeful that these traditional principle of inequality is being replaced gradually by various land reforms measures which specially began in the period of first United Front Ministry in West Bengal. The process after the third time victory of the Left Front Government of West Bengal whose utmost efforts are going on for the implementation of equality in rural field, including our universe. But one thing we

find from our study that though various measures have been adopted and implemented in the field of rural society of West Bengal the economic dominance is till now pre-dominating in every field of activities in the society where castes and community dominance have been loosened. The effect of traditionalism has not been abolished totally because of their traditional strong economic background. The lower castes and community people are getting less preference in the field of leadership position and other activities in the modern society because of their weak economic background. Though the principles of equality and democratization have been implemented in every field of state activities, the practically well to do economic position is predominating in every field of the state activities where economically less developed groups are going on in disadvantageous position in the society where the lower castes and backward community people numerically outnumber others. Various reformative measures were taken to equalize the position in the society whose efforts are still now propagated enthusiastically by the Left Front Government of West Bengal, yet the position till now is in favour of the economically powerful classes with minor exceptions in a lower degree.

The studies of rural leadership and power politics in India are mainly emphasised the principle of castes and community based inequality in the society where the dominance of upper castes is proved in economy, income and occupation as well as education. But our study is mainly confined to the process of economic development and inequality where the economically powerful groups are till now dominating in the society though a progressive reformation has

happened and is still happening in the rural peasant society. This we may say in a different way as the Marxists say that every type of inequalities in the developing country like India revolves round the ownership of the means of production and production relations where ownership groups generally control major activities of the society until the proletariat possess power in an organized way. Our universe which is situated in West Bengal where an organized group of Marxist oriented people is in power and performing their activities in a Marxist line till now is unable to establish equality in major field but a progressive development is going on in practice by which a changing attitude and activities inform the peasant society.

In a sense inequality is nothing but of the differences among men which was distinguished by Rousseau earlier where he said, "I conceived that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species. One, which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul; and another, which may be called moral or political inequality, because it depends upon a kind of communication, and is established, or at least authorized, by the consent of men. This latter consists of the different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience"⁵⁶. Our main concern in this portion is that with the second kind of inequality which is created by men among themselves. Where the "major inequalities in society are in the main social products, created and maintained by the institutions of property and inheritance, of military power,

and supported by particular beliefs and doctrines, even though they are never entirely resistant to the ambitions of outstanding individuals"⁵⁷. So, the inequality in rural India of contemporary society is generally maintained by the landholding qualities of the people from which the other types of inequalities crop up, namely, leadership and other activities of power and politics from which the notion of power-elite is derived. They are the superior to all others in the society. "Land ownership is a crucial factor in establishing dominance. Generally, the pattern of landownership in rural India is such that the bulk of the arable land is concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of big owners as against a large number who either own very little land or no land at all. The small number of big owners wield a considerable amount of power over the rest of the village population"⁵⁸. Only differences we find in the progressive land reforms that has been implemented in our universe through which the inequality in ownership has been somewhat narrowed down in society. It leads our investigation and ^{discussions} discussions to a different direction from that of the other studies of similar people. V.M. Sirsikar only brings out some important facets in his discussion devoted mainly to the field of politically oriented discipline where he studied the structural bases, functioning and psychological make up (in relation to value orientations and political perspectives) of the rural elite. His investigation of rural leadership touches upon the problem of peasantry but he could not ignore the traditional social status and other factors. But our universe shows a different picture which has the tribals in majority and other people come from lower middle class

of traditional Hindu castes who have a large number of scheduled castes, who are prominent in the peasant structure of the society. As a result our study completely ignores the traditional caste based leadership, on the contrary, a class based leadership on the basis of the ownership of the means of production is noted. In this context, we would like to refer a phenomenon that the tribal people were the original inhabitants and the owners of the land and the rest settled in the universe latter on. In earlier period the tribals were the superior in all respects and possessed maximum wealth but in a later period they have been degraded from their earlier position because of the lower level of education and other factors of inequality gradually infiltrated in the society by the outsiders which has not been remedied with a degree of equality by the series of reformative measures. This has been revealed clearly from the picture of the present power wielding people who have come from different sections of the society through a village electoral body democratically set up at the grass roots level of the universe. But in actual practice these people's representatives generally belong to the upper class of the society. They economically possess somewhat strong background. Besides, the general tendency of the upper community dominance is not totally a spent force. They were traditionally better occupied group in the society than the tribal community who were less advanced in the society and backward in all respects because of unequal social conditions and deprivation in the then society. Now, though they are majority in the locality, their representatives in the village administrative body is less in

number (even when the representatives are elected through majority's vote) proportionately. We find that economic inequality ultimately leads to the inequality in other socio-political field of activities which moulds the notion of elite personalities in the socio-political sphere of the rural society. These inequalities and other activities of the society is closely related to village administration, the basic precondition of grass roots level of democracy, the ultimate goal of equality in the political field, is yet to succeed in the society. This is found in our table (No. 28 & 29) on the Elected Members of the Village Panchayat body of the terms preceding and existing ones which is somewhat self-explanatory in the field of economic inequality and other activities.

The table (No. 28) shows the detailed particulars of the elected members of the village administrative body of the area we have investigated where the members have been elected on the basis of universal adult franchise with a view to establishing the grass roots level of democracy whose principal aim is to introduce equality in the society in respect of administration and development. The principal aim of the system is not only to establish equality in the society but to abolish the traditional system of dominance of a particular section, either based on religion or economic power, by the participation of the whole people irrespective of their traditional ascribed qualities or of the modern achieved criterion of economic inequalities in the society as a whole. But the table practically does not show the actual picture of equality in respect of village democratic body inspite of their being elected on the basis of democratic principle whereby every person has the equal right to contest election and cast vote for electing their repre-

representatives in the village political institution. The party based democracy has been established in the society according to our constitution where equality is more prominent than that of non-party based democracy but the party personnel form elite class in the society. They generally nurse their influence in the society personally under the party banner which is against the party ideology, and the party leaders do not interfere in this respect for losing their popularity in the locality. Besides, the party leaders know it well that if they have no supporters of strong economic background, the party activities may prove counter productive in the society for seizing power. Now the policies of political parties in India show more inclination to activities for acquiring power than that of making political field according to their distinct ideological commitment whether rightist or leftist beliefs. Consequently, we find the majority leaders and representatives of any democratic body generally come from the upper class who are economically and educationally of higher status in the society.

In our universe, the village representative body of the panchayat consists of 14 members from among different political parties and of different socio-economic backgrounds. Some of them, the majority members, are from Marxist oriented political parties. Their principal aim is to establish proletarian dictatorship in the society by abolishing various levels of inequality and discrimination within the society but in actual practice the majority of the Marxist group of representatives and non-Marxist representatives both, come of the rich peasants class. There is no representative

Table No. 28 Elected Members of the Existing Panchayat Body and their Status - 1988

Sl. No.	Name of the Constituency	Name of the Candidate and Father's Name	Political Party	Caste/Tribe	Property	Occupational Position
1.	Erenda	Naimuddin Mondal	C.P.I (M)	Muslim	5 Acs	Cultivator
		C/O Taju Mondal		"	5 Acs.	Pri. Tea.
2.	Atila	Arifat Hossain	R.S.P	Rajbanshi	19 Acs	Cultivator
		Murari Barman	R.SP.	Rajbanshi	16 Acs.	Cultivator
3.	Kakna	Sani Sarkar	R.S.P.	Muslim	13 Acs	"
4.	Bishnupur	Noor Md. Miah (P)	R.S.P.	Rajbanshi	15 Acs.	"
		Basudev Mondal	R.S.P.	Muslim	2 Acs	"
5.	Nimgachi	Ranjana Miah	R.S.P.	"	4 Acs	"
		Yogeshwar Singh	R.S.P.	Oraon	4.5 Acs	"
6.	Kashikuri	Litu Oraon	Cong. (I)	Muslim	15 Acs	"
		Tasiruddin Sarkar	Cong. (I)	Oraon	8 Acs	"
7.	Tilon	Khilanu Oraon	Cong. (I)	Kayastha	12 Acs	"
		Jagadish Ghosh	R.SP.	Muslim	3 Acs	"
8.	Arjunpur	Noor Md. Mondal	Congr. (I)	Rajbanshi	18 Acs	Pri. Tea.

Table No. 28 (Contd..)

Religion	Educational Qualification	Age	Positional Variation
Islam	VII	36	Eco. Balan.
"	H.S.	36	"
Hinduism	H.S	35	Eco. Imp.
Hinduism	VIII	34	Eco. Dwn.
Islam	VI	52	Eco. Balan.
Hinduism	VIII	46	Eco. Balan.
Islam	VI	50	Eco. Balan.
Hinduism	VI	50	Eco. Balan.
"	VI	39	Eco. Balan.
Islam	IX	43	Eco. Balan.
Hinduism	V	44	Eco. Imp.
Hinduism	IX	42	Eco. Balan.
Islam	VI	48	Ec. Dwn.
Hinduism	S.F.	42	Eco. Imp.

from the landless class who represent 15.74 per cent of the total population. In the marginal peasant class we find only one representative, though they consist 51.79 per cent of the total population who are in majority in the society, i.e., of more than 50 per cent, but represent only one candidate from among them. It does not conform to the ideological adulatory ^{posture} of the Marxists. Small peasant class represents 5 members in the village democratic body which is more or less proportionate and the rest 8 representatives are from the rich peasant class which consists only of 12.95 per cent of the total population, lowest among the village people but having the larger proportion of members. This small minority class is not only powerful economically and politically but also possess higher qualities in respect of education and other social activities which "serves merely to emphasize the inequality of individual endowment in every sphere of social life"⁵⁹. Besides, our constitution has made special provision in respect of backward communities where the framers of our constitution have made reservation for representing proportionate representatives from among them with a view to persuing their own interest and to make equality in respect of other communities who are regarded as advanced community or class. In our universe the tribal people are having greater majority but representing only a nominal number of members at the grass roots level of the panchayat. The present body of the panchayat represents only two members from among the tribal communities which establish the instances of inequality in the society.

"The emphasis on equality is indicated by the various provisions of the constitution : the land reforms, increasing welfare

activities of the state and the adoption of planned economic development. The creation of Panchayati Raj was also hailed as a step towards democratization and decentralization of power⁶⁰. As a result, "the constitution enlarged the restricted franchise and introduced universal adult franchise. This has made a tremendous impact on village India. The peasant mass suddenly became a significant determinant of Indian politics. The politicisation of the hitherto apolitical sections of the Indian community can be regarded as a major social change. This does not mean that by the mere introduction of adult franchise the traditional village society has been democratised"⁶¹. "Panchayati Raj came not only for the decentralization of democracy but also a new source of exercising power and influence in the form of giving loans or other forms of help to the villagers"⁶². With a view to minimizing rural inequality and preserving rights and privileges of the lower class and depressed sections of the society. But in actual practice a considerable number of representatives are from the lower class of peasants. In West Bengal massive programmes have been taken after the second Left Front Victory that was initiated at the time of United Front Government to reduce inequality particularly in rural society and a progressive land reform measures was undertaken from which a large section of the lower class peasants benefited and introduced the effective role of the panchayati raj by which the majority will decide their own fate by electing representatives democratically. And gradually this progressive development of democratic system will ultimately come in favour of the lower class people through their representatives because in modern time all the developmental works

are implemented through the village representatives in their own area under the supervision and recommendation of the village panchayat. A trend of achieving equality or reduction of inequalities introduced in the practical field of administration, we cannot ignore the progress they have achieved though proportionately lower but have made a progress which was totally absent in the traditional period and even a decade later of our independence.

The system of Panchayati Raj emerged with a view to establishing equality in rural society and started functioning at various levels of activities in rural India just after a few years of independence but achieved little success, on the contrary it became a political institution of the upper class people in the society. The pattern of leadership changed from hereditary to the elective and from ascriptive to achieved status where inequality in respect of equality became more prominent at the first stage of the development in the society as a whole. Seeing this socio-cultural and political development in the society the "Left Front Government of West Bengal spell out its clear intention to use Panchayat as a platform of fighting out rural vested interests. Promode Dasgupta, the then Chairman of the Left Front unambiguously pointed out that the Panchayat- Election is a struggle for establishing the rights of the poor peasants, agricultural labourers, village craftsmen etc; against the vested interests and exploiting classes in the villages"⁵³. But as a student of Social Sciences we cannot take anything at its face value enshrined in the party programme and literature. The table under reference of the existing elected members of panchayat and their background makes it clear that a little interest of the poor sections in the representative

body of the society is preserved including that of the scheduled tribes who are numerically dominant in the area. Only 2 members from their community are representing in the present body of the Panchayat what may be called a travesty of proposition raised by the leaders of the Left Front Government. This is not a picture of the existing body of the Panchayat only but the former body of the Panchayat which it succeeds is no exception, we find from the analysis of the former Panchayat body and the background of its elected members of the same perspectives.

The table (No. 29) shows that in 1983-88 panchayat there were 13 members in the body who were elected democratically by the majority vote. The elected members are from different community background and class position in the society. Our main intention in this portion is to analyse the economic position and different social background of the members elected to the panchayat. From the table, we find three members elected from the small peasant class, and the rest 10 from the rich peasants class who are numerically holding the lower percentage in the society. And the majority people who are numerically are of higher percentage in the society have no one member in the panchayat to raise their demand in action. These majority people come of the lower economic class in the society, i.e., of non-owner of land and the marginal peasants. They are not only the classes possessing the lower economic position in the society but also the classes facing deeper economic problems in the society and mostly the exploited classes in the rural scenario. Though the leaders of the Left Front Government of West Bengal expressed their intension to use the panchayat as a platform for fight out the vested interests of the society democratically

as a whole when they came to power but in actual practice even after a decade of their rule in the state they are unable to implement their intention properly in the panchayat administration to make it a platform for preserving the interest of the poorer sections of the society by sending their representatives to the centre of powers.

The table also shows that the majority members of the total panchayat body belong to the Revolutionary Socialist Party (R.S.P), a Marxist party organisation and the constituent of the Left Front Government. The members are the representatives of the Marxists in the village politics and always talk in favour of the poor people in the society but in actual practice they have no difference from the former panchayat members before this government who generally came from the upper class of the society. They were in all respect superior in the village, the 'elite classes'. In 1983-88 panchayat we find 7 members in the panchayat body who are from the R.S.P. organisation a constituent of the Left Front, among them only 2 are from the small peasant class who are middle class in the village society but not of poorer section and the other 5 are from the rich peasants class whose average land holding is more than 10 acres of land after the implementation of the land reform measures by the Left Front Government. In this place we did not find any member in that panchayat from the non-owners of land and from the marginal peasants class who are poor in the village peasant society and for whom the Left Front Government profess to safeguard their interests in the society. But in actual practice the same upper class people came to power by changing their apron who dominated the village politics and administration before the Left Front

Government. This is not the scenario of the 1983-88 panchayat in the area only but in the other panchayats we have seen, it is no more exception even after the decade of the Left Front Government rule in West Bengal. In 1988 panchayat which is working in the village where the total seats of the Left Front have been increased from 7 to 10 between the two parties of the Left Front, R.S.P. and C.P.I. (M) but not of the number of the candidature from the poorer sections. In this panchayat body we find only a single member from the marginal peasant class who represent the poor section but not from the poorest section of the society i.e., of the landless agricultural labourer. All the members are from the landowning classes of the society. Among them 4 are from the rich peasant's class and the 5 are from the small peasant class whom we may generally call the middle class family possessing average economic position in the society. They are superior to landless agricultural labourers and marginal peasants but inferior to the rich peasant in respect of economic viability and for that reason dominate the political activities in the society as a whole. Among the total members of the panchayat body, apart from the political background, the rich peasants are in higher number of seats i.e., 8 members in the body being 57.14 per cent 5 are from the small peasant class, i.e. 35.72 per cent and only one from the marginal peasant class and no one member from the landless agricultural labourers class, which is jointly marginal and landless agricultural labourer, the numerical majority in the society being more than 50 per cent of the total population in the village society but representing only one member i.e. 7.14 per cent in the totality. The poorer sections are being deprived of the participation in the

village administration. They are normally possessing the majority number of the population and democracy is the form of government where the majority's opinions are being preserved but in actual practice the majority are being left out of the village administration even after a decade of the Left Front Government in West Bengal which implemented the newly reformed panchayati raj system after a long period of time when it first established in the Indian society. They not only re-established the system but also announced that this panchayat will vest the powers in the poorer and exploited class in the society democratically. But in actual practice it shows different picture in the society though election is being held on the basis of democracy, the majority of people are being deprived of sending their representatives proportionately. A question may be raised, when election is being held on the basis of democracy by recording choice on the 'ballot papers', as how are the majority people being deprived of sending majority representatives in the administrative body for their own rule? In this context we may say, it is for the system of existing political scenario in the society where "the political members are to be controlled and manipulated by the ruling village elites who could bargain with the politicians at higher levels for patronage for themselves and their communities"⁶⁴. From which the parties of the Left Front are no exception.

The table also shows that all the elected members are from the age group of 19 to 60 years of age, the highest number of village people constitute this age-group in the society. In this context the most significant point is the community background of

the members of the panchayat. Among the elected members of the panchayat 42.87 per cent, i.e., 6 members among the total members are from the Muslim community, 28.57 per cent, i.e. 4 members from the scheduled castes, i.e., of Rajbanshi community, 14.28 per cent, i.e. 2 members are from the tribal communities, among these two representatives both are from the Oraon community and no one member is there from the Santal community though they are proportionately higher among the other communities in the society. The most significant point in this context is that the small number i.e. 14.28 per cent of the total members are constituting tribal representatives in the panchayat. This is significant and quite remarkable in this context because the villages constituting our panchayat are highly populated by men belonging to the scheduled tribes. Hence a question may be raised as to the politicisation of the tribals living in the mixed society. In fact our table of the statement runs counter to the late Promode Dasgupta's the major proponent of the Marxist and Left Front exhortation in selecting the Left Front candidates for the panchayat election, "... scheduled castes, sub castes, tribes and minorities should be given proper representation"⁶⁵. It is to be noted here that out of the 14 members of the panchayat 10 are from the Left Front and the rest 4 are from the Congress (I). Among these 10 candidates of the Left Front one from tribal communities, 3 from Rajbanshi i.e. of scheduled castes, 5 from Muslim community and the rest one from the lower caste Hindu community. From this data we may conclude in this context that though our panchayat is left Front dominated; yet its composition does not "support the statement of late Promode Dasgupta regarding the profile

of the panchayat leaders according to their caste group"⁶⁶.

The table (No. 28) of 1988 Panchayat reveals a clear majority of 8 among the 14 members of the panchayat leaders have come from the Hindu community including that of tribals, who declare themselves as Hindus, following Hindu beliefs and practices in their religious practices but in actual beliefs and practices they followed animism which is separate from Hinduism. So we have also identified them as Hindus in the column of the followers of religion. The rest 6 members i.e. 42.86 per cent of the total panchayat leaders belong to the Muslim community. No member of Christian and any other community is there, though the inhabitants of the Christian community are there.

In the literacy column we find all the leaders of the panchayat have crossed the boundary line of primary education among them 3 members have passed the examination conducted by the Board of Education Directorate. So it is interesting to note here that all the members of the panchayat have the basic idea of three R-s which is necessary for performing any political role in the society.

In occupational column we find that all the members are basically the owner cultivator, among these owner cultivators rich peasants, i.e., whose landholding are over 5 acres are cultivating their land by employing agricultural labourers and the majority of the panchayat belong to this category of agricultural activists. No one member from among landless agricultural labourers is there in the panchayat and a single member from the marginal peasant class is there as a symbol of the representative of lower classes

in the society. Among these elected members of the panchayat only 5 members are from the small peasant class who are basically the owner cultivator and practically cultivate their land by employing their own labour power either partially or fully according to the nature of the quantity of landholding and quality of the land including that of the other source of income generating assets or practice in occupational habits. Among these leaders of the panchayat two members (one from small peasant class and other from rich peasant) are serving them as government employees in addition to that of the owner cultivator by holding jobs of primary teacher. So these two leaders are more than a mere owner cultivator but are having higher income and prestige in the society. Here, we may refer one thing that all the members have the knowledge of agricultural occupation and practice which is essential for rural development in action.

In positional variation all the members are holding the same status as their traditional economic position in the society. Only two members have stated in response to our question that their economic position is lower than their traditional position in the society in effect of modern land reforms measures of the Left Front Government of West Bengal and diversification of the traditional family life following modernization and urbanization principle under the belief of enjoying liberty in the family life which has not only been made diversified in pattern but has also led to the division of family wealth. This division ultimately made some family members inactive in production process for the lack of the proper knowledge and degraded them from their actual position in

Table No. 29 Elected Member of the Panchayat Body-1983 and their Status i.e. 1983-88

Sl. No.	Name of the Constituency	Name of the Candidate	Political Party	Caste/Tribes	Property	Occupational Position
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Erenda	Poltan Saren Budhi Ehuimeli	R.S.P. Cong. (I)	Santal Ehuim.	20 Acs 3 "	Pri. Tea. Cul Cultivator
2.	Atila	Murari Barman	R.S.P.	Rajbans.	19 "	"
3.	Kakna	Noor Moh. Miah	R.S.P.	Muslim	13 "	"
4.	Bishnupur	Basudev Mondal Kachimuddin Mondal	R.S.P. R.S.P.	Rajbans. Muslim	15 " 12 "	" "
5.	Ningachi	Yogeshwar Singh Litu Oraon	R.S.P. R.S.P.	Oraon	4 " 4.5 "	" "
6.	Kashikuri	Tashiruddin Sarker Khilanu Oraon	Cong. (I) Cong. (I)	Muslim Oraon	15 " 8 "	" "
7.	Tilca	Prashunna Barman Bishupada Barman	Cong. (I) Cong. (I)	Rajbanshi Rajbanshi	17 " 22 "	" Pri. Tea./Cul.
8.	Arjunpur	Kshitish Barman	Cong. (I)	Rajbanshi	18 "	Pri. Tea./Cul.

Table No. 29 (Contd..)

Religion	Educational Qualification	Age	Positional Variation
8	9	10	11
Hindui.	H.S.	32 yrs.	Eco. Imp.
"	VI	49 "	Eco. Bal.
"	H.S.	30 "	Eco. Bal.
Islam	VI	47 "	Eco. Bal.
Hindui.	VIII	41 "	Eco. Bal.
Islam	H.S.	36 "	Eco. Bal.
Hinduism	VI	45 "	Eco. Bal.
Hinduism	IV	34 "	Eco. Bal.
Islam	IX	38 "	Eco. Dwn.
Hinduism	V	39 "	Eco. Bal.
Hinduism	VIII	48 "	Eco. Bal.
Hinduism	S.F.	42 "	Eco. Imp.
Hinduism	S.F.	37 "	Eco. Imp.

the society. The members have improved their family position economically by adopting modern method of technologically improved cultivation and other occupation in addition to the traditional practice of cultivation. So the majority members are holding the well-to-do position economically improved upon the traditional period which naturally does not support the proposition of the Left Front Government of West Bengal that the newly panchayat system will be a platform for preserving the rights and privileges of the poor peasants who are majority in the rural society.

The table of existing panchayat which is in power establishes different background of the elected members of the panchayat leaders who have captured power from different political backgrounds. Among them leftists members are larger in number who are the proponents of equality in the society and whose organisation stand for the poorer people for reaching the ultimate goal, the dictatorship of the proletariat. Others do not speak about establishing the dictatorship of proletariat but stand for greater equality in the society, including the rural society where the discrepancies of inequality are more higher in activity and practice. Both the poles of leftists and rightist organisations speak for equality mainly in rural society where the dominance of inequality is higher than that of other societies. All of them decided to solve the problem by adopting grass roots level of democracy where the administration will perform its activities on the basis of majority's opinion. By this grass roots level of democratic process this majority of rural poor will be able to send their representatives to power in larger number who will perform its activities in favour of them. In this way various measures of rural developments

will be implemented in favour of the majority people by their own representatives in power to decrease inequality in action.

The panchayati raj got its new impetus from the Left Front Government in West Bengal when it reinitiated its activities after a slight moderation by adopting "slogans, "socio-economic development of the rural poor", "more poorer to panchayats" "planning from below" etc. But we find it difficult to associate in any way the term 'below' with the gram panchayat that we surveyed. The real poor people of this area are not properly represented in this panchayat. Contrarily, the local vested interests, which are not at all averse to increasing the size of their 'bite' in the rural economy are represented here"⁶⁷. The study reveals more activities of inequalities in practice which we find from the economic position of the panchayat leaders who mostly come from the rich peasants' family. They are advanced in all respects including, education and social life in practice and are mostly called rural 'elites', a section of rural peasants which possesses unequal higher status and position in the rural society. They are unequal in social, economic and even politically possessed phenomenon of social life in practice. This picture is shown after adopting a series of measures taken for decreasing inequality in all respects in the rural society by Left Front Government of West Bengal who pose progressive and liberal attitude to the rural poor in theory. But our study reveals a different picture in which we find the majority number

of the village people languish in poverty and squalor, the most influential sections of our rural economy would again strengthen their position through the system of panchayat which was proposed to be made all the more powerful. "Unless the gap between promise and practice is narrow down, the rich will continue to grab the largest chunks of benefit here also, and the poor will remain in the same old position"⁶⁸. This is not only the picture of our universe and its panchayat but the position remains more or less the same in majority of the panchayats in West Bengal.

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