

# CHAPTER VI

## DYNAMICS OF EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP

### 6.1. Employment Conditions and Terms of Employment of Agricultural Labourers in West Bengal with Special Reference to Uttar Dinajpur District

#### 6.1.1 Introduction

This section would deal with the variations in employer-employee relationship of attachment and dependence. We shall analyse the patterns of relationship between the employers and the employees with respect to the following attributes, viz, duration of contract (day, month, season, period of particular operation, year etc); basis of payment (hourly, daily, piece-rate, product share etc); frequency of payment (day, month, year) mode of payment (cash and kind), degree to which work obligations and hours of work are specified or unspecified; interlinkage with other members of the labourers' family on the same employer's farm; freedom to work for different employers (full freedom, total absence of such freedom, conditional or restricted freedom), arrangement of group labour etc. Different combination of these attributes would determine the nature of employment and wage rates of agricultural labourers. Our objective in this chapter is to discuss the conditions and terms of employment of agricultural labourers in selected villages of Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

The Agricultural Labour Enquires (1950-51, 1956-57) classified agricultural labourers into two categories – attached and casual. After the publication of the First (1950-51) and Second ALE reports, several criticisms have been leveled against the classification of agricultural labourers into two categories – attached and casual. Daniel Thorner (1957) noted that the terms, 'attach' and 'casual' as interpreted by the designers of the Enquiry, proved in practice to be "mutually non-exclusion catch-all for non-homogeneous groups", and what was worse, the specific content and meaning of these two items were left sufficiently vague as to allow arbitrary and conflicting interpretations by

different field investigators in different areas. Because of these criticisms, the attach-casual distinction was altogether dropped in the latter Rural Labour Enquiry of 1963-04 and 1973-74 and only one category was retained – who was referred to as, ‘Agricultural Labourer’ in an undifferentiated manner. In understanding production relations in agriculture and the nature of segmentation in the labour market, it is absolutely essential to know what the varying degrees of labour attachment are and how they change with development in the forces of production and the various degrees of heterogeneity in labour contracts leading to different forms of employment (Bardhan and Rudra).

### 6.1.2 Variety of Labour Relations

There are variety of labour relations in agriculture not only in different regions of India but even within the same area. They not only have different local names to describe them (even the same name sometimes means different things in different villages), but they also vary widely in the terms and conditions of contracts between employees and employers. These different relations differ because of different combinations of a certain number of attribute which are as follows :

- a) Duration of contracts: day, month, season, period of a particular operation, year etc;
- b) Frequency of payment: day, month, year, several irregular installments during the year, bonus during festivals, etc;
- c) Basis of payment: hourly, daily, piece rate, product share etc.
- d) Medium of payment: cash, kind, meals, snacks, and their different combinations.
- e) Degree to which work obligations and hours of work are specified or are left unspecified;
- f) Interlinkage with other contracts with the employer in creditor land relations, or in employment of other members of the labourer’s family on the same employer’s farm;

- g) Freedom to work for different employers: full freedom, total absence of such freedom, conditional or restricted freedom etc.

It is necessary to take account of all the above attributes or aspects of employer-employee relations to understand the nature and degree of attachment of labourers to employers. The long-term contracts with an employer necessarily indicate a dependence-dominance relationship more acute than that characterizing the relationship of other members of the rural poor vis-à-vis the rural rich. But labourers on long-term contracts are not necessarily more dependents on their employer than those who may be called casual labourers or daily labourers.

The fact of a labourer getting his payment daily does not necessarily mean that his duration of contract is a day. On the other hand, a labourer working on a daily contract may not be receiving wages every day, especially if he has taken a loan which he is repaying through labour. The right to work for more than one employer is also something not necessarily indicating a daily contract rather than a long-term contract. A labourer might have an attachment condition with an employer such that he is obliged to work for him whenever the employer has work for him. But he is not paid those days when the employer has no work for him and he is free or obliged to seek work from other employer on those days. Some labourers work under such conditions that there are no fixed working hours and no clear definitions and demarcations of the kind of work they are supposed to do for their employer, the wage payment become irregular payments in kind and cash, with no concept of time rates, so as to provide the labourer's family with what may be considered a subsistence minimum, it happened when there is a close relation with the employer and the employees family.

## **6.2 Classification of the Agricultural Labourers**

On the basis of attachment, Bardhan and Rudra (1979) classified agricultural labourers into five categories in West Bengal.

- a) Totally unattached labourers (or casual labourers)
- b) Totally attached labourers (or farm servants);

- c) Semi-attached labourers (Type 1) – They are attached to an employer for part of the year, but for the major part of the year they have the freedom to work for other employers;
- d) Semi-attached labourers (Type-2) – They are obliged to work for the employer whenever called for a stipulated number of days in a stipulated period;
- e) Semi-attached labourers (Type – 3) – They are obliged to work for the employer whenever called for an unstipulated number of days over an indefinite period.

Under the changing employer-employee relationship due to change in the mode of production process, this type of classification is not relevant to explain the employer-employee relation. In recent years, the following types of employer-employee relationship can be found in rural areas on the basis of attachment.

- a) Annual Farm servant (Fully attached labourers)
- b) Temporary Attached or Semi-Attached Labourers
- c) Casual Labourers (Daily basis)
- d) Group Labourers (Casual, Daily or Piece rate basis)
- e) Landless Agricultural labourers
- f) Marginal farmer-cum-Agricultural labourers

### **6.2.1 Annual Farm Servant (fully attached labourers)**

By the term ‘fully attached labour’ we mean one who has a usual contract duration of one year, although there are occasional cases of more than one year or slightly less than one year contracts due to personal good relation between labourer and employers for any other reasons. Generally unmarried labourers are employed as annual farm servants because after marriage family burden of labourer increases and he has to take care for the family. Eswarann and Kotwal (1989a) proposed that it is an attempt by the employer to transform hired labourers into workers whose behaviour would approximate that of family

labour, thus, reducing the burden of job supervision and mitigating moral hazards of workers. This is done by paying workers in excess of their opportunity wage (Sarap, 1991). Thus, the payment of a wage in excess of their market clearing may be effective way for employers to provide workers with an incentive to work rather than shirk (Averlof and Yellen, 1986 and Sarap 1991). Family members can monitor the job of both casual as well as that of farm servants. Thus supervision problem are likely to be reduced not only when the ratio of family labour to hired labour is higher, but when to hired labourer work side by side with employers in the field (Boyce, 1987 and Sarap, 1991).

In our study area, fully attached labourers or 'annual farm servants' are known as 'Bachar-Kamla' or 'Chakar'. Previously the system of employment of 'Bachar-Kamla', (annual farm servant or fully attached labourer) was widely prevalent in this district. Usually, the then landlord or jotedars employed 'Bachar-Kamla' (annual farm servant or fully attached labourer) was employed to perform mainly the agricultural activities with other activities also. The relationship between 'Bachar-Kamla' or 'Chakar' and 'Jotedar' or employer is patron-client relationship. *Chakars* always pay respect to their employer as a master. The relationship between the regular farm servant and his employer takes a patron-client form; the patron saving on the non-wage cost of recruitment and supervising and utilizing hired labour and client benefitting from greater employment security and higher total earnings (Rao, 1988 and Sarap, 1991). Thus, for almost the whole year, the attached labourer has to work full-time exclusively for his employer (member of his family are usually allowed as proxy when he has to be absent). Such a labourer receives his payments partly at the end of the year (a certain amount of cash or food-grains or a combination of both) and partly in irregular instalments spread over the year. They have meals and tiffin with the employers every day and their annual payment – range from Rs. 1200/- to Rs. 12000/- fixed on the basis of age and the work performed. They also get some kind of bonus during festivals (Durga puja and Holy Utsav), in the form of cash or clothing like shirt, pant or trouser. When the farm servant or fully attached labourers engaged themselves to an employer for a year or more they become unable to indulge them in any other activities to other employer. So in that way there is an element of bondage in their relation with their employer. In

attached labourers engaged themselves to an employer for a year or more they become unable to indulge them in any other activities to other employer. So in that way there is an element of bondage in their relation with their employer. In our study area as well as in Uttar Dinajpur, the existence of annual farm servant is now hardly found. Out of 180 surveyed households in our study we find two such labour in two villages. One in Lalbazar, as the village under least developed block and one in Jagadishpur, the village under highly developed block. Though this type of annual servant is declining over the year. But we find two such type of annual servant, there is some reason. For the annual servant in Lalbazar, he has no any kith and kin and no other belongings or property. As a result it is beneficial to him if he gets two square meals a day in exchange of the work he performed. He become a member of the employer's family and spend his days with the farmers to joy and woe. This is true for the other one (annual servant) belonging to the village Jagadishpur.

There is some reason for the decline of such type of farm servant. Firstly, the labourers are reluctant to engage themselves with one employer for a year or more, as it is not profitable to them. They mainly find it profitable to work as a casual labourers in which they are more free to work with different employers where they can bargain for their wages. They can enjoy full freedom to work as a casual labourer or group labourer and they also can engage themselves in non-farm employment within or outside the villages. Secondly, from the employer side, the majority of the farmers in the rural areas have now been converted into small and marginal farmers after the introduction of land ceiling legislation in West Bengal and land is subdivided and fragmented further and further with passing of each generation due to the existence of the law of inheritance. Small and marginal farmers have not been able to utilize the capacity of permanent labourers due to small size of holding. The small and marginal farmers are not able to bear the expenditure of permanent labour. On the other hand, permanent labourers do not work properly and their tendency is to spend time lazily and to shirk the work. As a result, farmers prefer to cultivate their land with the help of casual agricultural labourers or group labourers.

## 6.2.2 Temporarily Attached or Semi-Attached Labourers

We define semi-attached labourers as a person who has some continuity of association with a particular employer or employers for a few days or month. He has the freedom to work for other employers for the major part of the year. A deviation from the case of fully attached labour can take place in different ways. There are different kinds of relations that can be called semi-attached. We can divide semi-attached labourers into two categories, depending on two aspects of attachment in which the semi-attached labourers attachment falls short of that of the fully attached labourers. One is that of the duration of contract and the other is that of the freedom to work for other employers. The first broad category of semi-attachment is subject to the same condition as fully attached labourers – not having the freedom to work for other employers during the contract period, but the restriction is limited only in the busy period of agricultural work and they are employed for a month or a few months at a time for completion of an important operation for a certain crop. They are known as *Masila* at Uttar Dinajpur district. It is important to note that they are usually paid everyday at a higher rate than the ruling market wage rate in the form of cash and kind.

The second category of semi-attachment involves a relaxation of the condition of fully attached labourers with regard to freedom of working for other employers. This type of labourer has to work for the employer on whichever day the latter would want his services; but on those days when the employer does not have any work for the labourer, the labourer would be free to work for any other employer. A semi-attached labour of this kind is usually paid on a daily or weekly basis. But their wages are slightly lower than the market wage rate. They are also known as tied labourers in Uttar Dinajpur district.

These semi-attached labourers of the second category can be divided into two said categories (Bardhan & Rudra 2003). The first sub-category is what they (Bardhan and Rudra, p. 453), call a semi-attached labour Type-2. Such labour is subject to the foregoing condition of having to work for a given employer whenever the employer needs his services, but normally his commitments are clearly defined and understood by both sides in terms of numbers of days of labour has to provide, the period during which his labour may be demanded and

the wage for this type of labourer are sometimes lower than the market wage rates. This kind of semi-attachment arises mostly out of a particular loan taken from the employer to be repaid in terms of labour. Thorner (1957) has described this 'beck and call' relationship – or semi-attached labourer of Type – 3. He suggests that quite often long-term outstanding loans, which the labourer is not in a position to repay, bind him (or his family members) to the employers in such a relationship. In our West Bengal sample none of the 'beck and call' labourers reported hereditary debt or a long-term debt incurred by the labourer as a basis for his attachment to the employer (Bardhan and Rudra, 2003). But the overwhelming majority of them reported periodic taking of consumption loans or wage advances from the employer on the basis of their attachment (Bardhan and Rudra, 2003).

According to Bardhan and Rudra (1980) full or partial attachment relation between labourers and employers are usually based on certain factors, among which the most important are the following: a) allotment of land; b) current consumption loans; and c) old debt.

However, it is not at all uncommon that a long duration attachment might exist without any such specific factors. They show that allotment of land as a means of tying a labourer to an employer works in the following way. The employer allots a piece of land to the labourer who cultivate it with the help of the employer's bullock and plough and receives the total or a fraction of the crop output. He sometimes receives even other kinds of help from the employer, e.g. in the form of supplies of seeds, fertilizers, etc. In exchange, the labourer gets committed to work for the employer at whatever time might suit the latter. It might be the case that the labourer work exclusively for the employer right through the year.

In the villages under study, only few labourers have reported that the attachment of land and old debt are the basis of their attachment. Because the size of holding of the farmer is declining over the year and as a result the year not in a position to base out their land to the labourers on the basis of share of crop by supplying bullocks and plough on the seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. Secondly, the employer did not lease out their land due to the risk of recording the names

of labourers as sharecroppers in their land due to the risk of recording the names of labourers as a sharecroppers on their land. Also, no labourers have reported a hereditary debt as the basis of their attachment to an employer. In the village under highly developed block, some labourers reported that the consumption loan taken from the employer is the basis of their attachment to the employer as compared to the villages under moderately developed and least developed block. They take consumption load from their employer during their hardship. They repaid the loan by working as a labourer to the employer's house. One of the important motivation of the lender – employer in giving such loan is to secure labour services for the peak season. Besides, in such a case he also save recruitment cost of the labourers (Bardhan, 1979, 1983).

### **6.2.3 Casual Labourer (Daily Labourer)**

By casual labourer or daily labourer we mean, a person who enters into an agreement or a contract with a particular employer for just a single day at a time, different contracts being negotiated on different days, in principle with possibly different employers the contract for one day with one employer not having an influence on the contract with another employer on another day. Normally, he gets paid at the end of the day's work, but he may take an advance payment or it may be withheld to make possible a loan repayment. According to Nagesh (1981): "A labourer is free when he is able to accept or reject the conditions and wages offered by the employer. He should also have the choice not to work. Further he should be able to break the contract and quit if he so wants". The labourers as well as the employers are free to discontinue the agreement. Generally the employer, or his son or his wife to the house of the workers in the evening of the preceding day or before to call them for work in the next day or on a specific day with specific wage rate. The employer always tells the worker to join at the work as early as possible in the morning for the same day. The employer approaches first to a worker or one who has worked with him earlier. If he is not available, some one else capable of doing the work is employed. In such case the search cost of labour increases (Bardhan, 1979). Information cost constitute an important part of transaction cost in the casual labour market is accounted for by a host of factors such as social and

demographic factors, emigration, farm fragmentation due to land reforms, commercialization and counter seasonality (Nair, 1997). When there is adequate information, which is not quite unlikely in a village setting, all employer know is and who is not a good worker. Since there is heterogeneity of labour, employers preferentially employ labourers whom they know to be better workers (Binswanger et.al, 1984; Richards and Martin, 1983). Though there is heterogeneity, inferior labourers cannot be paid less than their better counterparts because of the the intervention of various factors in the market. The preference for workers of known ability over those unknown ability results in what is known as adverse selection (Greenwald, 1986).

The working hours in all villages of the study area generally vary between seven to eight hours for ordinary jobs with an interval of lunch. Sometimes, workers are taking lunch at works due to heavy pressure of work. In order to reduce moral hazard problems of workers, employers or their family members including female members work along with their workers. Sometimes, the employer is not in a position to work, he stays near the work site and closely watches the workers so that they can not be involved in delinquencies and workers work properly. Thus supervision problems are likely to be reduced not only when the ratio of family labour to hired labour is higher, but also when the hired labour works side by side with employers in the field (Boyce, 1987: 213).

Labourer is paid wages both in the form of cash and kind or only in cash at the end of the day's work, but he may also take wage as an advance payment. He enjoys more freedom to choose the employer and works more freely as compared to semi-attached labourers and fully attached labourer. The casualisation of agricultural labourers has increased over the years because the farmers prefer more casual day labourers as compared to semi-attached and fully attached labourers. Similarly, labourers also prefer to work as casual labourers as compared to semi-attached or fully attached labourers because they enjoy more freedom. In the study area, casual day labourer is known as '*jan*' or '*janmajoor*'. The number of casual day labourers is more in villages under moderately and least developed block as compared to highly developed block.

During the peak period, the demand for labour is very high in all block. So in order to meet the demand for labour in the peak period, employers try to ensure the labour services of labourers through the provision of consumption loan in the lean period. Thus, tying of labour services with consumption credit, tenancy or any other form of patronage are devices resorted to by employers to reduce supervision cost and a variety of risk in production by ensuring timely supply of labour (Bardhan, 1979, 1983, Abhijit Sen, 1981; Platteau, 1990). But linkage of labour services with consumption credit is declining in the study area because of violation of credit contract from the labourers' side.

#### **6.2.4 Group Labourer**

By the term 'group labour' we mean a group of labourers who forms groups with equal able bodied persons to work on piece rate basis. Piece rate are generally feasible where worker specific output is easily measurable in both quantitative and qualitative terms as in harvesting of grains. In other operations time rates are preferred. If recruitment cost is too high and there are other problems of labour, the employer may prefer piece rate even in those operations where worker's specific outputs not properly measurable (Sarap, 1991).

This system has been spreading rapidly and is used for major agricultural operations such as transplanting, weeding, harvesting and thrashing involving more amount of labour. There is no fixed working hours for them. They can extend the normal working hours to complete the particular piece of work. They work according to their willingness. So they enjoy much freedom as compared to other categories of workers. In our study area this type of work arrangement is known as, 'thika' and the workers is known as 'chuktia'. Generally group labourers are taking 'thika for transplantation of paddy, weeding of paddy and jute, harvesting of paddy, jute etc. For example, for transplantation of (*amon*) paddy, the group labourers get wage of Rs. 250.00 – 350.00 per bigha. Each group has a leader who search work and bargain with the employers. He has control over the whole group's work. Usually, the leader of the group is an elderly clever person and he does not participate in the work along with other persons. All members, both male and females get equal remuneration as wages. The income of the group labourers is higher as compared to other categories of

labourers. In the village under highly developed block, most of the agricultural activities are being done by the group labourers. The cost of supervision of work done by group labourer is lower as compared to casual day labourers.

The employers (farmers) prefer the group labour because through employment of group labour it is possible to maintain the timeliness for different agricultural operations and also to reduce search cost involved in contracting a number of individual workers. Thus by employing group labour perhaps the employers are trying to reduce the managerial diseconomies of scale (Bardhan, 1973; Binswanger and Rosenzweig, 1986). Moreover, the supervision costs involved in the group labour, given the homogeneity in the group because of its place or origin, caste etc. will be lower as compared to individual workers. Monitoring of work efforts arising out of moral hazard will be less problematic in the former as compared to latter. The search cost for group labour is much less as compared to individual labour whereby the employers reap the economics of scale in employing the group labour (Sarap, 1991). Of course, the employer tries to monitor the work of the individual labourer so well as that of group as a whole by paying some extra benefits in the form of money, feast etc. to the leader of the group or to the group as a whole to raise their work efforts (Akerlofw, 1982). In the study area, the employers provide some kind of incentives to the leader as well as to the group as a whole besides the wage payment. The incentives payments include money for purchasing 'biri' or 'tobacco' provide directly or sometimes special food served at home or at work place. The main objective of the employer is to motivate the workers to complete the work (quickly and nicely) by providing incentives to the workers.

The labourers in the absence of effective supervision may not put enough effort and work less carefully which may affect growth of crops and in turn the output. There may be problem of moral hazards in the case of piece rate job performed by a group of labourers. As Stigletz (1975) has observed, "because piece rates reward speed, they tend not to provide the correct incentive to quality". Olson (1965) has shown that the mere existence of a large group with common interest does not automatically lead to collective action, because individual labour may not put his best effort (Eswaran and Katwal, 1989). The

larger the group the greater is the need for monitoring or individual incentives in order to achieve full participation of workers (Eswaran and Katwal, 1989), in collective action. Monitoring the workers involve transaction cost. Due to these problems related to group labour, the farmers are now in the villages under highly developed and moderately developed block leased out their land to the landless labourers or marginal farmers on the basis of contract for the cultivation of boro paddy, amon paddy and other crops. But the system of contract farming was more prevalent in the case of boro paddy as compared to other crops. In the boro season, the labourers who leased in the land from the landlord has to pay Rs. 1100 to 1500, per *bigha* (one third of an acre) in exchange of leased in land for one season or three to five *mounds* (40 kg) of paddy per *bigha* which is fixed at the time of contract.

#### **6.2.5 Marginal Farmer-cum-Agricultural Labourer**

By the term marginal-farmer-cum agricultural labourers, we define a person who work in his own land and side by side also work in another persons (Landlord) land in exchange of wage. He used to work another person's land when he has no work in his own farm land. The income of the marginal farmer-cum-agricultural labourers are generally higher than the other categories of labour. The reason is that they derive income from more than one source, though their major source of income is agriculture.

#### **6.2.6 Landless Agricultural Labourers**

By the term 'Landless Agricultural Labourer' we mean the agricultural labourers who do not possesse any land for cultivation. They have only their homestead, even some of them have no homestead land they live in another person's land or the land given by the government. This type of labour mainly depends on this labour for subsistence. In our study area 90 households are landless agricultural labourer. Their income is also low than the other labour in the study area. As we have shown in the earlier chapter that their source of income is mainly wage income. Sometimes they lease in land from the employer.

### 6.3 Attachment or Association of Labourer with the Employer

The duration of association between a labourer and his employer is much more important than the duration of contract or agreement. The labourers tends to retain their association with the same employer for a long period. The employer and the employee may each find it convenient to work continuously with a party with whom there is an understanding and familiarity over a long time, without any binding obligation. It may happen that such a labourer frequently takes consumption loans from such an employer. Except these there may be other type of association also. In a village, the villagers may be related to each other over generation. In such a situation some one may be richer than the other. In this case the former may be the employer and the latter may be the labourers. So, in that case their relation is some what above the ordinary employer-employee relation and in this case the labourer work for the employer for maximum period of the year. In the above case, the duration of work association may be more than six month or a year. It means that his association with the employer is more than a year, but his duration of work may vary from 1-2 days to one week and above.

**Table 6.1 Distribution of Attached Labourers on the Basis of Duration of Contracts**

Villages	1 <sup>st</sup> Category 1 to 5 days	2 <sup>nd</sup> Category 1 to 2 weeks	3 <sup>rd</sup> category 1 to 6 months	4 <sup>th</sup> category above 6 months	Villages
Villages Under Highly Developed Block	14(16.47) 15(11.16)	4(4.11) 5(5.88)	1(1.18) -	1(1.18) -	Jagadishpur Kamalpur
Villages under mod. Developed Block	12(14.12) 7(8.28)	2(2.35) 2(2.25)	-	-	Alianagar Dolua
Villages under Least Developed Block	8(9.41) 13(15.29)	2(2.35) 4(4.71)	1(1.18)	1(1.18)	Lalbazar Solpara
<b>Total</b>	<b>64(75.29)</b>	<b>19(22.35)</b>	<b>2(2.35)</b>	<b>2(2.35)</b>	<b>87</b>

Source : Field Survey.

From the Table 6.1, it is clear that the attachment of (semi-attached) labourer is higher in the villages under highly developed block ( Jagadishpur and Kamalpur

villages) followed by moderately developed block (Alianagar and Dolua villages) and least developed block (Lalbazar and Solpara villages). In the Table 6.1, we see, the number of labourers and the duration of their contract in respect of attachment. We see that number of labourers higher (64) in the first category in the duration of contract for 1 to 5 days followed by 1 to 2 weeks, above 6 months and one year and above. Village wise number of attached labourer in respect of first category (1 to 5 days contract) is higher in the village Jagadishpur (14) under highly developed block.

Table 6.2 shows the distribution of attached labourers on the basis of payment and frequency of payment category wise. We can see from the Table 6.2 that the distribution of labourers on the basis of frequency of payment the numbers of attached labourers belonging to the 3<sup>rd</sup> category ((piece rate basis) is higher (36.47%) than the other category followed by 4<sup>th</sup> category (31.76 percent), 2<sup>nd</sup> category (25.85 percent) and 1<sup>st</sup> category (5.88 percent).

**Table 6.2 Distribution of Attached Labourer on the Basis of Payment and Frequency of Payment**

Status of Block	Name of villages	Hourly rate 1 <sup>st</sup> category	Daily rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> category	Piece rate 3 <sup>rd</sup> category	Product share 4 <sup>th</sup> category	Total
Villages under Highly Dev. Block	Jagadishpur	2(10.53)	4(21.04)	7(36.84)	6(31.58)	19(22.35)
	Kamalpur	1(7.14)	3(20.00)	6(40.00)	5(33.33)	15(17.65)
Villages under Moderately Dev. Block	Alianagar	-	<b>6(82.80)</b>	<b>5(35.71)</b>	3(21.43)	14(16.45)
	Dolua	-	<b>4(42.86)</b>	<b>3(33.33)</b>	2(22.22)	9(10.59)
Villages under Least Dev. Block	Lalbazar	-	3(27.27)	5(45.45)	3(27.27)	11(12.94)
	Solpara	2(11.76)	3(17.65)	5(29.41)	7(41.18)	17(20.00)
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>5(5.88)</b>	<b>22(25.85)</b>	<b>31(36.47)</b>	<b>27(31.76)</b>	<b>85(00)</b>

Source : Field Survey

The village wise numbers of attached labourers on the basis of payment and frequency of payment belong to 1<sup>st</sup> category is higher in Solpara (11.76 percent), the village under least developed block followed by Jagadishpur (10.53 percent) the village under highly developed block and Kamalpur (7.14 percent) the village under highly developed block. The number of labourers belongs to 2<sup>nd</sup> category in respect of frequency of payment is higher in the village Dolua (44.44

percent), the village under moderately developed block followed by Alianagar (42.86 percent) the village under moderately developed block, Lalbazar (27.27 percent) the village under least developed block, Jagadishpur (21.04 percent) the village under highly developed block. The numbers of attached labour belonging to 3<sup>rd</sup> category (piece rate basis) is higher in the village Jagadishpur (7) in respect of number but it is highest in the village Lalbazar (45.45 %) in respect of percentage out of the total number of attached labourers in that village. But it is lowest in village Dolua in respect of number but in respect of percentage it is lowest in village Solpara. The attached labourers belonging to 4<sup>th</sup> category (product share basis) is highest in the village Solpara (41.18 percent), the village under least developed block and lowest in Alianagar (21.43%) the villages under moderately developed block. From the Table 6.2, it is clear that the hourly basis payment is not liked by the employer, they like to employ the labourer most in piece rate basis and it is profitable for both the employees and the employer.

Recently there is a radical change in the worker-employer relation in the rural labour market. The labourers are very much interested to work on piece rate, product share and casual basis. Though we called it as attachment but it is not more than 3 to 5 days at a time. Long duration of contract or attachment is not found in the study area except in two cases. As result of mechanisation of agriculture, the use of plough and bullock is declining, the farmer or agricultural labourers use the bullock only for leveling the land. The other works for cultivation is mostly done by the power tiller or tractor. So, the time of plantation become shorter than before. On account of shortage of mechanised implements and also for the labour scarcity in peak season, employers prefer to employ labourers on piece rate rather on product share basis. It could be found that at the time of plantation of paddy the employers as well as the labourers like to make contract on piece rate basis.

But in the time of harvesting the paddy or other crops they like to make contract in product share basis. In our study area, in the case of harvesting of paddy contract is made on product share basis in the rate of 20:4, i.e. if the employer get 100 kg product sharing the labourers will get 1 mound (40 kg). In the village, this mode of product sharing is known as *Tin-bhaga* (20:3) or *Char-*

*bhaga* (20:4). That is the practice is such that it is measured on the twenty and with other number as a ratio of twenty as 20:3 or 20:4 or (20:5), usually in our study area the *Char-bhaga* (20:4) is in practice.

**Table 6.3 : Distribution of Attached Labourers on the Basis of Mode of Payment**

Block	Name of Villages	1 <sup>st</sup> Cash	2 <sup>nd</sup> Kind	3 <sup>rd</sup> Others	Total
Villages under Highly Dev. Block	Jagadishpur	12(23.53)	6(27.27)	5(41.67)	23(27.06)
	Kamalpur	10(19.61)	4(18.18)	12(16.67)	16(18.82)
Villages under Mod. Dev. Block	Alianagar	9(17.65)	3(13.64)	1(8.33)	13(15.29)
	Dolua	7(13.73)	2(9.09)	3(25.00)	12(14.12)
Villages under Least Dev. Block	Lalbazar	5(9.80)	2(9.09)	0	7(8.24)
	Solpara	8(15.69)	5(22.73)	1(8.33)	14(16.47)
Total		51	22	12(100)	85(100)

Source : Field Survey.

Table 6.3 shows the distribution of attached labourers on the basis of mode of payment. The wages of the agricultural labourers are mainly paid in cash, kind and in others means.

Most of the labourers like to take wages in terms of cash than the other means. They also take in kind as a medium of wages some times, when it (wage) become in the form of daily essentials goods like, rice, wheat and others. Usually the labourers like wage in terms of cash for easy transaction that is for them, to purchase something money is the best. If they take wage interms of kind then to purchase some things for their daily requirements they have to sell the goods at first to get money after that they can purchase the necessary goods. So it become troublesome for them to take kind wage. But in the case of product share they take this wages in the form of kind or product, and it is profitable to them if they store the product share except their daily requirement and sell the rest of the product later on when the price of the goods become high compared to the period immediately after harvesting.

From the Table 6.3, it is clear that the number of attached labourers is higher in the first category (in terms of cash) followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> category. The village wise number of attached labourers belonging to the 1<sup>st</sup> category is

highest in the village Jagadishpur (23.53 percent) and Kamalpur (19.61 percent) the villages under highly developed block and lowest in the village Lalbazar (9.80 percent), the village under least developed block. In the case of 2<sup>nd</sup> category (in terms of kind) the village Jagadishpur recorded the highest (27.27 percent) number of attached labourers, the village under highly developed block and lowest (9.09 percent) in the village Dolua and Lalbazar, the village under moderately and least developed block. The number of labourers (attached) belonging to the 3<sup>rd</sup> category is highest (41.67 percent) in the village Jagadishpur the village under highly developed block followed by Dolua (25 percent) the village under moderately developed block.

Table 6.4 shows the distribution of attached labourers on the basis of interlinkage with the employer and the members of the labourers family. The number of attached labourers is high (23.00 percent) in the village Jagadishpur, the village under highly developed block, in respect of interlinkage with the employers and it is lowest in the village Solpara (10.53 percent) and Dolua (10.53 percent) the villages under least and moderately developed block. For the second category (2 members interlinkage) the numbers of labourers is highest in Jagadishpur (26.67) and Kamalpur (20.00 percent), the villages under highly developed block. For the 3<sup>rd</sup> category the villages Kamalpur (50.00 percent) and Lalbazar (50.00 percent) showed the same number of labourers interlinkage with the employer.

**Table 6.4 : Distribution of Attached Labourers on the Basis of Interlinkage with the Employers and Members of the Labourers Family**

Name of Block	Name of Villages	Numbers of workers Interlinkage with the Employers and the Members of the Labourers family			
		1 Member	2 member	3 & above	Total
Villages under Highly Dev. Block	Jagadishpur	9(23.68)	4(26.67)	-	13(23.64)
	Kamalpur	8(21.05)	3(20.00)	-	12(21.82)
Villages Under Mod. Dev. Block	Alianagar	7(18.42)	1(6.67)	-	8(14.55)
	Dolua	4(10.53)	1(6.67)	-	5(9.09)
Village under least Dev. Block	Lalbazar	6(15.79)	2(13.33)	1(50.00)	9(16.36)
	Solpara	4(10.53)	2(13.33)	-	6(10.95)
	Total	38(100)	15(100)	2(100)	55(100)

Source : Field Survey.

**Table 6.5 Distribution of Semi-Attached Labourers on the Basis of Freedom to Work for Different Employers**

Block	Name of Villages	Full Freedom	No Freedom of work	Conditional Freedom
Villages under Highly Dev. Block	Jagadishpur	18(23.08)	-	1(12.50)
	Kamalpur	14(17.95)	-	1(12.50)
Villages under Mod. Dev. Block	Alianagar	12(15.38)	-	2(25.00)
	Dolua	9(11.54)	-	-
Villages under Least Developed Block	Lalbazar	11(14.18)	-	1(12.50)
	Solpara	14(17.95)	-	3(37.50)
	Total	78(100)	-	28(100)

Source: Field Survey.

We defined fully attached labourers as those who work for a single employer during their period of contract with him. For such labourers, the question of freedom to work for other employers does not arise. However, it

does happen that such a fully attached labourers sometimes work for some other parties with the permission of his own employer when the latter does not have enough work for him. In our survey area we find only two fully attached labour respondents indicated that they would work for other employers when their own master did not have enough work, while semi-attached labourers are free to work for as many employers as they like, it is interesting to note that a considerable proportion of them prefer to work for a single employer during a period of time.

There are no indications in our data that this phenomenon of working for a single employer during a season and that of working continuously for the same employer over a number of years indicates any *extra-economic* coercion exercised nby the employer over the labourers, robbing the later of his freedom to terminate his services with the employer. In our sample we hardly found any case of special obligations (like unpaid labour or begger) reported our labour respondents. While the fact of economic dependence of the labourer on the employer is a part of the universal phenomenon of the unequal relation between the poor and the rich, it is well to remember that any employer could find it more convenient to work in an environment of mutual understanding and familiarity over a long time and prefer to work with the same party rather than changing parties too often.

Table 6.5 shows the distribution of attached labourers on the basis of freedom to work for different employers. We defined attached labourers here only as the semi-attached labourers according to Bardhan and Rudra (1980), and we also include those labourers who work for 2 to 3 days continuously with an employer and we call them as semi-attached labour in our study. And they have full freedom to work with another employers except the days which they are engaged with an employer. We also found that besides this, some labourers enjoy some restricted freedom. In the peak season some employer find it more profitable to make mutual arrangement with one another to work for each other. In that case the labourers possesse some restricted freedom of work in the peak period. They make this management to ensure the labour availability in time of this agricultural work.

From the Table we see that there are not a single labourer who have no freedom at all. Most of the attached (semi-attached) labourers have full-freedom to work for the other employers. In the case of full freedom of the attached labourers, the village Jagadishpur (23.08 percent) recorded the highest position, the village under highly developed block followed by, Kamalpur (17.95 percent) and Solpara (17.95 percent) the vilages under highly and least developed blocks, Alianagar (15.38 percent), the village under moderately developed block, Lalbazar (14.18 percent), the village under least developed block, and Dolua (11.54 percent), the village under moderately developed block. In the case of conditional freedom the village Solpara (37.50 percent) recorded the highest position, the village under least developed block followed by Alianagar (25.00 percent), the village under moderately developed block, Jagadishpur and Kamalpur the village under highly developed block, Lalbazar (12.50 percent), the villages under least developed block.

#### **6.4 Distribution of Attached Labourers on the Basis of Attachment**

We find that the full or partial attachment relations between labourers and employers are usually based on certain factors among which the most important are: i) allotment of land; ii) current consumption loan and iii) old debts.

But it is also true that a long duration attachment might exist without any aforesaid factors. Allotment of land as a means of tying a labour to an employer works in the following way. The employer allots a piece of land to the labourer who cultivates it with the help of the employer's bullock and plough and receives the total or a fraction of the crop output. He sometimes receives even other kinds of help from the employer, e.g. in the form of supplies of seeds, fertilizers, etc. In exchange, the labourer gets commitment to work for the employer at whatever time it might suit the latter. This is the case of a fully attached labourer receiving a part of his payment from the employer in the form of the produce of the allotted land (Bardhan & Rudra, 1980). But somewhat more often, allotment of land goes with semi-attachment. Under these conditions, the labourer works for the employer only as such days when the employer requires his services and he receives payment only for those days of work. The employer thus ensures for himself a supply of labour of a requisite kind and quality for any

time that he may need whereas he does not have to pay him for the entire year (Bardhan and Rudra, 1991).

There are another type of basis of attachment which is that of the employer being a common and frequent source of consumption loans, currently taken and liquidated by the end of the current crop year. This basis is more important for semi-attached labourers. (Bardhan and Rudra, 1991). In our study out of 55 semi-attached labourers only 21 labourers reported consumption loan as the basis of semi-attachment with employers. There are not a single labour respondent in any of the villages under study who reported debt as the basis of his long-term attachment to an employer.

From the Table 6.6 it is clear that there is not any labourer respondent who reported old debt as a reason for attachment with the employer.

**Table 6.6 Distribution of Attached Labourers on the Basis of Allotment of Land, Consumption Loan and Old Debt with the Employer**

Block	Name of Villages	Allotment of Land as the basis of attachment	Consumption Loan as the basis of attachment	Old Debt as basis of Attachment
Villages under Highly Dev. Block	Jagadishpur	1(50.00)	4(19.02)	0
	Kamalpur	0	3(14.29)	0
Villages Under Moderately Developed Block	Alianagar	0	5(23.81)	0
	Dolua	0	2(9.52)	0
Villages Under Least Dev. Block	Lalbazar	1(50.00)	1(4.76)	0
	Solpara	0	6(28.57)	0
Total		2(100)	21(100)	0

Source: Field Survey.

In our study area only two out of 85 semi-attached labourers reported allotment of land as the basis of attachment with the employer. And out of 85 attached labourers only 21 labourers reported consumption loan as the basis of attachment with the employers. The employer and the employee may each find it convenient to work continuously with a party with whom there is an understanding and familiarity over a long time, without any binding obligation. It may happen that such labourer frequently takes consumption loans from such an employer. Yet, it may not be correct to say that the consumption loan necessarily

forms the basis of attachment. It may be the other way round, it may be the long-running attachment which is the reason for the loan relationship.

## 6.5 Summary:

We find that different categories of labourers are employed under different terms and conditions in the study areas. Out of the different categories of labourers, we divide agricultural labourer into six categories – annual farm servant (fully attached labourers), temporary attached or semi-attached labourers, casual labourers, group labourers, landless agricultural labourers and marginal farmer-cum-agricultural labourers. Different categories of agricultural labourers are employed under different terms and conditions under the same employers or different employers. The existence of fully attached or annual farm servant is hardly found in this district. Semi-attached labourers can be divided into two categories on the basis of the period of contract and the freedom of choice of the employers. The first category of semi-attached labourers have no freedom to work for other employers during the busy season of agriculture. The second category of temporary attached labourers has enjoyed more freedom to work for other employer during the contract period and they are attached with the employer for 2 and more days in the busy agricultural periods. The second category of semi-attached labourers has enjoyed more freedom to work for other employers as compared to first category. The basis of attachment (ful or partial) are the followings: i) Allotment of land ; ii) current consumption loans, and c) old debt .

By casual labourers, we mean, a person who enter an agreement or ctract with a particular employer for a single day at a time. He enjoys more freedom to choose the employer and works more freely as compared to semi-attached labourers and fully attached labourers. The casualisation of agricultural labourers has increased over the years because the farmers prefer more casual day labourers as compared to semi-attached and fully attached labourers. Similarly, labourers also prefer to work as casual labourers as compared to semi-attached or fully attached labourers because they enjoy more freedom

By group labourers, we mean, a group labourers who form groups with equally able bodied person to work on the basis of piece rate or product share

basis. The farmers- employers prefer the casual group labour because through employment of group labour it is possible to maintain the timeliness for different agricultural operations and also to reduce search cost involved in contracting a number of individual workers. It has been spreading rapidly and is used for major agricultural operations such as transplanting , weeding, harvesting and threshing involving more amount of labour. There is no fixed hour of work for them. The income of group labourers is higher than the other categories of labourers. We find the heterogeneity of labour contract in labour market of Uttar Dinajpur district. Each type of labour contract differ from one another in respect of terms and conditions between employers and employees, During the survey, it was observed that most of the agricultural labourers were employed as casual day labour and group labourers. The demand for group labourers are increasing day by day.