

CHAPTER - IX

EXTENT OF RURAL POVERTY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
DISTRICT OF WEST DINAJPUR :

INTRODUCTION :

Thus, it is the class of agricultural labourers who are in absolute poverty in the district. In the present chapter(Chapter IX Part-IV), we shall make an attempt to study the theoretical and empirical measurement of poverty. In the empirical measurement, the frame of reference is some of the rural areas of West Dinajpur District. For the empirical measurement, expenditures on the part of the marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others on various food and non-food items have been taken into account.

Poverty is a state of deprivation of basic necessities of life and conditions essential for the unfoldment of one's inherent creative faculties. The endemic problem of poverty is not of recent origin. It can be traced to the birth and growth of "feudal" relations of production, which institutionalised economic and social inequalities based on private property. Poverty exists to a lesser or greater extent in large areas of the contemporary world, particularly the developing countries. Scholars like Ragnar Nurkse explained the problem of poverty by the concept of "Vicious Circle of Poverty ". According to his opinion, "The concept implies, of course, a circular constellation of forces tending to act and react upon one another in

such a way as to keep a poor country in a state of poverty ". During 1950's, a U.N. study observed that obstacles to economic development were located in defective agrarian structures and unless the agrarian structure was altered, development might not be quick enough.

In India, prof. Dandekar and Rath has made extensive study on the nature and extent of poverty, particularly in rural areas. It has been revealed in their study that during 1960-61 one-third of the people living in rural areas lived on diet insufficient for the required calorie intake. They anticipated that by 1980-81 poverty in India would grow in absolute size. On the basis of their findings, they came to the conclusion that it might take about 35 years for the average per capita consumption to reach the nation's desirable minimum level. Scholars like Minhas, Bardhan, Ranjit Sau etc. have identified a large number of people who are the victims of abject poverty. Studies conducted by Govt. agencies have under-lined the fact that about 45% to 50% of the total population of India were living below the poverty line in the early 1980's.

CONCEPT OF POVERTY :

Poverty can be defined as a social phenomenon in which a section of the society is unable to fulfil even its basic necessities of life. Kurien defined poverty as the socio-economic phenomenon whereby the resources available to a society are used to satisfy the wants of a few while many do not have even their basic needs met.

The first requirement of the concept of poverty is of a criterion as to who should be the focus of our concern. The specification of some "consumption norms" or of a "poverty line" may do the job: the poor are those people whose consumption standards fall short of the norms or whose incomes lie below that line.

In his famous study of poverty in York, Seebohm Rowntree (1901) defined families as being in "primary poverty" if their "total earnings are insufficient to obtain the minimum necessities of life for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency". It is not surprising that biological considerations related to the requirements of survival or work efficiency have been often used in defining the poverty line. Starvation, clearly, is the most telling aspect of poverty.

The idea that the concept of poverty is essentially one of inequality has some immediate plausibility. Arguments in favour of viewing poverty as inequality are presented powerfully by Miller and Koby who conclude that casting the issues of poverty in terms of stratification leads to regarding poverty as an issue of inequality. In this approach, we look at the nature and size of the differences between the bottom 20% or 10% and the rest of the society.

The concept of "relative deprivation" has been fruitfully used in the analysis of poverty, especially in the sociological literature. Being poor has clearly much to do with being deprived,

and it is natural that for a social animal, the concept of deprivation will be a relative one. The conditions of deprivation should be noted carefully. There is indeed much to be said for a set of criteria that can be based on concrete conditions, so that one could use "relative deprivation" in an objective sense to desirable situations where people possess less of some desired attributes, be it income, favourable employment condition, or power, that do others.

On the other hand, the choice of "conditions of deprivation" cannot be independent of "feelings of deprivation". Material objects cannot be evaluated in this context without reference to how people view them and even if feelings are not brought in explicitly, they must have an implicit role in the selection of "attributes".

A second contrast concerns the choice of reference "groups" for comparison. These different issues related to the general notion of relative deprivation have considerable bearing on the social analysis of poverty.

The view that poverty is a "value judgement" has recently been presented by many authors. It has been argued by Mollie Orshansky, an outstanding authority in the field, that "poverty, like beauty, lies in the eye of the beholder".

However, according to the Drummond Professor Amartya Sen, poverty is, of course, a matter of deprivation. The recent shift in focus—especially in the sociological literature—from absolute to relative deprivation has provided a useful framework of analysis. The much maligned biological approach, which deserves substantial reformulation but not rejection, relates to this irreducible core of absolute deprivation, keeping issues of starvation and hunger at the centre of the concept of poverty. To view poverty as an issue of inequality, as is often recommended, seems to do little justice to either concept. Poverty and inequality relate closely to each other, but they are distinct concepts and neither subsumes the other.

According to Martin Rein, three broad concepts of poverty can be identified : Poverty can be defined as subsistence, inequality and externality. Subsistence is concerned with the minimum provision needed to maintain health and working capacity. Inequality is concerned with the relative position of the income groups to each other.

The concept of poverty must be seen in the context of society as a whole. To understand the poor, we must study the affluent. Externality is concerned with the social consequences of poverty for the rest of the society rather than in terms of the needs of the poor. By the term "rural poor", we mean those vulnerable sections of the rural population who have income and consumption expenditure below what is considered to be the poverty line. The consumption expenditure is very important to estimate the standard of living.

The exercise of describing the predicament of the poor in terms of the prevailing standards of necessities does, of course, involve ambiguities, which are inherent in the concept of poverty.

MEASUREMENT OF POVERTY :

In the measurement of poverty, two distinct problems must be faced viz. (i) identifying the poor among the total population, and (ii) construction of index of poverty using the available information of the poor. The former problem involves the choice of a criterion of poverty (e.g., the selection of a "poverty line" in terms of real income per head), and then ascertaining those who satisfy that criterion (e.g. fall below the "poverty line") and those who do not.

The most common procedure for handling problem (ii) seems to be simply to count the number of the poor and check the percentage of the total population belonging to this category. This ratio, which we shall call the "head-count ratio", H, is obviously a very crude index. The "head-count ratio" is the ratio of the number of people with income $Y_i \leq Z$, to the total population size "n". Thus :

$$H = \frac{q}{n}, \text{ where } q = \text{set of people}$$

$$z = \text{poverty line}$$

$$y_i = \text{income of the individual}$$

An unchanged number of people below the "poverty line" may go with a sharp rise in the extent of the shortfall of income from the poverty line.

EMPIRICAL STUDY :

In order to have an empirical measurement of poverty, let us use the consumption expenditure of different categories of respondents in some rural areas of the district. An attempt has been made to identify the consumption expenditure of the rural poor on various food and non-food items.

In order to study the extent of rural poverty in some rural areas of the district of West Dinajpur, the villages surveyed are : "Kharua", "Itakhor", "Sundail" and "Ramkrishnapur".

COLLECTION OF DATA :

Data for our purpose have been collected from the field investigations in the villages surveyed.

The villagers of the selected villages under Banshihari Block are dependent mainly on the market of "Harirampur" village where the Headquarter of Banshihari Block is located. Most of the respondents of these villages are small farmers, marginal farmers, landless labourers and rural artisans including "Beedi" workers. The investigation included questions about size of farms, size of family, occupational category, monthly consumption expenditures on food and non-food items, literacy level etc.

LIMITATIONS OF DATA :

Data thus collected from field survey were not without limitations, Lack of data at the disaggregated level limits our choice of

appropriate variables. Another constraint, viz., the unwillingness of the respondents to disclose the informations regarding their household affairs also stood in the way of desired informations.

METHODOLOGY :

Though per capita income is often taken to measure the standard of living of a community, a more direct index of economic welfare and standard of living of the people is the per capita private consumption expenditure. Keeping this view, we have , first of all, categorised the population of the sample villages into (i) marginal farmers, (ii) agricultural labourers, (iii) rural artisans, and (iv) others to know the sample and number of persons on the basis of the collection of data of the households under our study.

Secondly, in order to compute average monthly consumption expenditure of the households, we have classified the consumption items into (i) food items and (ii) non-food items. On the basis of the collection of data, the expenditures on the food items and non-food items have been computed. The expenditures on food items include expenditures on cereals, pulses, poultry, meat, dairy-products etc. On the other hand, the expenditure on non-food items include expenditures on clothing, liquor, tobacco, festivals rituals, education, health etc. The monthly total expenditures and the percentages of the expenditures incurred by the households on the various food and the non-food items have been calculated.

Thirdly, in order to know the depth and extent of poverty in the selected areas under our study, we have also considered the literacy level. For the purpose, literacy at the primary, secondary and higher education levels of the respondents has been studied. We have computed total and percentage to total literacy among marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others.

All the findings of our study have been presented in the following tabular forms :-

T A B L E N O . (1)

SAMPLE AND NUMBER OF PERSONS: VILLAGE "KHARUA"

Sl. No.	Category	No. of sample households	Unit of Population (Number of persons)		Total population (No. of persons)	Average size of family
			Male	Female		
1.	Marginal farmers	20	35	37	72	3.60
2.	Agricultural labourers.	20	52	46	98	4.90
3.	Rural artisans	20	39	35	74	3.70
4.	Others	20	34	34	68	3.40
TOTAL :		80	160	152	312	3.90

Source : Field Survey.

T A B L E N O . (2)

SAMPLE AND NUMBER OF PERSONS: VILLAGE "UKHALI"

Sl. No.	Category	No. of sample households	Unit of Population (Number of persons)		Total Population (No. of persons)	Average size of family
			Male	Female		
1.	Marginal famers	20	37	33	70	3.50
2.	Agricultural labourers	20	48	40	88	4.40
3.	Rural artisans	20	32	28	60	3.00
4.	Others	20	36	30	66	3.30
TOTAL:		80	153	131	284	3.55

Source : Field Survey

SAMPLE AND NUMBER OF PERSONS IN THE VILLAGE "SUNDAIL"

1.	Marginal farmers	20	43	44	87	4.35
2.	Agricultural labourers	20	50	45	95	4.75
3.	Rural artisans	20	42	40	82	4.10
4.	Others	20	39	35	74	3.70
TOTAL :		80	174	164	338	4.22

Source : Field Survey.

TABLE NO. (3)

SAMPLE AND NUMBER OF PERSONS IN THE VILLAGE "RAMKRISHNAPUR"

Sl. No.	Category	No. of sample households	Unit of Population (Number of persons)		Total Population (No. of persons)	Average size of family
			Male	Female		
1.	Marginal famers	20	42	41	83	4.15
2.	Agricultural labourers.	20	48	44	92	4.60
3.	Rural artisans	20	41	38	79	3.95
4.	Others	20	35	35	70	3.50
TOTAL :		80	166	158	324	4.05

Source : Field Survey.

The sample households are 80 in number in each of the villages. In village "Kharua", the 80 households have a total number of 312 persons among whom 160 persons are males and 152 persons are females and the average size of the family works out to be 3.90.

In village, "Sundail", the 80 households have a total number of 338 persons among whom 174 are males and 164 are females and the average size of the family works out to be 4.22 (approx).

In village "Ramkrishnapur", the 80 households have a total number of 324 persons among whom 166 are males and 158 are females and the average size of the family works out to be 4.05.

Let us now turn to the second step. This step is concerned with the literacy levels of the sample households. The results of our findings are tabulated below :-

T A B L E

LITERACY AMONG THE RESPONDENTS : VILLAGE "KHARUA"

Sl. No.	Education	Marginal farmers	Agricultural labourers	Rural artisans	Others	Total and percentage to total
1.	Illiterates	16	18	12	10	56 (70%)
2.	Primary education.	3	2	6	7	18 (22.5%)
3.	Secondary education.	1	0	2	3	6 (7.5%)
4.	Higher education	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		20	20	20	20	90 (100%)

Source : Field Survey.

LITERACY AMONG THE RESPONDENTS: VILLAGE "UKHALI"

1.	Illiterates	15	17	13	9	54(67.5%)
2.	Primary education	4	2	5	7	18(22.5%)
3.	Secondary education	1	1	2	4	8(10%)
4.	Higher education	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		20	20	20	20	80(100%)

Source : Field Survey.

T A B L E

LITERACY AMONG THE RESPONDENTS : VILLAGE "SUNDAIL"

Sl. No.	Education	Marginal farmers	Agricultural labourers	Rural artisans	Others	Total and percentage to total
1.	Illiterates	16	19	14	11	60(75%)
2.	Primary education	2	1	5	6	14(17.5%)
3.	Secondary education	2	0	1	3	6(7.5%)
4.	Higher education	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		20	20	20	20	80(100%)

Source : Field Survey

LITERACY AMONG THE RESPONDENTS: VILLAGE "RAMKRISHNAPUR"

1.	Illiterates	17	18	10	11	61(76.2%)
2.	Primary education	2	1	3	6	12(15%)
3.	Secondary education	1	1	2	3	7(8.7%)
4.	Higher education	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL :		20	20	20	20	80(100%)

Source : Field Survey

All the above tables reveal the fact that the literacy level of the respondents is very low. In village "Kharua", out of the 80 respondents, 56(70%) are illiterates, that is, they are neither able to read nor write. Out of the number of illiterate respondents, the number of agricultural labourers is the highest (18), while it is 16 in the case of marginal farmers followed by rural artisans for whom the number is 12. Among the literates, 22.5% possess primary education and only 7.5% possess secondary education while higher education is nil among all the categories of working population.

In village "Ukhali", almost the same situation exists. The percentage of illiteracy in this village is 67.5. Out of the illiterate respondents, agricultural labourers possess the highest number (17) while the number for marginal farmers is 15 followed by the rural artisans for whom the number is 13. The percentage of literacy at the primary education level in this village is 22.5% which is the same as in the case of the village "Kharua". However, the rate of literacy at the secondary education level is 10% while the percentage at the higher education level is zero.

The total number of illiterates in the village "Sundail" is 60 which is 75% of the total number of respondents. Agricultural labourers possess the highest number and percentage of illiterate persons followed by marginal farmers. In the same village, 17.5% of the respondents have Primary education and only 7.5% have secondary education while the percentage of literacy at the higher education level is zero.

Finally, the total number of illiterates in the village "Ramkrishnapur" is 61 which is 76.2% of the total number of the respondents. In this village, it is also observed that the percentage of illiteracy is the highest among the agricultural labourers followed by marginal farmers. Moreover, among the literate respondents, 15% of them possess primary education and only 8.7% possess secondary education while the percentage of literacy at the higher education level is again zero.

Many of our sample households are not in a position to put their children in schools because of either poverty or lack of appreciation of the importance of education.

Now, in order to measure the depth and extent of rural poverty among the respondents, we shall try to compute the consumption expenditure of the sample households. For our purpose, let us classify the consumption expenditure into food and non-food items.

TABLE - A

AVERAGE MONTHLY CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS

VILLAGE : KHAFUJA

(Amounts in Rupees)

Serial No	Category	Food Items					Non-Food Items					Grand total	Per-Capita consumption Exp.		
		Cereals	Vegetables	Pulses	Poultry/ meat	Dairy products	Total	Clothing	Liquor and tobacco	Festivals and rituals	Education and health			Others	Total
1.	Marginal Farmers	181.70 (53.52)	19.70 (5.80)	9.20 (2.71)	9.65 (2.84)	6.75 (1.99)	227.00 (66.86)	39.20 (11.55)	17.70 (5.21)	23.20 (6.83)	30.20 (8.90)	2.20 (0.65)	112.50 (33.14)	339.50 (100.00)	87.05
2.	Agricultural labourers	144.55 (61.82)	16.85 (7.20)	6.30 (2.69)	5.20 (2.22)	2.30 (0.98)	175.20 (74.93)	24.60 (10.52)	10.20 (4.36)	12.50 (5.34)	10.55 (4.51)	0.75 (0.32)	58.60 (25.06)	233.80 (100.00)	59.94
3.	Rural Artisans	129.40 (55.89)	15.20 (6.56)	7.35 (3.17)	6.55 (2.82)	2.00 (0.86)	160.50 (69.33)	25.30 (10.92)	17.50 (7.55)	15.60 (6.73)	11.60 (5.01)	1.00 (0.43)	71.00 (30.67)	231.50 (100.00)	59.35
4.	Others	125.60 (60.09)	14.25 (6.81)	7.00 (3.34)	5.70 (2.72)	4.60 (2.20)	157.15 (75.19)	22.80 (10.90)	5.30 (2.53)	15.20 (7.27)	8.20 (3.92)	0.35 (0.16)	51.85 (24.81)	209.00 (100.00)	53.59

Source : Field Data

N.B. : Figures in brackets represent percentages out of the total figures and the figures in the last column are computed by dividing the grand total figures by the average size of the family (3.90)

The expression 'Exp.' in the last column denotes 'expenditure'

TABLE - B
AVERAGE MONTHLY CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS
VILLAGE - "UKHALI"

(Amounts in Rupees)

Serial No.	Category	Food Items					Non-Food Items					Grand Total	Per capita consumption Exp.		
		Cereals	Vegetables	Pulses	Poultry meat	Dairy products	Total	Clothing	Liquor and tobacco	Festivals and rituals	Education and health			Others	Total
1.	Marginal Farmers	189.40 (51.72)	21.50 (5.87)	9.75 (2.66)	11.00 (3.00)	8.60 (2.34)	240.25 (65.61)	42.55 (11.61)	20.75 (5.66)	25.30 (6.90)	33.55 (9.27)	3.80 (1.03)	125.95 (34.39)	366.20 (100.00)	103.15
2.	Agricultural Labourers	145.70 (60.86)	18.10 (7.56)	5.20 (2.17)	4.80 (2.00)	3.00 (1.25)	176.80 (73.85)	24.10 (10.06)	11.40 (4.76)	13.60 (5.68)	12.40 (5.17)	1.10 (0.45)	62.60 (26.14)	239.40 (100.00)	67.43
3.	Rural Artisans	128.20 (54.50)	16.20 (6.88)	8.10 (3.44)	5.80 (2.46)	2.70 (1.14)	161.00 (68.45)	26.20 (11.13)	18.70 (7.95)	16.00 (6.80)	11.50 (4.88)	1.80 (0.76)	74.20 (31.54)	235.20 (100.00)	66.25
5.	Others	123.20 (59.92)	12.50 (6.12)	7.40 (3.59)	5.00 (2.43)	4.10 (1.99)	152.30 (74.07)	21.50 (10.45)	6.10 (2.96)	14.20 (6.90)	10.20 (4.96)	1.30 (0.63)	53.30 (25.92)	205.60 (100.00)	57.91

Source : Field Data.

N.B. : Figures in brackets represent percentages out of the total figures and the figures in the last column are computed by dividing the grand total figures by the average size of the family (3.55).

The expression 'Exp.' denotes 'expenditure'

TABLE - C

AVERAGE MONTHLY CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS

VILLAGE - SUNDAIL

(Amounts In Rupees)

Serial No	Category	Food Items					Non-Food Items						Grand total	Per capita consumption Exp.	
		Cereals	Vegetables	Pulses	Poultry/ meat	Dairy products	Total	Clothing	Liquor and tobacco	Festivals and rituals	Education and health	Others			Total
1.	Marginal Farmers	191.20 (53.29)	19.50 (5.43)	10.00 (2.78)	13.55 (3.77)	7.20 (2.00)	241.45 (67.30)	38.60 (10.75)	19.80 (5.51)	27.10 (7.55)	26.90 (7.49)	4.90 (1.36)	117.30 (32.69)	358.75 (100.00)	85.01
2.	Agricultural labourers	140.70 (61.12)	17.20 (7.47)	4.40 (1.91)	6.10 (2.64)	3.20 (1.39)	171.60 (74.54)	28.30 (12.29)	9.90 (4.30)	10.30 (4.47)	8.75 (3.80)	1.35 (0.58)	58.60 (25.45)	230.20 (100.00)	54.54
3.	Rural Artisans	119.80 (53.60)	16.70 (7.47)	5.80 (2.59)	7.90 (3.53)	4.30 (1.92)	154.50 (69.12)	29.90 (13.37)	14.50 (6.48)	13.75 (6.15)	8.95 (4.00)	1.90 (0.85)	69.00 (30.87)	223.50 (100.00)	52.96
4.	Others	118.90 (57.85)	15.75 (7.66)	5.00 (2.43)	6.90 (3.35)	3.80 (1.84)	150.35 (73.16)	27.10 (13.18)	8.00 (3.89)	11.90 (5.79)	6.40 (3.11)	1.50 (0.72)	54.90 (26.71)	205.50 (100.00)	48.69

Source : Field Data.

N.B. : Figures in brackets represent percentages out of the total figures and the figures in the last column are computed by dividing the grand total figures by the average size of the family (4.22).

The expression 'Exp.' denotes 'expenditure'.

T A B L E - D

AVERAGE MONTHLY CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS

VILLAGE - RAMKRISHNAPUR

(Amounts In Rupees)

Serial No.	Category	Food Items					Non-Food Items					Grand Total	Per capita consumption Exp.		
		Cereals	Vegetables	Pulses	Poultry/ meat	Dairy products	Total	Clothing	Liquor and tobacco	Festivals and rituals	Education and health			Others	Total
1.	Marginal farmers	185.70 (50.86)	20.35 (5.57)	12.20 (3.34)	14.40 (3.94)	8.45 (2.31)	241.10 (66.03)	31.80 (8.70)	24.70 (6.76)	30.20 (8.27)	32.30 (8.84)	5.00 (1.36)	124.00 (33.96)	365.10 (100.00)	90.14
2.	Agricultural Labourers	138.80 (63.81)	13.80 (6.34)	3.90 (1.79)	4.65 (2.13)	2.95 (1.35)	164.10 (75.44)	20.75 (9.54)	11.40 (5.24)	12.45 (5.72)	7.40 (3.40)	1.40 (0.64)	53.40 (24.55)	217.50 (100.00)	53.70
3.	Rural Artisans	123.50 (55.17)	15.40 (6.87)	6.00 (2.68)	7.60 (3.39)	3.75 (1.67)	156.25 (69.80)	25.10 (11.21)	17.70 (7.90)	14.60 (6.52)	8.20 (3.66)	2.00 (0.89)	67.60 (30.19)	223.85 (100.00)	55.27
4.	Others	112.40 (60.70)	11.50 (6.21)	2.70 (1.45)	4.90 (2.64)	2.75 (1.48)	134.25 (72.50)	22.00 (11.88)	12.45 (6.72)	9.90 (5.34)	5.25 (2.83)	1.30 (0.70)	50.90 (27.49)	185.15 (100.00)	45.71

Source : Field Data

N.B. : Figures in brackets represent percentages out of the total figures and the figures in the last column are computed by dividing the grand total figures by the average size of the family (4.05).

The expression 'Exp.' denotes 'expenditure'.

From the table (A), it is evident that in the village "Kharua", the marginal farmers of the sample households spend, on an average, Rs.340 per month. About 67% of this amount is spent on food items and the rest is spent on non-food items. The percentage of expenditure on the food item "cereal" is the highest (more than 53%).

In the same village, it is also observed that agricultural labourers spend, on the average, about Rs.234 per month out of which 74.93% is spent on food items. Rural artisans live on, on the average, about Rs.232 per month out of which about 70% is spent on food items.

The category of Others live on, on the average, Rs.209.00 per month out of which about 76% is spent on food items.

It should be noted that among all the categories of population sample, more than 65% of the total consumption expenditure is incurred on food items. The cereal food consists of mostly coarse rice, jawar, maize etc. The consumption of coarse grain is the highest for agricultural labourers (about 62%) followed by others for whom it is about 61% ;

It should be noted further that the average consumption expenditure on proteinous food items like pulses, poultry, meat and dairy products constitute only a small percentage of the total consumption expenditure on food items in cases of all the sample households. It is further observed that most of the sample households consume meat and poultry products very rarely. These products are mainly consumed by them during the periods of festivals and rituals.

Let us now examine the expenditures on non-food items.

The data presented in this respect reveal that the expenditure on the item "clothing" is the highest in the case of each of the villages surveyed. Most of the sample households from all sections of the population are unable to meet their minimum clothing requirements. It has been revealed during our field study that the children of these sample households go almost naked.

As regards the expenditures on education and health, it is observed that the percentage of expenditures on these non-food items constitute a very small proportion of the total non-food expenditure. It has been revealed in our study that malnutrition and ignorance of personal hygiene are the causes of most ailments of the rural poor. Local practitioners are mostly quack lacking the knowledge of proper diagnosis and modern medicine.

The pattern of consumption expenditures of the households under the above-mentioned villages is more or less similar. We are now in a position to summarize our main findings as follows:-

(i) Among all the categories of sample households, the food item "cereal" constitutes the highest percentage of expenditure

- (ii) The percentage of expenditure on "cereals" is the highest for agricultural labourers in all the villages.
- (iii) The expenditure on proteinous food items, like pulses, poultry, meat and dairy products constitutes only a small proportion of the total consumption expenditure among all the categories of households of all villages.
- (iv) Expenditure on the non-food item "clothing" constitutes the highest percentage though the pattern of such expenditure reveals insufficiency in meeting the minimum clothing requirements of the rural poor.
- (v) Non-food expenditure on items like education and health constitutes a very small proportion. This phenomenon leads to malnutrition and diseases of the rural poor.

On the basis of the average monthly consumption expenditure of the households and the average size of the family, we have tried to estimate per-capita consumption expenditure of different categories of sample population of the villages under our study. Thus, it is observed that per-capita consumption expenditure of the sample households is very low.

On the basis of the average size of family, the per-capita consumption expenditures for village "Kharua" are estimated to be Rs.87.05, Rs.59.94, Rs.59.35 and Rs.53.59 for "marginal farmers", "agricultural labourers", "rural artisans" and "others" respectively.

Similarly, the per-capita consumption expenditures for village "Ukhali" are estimated to be Rs.103.15, Rs.67.43, Rs.66.25 and Rs.57.91 for marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others respectively.

For village "Sundail", the per capita consumption expenditures are estimated to be Rs.85.01, Rs.54.54, Rs.52.96 and Rs.48.69 for marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others respectively.

Finally, for the village "Ran Krishnapur", the average size of family has been estimated to be 4.05 and on this basis the per capita consumption expenditures are estimated to be Rs.90.14, Rs.53.70, Rs.55.27 and Rs.45.71 respectively for marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans and others. Thus, majority of the rural population live below the poverty line as a result of which they fall under the vicious circle of poverty. They possess less efficiency. Employment is not regular for these categories of people. Most of them own no productive assets.

Due to the lack of alternative job opportunities, most of the labourers depend only upon agriculture. The scope of farm - employment is limited. Consequently, there is an excess supply of labour. This 'reserve army' of unemployed workers bid down the wage rate. The labourers are thus exploited by landlords who force them to accept a wage rate at par with their subsistence requirements. Thus, they fall below the Poverty line. This phenomenon causes malnutrition which hinders the survival chances of children in the rural sector.

One of the most striking features of the child mortality data in rural west Dinajpur is the male-female differential. The general neglect of female children is more prevalent. It is a complex subject in which historical, cultural, ecological and sociological factors interact.

In fine, we conclude that sufficient infra-structural facilities would have to be generated through which agriculture would be developed and eradication of rural poverty would be possible. The prospects of a substantial agricultural growth in the district are crucially dependent upon the provision of controlled supply of water and a vast network of water management and distribution.

R e f e r e n c e s

1. Poverty And Famines : A.K.Sen.
 2. "Rural Poverty And Agricultural Performances In India" :-
Journal of Development studies (April)
vol.4 - M.S.Ahluwalia (1978)
 3. Rural Poverty In South Asia : Edited by
Srinivasan And Bardhan.
 4. Poverty, Unemployment And Perspectives of Development -
S. Subrahmanyan.
 5. Poverty And Income Distribution : Edited by
K.S.Krishnaswamy (1990)
 6. "Inequality And Poverty In Rural India", in
Srinivasan And Bardhan (1974)
- Batty, I.Z.
-