

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Before the nineties the development of the rural sector of the Indian economy was, in a substantial part of it, victim of over-centralised planning. The lop-sided development of the country at large with pronounced favours of infrastructures in western parts of the country was cause enough for special study of the neglected areas of our rural sector. Our basic resources remained so unutilised that labour power appeared surplus. The so-called labour-surplus villages remained so because special purposive development planning of such rural economies were and still are being neglected. With the nineties the policy mix of the country has been changing. New enterprises appearing on the scene are prone to depend on high technology and to ask for demand for their outputs without creating any employment.

Under both situations it is of prime importance to generate full employment at the doorsteps of the villagers. A scientific study of the local level rural economies may result in our realisation that the resources at the grass-roots have enormous productive capacities so that labourers who are now judged surplus might not only be fully employed but a rational planning of these local level economies may generate good demand for improved implements and even machines after full employment with the present technology mix.

The present study seeks to achieve a particular aim in relation to the general task of finding methods to generate fuller employment in the local level rural economies. We seek to test if any provocation set around a village-level economy can induce the village level activities to reach any a higher level of efficiency and help it ride a journey towards better employment.

1.2 THE PROBLEM

Accordingly we make an analysis of the economic activities of five village economies. Each of these villages are so selected that it is located near an organization or enterprise or a set of enterprises. The organization or the enterprise or the set of enterprises are expected to provide a provocation to a village economy lying in the neighbourhood. The problem in this study is to measure the impact of the provocation on the mobilisation of the basic resources of land and labour of the concerned village-level economy.

The most usual method of economic development so long consisted of procuring capital and utilising the same for the development of various new enterprises. Applying this approach in the case of our lagging rural areas one finds that the capital requirement for even a steady modest development is colossal. There is, therefore, a great need for saving capital for initiating the process of development of backward agriculture. Capital-saving

method, on the other hand, will enable us to minimise foreign assistance and allow us to obtain in gradual stages the benefits of optimal utilisation of our nationally plentiful or unused resources.

The point of departure of this study is to discover such possibilities of restructuring productive activities of our local level rural economies as are laid bare through a study of the impact of such agencies as specified in the first paragraph of this section. Naturally such possibilities might come to the view of an investigator in a number of ways. Firstly, it is possible that some provocation setting organisation might be so vitalising that we multiply such agents for the transformation of traditional village economies. Secondly, even though such agencies may not have succeeded in ushering right development initiatives a study of the impact helps to identify some causes for whatever ripples may have occurred in the otherwise stagnant pool. Finally, if these agencies have failed completely it would be possible in the light of the reality of these village economies to suggest, on basis of whatever hints or signals are available, structures to motivate rural producers to resort to self-sustained diversification of enterprises.

A special dimension of the problem is to study the impact of the provocative agency through time. The impact is studied in intervals of eleven to fourteen years. This lays bare a little more emphatically the power or absence of power

of the selected provocation to give life to the producers or to the productive workers. Besides a study of change through time may bring to surface any manner in which the homo economicus may cope with any new problem arising out of absence of infrastructure but a little change in economic or non-economic reality. This in turn might lead to a rediscovery of the intrinsic power of the traditional rural producer who might flourish to new heights when infrastructural facilities would be exceedingly more productive than the type now tolerated by the present concerned leadership.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

On the basis of the problem we have set it should be clear that the villages we study for the problem are all purposely selected on the basis of a provocation we considered effective. Two villages were selected as each of them were to benefit from a CADP or Comprehensive Area Development Project. One of them, namely, Budhkaran is situated in the terai region of Darjeeling. The other Kshirarkot located in the lower dooars area of the Jalpaiguri district. A third village, namely, Nimai is located near HIMUL dairy of Matigara in terai region of the Darjeeling district. The fourth one, namely, Uttar Latabari located in the neighbourhood of a number of tea gardens in the upper Dooars of the Jalpaiguri. The fifth village, namely, Kamini Ghat, was selected for probable impact of the nearby district town of Cooch Behar on the village.

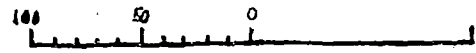
The number of the households surveyed in a village is around 150. The whole village was not surveyed. At times even a portion of a neighbouring village became a part of the set of households surveyed. Thus Kshirar Kot included some households also of Jaichandpur.

The data have been collected from households. The head of the household submitted the returns on a method of interrogation planned carefully. Whenever possible the returns have been checked from other sources in the village. Before approaching the householders multi-level contacts were established in a bid to ensure full cooperation of the householders. Revisits were made as and when scrutiny led to the discovery of inconsistency of returns.

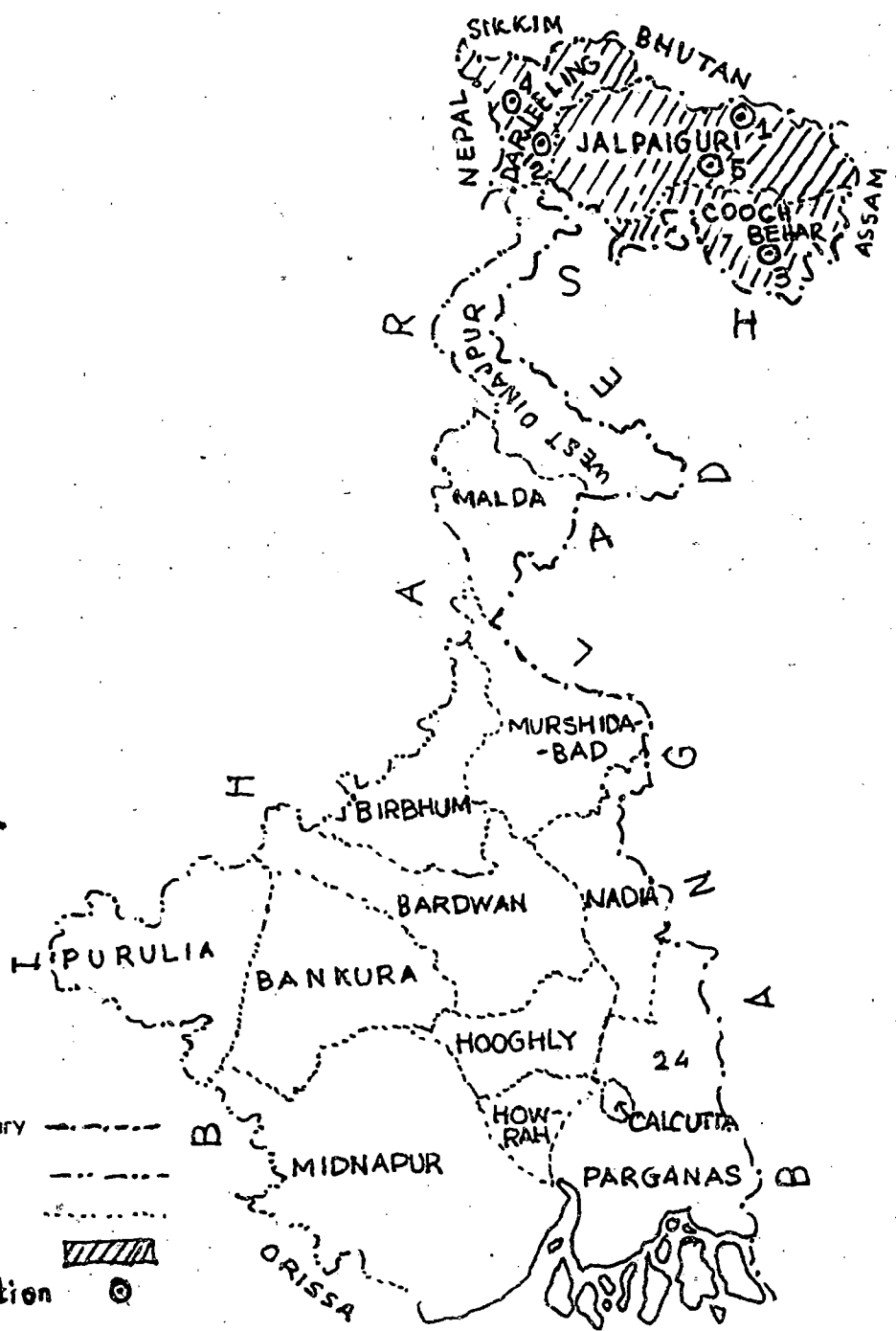
Household schedules prepared on the basis of elaborate itemisation were filled on the basis of artful interrogation. Elaborate notes made on the basis of artistic interrogation were used subsequently to fill the household schedules.

On measuring change after a time interval we have made use the concept of Monsoon paddy equivalent per acre. This is a substitute of the deflated value of total output per acre. We add outputs of paddy in kilos and the total values of non-paddy outputs divided by the price per kilo of monsoon paddy. We have also deflated consumption or income by price index number based on base year weights.

MAP 1



VILLAGES SURVEYED IN THE STATE OF WESTBENGAL



- INDEX**
- 1 International boundary ————
 - 2 State boundary - - - - -
 - 3 District boundary ······
 - 4 Study districts
 - 5 Village Location

1.4 AN OVERVIEW

In Chapter 2 we analyse the data of the activities of Uttar Latabari. We study here the impact of tea gardens on the setting of the village in motivating the productive workers. The impact of the Government dominated Himul dairy on an adjacent village is examined in Chapter 3. The impact of the setting of a district town with its numerous facilities of relevance to rural activities on a village within four kilometres is analysed in Chapter 4. The Chapter 5 reviews the impact of the Naxalbari Comprehensive Area Development Project on a village in the Naxalbari area of West Bengal terai. The impact of another CADP, namely, the Falakata CADP, on a village in the lower Dooars area of the Jalpaiguri district is the subject of Chapter 6. The last Chapter carries the grim realities of the findings to important conclusions and a bold course of action.