

Effect of Family Environment on Children's Well-Being: A Case Study

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Abstract: Family environment is an important issue which influences on child's well-being including social, emotional or psychological part. Family plays an important role in educating-socializing children. It is said that family is a primary institution where a child learns a lot by observing and teaching, and know what is wrong or right, should or should not. Our child is a vulnerable asset and future wealth of society. Thus, it is a duty of every parent to protect their children against all forms of exploitation and nourish them properly to make a healthy society. But there are so many children in our country are being exploited by their poor family environment and in this context the present studied families are a burning example. The focus of this paper is on family environment that influences the social, emotional or psychological well-being of children in the stone crushing society of Balasan River Basin, Darjeeling district, West Bengal.

Introduction

Family is an old age universal organisation that can be seen in every society even from primitive to civilize stage. It plays an important role in maintaining the social structure. Anthropologists have often supposed that the family in a traditional society forms the primary economic unit. Family is the principal institution for the socialization of children. The socialization of the individual typically begins in the family, as that institution may be defined by a given culture, and it continues largely under family domination during the individual's most impressionable years. Mother, father, and siblings, or substitutes for any or all of them, provide the most decisive mold for the individual's personality, the consequences of which persist throughout life. Family members accomplish this- (i) through exemplifying customary interaction patterns (culture, in this sense viewed as defining the "family drama") and carrying on their spontaneous interactions with each other in situations as they arise; (ii) through furnishing the "looking glasses" out of which the "looking -glass self" develops; (iii) through establishing the "right" models for generalized and specific group and social roles; and (iv) through serving as surrogates of society and of various groups and classes in making the new person a unit in the complex of culture series represented by the family's members (Lee 1946, 299). According to Article 20 of convention on the right of the child by United Nations, "a child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interest cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the state" (Saksena 1999, 285). It is said that today's children are tomorrow's citizen. The fate of nation to which

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they belong, is in their hand. The most crucial task developed upon each sensible and responsible parent, regarding his or her children, is to instill a strong sense of discipline, accountability, belongingness on self respect. For this the parents have to make themselves an ideal, embodying all these qualities (Bagulia 2006, ix).

The family environment has a great impact on child's social, emotional or psychological development. It is said that family is a primary institution in which a child learns his or her behaviour, attitudes, norms, customs, values and any other capabilities and habits related to their socio-cultural life. Family has a great contribution to the process of socialization of a child. Thus, it is a duty of every parent to protect their children against all forms of exploitation and nourish them through proper socialization process to create a healthy and peaceful society because our child is a vulnerable asset and future wealth of society. So, as a member of a society it is our duty to protect this wealth. But have we ever thought, whether we are able to maintain it properly? Because there are so many children in our country are being exploited by their bad family environment and in this context the studied families are a burning example.

In this regard, the present study has been done among 250 families at Purba Rangia village of Balasan River basin, Darjeeling district, West Bengal who depend on pebble and sand gathering, stone crushing etc. for maintaining their livelihood. Their brief historical background and economy are stated below.

Migration and Economy

The studied families mostly came from Bangladesh and very few from other districts of West Bengal. During independence and post independence of Bangladesh several communal violence and political turmoil took place and as a result the life and livelihoods of many of the studied families got hampered. They lost their all properties and became roofless, shelterless as well as resourceless. Under this circumstance, they were forced to come in Balasan River basin for permanent settlement and earning and yet it is continuing. They migrated illegally; and in Bangladesh, they had agricultural land from where they could manage necessary crops and so on. But after independence of Bangladesh they faced a lot of problems to run their families as their properties were looted and their agricultural land were grabbed by the Muslim people of Bangladesh. Due to this fact both their lives and livelihood were affected badly. For minimum survival they migrated to Balasan River Bed. They had not own homestead land and they could not purchase a plot of land for making house. Therefore, finding no other ways they made their houses on the Balasan River bed which was the vested land. The Balasan River carries with its stream a huge amount of sand, stone and boulder and these were used for urban construction that have huge demand in this locality. It was the fact that to do the stone based work only physical labour is needed and due to this fact this stone based work was readily accepted by the studied families. They worked throughout the year paying no attention to scorching heat of summer and biting cold of winter. They did different kinds of stone based activities like stone collection, stone crushing, sand gathering, and truck loading. They worked hard throughout the day but they earned very little as compare to their work amount. Their average earning was Rs. 2000/- per month. Due to little earning they could not manage their living. Therefore, they sent their children to work to augment their earnings. In the stone field the children mainly did both stone collection and stone crushing activities but very few were involved in truck loading activity as it was very much hard labourious. They had to do the work in the stone field for an average seven hours in a day. On an average around four members in each family were involved in this work. Their remuneration was too little to meet the needs of living such as sufficient food, clothing, proper shelter and education. They always had to struggle against poverty. They worked hard in the stone field for all the day. They had a crying need to augment their earning for living but finding no other means most

of the parents sent their children to the stone field. Hence, due to extreme poverty the children had to do this work from the very beginning. The average monthly income of the children was around Rs. 400/-. They provided their total earnings to their family. The children were not satisfied with this work and they opined that if they get better opportunity then they shall leave this job. They had to struggle against poverty in order to accumulate a fold of rice twice in a day. They used to wake up very early in the morning with the ray of sunup and after having little breakfast they went to the stone field and returned home in the evening when the work was over for the day. After resettlement their prime need was to have a strong economic backbone but the present stone crushing occupation could not provide the concerned security to them. A strong competition in economic field, struggle for survival and an anxiety for future were found among them.

Case Study 1: Govinda Singha was a 12 years old boy belonged to Rajbanshi community. He was born in Bangladesh. Their four *bighas* of land was grabbed by the Muslim people of Bangladesh. As a result, their only earning source became lost. Even all the vegetables and fruits of their kitchen garden used to be grasped by these Muslim people and also their scope of work got reduced. Due to this serious economic setback they migrated to Balasan River basin in 2006. As a result, they came here in roofless, shelterless and resourceless condition. In his family he had father, mother, three younger sisters and an elder brother. After migration stone based work was the only way of making their living. Both his parents and also his elder brother got involved in stone based economy to earn their living. They earned Rs. 1400/- per month with great difficulty but their little earnings could not feed them to the fill. His family could not provide him minimum educational requirements such as necessary books, note books, pen, pencil, private tuition etc. Even, sometimes he was scolded bitterly by his parents. As a result, he lost his fondness of education and failed in the final examination. He had to help his parents in the stone field and domestic chores as well. He had no guidance and no materials for education. As a consequence, he dropped out of school when he was in class III. In this connection the parental illiteracy could not be ignored. Indeed, owing to illiteracy both of his parents could never understand the importance of education. They preferred to involve him in stone based occupation instead of schooling. His eyes filled with tears while asking about his school education. His parents and his elder brother worked hard throughout the day in the stone field but they could earn too little to meet all the needs of their five members' family such as food, proper shelter, health, treatment, education, dress etc. They could hardly afford to meet these needs at minimum level. Govinda and his family could not afford to eat meal not more than twice a day. They could eat rice, pulses and vegetable curry. Sometimes, they had to starve. They could hardly arrange breakfast but it was only tea and biscuits or pup rice. Due to utter financial constraint they could not afford to maintain the nutritious food diet and even it was out of their capacity to accumulate the least expensive animal protein. Moreover, Govinda and his family had to face a lot of difficulties in living. Their dwelling house was *kachha* type that was made of wattle walls with corrugated tin roof and muddy floor and poor ventilation. Further, it was broken too. But they could hardly meet the expense of repairing it. There was no drainage system as well as electricity and latrine facility in their house. The house composed of two little rooms and there was no separate kitchen. Moreover, Govinda and her rest family members had no well dress because due to poor economy they could not purchase it. He had only two dresses. Parents failed to purchase the school uniform and due to this fact he had to be scolded by his teachers. Even in last puja festivals his parents could not provide any dress to him. It was the fact that they had not the capacity to purchase a new dress. Indeed, their condition was just like after meat comes mustard. In fact, the large family size with less income, poverty,

and not fulfilling of their minimum materialistic requirements, migration, displacement, shelter, income, inter-familial and intra-familial conflict, outlook of parents i.e. more children means more income, and the ignorance of parents, working involvement of parents and other family members in the stone field for the whole day, at the very beginning to help them in work and later on motivation of parents to get involved in work, social and environmental condition, socio-political situation, involvement of all the villagers in the same working field and leading life in a same way, and his growing up under these circumstances, all the said situations influenced him and forced him to get involved in work. Due to these facts, Govinda got involved in this job since he was only seven years old boy. He stated that his father was a hard hearted man who scolded him always and even sometimes he was beaten up soundly by his parents if he was absent in work or even raised his eyes from work. He had to do this work against his will.

Case Study 2: Sanjeeb Barman was a 13 years aged boy. He got involved in both stone crushing and stone collection activities. In his family he had father, mother and two younger sisters. Both of his parents got involved in stone based job as prime earning source. But their earnings could not meet to expense of necessary livelihood requirements. Sanjeeb was motivated by his parents to do this work. He was doing this work for last five years. The concept of stone crushing job was gradually developed into his mind from the very beginning. He was first generation learner and due to this fact he could not hope to get the proper guidelines from his parents. His parents preferred more to send him to stone field as their anger found expression in bitter scolding and sound beating either for absence in work or raising eyes from work. Indeed, the burden of economic responsibility of the family was imposed upon the Sanjeeb at the very beginning of life. However, to get rid of poverty his parents forced him to do the work. So, he had to go to the working field sacrificing all the recreations like participation in various sports and games, watching television, gossiping with peer group etc. As a consequence, the development of children got affected badly and he was the worst sufferers from blossom into a healthy child. Moreover, their housing condition was not in favour of living. Their dwelling house was broken and *kachha* type of two small sizes rooms with *kachha* floor made of wattle walls, corrugated tin roofs and devoid of proper ventilation. In rainy season the insider atmosphere of the houses became dump and its floor became muddy and moisty. Thus, they had to face a lot of difficulties in living. Besides these, Sanjeeb failed to meet the basic necessities like food, dress, education etc. He could not eat to the fill and therefore, he had to do the work hungry in the stone field. Moreover, he had no well dress and worm clothes as well. As a result during winter season he became weakened by cold and found to work in the stone field while shivering. He had to suffer from lots of difficulties. Due to busy working schedule neither he could play games nor could manage adequate time for other recreations too. Even, he could not study at home due to lack of adequate time. Moreover, he went off to school for maximum days in a week and often for the whole week too. The parents scolded him bitterly if he was absent in work. Besides working involvement, Sanjeeb had to help his mother in necessary domestic chores. The family atmosphere was not in favour of living. His father became habituated with taking alcohol every day in the evening. There was a frequent conflict between his father and mother due to any small affairs in daily family life. The relationship between parents was based on economic performance. Indeed, the poor socio-cultural environment had a serious impact on his living. A regular quarrel, threatening, reproach, gambling etc all were happened before him every day. So, he had to grow up under these circumstances.

Case Study 3: Kamala Roy was a 14 years old girl belonged to Rajbanshi community. She got involved in stone based job. She did both stone collection and stone crushing activities in the stone field. Both of her parents got involved in stone based job. But their earnings could not pro-

vide them a minimum support to run their family. To meet the needs they provoked Kamala to do this work. Kamala was doing this work for last five years. She was busy with this job for the whole week. She was scolded bitterly and even beaten up by her parents if she was absent in the stone field which created a fear into her mind. She and her rest family members had to live in a broken and *kachha* house and it was composed of single little room. There was very much moisture in the room and the moisture entered through rain which was falling on their leaky roof. But her parents could not afford to repair it. Due to little space in the room she could not sleep well at night and also could not maintain her privacy. There was no electricity and sanitation facility in their house. Due to poor light she faced serious problems at night. Though, she could hardly eat rice meal twice a day but it was poor nutritious and even sometimes she had to starve and due to this fact she became sick. Even, her family could not afford to see the doctor with necessary diagnostic tests and also failed to meet the expense of purchasing all the doctors' prescribed medicines. She could not study at home and even she had to absent in the school for maximum days in a week. Besides stone crushing job, she had to do necessary domestic chores. The parents could not provide her private tuition and other requirements like sufficient books, note books etc. Moreover, she had no well and clean dress. Due to rough use of dress in the stone field it became dirty soon. She had to collect stone every day from the river resulted in her dress got drenched but could not change it. Even she had no well school dress too and she had a quarrel with parents for making a new school dress. However, her family failed to ensure her proper shelter, food, dress, treatment and necessary educational requirements. Due to poverty her family could not celebrate many religious festivals and even there was not sufficient space at home for house deity and due to this fact she and her family were deprived of its enjoyment. Besides these, her parents were failed to sustain a good family environment because there was a frequent conflict between her parents in daily family life due to any affairs like poverty, alcoholism, treatment of children, food, education etc. In her family it was common to notice that the parents were aggressive in nature. She was rebuked if she did not do the work. As a result ultimately the rights of the child in family as well as in society were being adversely affected. Indeed, her family atmosphere was not in favour of peaceful living.

Case Study 4: Rita Barman, an 11 years aged girl. In her family she had her father, mother and an elder brother and sister. They migrated here from Bangladesh about eight years ago i.e. in 2003 due to poverty and political unrest as well. They had five bighas of land. One day along with this land all their crops were pillaged and that made them indigent. As a result, the migration as well as displacement took place for survival. They became penniless. Under this condition, they came in Balasan river basin and made a house of two little rooms on the River bed. They lost their economic resource and finding no other alternatives, the stone based occupation became their only source of earning. After migration both her parents got involved in stone based job. They could earn Rs.1300/- per month that was not enough for maintaining their large family. She was reading in class IV. Due to ignorance and poverty the parents could not afford to provide anything for education like books, note books, private tuition etc. Rita could not maintain regular schooling. Only this hard manual labour could feed them because without income it is impossible to survive. She had to drop out of school. She was first generation learner and due to this fact she did not get any support from her parents for education. Hardly they could take breakfast with tea and pup rice. Due to poor income they could not manage food more than twice a day and it was poor nutritious. She had her both lunch and dinner with rice, pulses and vegetable curry. The nutritious food like meat, fish, egg, milk, fruits etc. were almost absent in their diet. Moreover, their living condition was very much poor and unhygienic. They lived in *kachha* and broken house and

it was ill ventilated and damp. She fell ill but her parents could not provide better treatment, medicine and food to her. She had to share the single little room with rest family members. As a result, she could not maintain her privacy. There was no electricity and sanitation facility in the house. Moreover, she had only two sets of dresses but her parents could not provide more than that. She had no well dress. Even, her parents failed to purchase the school uniform too for her. Indeed, they were going through a tough condition due to utter economic constraints in the family. Therefore, the parents needed an extra earning to augment their family income. Rita confessed, she was provoked by her parents to do this job when she was only seven years little baby. She admitted that her working involvement had an adverse impact on her studies. She had a fear of scolding if she was absent in work and often she was beaten up soundly by her parents for the same reason. They could earn Rs. 1600/- per month. The ignorance of parents; failing to meet minimum material need; conflict due to poverty; no treatment and no medicine; motivated by parents and others as well to do the work; social environment; and socio-political situation etc. were the reasons due to which she got involved in this work as there was no other option.

Case Study 5: Pradip Barman, a 14 years old boy belonged to Rajbanshi community. He got involved in stone crushing and truck loading activities. Both of his parents were involved in stone based job. But their earning was not enough for living. Pradip was motivated by his parents to do this work. He was doing this work for last five years. From the very beginning his thinking pattern was around stone crushing work and gradually developed into his mind. Owing to busy working he could not manage adequate time for study at home. He was first generation learner and due to this fact he could not hope to get the proper guidance and care from his parents. His parents could not provide private tuition, books, note books etc. to him. In fact, if he attends the school regularly then the earnings get reduced and if the earning became reduced then he has to starve. Moreover, there was no proper and sufficient room as well as electricity in the house and this problem mainly faced by him because due poor light and lack of room he could not study well. He had a fear of scolding and often beating too by his parents if he was absent in work. Besides these, they had no proper shelter to live. They had a broken house that had to be repaired immediately but due to utter economic constraints they could not repair it. In rainy season the insider atmosphere of the houses became dump and its floor became muddy and moisty and as a result he became weakened by cold-cough and fever. They fetched water from neighbours well for drinking, cooking, bathing and also for other domestic purposes, but it was always uncovered and as a result the water got polluted with tree leafs and various dust particles. They faced a lot of difficulties in living. They were deprived of enjoying various government facilities and opportunities like accessing food supplies at subsidiary rates, facilities of BPL (Below Poverty Level), educational facilities, getting citizenship, voter identity etc. due to absent of ration card, voter identity card as well as their birth certificate too. It created a tension in their family and they felt insecurity that could also be noticed among Pradip. Their family atmosphere as well as social environment was so problematic. His father was alcoholic and took alcohol every day in the evening. But his father became aggressive whenever he developed alcohol. His father used abusive words and broke all the household stuffs within the access and also beat his mother soundly. He used to create a chaos in the family and had a conflict with other family members. Often Pradip was threatened by his alcoholic father. His father never loved him; instead he had to be beaten up by his father. There was no love, affection and cooperation in the family. He had to earn money by doing stone based work; otherwise, he was not provided food, dress and other amenities. In his family the relationship was based on economic performance. Even, there was a regular clash between father and mother due to any small affairs in daily family life. Moreover, the inter-familial

and intra-familial conflict was common to notice in their family. Ultimately their family life was being affected badly due to these reasons.

Case Study 6: Prabhu Barman was an 11 years aged boy belonged to Rajbanshi community. They migrated here around 10 years ago i.e. 2001 from Bangladesh. They had two bighas of land. They used this land for cultivation which was their only earning source. But this land was grabbed by the Muslim people and even, all their produced crops were looted by some Muslim people. As a consequence, their only source of earning became lost that resulted in serious financial constraint. The fundamental needs and rights to live became violated. The problem of survival got emerged. In his family he had father, mother, two younger sisters and an elder brother. Under this situation, this six members' family with utter economic instability resulted in poverty and misery, and also the security and protection for living were found lacking. As a consequence, they were forced to migrate illegally in Balasan River basin in 2001 through their close relatives. They made a kachha house of two small sizes rooms by lending money from a Sardar of the stone crushing field to be settled permanently in the River basin. Indeed, finding no other alternative scopes, they had to choose the stone crushing occupation as their only earning source. Both of his parents and elder brother earned their living as stone crusher but their earnings was failed to ensure a minimum security for living. They altogether could earn not more than Rs. 1600/- per month and this amount was too little to meet the minimum needs for living. The fulfilment of necessary requirements like food, dress, expense of education and treatment, house repairing etc. were at very poor level. The teachers scolded him bitterly because he had no school uniform. In most of the cases his parents could not provide books, note books, or other requirements to him. Moreover, the parents were unable to provide private tuition to him because of its unaffordable expense and even they could not guide him as well. He dropped out of school when he was in class IV. He never got the support from his parents for his studies and perhaps it was just due to the fact of his parental illiteracy. They could arrange food not more than twice a day and it was just rice, pulses and vegetables. They could rarely eat meat, egg, fish, fruit and milk. They could hardly manage a little breakfast with tea and pup rice. Even in many cases they had to starve. They used to suffer from various diseases and ailments throughout the year but had no capacity to bear the expense of treatment. They could never purchase all the doctor prescribed medicines and even could not maintain its full course also. They could not afford to see the specialist doctors due to unbearable expense. They had a quarrel all the time at home over these matters. To get a relief from tension his father used to take alcohol everyday and also used abusive words and beat them soundly. Moreover, all his neighbouring people did stone based work throughout the day and even at the beginning sometimes food and other necessary things were taken to them. Ultimately, poverty and lack of security (food, survival) were more acute. However, He had no well dress because of acute poverty. His parents could not afford to purchase a new dress for him. He was found crying his eyes out while describing the fact. For the agony of hunger parents motivated Prabhu to involve in the stone based work. He got involved in stone based work since he was only 8 years old. He spent most of the time in a day for work. He had to work against his will because he had a fear of scolding and even beating as well by his parents.

It was observed that among the studied families the average family size was five. There is a need of balance between family size and income. But it was observed that the average monthly family income was Rs. 2000/-. They faced problems to maintain their family on this poor income. It may be said that in respect of family income; family size was large. They could not run a family on their little earnings. Due to large family size with comparatively less income, the fulfilment of minimum basic necessary requirements for the family was simply tough and that's why the in-

volvement of children in work for a financial aid was very much essential. But if the family size would be limited, then there might have no need to send their children to work rather they would have carefully educated them or they could have provided other necessary things for their progress and development. They had firm belief that more children means more earning but they were not aware about the reality that extra children means extra mouth to feed. Ultimately, their burden of expense was getting higher with a significant increasing of family members and it seriously affected the children's development in various ways which are discussed one after another.

Interpersonal Relationships: In the studied families the love, affection, sympathy, humanity, kindness were almost absent. They had to do work hard altogether for all the day in the stone field. Due to extreme poverty, busy working schedule, and poor educational background the parents could not take proper care of their children. The relationship between parents and children was mostly based on economic performance. Another surprising matter is that in working field most of the parents behaved like employers with their children that was a bad treatment for a child. Ultimately the children were affected badly and they were robbed off their childhood and ultimately their interpersonal relationships were seriously affected.

Housing: In the studied families the quality of housing revealed an unpleasant condition. Due to poor and unhygienic living condition the studied children and their families faced serious problems. They had not own homestead land and with this poor income they were unable to purchase a plot of land for making house and in fact it was simply out of their capacity. Therefore, finding no other means they made their houses on the river bed that was the vested land. Their dwelling houses were mostly broken and *kachha* type made of wattle walls, corrugated tin roof, *kachha* floor and devoid of proper ventilation. In this connection the data reveals that around 84 per cent of the total houses were *kachha* type. It was common to observe that during summer season the insider atmosphere of the house was very much suffocating. The rainy water was falling on the leaky roofs which damaged their study materials and affected their health badly as they got weakened by fever, cough and cold, running nose, nasal blockage, sneezing and headache. Besides, there was no electricity in their houses and due to poor light they could not read and write well at night. Moreover, most of the houses were composed of the single little room. Due to lack of room all the family members had to share the single little room. Due to this fact they could not maintain privacy. Due to lack of insufficient space in the room their education got hampered badly. They cooked inside the room because there was no separate kitchen in their house. They used earth oven or cooking pit that emitted huge smoke and their rooms became smoky. The smoky environment caused their eyes to go red and start watering and as a result the children could not read the books and also could not write well. The data reveals that around 91 per cent of the houses were composed of 1-2 small rooms. Due to utter financial constraint they could not make any new veranda or extension for cooking and failed to thatch the roof properly. Further, due to same many of them had to live in the broken house and could not repair at proper time. Even, there was no electricity, drainage system and sanitation facility in their houses. Due to the absence of latrine facility they used the backside of the house or the open river bed for nature's call. They had to face a lot of difficulties in living. Due to this unhygienic living the studied children and their families were weakened by various ill healths. Indeed, the unhygienic living conditions might have told upon their social, physical and mental health as well.

Education: However, the educational scenario of the studied children was revealed an unpleasant condition. In this regard, poverty and busy working schedule affected their education badly. On

an average they could earn Rs 2000/- per month but their little earnings could not feed them to the fill. Their parents could not provide minimum educational requirements such as necessary books, note books, pen, pencil, private tuition etc. to them. Even they had no school uniform and for this reason they were scolded bitterly by their teachers. Owing to absence of private tuition they could not understand many parts of their lesson and they mainly faced problem in English and mathematics because they were very much weak in these subjects. Besides, many of them were first generation learner and due to this fact they did not get proper guidance and cooperation from their parents, rather they were beaten up and rebuked by their parents if they were absent in work. However, due to illiteracy of parents and absence of private tuition the studied children could not complete their homework and they had a fear of scolding by their class teachers owing to incomplete homework. Their parents preferred to send them to work in lieu of schooling. They became very irregular in school attendance as during day time they were busy with work in the stone field. Even, it was reported that they used to go out from the classes to join the work in the stone crushing field. As a result, they lost interest in education. Many of them failed in the exam and dropped out of school. Apart from these, due to poor income the parents could not feed their children to the fill and many times they had to starve. They had a burning sensation in their stomach due to extreme hunger. Though they could provide rice meal twice in a day but it was insufficient and less nutritious as eating nutritious food like fish, meat, egg, fruit, milk etc. was rarely possible. Due to hard manual work and less nutritive foods they became very weak. Owing to ill health they could not pay attention to their studies. Moreover, they had no separate room for studies. Most of the houses were broken and kachha type and composed of the single room. The rainy water was falling on the leaky roof which damaged their study materials like books, notebooks etc. that became disable for reading and writing. Even, there was no electricity in their houses and owing to poor light they could not read and write well at night. Owing to absence of separate kitchen they were found to cook inside the room. For the purpose of cooking they used earth oven or cooking pit that emitted a huge smoke and made their rooms smoky which caused their eyes to go red and start watering and due to this fact the children could not read the books and even could not write well too. Owing to lack of room all the family members had to live in the single room and due to this fact the children could not concentrate to their studies. Moreover, the poor socio-cultural environment like alcoholism, gambling, regular conflict and chaos made them upset because they could not pay attention to their studies. Even, the untiring labour in the stone field made their body painful resulted in they could not study their lessons. Moreover, they had to assist their parents in domestic chores and in this regard especially the female children were forced to do it. They had to do several domestic chores like washing cloth, sweeping floor, cleaning the house and utensils, carrying water, going to shop, taking care of younger siblings and so on that kept them separate from their studies. Many of the parents had a notion that the prime duty of every female is to serve the family because after marriage they have to do it. So it is more important for them to learn and practice necessary household works rather than schooling. They thought that if the females become educated then their husband would be benefitted rather than their parents. Even, few of them opined that financially they were too weak to make their children suitable for getting service through providing proper education. Therefore, in the studied families the non enrolment and dropout rate were more among the female than males. However, the children were very much displeased with their family environment. The regular chaos and conflict in the family made them upset as they could not pay attention to their studies. However, besides working involvement there were many obstacle factors resulted in their poor educational status. Ultimately, they had to face a lot of problems in their studies.

Health Care Practices: In the studied families the children were weakened by several diseases and ailments. They were involved in stone based work. But due to poor earnings their parents could not provide better health and treatment to them. They had to do a continuous hard work throughout the day in the stone field. Their untiring hard labour made their body painful but they could not take adequate rest. During crushing stones often they made themselves injured with blood secretion and in most of the cases their eyes got seriously injured with stone cheaps and iron implements. But their injurious place became swelled up with burning sensation due to their wrong treatment and improper care over it. They were referred to the hospital but due to extreme poverty the treatment had to be stopped in the middle and they could not complete the full course of doctors prescribed medicine. Owing to incomplete treatment many of their injurious eyes became infected and it affected their vision badly. But for the agony of hunger they had to do work with injurious eyes. For the treatment they had a strong faith on the quacks of local medicinal shops and traditional medicinal men but they could not provide proper treatment to them. In fact, they had not the capacity to go to the private doctors for better treatment. Many of them had to take loan from local *samity* (cooperative society) or from their local *sardar* of the stone field for the treatment of diseases and ailments. Even, their parents could not give them a full feed and as a result, many times they had to starve. Many of them felt uneasiness due to extreme hunger. Though, the children were provided meal twice in a day but it was insufficient and poor nutritious. They took lunch with rice, pulses and vegetables. Due to utter economic hardship they could not afford to maintain the nutritious food diet. They took lunch directly in unhygienic stone field. Due to untiring hard manual labour with insufficient and less nutritious food they became very weak but they had to do a continuous hard work with ill health that made them weaker. In fact, if they do not work, they have to starve. They worked for long in touch of river water for the collection of stones and boulders from the river that made them very sick with fever, cough and cold, sneezing, nasal blockage and headache. They used water of uncovered well and also used river water for drinking, bathing and other domestic purposes. But they did not take any precautionary measures such as boiling and filtering. As a consequence, the diarrhoea and dysentery was common to notice in their families. But they could not see the doctor at proper time. Moreover, their dwelling houses were mostly broken and *kachha* type and the houses were mostly composed of the single little room with *kachha* floor made of wattle walls, corrugated tin roofs and devoid of proper ventilation. During rainy season the water entered the room through leaky roof and crack walls which made their house damp and muddy resulted in they were weakened by fever, cough and cold, running nose, nasal blockage, sneezing and headache. Besides these, owing to heavy work load many of them could not maintain their good standard of personal hygiene as they were very irregular in bathing with oil and soap, brushing up teeth, washing clothes, frequency of changing clothes etc. However, their untiring hard manual labour made their body painful and due to this fact many of them could not sleep well at night. Many children with ill health had to do the work hard for all the day otherwise they had to starve. Due to this fact they became ailing more.

Political Rights of the Children: According to Article 3 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural Rights, the State Parties to the present Covenant undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all Civil and Political rights set forth in the present Covenant. Besides these, according to Article 25, “every citizen shall have the right to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors” (Sakse-
na,1999: 258 & 267). But the violation of such type of right was so rampant in the studied area as major section of the families had not the ration card which was a great hurdle to enjoy necessary

facilities such as to access food supplies at subsidiary rates provided by the government and besides this, it is remained one of the important document which supports them at the time of application for voter card.

The data reveals that most of the studied families (around 61%) were completely deprived of enjoying all sorts of ration facilities as they had not ration card; and again around 61 per cent of the studied families were dispossessed of their right to vote as they did not have the voter identity card. Even a large number of parents did not registrar the birth of their children for their lack of proper knowledge and awareness, low level of educational standard and also for their home-based deliveries and due to this fact they faced serious problems. For instance, many children faced a serious problem during school admission for not having their birth certificate. Even their name had not been registered in the ration card that may create another serious problem in near future when they cross the threshold of 18 years age. As pursuant to Indian Constitution, the voting power is provided to a person when he crosses the said age. Therefore, those children whose names were not registered in birth certificate may completely be debarred of their right to vote in near future in accordance with government's rules and regulations. The problem of nationality arose and created identity crisis. It is the key of all rights but without identity how they will claim; and how they will get required facilities of government. Without help of government facilities how the poverty will be eradicated. This crisis made depressed them about the nationality. Even many of the working children felt the identity crisis. They thought they had no value as they were treated as illegal migrant. To speak in a word, the violation of such right is bound to cause serious problems in future. As a whole, many of them were debarred from socio-political rights which made them psychologically depress and ill and obviously it had a negative impact on their grow up as well as progress and development and in this regard we may not ignore the truth that identity crisis may lead the several unrests.

Absence of Parents or Guardians: Absence of parents or guardians affects largely and due to this fact in many cases the studied children were forced to take the responsibility to run the family sacrificing the enjoyment of childhood. In this concern, it was observed that the children of few families lost their father and mother too. Besides this, in few cases it was noticed that the fathers of 3 per cent families left their family permanently and established a new family by remarriage. Under these circumstances, the children were bound to share the economic and other familial responsibilities too.

Conflict Situation of the Families and Psychological Pressure: Any conflict hampers the peace and affects the normal way of living. It seriously affects the progress and development too as it creates tension which affects our thinking, working etc. However, among most of the studied families the relationship between fathers and mothers was not in well state at all. Even in some cases parents failed to maintain good relationship with their family members too. Mental agony for not getting required food and dress, and also for the lacking of ability to provide the study materials like books, note books etc.; mental unrest for lacking of proper shelter as well as for the inability to bear the expense of treatment etc. for these reasons they failed to meet the minimum needs of the family. Even, a serious conflict and usage of abusive words could be noticed in every family when they developed alcohol; a disturbance among the members at home and also with others had been taken place. In this regard, the prime responsible factor was their continuous hard struggle against extreme poverty for survival that kept them away from peaceful living. It was the fact that altogether their monthly income was too poor to provide the minimum daily livelihood requirements. The relationship among the family members was mostly based on economic per-

performances that told upon their children's psychology atrociously. Majority of the children did not get proper care, guidance, love and affection. Under these circumstances, some of the children felt that if they do not do the work, they have not any value in their family. They also realized that parents needed an economic support. Thus, their psychology was developed in such a way. Therefore, conflict situation of the families created a psychological pressure to get involved in this work as soon as possible.

General Observation

The studied families had a serious economic problem. During independence and post independence of Bangladesh they got displaced due to partition and political turmoil and due to this fact they became roofless, shelterless, resourceless and incomeless. Under this circumstance, they were forced to migrate in Balasan River basin for permanent settlement and earning. They worked hard for all the day but they earned very little as compare to their work amount. The average monthly income was Rs. 2000/-. Due to poor earnings they could not meet the adequate needs of living. Therefore, they used their children as a source of earning. The children were sent to work to get rid of poverty. In the studied families it was common to notice that almost all the family members including children worked hard altogether for the whole day in the stone field but their payment was very little as compare to their work amount. Their average monthly earning was Rs. 2000/- for their average 5 members family. They had to run their family with great difficulty and they could not manage all the expenses of necessary requirements like food, shelter, dress, education, treatment etc. although they could manage food twice a day but it was insufficient and poor nutritious. In their daily diet they could eat rice, pulses and vegetable curry but could rarely manage fish, egg, meat, fruit, milk etc. Even they could not feed to the feel and often they had to starve, as a result they had a burning sensation in their stomach due to hunger. However, the daylong hard manual work with less nutritious food made them weak very much. Moreover, they had serious problem of shelter. Due to lack of room and lack of sufficient space in the room all the members had to share the single little room. As a result, they could not maintain their privacy and the children also faced problem in their studies. Further most of the houses were broken too. The rainy water was falling on the leaky roofs which damaged their study materials and affected their health badly as they got weakened by fever, cough and cold, running nose, nasal blockage, sneezing and headache. Besides, there was no electricity in their houses and due to poor light they could not read and write well at night. They had no well and sufficient dress. Due to poor income the parents could not always provide a new dress to them and many of them had no school uniform too. Even during puja festivals they were not provided any new clothe too. The clothes became tattered and dirty soon due to rough use of it but they could rarely wash it. They had no proper warm clothes and owing to this fact during winter they had to work in freezing cold while shivering. Most of the children in the studied area were first generation learner and due to this fact the children did not get proper guidance from their parents. They had no proper shelter and there were no sufficient space and electricity in their houses. As a result, they could not pay attention to their studies and also could not read the books well. Moreover, they had no adequate books, note books, pen, pencil, private tuition etc. Due to lack of private tuition they could not solve all the home tasks those were provided by their class teachers. Owing to this fact they had a fear of scolding and beating by their class teachers. They became very irregular in school attendance and they lost interest in their studies. As a result, many of them failed in the exam and ultimately dropped out of school. In most of the cases mother took their little baby to the working field and due to this fact from the very beginning their mental setup were grown up by the effect of working environment and also by stones, sand and other stone crushing implements. And a fondness of the same was gradually developed into their mind and they became accustomed with

the concerned environment. They observed in their daily life that in the stone field so many people were doing different types of activities such as stone collection and sand gathering, stone crushing, truck loading and so on. Gradually they began to learn the work. Most of the children did not get any co-operation from their parents to fulfill their minimum needs and even they did not get proper guidance and awareness from neighbours, relatives and other elder members of the family. Thus, children had no other ways but following their livelihood pattern. Indeed, owing to same socio-economic and cultural practices their peer groups were also going through the same situation. In this way they were growing up. In the studied families the relationship among father, mother and their children was based on economic performance where the love, sympathy, affection, humanity, kindness were absent in their families. There was a frequent conflict between husband and wife due to any small affairs in daily family life. Indeed, due to poverty and poor educational background the parents could not take proper care and guidance of their children. Besides these, drinking habit of father created a tension in the family. It is such type of family disease where the user is not only impaired but the other members of the family are also affected. However, this problem was common to notice in the studied families, where most of the fathers of working children became habituated with taking alcohol everyday in the evening. The alcoholism of fathers created chaos in the family because when their fathers became drunk, the other family members reacted against it with fear, despair, confusion and blame. Often mothers were beaten up by their husbands when they reacted to it. Their husband became aggressive when they were drunk which was responsible to create a bad family environment and children were the worst sufferers because of aggressive characters of father. As a result, their emotional as well as behavioural problems were developed among their children. The relationships got affected seriously and also told upon their mental as well as emotional health. Under these circumstances most of the children were feeling both emotionally and situationally helplessness. The confusion, fear and despair were developed into their mind. From an early childhood their psychological feelings had turned into serious complexities and frustration. It admits of no doubt such type of problem can rob a child from his childhood. Moreover, the inter-familial and intra-familial conflicts were also liable to make their families inhabitable that created a bad environment. However, in few families it was observed that due to absence of father in the family the children had to take the responsibility to run the family sacrificing the enjoyment of childhood. Many of the families had no ration card and voter identity card and as a consequence they were deprived of various government facilities that used to create a tension in their families. In fact it increased insecurity and identity crisis among the children. Besides these, in many cases the community festivals would not be celebrated due to poverty and migration. As a result, their enjoyment and merriment got hampered seriously. Even due to poverty and disturbance in family life they could not worship their household deities. Thus, their socio-religious life got affected seriously that had a negative impact on the development of children. Ultimately the progress and development of the studied children got hampered badly due to their bad family environment.

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