

## CHAPTER - I

### THE UNIVERSE

The universe of our study is situated in the remote areas of the rural Bengal under the Tapan Block of West Dinajpur, 20 miles away from the district headquarter town Balurghat. It is an area adjacent to Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) India border line. The territory is inhabited by the tribals and Rajbansis along with their converted counterparts to Islam. The previous report shows that the territory was sparsely populated but just after the partition of Bengal the territory began to receive immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan whose flow has not ceased as yet. 'Among these new entrants to this district there were some mixed people of tribal and non-tribal variety'<sup>1</sup>. So, the present population of the universe consists of varieties of immigrants from Bangladesh and other parts of the Indian territory.

The District shows varieties of people most of whom are immigrants with varieties of cultural pattern. 'The present re-constituted district of West Dinajpur has been the home of a people who are in a process of adapting themselves to the life and pattern of the incoming migrants from other parts of the country. The course of adaptation could hardly become a mutual affair of give and take. It is, on the contrary, under the spell of a preponderant culture namely, the caste-Hindu and, in some parts of the district, culture process working among the tribals. It is the Christian order among the converts. The most important converts to Christianity are the tribals'<sup>2</sup>.

There is no denying the fact that the present population of the district according to the 1981 Census is 24,04,947 (Souvenir-Zilla Parishad) who comprise the agrarian feudal social order and are really descendants of the immigrants in this territory from the early British period; and just after the partition of the country they have been divided into citizen of two sovereign states, namely, India and Pakistan. The territory has been populated not only by the migrant people of the then British Bengal but some tribal people of different ethnicity also migrated in this territory'<sup>3</sup>. The 1901 Census Report referred to Gait's comment that 'About fifty years ago it occurred to the manager of a Government estate that the waste land might be reclaimed if Santals were imported and settled there. The experiment was made and it proved such a success that the influx has continued ever since .... The lead has been followed by a few Mundas and Oraons from Ranchi'<sup>4</sup>. According to both Hunter and Thomas, the Santals came to this district from the then "Beerbhoom" which included the present district of Dumka in Bihar'<sup>5</sup>. So, 'the territory is primarily the habitat of the immigrants. The present population of the territory consists of various mixed people of tribal and non-tribal origin including Rajbanshis and Palyas with different varieties of Muslims and Caste-Hindus of traditional hierarchy which comprise the present agrarian, social, economic and political structure'<sup>6</sup>.

The present area of our study is included within the territory where we have studied 12 villages under the Tapan Block and Balurghat Block of West Dinajpur district to maintain a balance between the two sections of people adjacent to urban areas and the remote areas of

rural society. The villages we have studied are Berakuthi, Bhalkadaha, Dangapara, Kathalpukur, Shalukkuri, Mallickpur, Kamdevbati, Gorenda, Ahira, Nimpur, Kartikpur and Khadimpur Dighipara. The population of these villages are distributed according to the Table No. 1 of Population Distribution in the villages.

Table No. 1 Population Distribution in the Villages

S1. No.	Name of the villages	Total No. of House-holds	Male Distri-bution	Female Distribution	Total No. of Popula-tion
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Berakuthi	45	133	132	265
2.	Bhalkadaha	63	173	156	329
3.	Dangapara	16	47	42	89
4.	Kathalpukur	68	192	182	374
5.	Shalukkuri	21	60	68	128
6.	Mallikpur	58	157	161	318
7.	Kamdevbati	86	265	233	498
8.	Gorenda	24	48	50	98
9.	Ahira	31	86	96	182
10.	Nimpur	49	125	121	246
11.	Kartikpur	8	25	23	48
12.	Khadimpur Dighipara	33	78	77	155
		<u>502</u>	<u>1389</u>	<u>1341</u>	<u>2730</u>
			50.88%	49.12%	

The table shows that in 12 villages we find 502 households comprising 2730 population in total; among them 1389 are male and 1341 are female in number, actually the number indicates 50.88 per cent and 49.12 per cent of male and female population of the total

number of inhabitants in the villages including the child population and age-old people. Among the villages Kamdevbati contains 498 population distributed in 86 households, and this is the highest number; and Kartikpur contains 48 population distributed in 8 households, and this is the lowest in number. Among the villages 11 are situated 20 miles away from the sub-divisional as well as the district headquarters town, Balurghat and from 4 to 5 miles apart from the main bus-communicational road of the district headquarter.

Another village Khadimpur Dighipara is comprised with 155 population distributed in 33 households which are situated adjacent to Balurghat Municipality where the people have the urban facilities in one hand and performing urban type of professional jobs and on the other their agricultural activities and rural type of occupational business, creating thus unique admixture of two types of societies cutting across village and urban people.

Moreover, the villages we have studied are situated nearby Bangladesh-India borders (erstwhile East Pakistan); this demarcation of border-line was created at the time of independence of our country. This demarcation has caused various problems to the people particularly of East Pakistan from time to time from communal point of view. So, the immigration of the Hindus started just after the partition of Bengal from the erstwhile East Pakistan for political reasons of tension and conflict posing violent disorder within the communities which drove them into the new part of the independent India. This process of immigration which started just after the independence, is continuing till now. And our study is conducted on both the newly immigrants and the original inhabitants, that is, who immigrated earlier.

'We have a suspicion as to the nature of "import" of the Santals and other tribal people by the British managers of the farm houses. It appears to be a reasonable conjecture that there was a slave trade run by imperial masters and their stooges in India with the aborigines of the "Beerbhoom"; and that the aborigines were generally imported for the reclamation and cultivation of the fallow and jungle lands of this region. References to slave trade with the aborigines are found in the writings of many British officials, who, as usual, had squarely laid the blame on the native well-to-do people. There may be doubt and disagreement as to the British involvement in and connivance at slave trade in Bengal, but there is no doubt that slavery was there among the aborigines who used to provide the man power for the "English enterprise" in this sparsely populated fertile land of Bengal'.<sup>7</sup>

This importation made many changes in the development of agriculture and trade which ultimately attracted many other aboriginals from their ancestral land for settlement in the newly reclaimed part of the area. This development of agriculture and trade not only attracted the aboriginals but also traders from far distant and remote parts of our country who gradually migrated for improving their lot and settled permanently in the area. These newly immigrants placed them in the higher stage of the prevalent social hierarchy at that time. But the 'partition of Bengal drove thousands of individuals out of their ancestral homes on either side of the newly established border of two independent states. As the greater part of Bengal went under the green flag of the Islamic State of Pakistan, the Hindus of Eastern Bengal districts were left with no other alternative than to seek a home in some parts of secular India. Streams of displaced

persons crossed the border and settled in different parts of West Bengal<sup>8</sup>, from which our universe could no longer escape, rather it holds more immigrants as it is situated just near the border district of West Bengal. Consequently, population in the area increased in an unimaginable way after the partition. This immigration has not yet come to a halt even after the emergence of the newly independent state of Bangladesh in 1971, instead of Islamic Pakistan. So, the present population of the universe consists of varieties of migrants from our own country and the immigrants of East Pakistan which is now Bangladesh. This picture can clearly be understood from our table on the Pattern of Immigrants among the Castes/Tribes (Table No. 2).

Table No. 2. The Pattern of Immigration among the Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Total No. of Older Inhabitants	Total No. of Immigrated Families from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan)	Total No. of Migrated Families from various places in India.
1.	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Santal	193	151	20	22
2.	Oraon	158	130	16	12
3.	Rajbanshi	40	3	34	3
4.	Kshatriya	24	2	21	1
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	-	4	3
6.	Bhuimali	4	2	2	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	1	-
8.	Tili	1	1	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	-	1	-
10.	Muslim	<u>73</u>	<u>72</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1</u>
		502	361	99	42
			71.91%	19.72%	8.37%

The table shows a clear differentiation of the people now living in the universe who are identified into three groups; firstly, the group of the older inhabitants who are specially imported by the British administrators, secondly, the immigrants who came from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and settled in the area; and lastly, the migrants who came from different parts of our country following their relatives or for improving their lots from the development of trade and agriculture in the area.

The table clearly shows the total number of the households in statistical way we have differentiated the people of the universe which are as follows. The first category of people who are identified as older inhabitants of the area are 71.91 per cent of the total population, a major part of the village people whose important portions generally consist of the tribal population. These tribal population is in a sense migrants in the area but their migration occurred in a sense for the conveniences of the British administrators at that time; rather the case we find that they did not migrate themselves at first in a proper sense of the term but were imported in the area of the plains of Bengal. The second type of the people who immigrated in the area after the partition of Bengal at the time of independence are the original victims of the interest groups who divided the country for their respective political benefits. These inhabitants are generally comprised of the Hindus including tribals who were also identified as Hindus in the Islamic Pakistan. They comprise 19.72 per cent of the total population, a remarkable part of the total number of inhabitants. The third category of people in the table, who also immigrants in the area not for any political

turmoil in a part of our country or were imported for any special purpose but with a view to improving their lot by pursuing any type of occupational business. Among these immigrants both the tribals and non-tribals are included. They consist of 8.37 per cent of the total population. So, the present population of the universe of different types are going on in a process of adapting themselves to the life and pattern of the incoming immigrants from other parts of the country including that of the immigrants of other countries particularly from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan). The present reconstituted villages of the universe are enriched with various culture; namely, the caste-Hindu, Muslim and tribal cultures including that of the converts to Christianity who gradually began to adapt themselves to a process of culture contact within themselves in pursuing similar economic business in the society. This transformation is not only confined to the process of economic business in the society but spread it into the social aspects where the tribals and caste-Hindus are of more advanced culture in the society. Muslims are not showing religious chauvinism in this respect rather they are more liberalised in this process of culture contact and have made themselves more relaxed from their traditional rules of dietary pattern and other distance making habits. This new rules and patterns of living brought them closer for economic needs of the society which is influenced by the process of modern political culture of secularism and egalitarianism. This process of mutual give and take affairs within themselves came by a process of typical economic professions of agriculturally related society from a common habitation in the same



part of the territory. This instance of common habitation in a territory we find from our table of Village and Communities (Table No. 3).

The table shows the various communities who are living in the 12 villages in the area where we find people of various ethnic groups and communities living together, though separately. Except 4, villages are enriched with various communities of people. These people are not only living together within the boundary of different villages for performing more or less same economic business of agricultural activities for spending major part for their livelihood; but for performing major social functions jointly, like birth, marriage and other ceremonies in the life cycle according to their own ways of rituals and modes they follow. But one thing we find that the participation of various communities of people in these ceremonies are going on unitedly by accepting foods either cooked or non-cooked in the same place according to their economic position in the society. In the villages we find no separate bathing ghat for separate communities, who use one bathing ghat in a pond attended by the tribals, caste-Hindus and the Muslims. There is no such distance making instances and habits in this purpose we find at the time of our study. Naturally, a common type of life pattern and cultural habits have grown within the communities following similar type of economic activities in the society. Tribals in this perspective are of more Hinduized in performing their social functions, it has also been found Hindu-culture and religious practices within these tribal communities of Santal and Oraon who identified them as Hindus except few Christian converts. This transformation of various communities in the process of cultural

Table No. 3. Table of the Village and Communities

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Total No. of Household	Santal	Oraon	Rajbanshi	Kshatriya	Kayastha	Bhumali Ghosh	Ghatoal	Tili	Brahmin	Muslim
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Berakuthi	45	19	23	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
2.	Bhalkadaha	63	31	19	-	5	7	-	-	1	-	-
3.	Dangapara	16	1	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
4.	Kathalpukur	68	16	3	30	19	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Shalukkuri	21	-	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6.	Mallikpur	58	1	53	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Kandevbati	86	33	27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
8.	Gorenda	24	24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Ahira	31	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	27
10.	Nimpur	49	35	3	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	6
11.	Kartikpur	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
12.	Khadimpur Dighipara	<u>33</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
		502	193	158	40	24	7	4	1	1	1	73
			38.45	31.47	7.97	4.78	1.39	0.80	0.20	0.20	0.20	14.54

acceleration has been improved following communications and other external forces of the policies of economic development where a lower degree of emphasis has been added to for separating communities, except scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who were identified as depressed. These policies of development have been added to the principle of economic aspects of the society where a little impact of cultural differentiation is found among these backward people. Except a few major religious performances within the society, they are all equal in socio-economic attitude to their society as a whole which is beyond their personal control. These types of common cultural attitude have been developed within themselves from the nature of the common habitation in a single territory for pursuing similar type of economic activities and life pattern by all the people in the society for the development of modern technologies and its appliances in the society as a whole.

The table also shows the percentage of different people in the universe by identifying their community and caste background and their situational identification in the villages of our study. Within the universe we find 502 households - among them Santal consists 38.45 per cent of the total population; Oraon shows 31.47 per cent, Rajbanshi and Kshatriya constitute 7.97 per cent and 4.78 per cent respectively; 1.39 per cent Kayastha-Ghosh, 0.80 per cent Bhuimali, 0.20 per cent respectively from Ghatol, Tili and Brahmin Castes and the rest 14.54 per cent consist of the Muslim households. From the strength of a single community they stand in the third position in the universe, just after the Santal and Oraon population. The caste

Hindus are 15.54 per cent in totality. These castes, ethnic and religious communities are living together in separate villages but are performing similar type of economic activities in the society as a whole either directly or indirectly performing similar type of cultural activities and living pattern in the society. They also participate in each others' social functions and using common materials for pursuing common goal e.g. using common bathing ghat for performing purification etc. But in religious activities they show separate divisions in the society. The tribals are mostly the followers of animism but identify themselves as Hindus, among them a few are the followers of Christianity. The rest are the followers of Islam, who are the second largest group in the universe from religious point of view. This religious attitude of the people in our universe can be shown clearly from the table of Community and Religion (Table No. 4). Before considering in detail about Community and Religion we would like to take note that the 'tribe as a social category, distinct from the Hindus and the Muslims, got crystallized through an oversimplified assumption that the former were animists while the latter were not'<sup>9</sup>. It has also been found that the most of the major tribal communities have had interactions with the Hindus, Muslims and others, in the process of which changes have appeared in cultural as well as structural complexes of the tribes, the castes and others'<sup>10</sup>, and gradually being identified themselves as Hindus by performing various Hindu beliefs, rites and rituals in their life pattern and society following their Hindu counterparts, that is, of

Hindu peasants who are their neighbours in the plains of Bengal. So, we have also discussed our attitude to them as Hindus and have identified the village peasants as Hindu, Muslim and Christian in our discussion which is shown in the table of Community and Religion.

Table No. 4. Community and Religion

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Hinduism	Islam	Christianity
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Santal	193	186	-	7
2.	Oraon	158	148	-	10
3.	Rajbanshi	40	40	-	-
4.	Kshatriya	24	24	-	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	7	-	-
6.	Bhumali	4	4	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	1	-	-
8.	Tili	1	1	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	1	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	-	73	-
		502	412	73	17
			82.07% 82.07%	14.54%	3.39%

The table shows that 82.07 per cent of total households are Hindus including that of the tribal people who identified themselves as Hindus but from the traditional point of view they are originally the followers of animism but gradually they have transformed themselves into Hindus following various Hindu methods and practices of religious rites and beliefs in addition to that of their traditional cultural and religious beliefs and practices which are originally in form of animistic attitude. We have also discussed them as Hindus

from their own statement against my question, which religious group you belong to? Among these tribal people some have been converted as Christian, who consist only 3.39 per cent of the total population. Majority of these converts have been proselitized as Christian for some individual economic benefits. These benefits generally came to them from some Christian missionaries who came to India for propagating their own religious beliefs to others and identified tribal people who were comparatively naive and poor than that of the other sections of the society, for their own conveniences; tribal people were attracted easily when they were allured by supply of free foods and clothes for meeting their economic needs which ultimately brought them success. In this way, they began to gain their personal benefits in the society from which the tribal people of Christian converts in our universe are more exceptions. The next group we find in the table are the followers of Islam which consists 14.54 per cent of the total households, the second largest group of the religious believers in the society. They are separate from the Hindus and Christian people from the point of view of religious beliefs and practices. There is no such speciality in other activities of the society among the followers of this group which is equal to that of the other two groups in the society. But they are all equal in all other activities in the society including that of the system of production where they are more equal in performing their activities in similar type of economic categories of peasants in the society. In this factor, religion is not merely an identification of human being but of a background of traditionalism in the society.

The universe we have studied, is situated in the remote part of the region and keeps a major distance of 20 miles apart from the urban area where fullfledged modern means of urban facilities are there like educational institutions of primary schools, secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges for higher education. The facilities of primary educational institutions which are there for imparting minimum educational instructions are yet insufficient, speaking proportionately. The facilities of higher education upto secondary stage are there but are also insufficient in all respects. The percentage of education is less in our area of review. Among the educated people, mostly come from the well to do families who are able to give higher education to their children by sending them to urban places where every type of facilities of modern education is maintained. Some people from middle class families are sending their children to the village educational institutions where minimum facilities of higher education are there like secondary education which is a time killing factor; because the children are bound to go to a distant place of 4 to 5 kilometres from their villages to make them available for instructions at high school level education. These difficulties in most of the cases discourage the young. Besides, the majority of the village people are living below the standard of average economic means in the society. In this place they generally prefer to take their children to assist them in earning daily livelihood, either sending them to take job in the well to do peasant families for looking after their livestock, if available, or employ them to assist their parents at everyday's livelihood like collecting fuel materials for cooking food etc. As a matter of fact, the

primary education which is available at the villages is mostly discarded by the villagers for poor economic causes. Few children are going to the schools at their leisure time when they make it available, naturally the level of education among the village people is low. Few tribal children from the christian population of the villages are making them educated from the missionary institutes situated at Rajibpur in this sub-division where these tribal children are getting all types of facilities free, including food and lodging which is minimum in per cent. Only the children who have studied from the near-by urban villages are comparatively high in percentage of availing themselves of education according to their ability and family means. So, for that reason, we have classified our village people in our study in three basic categories : illiterate, literate and educated. The section of illiterate is self-explicit because they are unable to read and write. They can not put their signature. Literate are those who are able to put their signature wherever necessary i.e. for meeting the basic primary needs for the society which is limited upto the primary stage. The educated are those who have at least the knowledge of the level of the higher stage of university education. Among these classifications we again have sub-classified it between the male and female where the female people are showing higher illiteracy rate in the villages and lower rate of literate and educated in the society. We clearly elaborate it in our table No. 5 the Caste/Tribe and Literacy.

From the table, we find, three categories of village people viz illiterate, literate and educated and these three categories are again sub-classified in male and female. Among the total number of the village people we find 74.87 per cent are illiterate, 5.75 per cent



Table No. 5. Table of Caste/Tribe and Literacy.

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Illiterate Male	Female	Literate Male	Female	Educated Male	Female			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.	Santal	193	785	347	438	45	43	2	110	91	19
2.	Oron	158	681	282	399	60	45	15	145	115	30
3.	Rajbanshi	40	151	69	82	21	14	7	60	45	15
4.	Kshatriya	24	101	40	61	10	7	3	27	20	7
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	19	8	11	5	3	2	11	8	3
6.	Bhumali	4	13	9	4	-	-	-	1	1	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1
9.	Brahmin	1	4	2	2	3	3	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	<u>73</u>	<u>289</u>	<u>107</u>	<u>182</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>173</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>52</u>
		502	2044	864	1180	157	124	33	529	402	127
			74.87	42.27	57.73	5.75	78.98	21.02	19.38	75.99	24.01

are literate and 19.38 per cent are educated. From the table, we find maximum number of illiteracy in the village people comprising three-fourths of the total population. Among this illiterate female percentage is higher than that of the male which is 57.73 per cent and 42.27 per cent respectively. Among the literate male, the percentage is higher than the female, comprising 78.98 per cent of male and 21.02 per cent of female population. In the educated class we find the same picture among the village people where the male constitutes 75.99 per cent and female 24.01 per cent respectively in the society. Females enjoy less advantage in this case because of social background of Indian society which made barriers to the female for making them available at outside the family activities.

The rate of literacy and education is not only lower in the area in case of female population; but it is also lower in case of male population than other parts of the adjacent urban areas of the district or of the places of the rural areas where the propensity of the existence of well to do families is there and the percentage of population are higher in number than that of the backward community people like ours. The lower rate of education is there because of insufficiency of educational institutions of various stages like primary and high schools at their nearby villages from which "a student in the local school is not all lost to his parents for other works in the fields and the family. But a student of a school situated at some distant place can seldom make time to assist his parents in their usual occupational work. Besides, the load of studies which grows with the advance to higher classes may be threatening to the backward communities and force them to stop sending their wards to

schools"<sup>11</sup>. This poor per cent of education is only for the reason of economic insufficiency of the village people with that of the non-availability of the minimum facilities of educational institution and proper guidance from in and outside the family members at home. Among these difficulties 'the more tragic is the inability of the parents to allow the boys longer time for preparation and practice of studies at home'<sup>12</sup>.

Various programmes on adult education have been taken by the State's Social Education Programme which aims at eradicating illiteracy in a large scale manner from the village people. 'It works in the off hours of the workers and peasants and in this sense, it is a part-time education for the large mass of illiterate citizens of the country'<sup>13</sup>. These types of educational programmes are conducted by the village literate people at night by a partial remuneration from the government. In our villages, we have seen one such institution which is conducted by two to three village tribal youth on a little remuneration. But the institution has achieved little progress in its primary objective to educate the old illiterate, at their leisure time mainly at night after their daily works. These programmes have been adopted on selective basis in rural areas of a limited periphery for which the actual progress varies from the national scale. Besides that 'the fatigued and exhausted toiling peasants look for rest and petty household works at night. They are very reluctant to travel a distance to attend the instruction in literacy'<sup>14</sup>.

The problem of literacy and education of the area is related to the problem of economic self-sufficiency because education needs

an extra leisure time for the students who pursue it but the most of the parents are unable to allow their children longer time for preparation and practice of studies at home and school because the parents need their children's assistance at their daily work in the fields and family. This ultimately hampers the studies of their children even at the nearby village educational institution which needs minimum time of devotion of a few hours in a day to attend the classes. This devotion of a particular time in a day seldom assists their parents in their usual occupational work which hampers family economy in practical life and ultimately stop sending their children to school. As a result the universe faces a great problem of literacy and education. Moreover, the majority of the peasants come under lower income group in the villages for which they cannot spare their wards to attend even village educational institutions like primary and high schools for securing minimum educational qualifications within the villages. The lower income group of the peasant householders generally consider it that they will profit little by sending their wards to attend educational institutions; on the contrary, they think it that if their wards join hands with their parents in occupational services, it will be helpful for the family. Majority of the peasants have stopped sending their wards to attend educational institution, on the contrary, they are sending their wards to assist household works and if possible they send them to earn for family economy. Naturally, the universe shows lower rate of percentage of education in the area. And a nominal percentage of educated people, we find, mostly come from the well to do families

which show 19.38 per cent of the total population. This section of educated people is coming from those peasant households where the peasants never care for their wards' assistance in the household work or other chores in the family business. These types of well to do families of peasants are lower in number in our universe. Consequently, the percentage of educated people are also lower in rate at the villages we have studied. Though proportional scarcity of institutional facilities is also there, economic hardships are more against the attaining of educational qualification, and other percentage of the rate of literacy in favour of the general peasants in the area, does not gain a higher rate.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS:

The villages we have studied are totally agricultural with the inhabitants of various communities like other villages of Bengal. The total population of the universe we find is 2730 with 50.88 per cent of male and 49.12 per cent of female who are the main source of labour power for production. Among this population we find various categories of people, including that of the backward communities that are specially divided by the Government from developmental point of view with special emphasis upon the category of Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and others. Among the total population of 502 households Scheduled Tribes constitute the largest majority of 69.92 per cent, Scheduled Castes comprise 13.75 per cent and the rest are 16.33 per cent including the Muslim. According to the religious division we find Muslims are the second largest religious group as per household and population next to Hindus, and a few per cent of 3.59 of the total

households are the followers of Christianity. Formerly there was no such followers of Christianity, after the independence few missionaries established Churches in various tribal villages and began to preach Christianity among the tribals with some economic assistance for the needy. The economic assistance tended the poor and needy to convert into Christianity. But the proselytization could not change their original beliefs and practices they followed. So, the process of economic development did not follow any other changes in the system of production by changing people's cultural beliefs and social practices.

The agricultural practices we find in the villages are dependent on the land, nature and manpower resources like other majority of the villages in India. Land and manpower are the main sources of agricultural production when it follows traditional type of plough cultivation. When manpower is an important source of cultivation and agricultural production then one thing we cannot ignore that among the total population all are not effective for employing labour power in the production purposes. Among this manpower, children and older inhabitants are generally excluded because of non-potentiality of exploiting physical labour for production. Only people from a particular age-group are able to exploiting their labour power for production and family maintenance. This category of effective manpower generally comes from the age-group of 19-60 years' of age. Other categories of people i.e. of separate age-groups like the inhabitants of 10 to 18 years of age are sometimes employing themselves in production and other purposes but it is for economic insufficiency for the

family. Within this age-group no one can possess full potentiality of exploiting physical labour. Naturally, the population from the middle age-group in the field of agricultural production is expected where the traditional system of cultivation is going on. The manpower resources and agricultural practices are generally depend on the distribution of a particular age-group in the society which has been described in the table of Caste/Tribe and Age-Group Distribution (Table No. 6) in the villages we have studied.

The table shows 4 separate age-groups in the villages i.e. (i) less than 10 years of age (ii) more than 10 years but less than 18 years, (iii) from 19 years to 60 years and (iv) more than 60 years of age. Among these age-group first category possesses 26.30 per cent; second category possesses 18.87 per cent; third category possesses 50.07 per cent and the last category possesses 4.76 per cent of total population respectively. Moreover, the categories have been sub-divided again according to male and female population. From the view point of labour power and its higher potentiality, male population is more powerful than the female population. There are separate types of percentages among the sub-divisions in each category. The first category shows 53.48 per cent of male and 46.52 per cent of female population. In the second category we find 57.48 per cent and 42.52 per cent of male and female population. In the third category it shows 49.45 per cent and 50.55 per cent of male and female population and last the category i.e. 60 years and above shows 30.77 per cent and 69.23 per cent of male and female population respectively. Of all these age groups, the third category is the more powerful and effective in exploitation of physical labour for agricultural

Table No. 6. Caste/Tribe and Age-Group Distribution

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. House-holds	Less than 10 years	Male	Female	More than 10 years but less than	Male	Female	19 years to 60 years	Male	Female	60 years & above	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.	Santal	193	230	127	103	179	101	78	489	244	245	42	13	29
2.	Oraon	158	222	126	96	180	94	86	456	217	239	28	9	19
3.	Rajbanshi	40	68	41	27	31	21	10	114	58	56	19	8	11
4.	Kshatriya	24	43	21	22	28	18	10	61	31	30	6	-	6
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	7	4	3	9	6	3	13	7	6	6	2	4
6.	Bhumali	4	3	-	3	2	2	-	8	3	5	1	-	1
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	1
9.	Brahmin	1	2	2	-	1	1	-	4	2	2	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	143	63	80	85	53	32	219	112	107	27	8	19
		502	718	384	334	515	296	219	1367	676	691	130	40	90
			26.30	53.48	46.52	18.87	57.48	42.52	50.07	49.45	50.55	4.76	30.77	69.23



production including that of male and female population; and the (ii) category i.e. of more than 10 years of age and less than 18 years are partially responsible according to the economic capacity of the households that exploit their physical labour for agricultural production and other source of family income conveniently. The (i) and (iv) categories of less than 10 years of age and more than 60 years of age are less important at the present moment from the view point of labour power and production including that of male and female population in the villages.

According to the physical division of labour, both the male and female population are there and both of them are engaged in agricultural production where people from 19 to 60 years of age-group are maximum in number. Within this category of people female are more in number than that of the male population which shows 49.45 per cent and 50.55 per cent respectively; and the female population is no less important from the view point of agricultural production because most of the works related to seedling and harvesting of the crops are linked with the female workers and in majority cases they are engaged for this work either in their own field or in others' field on wages. The owners of the means of production in the villages are generally tended to employ female labour where they are suitable like seedling and harvesting because of lower rate of wages than that of the male labour. Male labour are generally needed for ploughing, carrying of crops from field to owners' courtyard and other hard work depended upon physical strength. So, the owners of the means of production cannot ignore male labour who charges higher rate of wages than that of female labour. Naturally, both types of labour power are needed

for production purposes and maximum of labour power is engaged for production in our universe generally coming from this age-group, either for their own production or for others' production according to the ownership of the means of production, capacity and need for the individual household economy in the society concerned. Within this age-group various ownership types of families are there and people from different ownership categories engage their labour power accordingly; for example, some are whole time labourers including that of male and female population of the family according to their capacity; some are engaged partially in their own production and partially wage earners, a few are engaged for their own production only, some of them are engaged in own production, and hire in extra labour power from both categories of male and female; and there are other peasants who employ only hired labour power for production and engage themselves in only supervisory works. Again, within these peasant families some engage female workers outside homework in their own fields as well as in the fields of others against payment, a few engage only in their works and are averse to employ themselves in outside fields. Among these female labour power and participation of agricultural production tribals are more in number proportionately than those of other female population of all age-group categories and possessional variations in the society. These types of engagement and variation in working nature of male and female are generally found for varieties of occupation related to agricultural production and possessional variation, in the ownership of the means of production. But one thing is certain that every type of work related to the nature

of agricultural production generally goes to this age-group including the female.

So, the villages we have studied are completely agricultural and all the people of the villages are engaged in agricultural production either directly or indirectly and the social web shapes on agricultural production. The occupational pattern of the agrarian strata of Castes and Tribes is described in the following table No. 7. The data show that almost all of the village people are occupationally cultivators either directly or indirectly, only 0.60 per cent and 0.80 per cent of the total population stated other than agriculture as their direct occupation. But if we critically examine their occupational pattern we will find that they are indirectly linked with agriculture because with fluctuation in agricultural production their occupation also differs and fluctuates. They are cultivators by birth and are forced to adopt other occupation for livelihood when agriculture fails to contain them.

Of the five occupational categories, landless agricultural labourers constitute only 10.16 per cent of the total households. But originally the number of agricultural labourers is higher than this. Because some small land owners like marginal and small peasants also employ themselves as agricultural labourers. They are poor in the universe.

Another occupational group among the village people is the sharecroppers who constitute 4.98 per cent of the total households. They are the groups of peasants whose occupation is very uncertain from the very beginning of the feudalism in India. This group of peasants cultivate others' land by contributing all the production

Table No. 7. Agrarian Strata in Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of House-hold	Landowner	Share-Cropper	Agricultural Labour	Other Labour	Trade/Service
1.	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Santal	193	137	18	32	3	3
2.	Oran	158	138	7	13	-	-
3.	Rajbanshi	40	39	-	1	-	-
4.	Kshatriya	24	24	-	-	-	-
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	7	-	-	-	-
5.	Bhumali	4	-	-	4	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	-	-	-	-	1
8.	Tili	1	1	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	1	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	72	-	1	-	-
		502	419	25	51	3	4
			83.46%	4.98%	10.16%	0.60%	0.80%

costs and sharing half portion of the crops. Besides, sharecroppers always have the fear of the eviction from his cultivable land at any time. Though the 'Operation Barga' has been introduced by the Government of West Bengal, the lack of proper implementation of the policy and for fear of the rich peasants most of the sharecroppers did not record their sharecropping land. So at the last half of the twentieth century they are not free from the clutches of the landlord, indeed under different titles.

The next occupational group according to the agricultural production and rural stratification who possesses the first position in the production relations in agriculture is the landowner. Though the total number of the group is highest and constitute 83.46 per cent of the total households, the agricultural labourers also comprise the stratum by occupying small holdings inadequate for livelihood. Actually only a few per cent of the rich peasants who are wealthy within the group are the real owners of the rural means of production. Others are pushed to the stratum of relations of production involving sharecropping and agricultural job.

The simple occupational division we have shown in the table of the Agrarian Strata in Castes/Tribes, is not sufficient to clear the picture of the village economy we find where a maximum number of the village people are doing various occupational jobs besides their prime occupation in agriculturally related society like ours. In this context, we may say that this occupational variations are generally shown in the people of non-owner of land or lower landholding group, mainly marginal peasants whose income is not sufficient for spending their livelihood in a single one occupation like agri-

cultural labourer or cultivating their own land under possession. In the small peasants group some are doing sharecropping and other related business like cultivating others' land on the basis of 'Khai-Khalashi' (a system of lease cultivation) besides cultivating their own land for running their smooth family life according to their capacity. It has also been found among the rich peasants who are doing extra occupational business besides their own cultivation like money lending business to the needed peasants with an interest which earn an extra money in their economic life is a part of an occupation they perform in their life pattern besides cultivating their own land. They sometimes lend crops to the poor peasants at the crisis time they need for consumption in exchange of higher repayment at the period of harvest is no less an occupational business because of an extra income they earn in addition to that of their own cultivable land. In this way, many people from all sections of our society, are doing some extra occupational business besides their main occupation at their leisure time or at the time when they are not busy at their main occupational business are clear from our table No. 8 on the Pattern of Occupational Distribution in the Caste/Tribes.

In this table we find many people are performing different types of occupational business at a time like owner cultivator, sharecropper, agricultural labourers and other business according to the ability and scope of the work in the society where maximum number of role differentiation are found in a single family. This phenomenon of role differentiation is generally shown as an instance of the unhealthy economy of a particular society like ours. In this situation, it is unhealthy because it cannot provide sufficiency for the family

Table No. 8. Pattern of Occupational Distribution in the Castes/Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of House-hold	Cultivation	Cultivation Landholding	Cultivation/ Landholding/ Business/ Service	Cultivation Share-crop.	Cultivation Sharecrop. Agri. Labour	Cultivation Sharecrop. Business Service	Cultivation Agri. Labour Share-crop. Business Service	Cultivation Agri. Labour
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1.	Santal	193	11	-	-	13	38	2	-	68
2.	Oraon	158	19	3	-	<del>28</del> <sup>37</sup>	<del>37</del> <sup>28</sup>	2	-	48
3.	Rajbanshi	40	6	2	-	6	2	2	-	10
4.	Kshatriya	24	1	1	-	-	4	2	1	6
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
6.	Bhumali	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Ghatgal	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	Brahmin	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Muslim	73	36	2	-	<del>6</del> <sup>10</sup>	<del>21</del> <sup>10</sup>	3	-	10
		502	75	9	1	62	82	11	1	144
			14.94	1.79	0.20	12.38	16.33	2.19	0.20	28.68

Table No. 8 (Contd..)

Cultivation/ Agri. Lab./ Business/ Service	Cultivation/ Business/ Service	Cultivation/ Others	Share- cropping	Share- Cropp. Agri. Lab. Busi. Ser.	Share- Cropp. Agri. Lab.	Share- Cropp. Busi. Serv.	Share- Cropp. Others	Agri. Lab.	Agri. Lab. Busi. Serv.	Agri. Lab. Others	Business/ Service
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
2	3	-	-	17	1	-	-	25	7	3	3
-	1	-	1	5	-	-	-	12	1	-	-
1	9	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
1	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
X	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
4	28	2	1	23	1	-	-	42	9	3	4
0.80	5.58	0.40	0.20	4.58	0.20			8.37	1.76	0.60	0.80



from the occupation they perform mainly in the village agricultural society like cultivation, sharecropping or agricultural labourer etc., for spending their livelihood is no less an instance of the unequal society. Because in this society some are doing various occupational business for their livelihood on the one hand, and on the other a few people are doing more than one occupational business for making an extra wealth for his family for leading a life of ease and comfort is nothing but an instance of an open society.

Unlike the <sup>heterogeneous</sup> heterogeneous occupational division of urban society, the homogeneous rural society characterises the village people into a few limited occupational categories resorting to agriculture as their main source of occupational business for the non-existence of other additional scope of employment. Limited number of families from different communities are engaged in business at off-season, besides agricultural occupation. They purchase paddy and make rice for selling those in the village market. Sometimes they contact with other cultivators who are unable to make rices for the lack of man power in the family in exchange of commission is a kind of business from which they earn something for their family. Two families are engaged with the oil pressing business where the owners of the machine generally engage themselves in the business in addition to their cultivation. These machine owners generally press the mustard brought by the village people for making oil with a commission or exchange what we may say is an additional income for them. A few village people are engaged with the milk-business where the milkmen generally collect milk from different households in the

villages and send it in the local village market of urban vicinity where they get better price for milk they collect from different households is also an income generating source for a few household owners. Besides, a few tribals are engaged in making harira (country liquor) and sell it in village market for making an extra earnings for their livelihood. A few are engaged in the business of basket making and other household accessories of bamboo knitting and wooden crafts at their leisure time which is nothing but an engagement for extra earnings in the family when they have no work at hand. These types of expanded occupational business are performed by the village people in addition to that of the agricultural occupation in the villages which is not sufficient for a member of the peasants. These role differentiations are generally found for a gap of economic inequality in the society of our universe despite the implementation of the newly adopted land reforms policy in the state by the United Front Ministry and later by the Left Front Government of West Bengal for the lack of the rational implementation of the policy. The original peasants of the society to be benefited are naturally being deprived of the benefit by some interest groups who are the possessors of the higher quantum of land on the one hand and detector of excess land of the owners above the ceiling limit. These two groups are generally inter-linked with each other in the village politics for which a major section of the owner peasants are suppressing their actual limit of the ownership, that ultimately deprive a section of the peasants who could be benefited from the actual scheme of land distribution in the society. If any government likes to remove this type of inequality from the peasant society then they

will have to adopt a fresh land reform policy in the society.

The table again shows that only four householders are occupying other occupational business outside agricultural job living within the agricultural communities we may say. Three among these four householders whose forefathers we may say settled themselves as cultivator are from the tribal community of Santal society. But closer examination shows that in course of time they have lost the land they possessed at their initial stage of settlement and have been forced to adopt other occupations like the ones they are engaged in the present society. All the three householders who started their livelihood as contracted labourer under different governmental departments and contractors on daily wage system and gradually became permanent in the department of Electricity Board and Public Works Departments for their general literal background and next one started his livelihood finally as a mason builder, are from the villages of nearby urban vicinity. The last one of the four householders, whose traditional occupation is boatmanship, is now a fisherman, and belongs to the Ghatol community. In addition to that of his traditional occupation of boatmanship, the modern background of a single householder is completely different from agricultural society, though his present occupations somewhat depend upon the peasants because he is living within the village peasant society.

In the present position of the village peasant society of our study we find a few peasants doing separate works other than the agricultural occupation they formerly adopted, for the lack of a

sizable landholding for the maintenance of their family life by way of alienation from the mainstream of the society they lived. This alienation of tribal and latter non-tribal land became important when a few moneylender, mohajan or petty business were attracted to invest in that society with a view to maximise profit in the post independence period and gradually became non-cultivating landowner in the society by way of adopting various tricky policies of profit making business by lending money or goods to the poor peasants at their crisis period, which ultimately reached a non-repayable position with their crops or the like when the creditors demanded the repayment. The creditors shifted their stand and demanded the land they possessed for their cultivation as repayment of their debts. In this situation those petty-landowners generally paid off their debts by giving up of their ownership possession of the land they possessed. In this way various tribal and non-tribal land gradually became alienated from the small owners peasants of the rural society and they have been forced to adopt different works leaving direct cultivation or other works in addition to that subsidiary agricultural occupation for their livelihood, which is nothing but premium upon the increasing poverty within the society. The demographic pressure ultimately led to the fragmentation of landholdings that failed to provide square meal for family driving them to adopt other occupational jobs for their livelihood.

The phenomenon of non-cultivating landownership emerged in our rural society in this perspective when an uneven situation began to develop by social consequences. This situation of uneven economical system of occupation and landholding somewhat became normalised in

in the period of United Front Ministry of West Bengal which achieved its strength later on in the period of Left Front Government of West Bengal which continuity we find still now in the amended policy of Land Reforms Act implemented by them in the rural society. This newly implemented land reforms Act did not enable to remove the unevenness of the situation completely because of some technical difficulties in the implementation. This phenomenon has also been added by various rural developmental schemes they have taken in cooperation with that of the Central Government that took a step to normalise the situation in addition to that of the agricultural occupation in the rural village society. When this is the situation we find in our rural society where agriculture holds the main stay of occupation and agricultural ownership possesses the system of production and production relations in the society, then it is better for us to discuss first about the nature of agriculture and its productivity, cropping pattern, ownership and occupational diversification in the production relations with that of the labour power and other activities related to our society.

The village people who have land are related to agriculture and who have no land are also linked with the agriculture. The people who have no land employ themselves as agricultural labourers without having any other alternatives. The table of Landholding among Castes and Tribes (Table No. 9) shows the link of the people with land and agriculture.

The table shows the land man ratio of the universe as per community. Among the total people 15.74 per cent are landless people

Table No. 9. Landholdings Among Castes and Tribes

Sl. No.	Name of the Communities	Total No. of Household	Non-owner of Land	Upto 2.5 Acres	From 2.5 Acres to 5 Acres	More than 5 Acres
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Santal	193	55	103	26	9
2.	Oraon	158	17	82	37	22
3.	Rajbanshi	40	1	24	6	9
4.	Kshatriya	24	-	18	5	1
5.	Kayastha Ghosh	7	-	4	3	-
6.	Bhumali	4	4	-	-	-
7.	Ghatoal	1	1	-	-	-
8.	Tili	1	-	-	-	1
9.	Brahmin	1	-	-	1	-
10.	Muslim	73	1	29	20	23
		<u>502</u>	<u>79</u>	<u>260</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>65</u>
			15.74%	51.79%	19.52%	12.95%

who have nothing to cultivate for their own consumption, only physical labour is their main source of livelihood. Again a vast number of people who have a small portion of land as their own but is nominal for their livelihood are forced to employ themselves as agricultural labourers. They constitute a vast majority of 51.79 per cent. Their position is most transitory because of the direct exploitation by the viable land owners. They constitute the rural proletariat. The next group of peasants is not worse but day by day their position is also deteriorating. They comprise 19.52 per cent of the total households in our universe. The next is the group of rich peasants who dominate the peasants of the whole universe. They cultivate their land not for their livelihood but for accumulating

wealth too. Their tendency is to accumulate more and more wealth by any means. The table shows the economic position of the universe at a glance.

So from our investigation it has been clearly revealed that "agriculture holds pride of place in terms of both income and employment. It is perhaps even more important as governing a way of life with characteristic forms of organisation and patterns of value. Because of the preponderant influence of the agrarian way of life, these organisations and values are carried over into every sector of society"<sup>15</sup>. Besides that "the objective basis of the traditional hierarchy lay in the unequal distribution of a number of factors, the most important among these being property and income. In agrarian societies in general the ownership and control of land constitute the immediate source of economic power and in countries like India and Pakistan land has been very unequally distributed. In a traditional rural economy the landowners not only have higher incomes than the landless but also the traditional ties of dominance and dependence enable the former to control the lives of the latter in a multitude of ways"<sup>16</sup>.

Naturally, in the present day village economy is not depending upon any community's rule because of the appearance of the newly set system of production following capitalist method of cultivation which emphasises the individual progress and development. The system ignores the equal share of production and development in the society, consequently the community system of production is losing its ground and importance from the society day by day. So the people from different communities including that of the tribes are undergoing

easy way of transformation both economically and culturally following the progress from different corners of the society viz. modern method of cultivation by way of mechanization and a new policy of land distribution in the society which influences the economy and society of the village people. In this way of transformation, the stratificatory system we found previously is being changed day by day from both the tribal and non-tribal communities. On the contrary, a new system of stratification is emerging in our universe which compares well with the class system in the discussion of rural economic structure. "After independence the process of stratification, acculturation and economic transformation accelerated at a faster rate, through directed development measures, participation in the state level and national election, etc. As Sinha (1981 : 120) has remarked that during the last few decades since independence it has been the larger society which provides a model for conscious tribal elites and leadership of attaining 'secular status' through better education, better economic conditions, better jobs and higher living standards. Since the Third Five Year Plan a series of policy decisions were taken on rapid development of tribal regions on a priority basis. Yet, if we compare the economic conditions of the tribals with that of the general population in west Bengal we find that tribals are relatively more backward than the non-tribals. This is true of the general tribal population of India as well"<sup>17</sup>.

So we find land which is the main stay of the universe and the economy of production system, also determines the ties of social,



economic and political hierarchy of the village people. Other allied sectors of production are non-existent in the universe. So, agriculture solely determines the people's participation in the village economy and development of villages which depend upon the method of using land in different ways. The system of inequality in villages depend upon the distributive system of land which is an imperial legacy.

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