

THE PEASANT FAMILY AND SOCIAL STATUS  
IN EAST PAKISTAN

by

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PREFACE  
AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The present work on "The Peasant Family and Social Status in East Pakistan" is the result of a synchronic analytic study involving empirical investigation, which was carried out in three villages in East Pakistan. The research was guided to test Elizabeth Bott's hypothesis on the nature of the conjugal role-relationship and the status position of husband and wife.<sup>1</sup>

In the process of the research, specially during the fieldwork, it was found that an enquiry into kinship, structure of the family, life-cycle of the individual and the developmental cycle of the 'domestic group' was essential for the understanding of the conjugal role-relationship. Hence, the original idea of making an investigation only into the nature of the conjugal role-relationship was later expanded into a wider attempt at studying kinship, relationships within the family, the life-cycle of the individual and the developmental cycle of the 'domestic group'. In the enquiry into the developmental cycle of the 'domestic group' the theory of Meyer Fortes about the different 'phases' of the developmental cycle<sup>2</sup> was tested. The examination of the field-data would suggest some variation in the theories of Bott on conjugal role segregation and the status position of husband and wife,

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<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Bott, The Family and Social Network, London, 1957.

<sup>2</sup>Meyer Fortes, 'Introduction' in The Developmental Cycle of the Domestic Group, edited by Jack Goody, Cambridge, 1951



and of Fortes on the different 'phases' of the developmental cycle of the 'domestic group'. For want of adequate statistical information it was not possible to give a better quantitative analysis of some variables like the family budget, the frequency of the exchange of visits to determine the network density, etc., and, as such, had to rely more on the qualitative discussion based on data which were collected through the general observation and interview with the people. A quantitative research supported by more statistical facts would presumably throw more light on some of the problems which it was attempted to study in this work.

As already stated, the fieldwork was done in three villages in East Pakistan. When the British Government handed over the power of administration to the Indians in the year 1947, the former subcontinent was divided into two parts and two sovereign states were born - the Moslem majority areas formed Pakistan and the Hindu majority regions remained as India. Bengal was partitioned and East Bengal became East Pakistan.

East Pakistan belongs to the Great Gangetic-Delta Valley in the subcontinent and is bounded on all three sides of East, North and West by the Indian territory of Assam and West Bengal. There is a small boundary with Burma in the South-east. The Bay of Bengal lies in the South. East Pakistan is separated from West Pakistan by over one thousand miles of Indian territory. The total area of the province is about 55 thousand square miles and the total population is about 50 million; these constitute about 15 per cent of the total land area and 54 per cent of the

population of the whole of Pakistan. Over four-fifths of the East Pakistanis are Moslems. 94.8 per cent of the total population live in the rural areas. Only 17.6 per cent of the total population of both sexes are literate. The major part of the land mass is formed by the silt carried in the river waters. Innumerable big and small rivers are spread like arteries all over East Pakistan and are the principal means of inland transport and communication. Cultivation is the main source of livelihood for the overwhelming majority of the rural population. Rice and jute are the principal crops. The climate is tropical - hot and humid. During the monsoon, heavy rains flood the low lying areas. Communications in the rural areas are very poor.

It is generally known that there have been abundant writings both by the Indo-Pakistan and the western scholars on the various aspects of the Hindu society, but there has been little research on the Moslem society in the sub-continent. It was thought, therefore, it would be valuable to do some study on the Moslem society and as result the present work has been produced. In this study an attempt has been made to conduct the empirical investigation on the basis of some theories. Due to the lack of initiative, resources and, above all, trained research workers, there has not been, so far, any such anthropological field research on the Moslem peasant society in East Pakistan. So, the present thesis may be regarded as the first attempt at research in this direction.

I must thank the organizations and people who helped

me in various ways during my work on the thesis. I am thankful to the Government of the United Kingdom for granting me a Commonwealth Scholarship for a period of three years and an additional return air-fare for field work in East Pakistan which enabled me to pursue the present course of study and to complete the thesis at the University of Edinburgh. I am also grateful to the University of Edinburgh for giving me a post-graduate studentship for three months for the continuation of my study after the tenure of the Commonwealth Scholarship ended. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission and the British Council must be thanked for their valuable assistance without which life and work would not be to me as well as they were during my stay in this country.

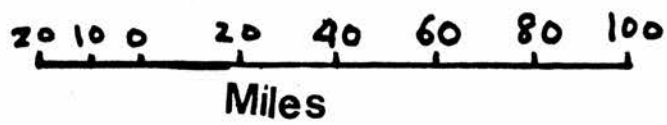
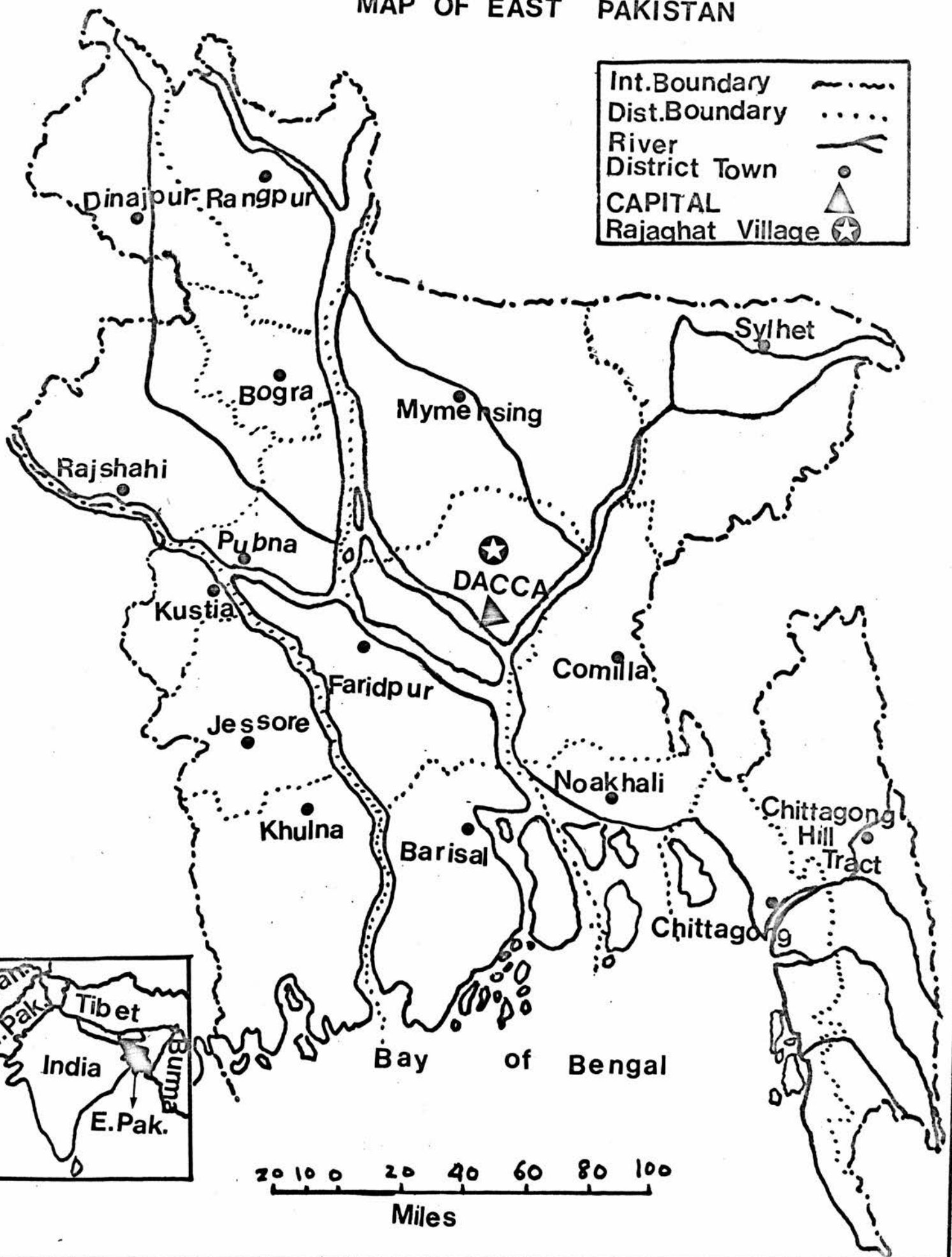
I am extremely grateful to Dr. James Littlejohn for his most valuable supervision all through my work at the University. In obtaining the passage money from the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for going to East Pakistan for fieldwork in the middle of my study and also to get a temporary grant for three months from the University of Edinburgh both Dr. Littlejohn and Professor K.L. Little had to try very hard and I am greatly indebted to both of them for their kindness and help. I have benefited a great deal from my discussion with Professor Little and I take the opportunity to express my gratitude to him.

I am very thankful to Professor A.K. Nazmul Karim, Head of the Department of Sociology, University of Dacca, who helped me in various ways during my stay in East Pakistan for

fieldwork. The officials of the Agricultural Census Office and the Population Census Office at Bacca must be thanked for their assistance in providing useful information. I thank also the students of the Department of Sociology, University of Bacca, who helped me in the interviewing. Last but not least I am grateful to the inhabitants of the three villages without whose help it would never be possible to collect information for writing the thesis.

# MAP OF EAST PAKISTAN

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| Int. Boundary   |  |
| Dist. Boundary  |  |
| River           |  |
| District Town   |  |
| CAPITAL         |  |
| Rajshat Village |  |



CHAPTER I

THE METHOD OF THE STUDY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE FIELDWORK

## CHAPTER I

### THE METHOD OF THE STUDY AND THE PROBLEM OF THE FIELDWORK

Fieldwork was carried out for five months in three villages and most of the information was collected through observation and interview. There will be four major sections in this chapter; anthropological techniques and the study of modern society, methods of the study, field techniques, and problems faced in the field work.

### ANTHROPOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES AND THE STUDY OF MODERN SOCIETY

With the widening of the anthropological study from primitive to modern societies, there have also been changes in its techniques of enquiry. The anthropological techniques used to study the aboriginals cannot be used to study the modern industrial and urban society or peasant community without modifications. The peasant community of today still has many characteristics of primitive society, that is, it is small and homogeneous and an intimate local group, has strong kinship ties and a simple economy, but, at the same time, unlike primitive society, it is not preliterate but illiterate, and is part of a larger society which is ruled by an organized government. Anthropological techniques of participant-observation is very useful and "handy" to study a small group of aboriginals whose social life is more or less observable. But in a peasant society of today, like the one under study, or in any urban - industrial society, many of the activities go on within the four walls of houses/offices, and social customs and many difficulties stand in the way of using the technique of participant observation. Writing on this problem, Professor K.L.Little says: "One of the more important, if less obvious, disadvantages which the

anthropologist working in the western society has to surmount is the fact that his subjects are out of sight for a large part of the day behind the walls of houses, offices, etc. In most preliterate societies, everyday life is lived very much in public."<sup>1</sup> The same disadvantage has to be overcome also for the study of an eastern peasant society. Though it is possible to see men working in the field, it is very difficult to see what women do inside the ghor. The life of women, their work and world and man-woman relationships are very difficult to observe from outside and are as unaccessible as ever. Social customs do not allow any stranger to see what happens in the family inside the ghor. A stranger finds himself most unwelcome in the community when he is even slightly suspected of being a person who is interested in the family relationships, which the peasants think, "should be covered rather than exposed,"<sup>2</sup> to others. The size of the sample and the availability of the required staff and resources also very much determine whether the technique of participant observation can be used or not, and in the present research it proved to be unusable. Oscar Lewis is also of the same view when he says that while working on family the size of a sample sometimes makes it very difficult to use participant observation technique unless the project has got a large staff, enough resources and time.<sup>3</sup> So, though observation was a very essential tool for research, the technique of participant-observation could not be used in the present study.

#### METHOD OF THE STUDY

The nature of the problem for research and the size of the sample not only made it difficult to use the anthropological technique of participant-observation, but also to use the

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<sup>1</sup> K.L.Little, Negroes in Britain, London, 1947, p.27.

<sup>2</sup> Ammar Hamid, Growing up in an Egyptian Village, London, 1954, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> cf. Oscar Lewis, "Anthropological Approach to Family Studies" in American Journal of Sociology, Vol.55, 1950, pp.468-475.



statistical methods. For the technique of participant-observation my sample was rather too big, and for the statistical method it was too small. Though it could be most suitable to use the technique of participant-observation to study relationships within the family and kinship relation, it would not be possible statistically to analyse the same. Professor K.L. Little maintains on this: "Quantitative methods are, perhaps, less open to suspicion than any other, but even here there are pitfalls. A careful and unimpeachable statistical analysis of economic data does not necessarily and of itself give the statistical results of the status of social facts."<sup>4</sup> He further says: "In the large scale enquiry, and where the application of statistical methods is envisaged, the direct approach is necessary as well as economic, but it should never be thought of as sufficient in itself. It requires supplementing by less ostentatious checks, by ear and by eyes as well as by verbal enquiry, and even by deduction from other known and observable material."<sup>5</sup> Hussain, who worked on human and social impact of technological change in Pakistan mainly by using the statistical method, also holds the same view when he says that "statistical data cannot furnish an insight into the actual life process or individual dailies in the family."<sup>6</sup> However, in the present research, the use of fixed questionnaire and simple statistics were found very useful and essential to collect and analyse field-data on background information.

The above quotation from Professor Little sums up, in a way, the basic techniques used in the present investigation. Though basically mine is an anthropological study, in the whole

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<sup>4</sup>Little, ibid, p.22.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p.23.

<sup>6</sup>A.F.A. Hussain, Human and Social Impact of Technological Change in Pakistan, Vol. I, Dacca, 1950, p.13.

investigation, neither the methods and techniques of Anthropology, nor those of Sociology could be used exclusively in any pure form; rather a more inter-disciplinary approach of anthropology, sociology and history was adopted. Field-observation helped not only to see and know the behaviour of the people but also to check how the ideal type tallied with the real ones. Genealogical method was very useful to study kinship in particular. But most of the data on relationships within the family and conjugal role-relationship etc., were collected through case-studies and long interviews with the help of aide-memoire. Fixed questionnaire and simple statistics were used to collect and analyse all the background information on population, housing, property, etc. The information from sociological, anthropological and historical literature already amassed by both the Indian and Western Scholars helped to give an insight into the background of socio-economic life of the peasants, especially, the problem of land tenure in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, particularly in Bengal. The chapters on land tenure and economic changes are based primarily on the historical information.

#### FIELD TECHNIQUES

Field work lasted five months. The whole project was divided into four major stages: site selection and introduction, genealogy collection, general survey of all the families for background information, and intensive study of a limited number of sample families. During the course of investigation, special care was taken to record accurately and to check the reliability of field data.

#### Selection of research villages and period of introduction.

As said in the next chapter, the three villages constitute

an administrative unit for local Government called 'Ward' and, hence, they have been treated as one single unit. The selection of the villages was done on the basis of the following requirements.

Firstly, it was decided not to include any Hindu population in order to avoid any complications arising from religion and caste-system. According to the census reports of Pakistan (1961), of the total population of East Pakistan, the overwhelming majority, 80.43 per cent, are Moslems, and 18.75 per cent are Hindu; the Christians, Buddhists and people of other religions make only 1.12 per cent.<sup>7</sup> Religion plays a significant role in the social and economic life of the people. Due to different religions, there have been striking differences in social structure, social values and ideas and economic life - among the Moslems and the Hindus. It was thought that a sample of mixed population of Moslems and Hindus would create many problems and make it difficult to complete the work in view of the nature of the problems, availability of time, staff and resources. A wholly Hindu population was not taken because a lot of study has already been done on them by the Indian and Western Scholars, while very little research has been carried out on the Moslem population in Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent in general, and in East Pakistan in particular. Therefore, for the above reasons it was decided that research villages would have to be exclusively Moslem in population. Secondly, villages should not be too close to a town or too far in the remote corner of the province, because it was thought that it might be influenced by the proximity of urban life, or

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<sup>7</sup>Government of Pakistan, Census of Pakistan, Vol. I, Karachi, 1961, p. II-23.

isolation might make it too backward and thus unrepresentative. The original idea was to conduct investigation on a peasant population which might be called typical in East Pakistan. Any peasant population which is isolated by seas, rivers or mountains may be different in the social structure or economic life from others. Again, if a population is too near the urban centres, then the typical peasant character of the life of the people might very well be influenced by the urban way of life. Therefore the place of research should not be too near to urban centres nor too far from them and isolated. Thirdly, attempts were made to avoid the selection of any village which might have any unique or extreme characteristics of its own in such respects as occupation, income, education, beliefs, etc., which might make it an extreme case and not typical of the greater part of the province. Fourthly, it was decided that the area and population under investigation would have to be outside any development schemes of the government or of any private organization, because this again may make the area a special and not a typical one for the purpose. Finally, it was practically a one-man project, and considering the available time and resources, it was decided not to take a large sample or a big area. And a possible and easy means of communication to and from the research villages was felt necessary.

Considering the length of time I was allowed to spend in the field, from the very beginning I had to be extremely careful about the time-table of the project. After my arrival in Dacca, the provincial capital, I made a few trips to villages around and within a radius of about 20-30 miles from the capital. The available census records and geographical documents provided the necessary information. Field observation and information

provided by census reports helped to select Rajaghat. It took about a week to complete the job of site selection.

After the area was selected, I had to introduce myself to the villages. The preliminary introduction with the Chairman of the Union Council and members representing the Rajaghat ward, was followed by the informal meetings with the village matbars and leading people of the village. Later, I was interviewed by the Chairman of the staff of the Union Council and Land Revenue offices, all of whom later helped me in various ways. In each meeting with the people, the aim and purpose of the research was explained as clearly as possible. The villagers were told that the purpose of the enquiry was to study the Moslem society, and not to collect facts about the earnings of the people. In my introduction, and later, throughout the period of investigation, all contact with the opposite sex was carefully avoided, because it was feared that this might create suspicion in the people about the purpose of my work in the village. It is the custom of the village for people to greet each other by saying "Salam-alai-kum" and at the same time raising the right hand up to the level of nose, eyes or forehead. The second person must return the greeting in the same way saying "Walai-kum-Salum." I followed this custom from the very beginning. My mother tongue being Bengali, it was very easy to talk to the people and understand them. All this helped in establishing a rapport between me and the people.

#### The Collection of the Genealogies.

The collection of the genealogies was very necessary for kinship terms and for kinship relations. The peasants do

not have any horoscope or any other written documents about the family history. They even do not remember anyone five generations ago. The younger generation do not even know all their relatives within five generations. There are a few very old people from whom genealogical information was collected.

#### General Survey.

A general survey was carried out through the filling in of an interview schedule.\* The answers provided background information on such things as the number of people in the family and their age, sex and marital status, property, residence, housing, title, etc. There was one questionnaire for each family which was filled in by the research worker with the information given by the head of the family. Two final year and 5 first year students helped me in this interviewing; each interview lasted on an average about 40 minutes.

#### Intensive study of the selected families.

It was decided that the sample families should not be less than 10 per cent of the total single and joint families. There were 221 families in which 191 were single and joint and 30 were widowed families. On the basis of ownership of land 23, or little over 10 per cent of the families in which both married couples were alive, were selected. It was thought that every family who promised might not finally agree to be interviewed, and hence a little more than 10 per cent of the families were selected. As feared, in all, 4 families out of a sample of 19 could not be interviewed; one head of the family had an attack of chicken-pox, one got a job in town and left the

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\* See Appendix II p.305 for interview Schedule.

village temporarily, one simply refused to be interviewed because he thought his father, though separated, still could and should speak about his family life on his behalf, and the fourth one had to be rejected because of contradiction in the statements of his wife and himself. Therefore out of 23 families selected, only 19 could be interviewed and this number remained as 10 per cent of the total single and joint families of 191.

The selection of the sample of 10 per cent research families was done on the basis of the following requirements; Firstly, the amount of land owned by a family was found to be the basic scale for the division of the society into three broad status groups which have been called the upper, middle and lower classes. An attempt was made to see that every class was more or less equally represented in the sample. Secondly, married couples whose marriage was not less than 2 years old in the age group of people from 20 to 50 only, were selected. It was found that, according to social customs, it takes from 6 months to about two years for married couples after marriage to know each other and each other's relatives and work as co-partners in the family. During this "introductory" period after marriage, the wife remains almost a stranger among her new relatives and new environment in the husband's parents' family. After 50 years of age, people in the village were found to be too old to participate in domestic responsibilities inside as well as outside the family. At this age, the old parents are helped by sons and daughters.

Each of the 221 families was interviewed only once for

background information, but each of the 19 sample families was interviewed four times - only once for background information and three times for detailed information on structure and organization of the family, kinship relation, etc. The first interview was done through filling in the schedules, and the other three interviews were done with the help of aide-memoire.\* Husband and wife could not be interviewed together, and men had to be interviewed by men and women by women research workers. Each of the three intensive interviews lasted on an average, about two hours. Three girl-students of the University interviewed the married women and I myself interviewed the men of sample families for detailed information.

#### Recording the data.

An interview schedule was filled in with the background information of each of the 221 families; such information was later tabulated in large sheets. There were 17 questions in the fixed questionnaire. Data for the more intensive part of the study on the 19 sample families was collected through interview with the help of aide-memoire. Every aide-memoire consisted of over three dozen main and subsidiary questions which acted as a general guide for the field-workers and the inclusion, form, and wording of questions were left to their discretion, though they were warned not to omit anything unless the situation demanded it.

The filling in of fixed questions was formal and quick, but the interview, with the help of the aide-memoire, was more of an informal and casual nature and very long. It was not always necessary to make a previous appointment for filling

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\*See Appendix III page 367 for aide-memoire.



in the fixed questionnaire, but it was very important and necessary to fix a place and time for each intensive interview done through the aide-memoire. Fieldworkers were asked to memorise as many questions as possible of the aide-memoire and ask them in a way suitable to the temperament of the interviewee and the situation. They had the freedom to ask the questions informally in any order according to the mood and temperament of the respondents. Each fieldworker carried an aide-memoire, which he/she could casually go through during the interview.

The questions in the schedule were of a simple and general nature and were all in English; the field worker translated the question into Bengali for the interviewees who answered in Bengali; their answer was translated into English and taken down on the blank space of the questionnaire in English. This was quite an easy job for the field workers and it took very little time and was done on the spot at the time of the interview. Recording of aide-memoire interview was done in short notes on a piece of paper, rather than by writing down everything said by the interviewee. The entire recording of aide-memoire interview was done through verbatim. Immediately after the interview - the field workers were required one at a time to make a detailed report on the basis of the short notes and what he/she remembered and this was done in as detailed a manner as possible. Besides, every field worker, after an intensive interview, was required to write down every important act of behaviour and event that he/she came across before, during, or after the interview with comments about the sincerity and honesty of the informants, giving all the data.

Photos of as many aspects of life as possible were taken. This helped to record in pictures various aspects of the life of the peasants.

#### Checking the reliability of field data.

The reliability of data was checked in four ways, namely, observation, comments of the field workers, reinterview and comments of the people.

Observation helped to check the ideal type of behaviour with the practical type. Not only were the comments of the field workers written on the report carefully read and examined but also after every interview there was a separate talk with the field worker before a new interview was undertaken. About twenty per cent of the sample married couples were re-interviewed and this helped to check the reliability of the information collected earlier by the field workers. Finally, conversation with the neighbours of the sample married couples helped to check the reliability of data.

The purpose of conducting ghor-to-ghor survey for information on population, housing, land, cattle, etc. of the area, was to be sure that whenever and wherever possible, reliable data should be collected. Much of this information could be found in Census Reports but it was decided not to rely on these reports if possible, because the accuracy of them is sometimes questioned by many.

But in spite of every possible attempt, the truth about the actual age of the people could not be verified and in my

view this cannot be taken as absolutely reliable. The villagers do not have any horoscopes or any kind of documents or any way of recording the dates of birth. People's memories cannot always be taken as reliable especially when numerical information is in question. Many villagers even while giving their age or the age of someone in the family frankly confessed that they were not absolutely sure and made a rough estimate, keeping a margin of 4 or 5 years. It seemed very interesting to find that there is a general tendency in people to reduce the age if it is under 35 or 40 years and want to be younger and to increase if over 60 or 70 when they want to be older. It was found natural to like to be called or remain young but the reason for people wanting to be thought older when they are more advanced in years is that then, people are generally respected for their age and experience.

An informal interview on social status, position of the family and segregation of the conjugal role-relationship with two government officials showed that what has been found in my research is true.

One official, who is a member of the Planning Board of the Government of East Pakistan and comes from another district said in reply that the type of the conjugal role-relationship is joint in a lower class family, but in the upper class families it is segregated. Another official, who is a secretary of a Research Academy and comes from another district in East Pakistan, also holds this view. Both of them are also of the opinion that the poor people have become poorer and that this has affected the social status as well as the organization and

structure of the peasant families of East Pakistan in general. These officials were informally asked on two occasions about their knowledge. This seemed to support the findings of my field work.

#### THE PROBLEM OF THE FIELD WORK

In the early stage of the project, it seemed to be a difficult problem to decide as to when field work could be started in East Pakistan. Originally it was decided to begin field work in May or June in the year 1965, about a year after my arrival at the University of Edinburgh. A careful examination of the climatic conditions and agricultural seasons in East Pakistan showed that May or June was not a proper time to begin field work in the rural areas. Monsoon in East Pakistan begins in June/July and heavy rains continue almost incessantly for four/five months; as a result, low-lying areas in the villages are flooded and communications become extremely difficult and uncomfortable. All but extremely necessary out-door activities have to be suspended during this period. This is also the period when ploughing and sowing or planting are done. August, September, October/November are the months for harvests. Consequently, with short breaks, the months from May/June to September/October are the busiest times for the farmers. The period of the year that seemed suitable for field work in the rural areas was for a few months from October/November, when lands are dry, and there is very little or no rain and the pressure of farmwork is at a minimum. So it was decided to start work at the end of September. In the early September, however war broke out between Pakistan and India and the plan

had to be postponed till the war ended. Finally, field work began in early November, 1965, and lasted for five months.

Though for all practical purposes the five months' period from October/November seemed almost ideal for field work, still some problems remained which could by no means be avoided. This is normally the period when an epidemic of such fatal diseases as small-pox, cholera and dysentery breaks out in many parts of East Pakistan. People have to be extremely careful about food and drinking water to avoid those diseases. Fortunately, there was no epidemic in the area where I worked during my stay there. The month of Ramadan is a time for fasting for the Moslems, and, in the year I worked in the field, it, very unluckily, fell right in the middle of the season of my work. When people fast all day and at the same time work in the field, they naturally become very exhausted, bad tempered, and irritable at the end of the day. So, in practice, the time after noon till evening was not suitable for interviewing people. As a result, most of the interviews were done in the morning when fasting and work had not yet had their effect on the peasants.

After the selection of time for field work was done, and the period of contact and introduction with the villagers was over, the actual interview began. It became impossible for men to interview women. Social customs demand that women should stay inside the leari, observe purdah and not talk to, or appear before, men-strangers. So girl interviewers had to be recruited for interviewing the women in the village.

The four girl-students who live with their parents in Dacca, had to be collected from their homes in the morning, taken to the village and returned to their homes before sunset or before it became dark, and always some men as escorts must accompany them. The parents of the girls did not allow them to be away from home at night. The whole thing was an extremely difficult problem. Want of transport and want of money for providing transport remained one of the most difficult problems that were faced during research.

During the course of actual work in the field, every girl interviewer had to be accompanied by a man. The people in the village do not think it is proper or safe for a single girl to walk alone anywhere and work. So, always a man must accompany her as an escort, and had to sit outside alone, or talk to the husband, while she interviewed the women. The girl-interviewers told me that in most cases they had to face a barrage of questions by women who asked if they were married or why they were not married at their age, or what was the relationship between them and the person who accompanied them or worked with them. The village women, who are curious to know all, cannot believe that a girl could go along and work with a fellow male student or a known man. So, to save the situation from appearing "immoral" etc., to the villagers, the girl interviewers had to say that the men or boys accompanying them were their brothers or cousins. Sometimes this answer did not totally save them when the village women remarked "but you and your brother do not look alike." Besides providing transport, food and miscellaneous expenses, the interviewers worked voluntarily and were a great help

help because I did not have money to pay them for their work. It is possible to get women who have finished College or University education and are unemployed or are working somewhere for the purpose of field work in the village. The recruiting of such "professional" women workers avoids the problem of transport or of reaching home before sunset as they would be prepared to stay in the village. Providing the present project had enough funds to pay for their service, women workers could be recruited, but again, no one knows if the temporary residence of a few "city" girls in the village would not create some "objectionable thing" in the eyes of the villagers who are so fond of rumour and would like to crowd and see how city women live. But, in practice, it could not be experimented as I did not have enough money.

It was not always easy to get a congenial interview situation in the village, by which I mean a situation for interview during when there were no other persons present to control, influence or dominate in any way, the behaviour, attitude or ideas of the research worker and the informant. In a few cases, the informant had to shout to disperse children and request grown-ups to leave. The worst was the situation with the women informants. Every time the females of the whole bari of few ghors or of few baris will assemble and I was told by the girl interviewers that the crowd made comments or jokes every time the informant said something. This "outside interference" influenced the behaviour of the women-informants; but this again sometimes helped to get correct information, because she could not hide anything about husband-wife relationship or on domestic roles or

relationships within the family which she might have wanted to hide had not the neighbours known and exposed her. This helped to check the reliability of what she said.

Before the field-data are taken up for analysis and interpretation, it was thought necessary, firstly, to give a brief description of the physical conditions, population, housing, occupation, etc. of the three villages, and, secondly, to discuss the problem of land tenure and the general economic conditions of the peasants in the perspective of history. The physical features and the demographic characteristics etc. are discussed in the following two chapters, after which it is intended to write about the land tenure and the economic conditions of the peasants.



PLATE 1



A PART OF THE VILLAGE RAJAGHAT

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY AND PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE THREE VILLAGES

## CHAPTER II

### THE HISTORY AND THE PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE THREE VILLAGES.

The subject matter of the present chapter has been divided into two major sections: The history of the name and the layout of the research villages, and their physical conditions. In the first section investigation has been carried out on the meaning and history of the names of the villages and there has also been some discussion of the layout of the village and the definition of such words as village, bari and ghor. In the second section subjects like location, boundary, area, topography, geology, flora and fauna, climate, river system, and communication of the villages have been discussed.\*

### THE MEANING AND HISTORY OF THE NAMES OF THE THREE VILLAGES

The three villages surveyed are Rajaghat, Khatrapara, and Torof-Rajaghat which, taken together, make one administrative 'ward' or unit of the local government of Union Council. The Union Council is the lowest layer of the five-structured basic Democratic Government of the country. Each Union Council is made up of several 'wards', each of which consists of one or more villages. Rajaghat, Khartapara and Torof-Rajaghat are one ward under the name of Rajaghat, which is the oldest and biggest of the three villages. Therefore, the three villages have been taken as a single unit for survey and have been treated so in the whole research and have been referred to as "Rajaghat". Except in cases where the names of the three villages have been mentioned separately to show their individual characteristics,

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\* All figures used in this chapter are from the Census Report of Pakistan, 1961.

the ward "Rajaghat", "the villages" or 'the village' has always been used in the thesis to refer to the whole unit of three villages, and never to one single village.

The people of the three villages are not sure how their villages have come to be so named. There are some opinions amongst the old people of the villages, about the origin of the names and history of the three, which, of course, cannot be confirmed or supported by any sort of documentary evidence. However, the popular information on this is stated below.

It is popularly known that the name 'Rajaghat', the name of the oldest village, has come from the fact that the Raja (King) Harishchandra (the legendary Hindu King who gave away his entire kingdom as a gift to a saint and worked as a Keeper of a funeral pyre) used to come to hunt and sit and rest in the village. Till recently, there were deep jungles and woods in the western part of the village where wild animals, including tigers, used to live. Raja Harish Chandra used to take a rest sitting in a place in the village and hence it has come to be known as Raja-ghat (Raja - King and ghat - place). There are some ruins of ancient buildings in a neighbouring village about two miles west of Rajaghat, to which villagers refer as the ruins of the palace of Raja Harish Chandra. Unfortunately, the origin of the history of the ruins could not be proved by any historical evidence. It might be that the ruins are really the remains of the buildings of some provincial ruler of

his deputy, or a seat of administrative-revenue-hunting department of the ruler who lived not long ago; but, again, it needs confirmation by historical proof which could not be obtained.

The name Khartapara (Kharta is a local slang word which generally means bad reputation, and para means part of a village) is believed by some people to have come from the bad reputation of the earlier inhabitants of the village. This explanation of the meaning of Khartapara which comes only from the people of Rajaghat and Torof-Rajaghat, is strongly rejected by the inhabitants of Khartapara. When this explanation was given to a few of the inhabitants of Khartapara, their first reaction was anger against all people in general, and the opinion-holders in particular, of Rajaghat and Torof-Rajaghat. They said, "Oh, they are bad people; perhaps their forefathers (Gap-dadara) were people of bad reputation. They do not know anything". When asked to give their own idea about the origin of the name Khartapara, they failed to say anything, except, "We do not know", or "It has been called like that", or "Government officials have given their name". So it was not possible to verify from any reliable source the reason and the history of the name of Rajaghat.

Inhabitants of all three villages could not say anything about the meaning of the name of Torof-Rajaghat, the smallest and the newest of all three, or about its origin, except that it had been a part of, and under the political and social control of Rajaghat, for a long time. The term "torof" is locally understood as meaning something or somebody is

"under the control or guidance" of something or someone. It was under the "control" or "guidance" (Torof) of Rajaghat, so it is called Torof-Rajaghat. But many people, specially the inhabitants of Torof-Rajaghat do not accept this explanation. They reacted in the same way as did the inhabitants of Khartapara. Inhabitants of Torof-Rajaghat observed: "We were never under them" (inhabitants of Rajaghat). Khodar-roheme (in the mercy of God) we are always good and well." I do not exactly understand what they really meant by this statement; but probably they tried to say that they all are good and, therefore, never needed any help or guidance from the people of Rajaghat, nor were they under their authority.

#### THE VILLAGE LAYOUT

It is necessary that certain terms like village, bari and ghor has been used instead of the English word 'house'. It has been found that 'bari' and 'house' do not have the same connotation in the local situation. The local word ghor has been found very useful to describe 'dwellings.' Therefore these words will be defined before the layout of three villages is discussed.

#### Definition of village, bari and ghor:

In area and size of population, Rajaghat is the biggest of all the three villages and Khartapara is the smallest. According to Section No.2 (29) in The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, 1950, the term 'village' has been defined as "the area defined, surveyed and recorded as a distinct and separate village in any survey made by, or under

the authority of the Government, and, where no such survey has been made, such area as the Collector may, with the sanction of the Board of Revenue, by general or special order, declare to constitute a village." <sup>8</sup> This definition of the term village, which is made purely in the context of physical area (and population) needed for the purpose of administration and revenue-collection, is not a satisfactory definition to be used in any anthropological study on a peasant society. A "village" in India or in Pakistan is not only a well-defined physical area having dwelling houses/ghors and people living in them; it is also a 'community' with a 'way of life of its own.' Hsiao-Tung Fei working on the peasant life in China has given us a definition of the term 'village' which conveys this meaning. To quote him: "A village is a community characterised by its being an aggregate of households on a compact residential area, separated from other single units by a considerable distance, organized in various social activities as a group, and possessing a special name of its own. It is a de facto social unit recognized by the people themselves."<sup>9</sup> Again, unlike the English villages which refer merely to a street or group of buildings, the term 'village' in India includes both the cluster of "houses" and the surrounding lands cultivated which always have a local name and known limits.<sup>10</sup> When analysed it is found that Fei's definition of 'village' contains most of the characteristics of a typical village in East Pakistan. A village has got a well-defined geographical area and a name. It is a residential area containing some households/baris. Its

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<sup>8</sup> Officer on Special Duty, S.& G.A. Dept., The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, Dacca, 1965, p.6.

<sup>9</sup> Hsiao-Tung Fei, Peasant Life in China, London, 1939, p.8.

<sup>10</sup> cf. B.H. Baden-Powell, The Origin and Growth of Village Communities in India, London, 1899, p.7.

people join and share the socio-political activities of 'their village' and also organize various other activities in the form of games and sport. It is a community of people who have a definite way of social and cultural life which they know, share and recognize. This has been found true in the area under study. But though three villages have been taken as a unit and they form a 'ward' in the Union Council, they are by no means different from, or independent of, one another in their socio-economic and political purpose and activities. By this I mean that they make one community having a similar cultural life and do not make their own "cultural area". The 'ward' or the smallest unit in the administration of Union Council is made up of one or more villages which have the closest possible geographical proximity and whose inhabitants have a common cultural life and identical interests in the activities of their villages. Each ward is represented by one or two members according to the size of the population and the elected members act on behalf of all the inhabitants of the villages. From the point of view of the rights of ownership in land from the historic past, the villages in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent have been broadly divided into two categories: Severality and Joint. According to Baden-Powell, the first type prevailed in Bengal (excluding Bihar) South and South-west India, while the second type of village prevailed in Behar and North India.<sup>11</sup>

The fundamental difference between those two categories of village is that in the Joint villages there was one or a group of proprietors owning the whole village, while in the severality villages the whole area was divided into a number

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p.19.



of separate and independent holdings owned by separate families, which may be joint or single.

A village is a 'compact residential area with dwelling baris.' It may be noticed here that I have been using the term bari and not households used by Fei in defining the term village. Fei has used the term household to mean a 'group of people.'<sup>12</sup> The Bengali word bari, which is locally used may be defined as an area of land with one or more ghors built in it, together with tanks, gardens, places of worship or of burial attached and pertaining to it. Few baris make a para or part or quarter of a village. Each bari has ghors for sleeping, cooking and keeping cows: A bari can be shared by one or more families having the same or different rights of ownership in land of the bari. That is to say they may live in separate ghors but the land of the bari is not separated yet, or though separated, not properly marked or walled. This happens when, after the death of a father, the division of property takes place and each heir, especially sons, have a right to get a part as this share in the bari-land. Therefore the term bari is not a household, which I have defined as a group of people of the same family who live and work for the common interest of the family and have proprietary rights. In some cases there may be one/more dependent kin-member in the 'group' but this does not change the meaning of the term 'household' as I have used the expression 'member of the family who have proprietary rights.' A household is identical to a family in my analysis. Therefore in a bari there may be one or more households or families having separate rights of ownership in the bari. Thus it is seen that the term bari is a wider term than 'household' used by Fei.

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<sup>12</sup>Fei, ibid, p.95.

I have preferred to use the local word ghor instead of the English term 'house'. The term 'house' means 'building for human habitation', and the term 'home' means 'dwelling place'.<sup>13</sup> The term ghor may refer to a building for human habitation, for cooking, or for keeping cows, etc. In the village in many baris there are ghors for different purposes. Each ghor will have one or more kothas (rooms) and most of the ghors are one storied buildings. They are built mostly of tin-wood, bamboo, jute-sticks, thatch or mud. A brick-built house is called "building" or "dalan". A newly married son will live with his wife in a separate kotha already existent, or in a newly partitioned or extended kotha of the parents' ghor, or in a newly built separate ghor.

The two villages of Rajaghat and Khartapara stretch straight East-West. Khartapara belongs to the eastern part. Both these villages face the south-east. About a couple of thousand yards of farm lands away, lies Torof Rajaghat which also stretches right from the motorway in the south to the north. The whole layout of these villages is something like a "U" sign but with an opening at the bottom as well. Torof-Rajaghat also faces south-east. The farm lands lie all around the villages. There are no other villages adjacent to or connecting with them. Most of the baris in each village are independent and separated from one another. There are rasta or foot-paths in the narrow-patches of land separating two baris and people walk along these rasta. Each village is like a row of baris one after another, some are joined together, some are separated from one another by a low and narrow patch of land which either makes a tank or a narrow rasta. Behind

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<sup>13</sup>Ernest Weekley and Anne Scott, New Gem Dictionary, London, 1963, p.257.

the villages and baris are more trees while in front they are open to facilitate entrances and exits.

### PHYSICAL FEATURES

#### Location-Boundary-Area.

Rajaghat is about 20 miles north of Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan. It lies roughly between  $90^{\circ} 28'$  and  $90^{\circ} 30'$  East Longitude, and between  $24^{\circ} 34'$  and  $24^{\circ} 35'$  North Latitude. It is bounded by a river in the west, open farm lands in the south and east, and the Dacca-Aricha motor road on the west. The road separates Rajaghat from the Hindu populated Fulbaria village, most of the inhabitants of which left it after the partition of the subcontinent.

#### Topography and geology.

The land is alluvial and belongs to that part of the district of Dacca which is fertile and low-lying plain. The land is formed by the deposits carried by the big rivers like the Dhaleswari, the Burigonga, the Padma, the Meghna and the Sitalakhya. The river Burgonga (Buri - old) or old-ganges flows about two miles west from Rajaghat. During the monsoon, i.e., from July to September, the low-lying areas in the district, which also includes Rajaghat, form a vast swamp. Rural baris, which are built on artificially raised high ground, seem to float in water. This flood water is very necessary for jute and rice which are the main crops. In the winter and summer, the flood water recedes completely from the fields which once again become dry green pastures and crop-lands.

The silt-laden, flood-water enriches the farm-lands every year. But if the flood-water rises above the normal level due

to heavy rains, it enters the baris and submerges the roads causing great damage to crops, lives and property. This abnormal flooding causes extensive damage in East Pakistan, almost every year.

#### Flora and Fauna.

Almost all varieties of trees that are commonly seen in other parts of East Pakistan also grow in Rajaghat. Mangoe trees are most common and they grow profusely in the village. Among other fruit-bearing trees that are found are coconut, date, tal (*Borassus-flabelifer*) gab (*Diospyros Embroyopteris*), bel (*Aegle Marmelos*), bananas, and 'kul' or plums. Besides the fruit-bearing trees, the important varieties for timber and fuel in the village are "gab", "bannya", and bamboo.

Cows, goats, cats and dogs are the common animals in Rajaghat. Two families have got two pairs of buffaloes which are used to drive carts. Jackals are seen at night and they often create a "concert" cry which lasts for some time unless dogs chase them and silence them. Cormorant, "shalik", sparrow, owl, hawks, crows, storks and black crows are most common; crows are by far the most numerous. Lizards are a common sight on the walls of the ghors. Huge numbers of flies, mosquitoes and little spiders are found in the village.

#### Climate.

There is not any separate record of the climate of Rajaghat. The village experiences the same climatic and weather conditions as are found in the whole of Dacca District, for which records are available.

Temperature is almost uniform throughout the district. The

mean temperature is about 84°F. in summer and about 67°F. in winter. The air is humid and wet, specially during May-September, though the actual rainy season lasts from July to October when rains pour most heavily and almost incessantly. Rains begin from March and continue all through summer till October. Timely and adequate rains are vital for crops like jute and paddy which are the chief agricultural produce of East Pakistan as well as of Rajaghat. While timely and proportionate rains mean good harvests, untimely and inadequate or too heavy rain may cause severe damage to crops, and thus affect the whole economy of the people. Hence it has been said that the economy of East Pakistan is a 'gambling of monsoon'. In 1958-59 the average monthly rainfall throughout the year was 6.13", the total annual rainfall was 73.57" and the annual average for the past 10 years is 69.64". Except for small showers, the four months of November, December, January and February are comparatively dry and bracing, with an average rainfall of not more than 3" for the whole period.

The following table will show the average annual rainfall, temperature and humidity of Dacca District and East Pakistan.

TABLE NO.1  
WEATHER - RECORD OF THE YEAR 1963<sup>13A</sup>

|                | Rainfall<br>(Total)<br>(inches) | Temperature<br>(Mean in<br>winter) | Temperature<br>(Mean in<br>summer) | Relative<br>Humidity<br>(Percent-<br>age) |
|----------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Dacca District | 77.98                           | 67°F                               | 84°F                               | 82  |
| East Pakistan  | 79.61                           | 64°F                               | 86°F                               | 83  |

<sup>13A</sup> East Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Digest of East Pakistan, Dacca, 1964, pp.48-49.

Theoretically there are six seasons, namely, summer, rainy season, autumn, late autumn, winter and spring, and each season is thought to last only two months. But in reality summer and the rainy season are most dominant and each lasts much longer than two months. Sometimes autumn does not last more than a month or fortnight and late-autumn merges unnoticed into winter. Sometimes the rainy season continues until winter, and autumn or late autumn pass almost unremarked. Spring can be the shortest season of the year and sometimes does not last for more than a fortnight, so that people scarcely notice it since just after winter, summer comes with all its intense heat, showers and storms. East Pakistan is a land of poets and poetry, singers and songs. In most of her past and contemporary literature the main theme is natural beauty. The most remarkable characteristic of summer is its storms known as 'Nor' Westers' or "Kal-baishakhir-jhor" (i.e. the storms of the deadly month of Baishakhir). The storms, which are an almost daily phenomenon, break out as a result of a cool dry air mass meeting a warm moist southerly air mass. The general direction of these storms is from the north-west and they have an speed of about 25 miles per hour, although sometimes they reach 90, 100 or even more miles per hour with an accompaniment of thunder, showers and violent winds. In "Kal-Baishakhir-jhor" the roofs and walls of many ghors are blown away, trees and crops fall, and there can be an enormous loss of lives, livestock and ghors. During the summer storms, people offer prayer and ajan ("shout" loudly in prayer to Allah) for his mercy in calming the storms and saving their life and property.

The different seasons are closely related to the economic and social life of the villagers. In every season nature not only changes its colour, but also brings different kinds of crops. Many social and religious festivities like the

arrangement and solemnization of marriages etc. depend on the particular time or season of the year, as well as on the Moslem lunar calendar month.

#### River System.

The river Buriganga, on which the capital of East Pakistan stands, flows about two miles west of the village. A canal that comes from the river passes along the western side of the village, and falls again into the Buriganga. The canal has connected Rajaghat with one of the main waterways of the province. It is used mainly for the transport of trade-goods in country boats all through the year. Villagers, men and women and children, bathe in the canal, and use it for washing and drinking.

#### Communication.

The Dacca-Aricha motorway connects the village with the capital in the south and Savar, a small town in the north. Savar is about two miles from Rajaghat and the capital is about 20 miles away. The road is the best and fastest means of communication for Rajaghat people. Privately owned buses run between Dacca and Savar. The inter-village travelling during dry season, i.e. when low lying lands are not under water, is mainly on foot, and during the rainy season is by the small country boats called "nauka". A narrow foot-path or "rasta" from the motorway passes along the north of the village and reaches the canal. The rasta, of course, goes under water during the rainy season and becomes unusable. The Union Council has planned to raise the rasta so that it could be used all the year; and some parts have already been raised by digging mud. Some buffalo carts are used for carrying

goods and families of old people, women and children to the neighbouring villages.

In this chapter we have seen that in the physical and climatic conditions and in respects of domestic animals and birds etc., Rajaghat appears to be a typical village in East Pakistan.



CHAPTER III

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

After having discussed the history of the name, the layout and the geographical conditions of Rajaghat, it is now intended to write about the demographic characteristics and social environment of the people. The discussion will include such topics as the nature and composition of the population, the type of occupation, housing, wealth and property, food and food habits, health and sanitation, dress and ornaments, language, literacy and religion, local government, festivities and "recreation", and games and sports in Rajaghat.\*

POPULATION

Total - Males and Females.

The total number of the inhabitants of the three villages is 1315 of which 672, or 50.97 per cent, are males and 643, or 49.03 per cent, are females. The differences in the total population and in the ratio of the male and female population are given in the following table.

TABLE NO.2

POPULATION OF THREE VILLAGES

| Villages                     | Both sexes |                  | Male  |                  | Female |                 |
|------------------------------|------------|------------------|-------|------------------|--------|-----------------|
|                              | Total      | Percent-<br>age. | Total | Percent-<br>age. | Total  | Percent-<br>age |
| Rajaghat                     | 597        | 45.4             | 308   | 51.59            | 289    | 48.41           |
| Khartapara                   | 439        | 33.38            | 223   | 50.8             | 216    | 49.2            |
| Torof Rajaghat               | 279        | 21.22            | 141   | 50.53            | 138    | 49.47           |
| <u>Total/<br/>Percentage</u> | 1315       | 100.00           | 672   | 50.97            | 643    | 49.03           |

\* All statistical data on Pakistan and East Pakistan are from the Census Reports of Pakistan, 1961, and all information on Rajaghat are from ghor to ghor survey.

Rajaghat village is the largest of the three in population as well as in area. More than 45 per cent of the inhabitants live in Rajaghat, about 33 per cent live in Khartapara, and about 21 per cent live in Torof-Rajaghat. Torof-Rajaghat has the smallest population but the second largest land area on which the baris stand. There is very little difference in the proportions of the male and the female population of the three villages.

#### Age-composition.

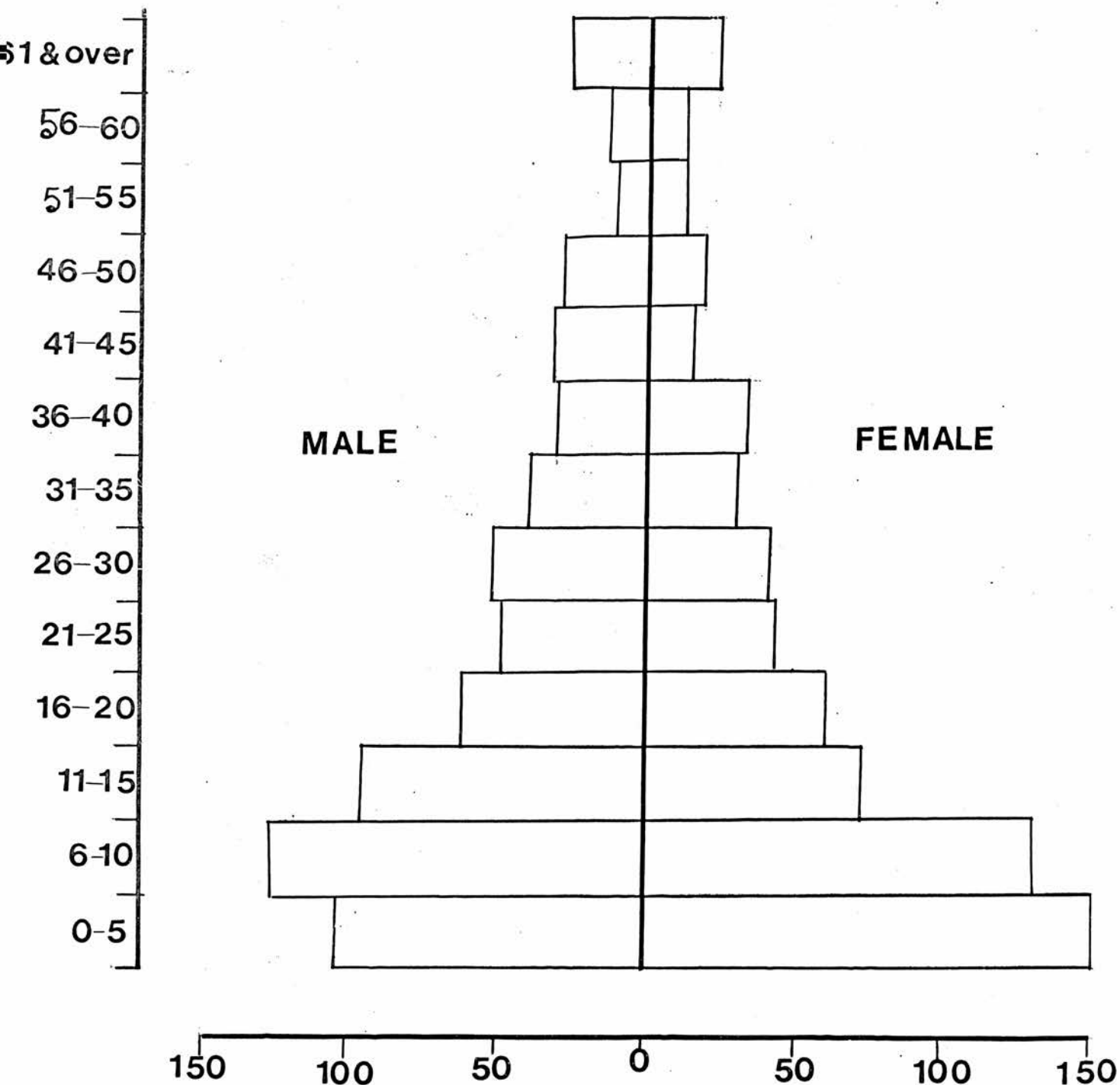
About one-fifth of the total population is under 6 years, and about two-fifths are under 11 years. There are more women under 11 years than men, and there are more men above 11 years than women. The pyramid structure (No.3, p.34a) will show the total male and female population in five-year age-groupings.

19.69 per cent of the total population is under 6 years, and about two-fifths or 39.31 per cent of the total population is under 11. From 11 years up there is a gradual fall in the number of people. 68.28 per cent belong to the age-group under 26 years. There is a fairly even distribution of people in the age-group from 21 to 30, and, then, after 30 years of age the number of people falls sharply. 75.43 per cent of the population is under 30 years of age. Only 3.65 per cent of the population belongs to the age group above 61.

The highest percentages, 16.07 and 18.9 of the male population belong to the age-group under 6 and under 11 years respectively; the highest percentages of the female population, 23.49 and 20.37 respectively, also belong to the same age-groups. The percentage of females is about 10% more than that

AGE-PYRAMID NO.3

TOTAL POPULATION BY 5-YEARS AGE-GROUP



of males in the under 11 years age-group; but the percentage of the male population gradually increases over that of the female population from and above 11 years.

The figures in the following table will show the differences in the percentages of the total, and the male and female population, in Rajaghat which have been discussed above.

TABLE NO.4  
POPULATION BY AGE-GROUP AND PERCENTAGE

| All Ages  | Total | Male  | Female |
|-----------|-------|-------|--------|
| 0 - 5     | 19.69 | 16.07 | 23.49  |
| 6 - 10    | 19.62 | 18.90 | 20.37  |
| 11 - 15   | 12.62 | 14.14 | 11.35  |
| 16 - 20   | 9.35  | 9.38  | 9.49   |
| 21 - 25   | 7.00  | 7.14  | 6.86   |
| 26 - 30   | 7.15  | 7.88  | 6.38   |
| 31 - 35   | 5.71  | 5.95  | 5.13   |
| 36 - 40   | 4.87  | 4.76  | 5.13   |
| 41 - 45   | 3.50  | 4.76  | 2.33   |
| 46 - 50   | 3.42  | 4.17  | 2.64   |
| 51 - 55   | 1.60  | 1.49  | 1.71   |
| 56 - 60   | 1.82  | 1.93  | 1.71   |
| 61 - over | 3.65  | 3.87  | 3.73   |

#### OCCUPATION

##### Main and Subsidiary occupation.

The great majority of the inhabitants are farmers. Agriculture is the main occupation of the overwhelming

majority of the people in Rajaghat. Besides cultivation, there are some occupations like small trades, carpentry, service, oil-pressing, and work as labourers or domestic servants, etc., which provide a subsidiary income to the farmers.

The following table will show the total number of families involved in different kinds of economic activities for their existence.

TABLE NO.5  
MAIN AND SUBSIDIARY OCCUPATIONS ( TOTAL NUMBER  
OF FAMILIES INVOLVED).

|                                     | Main occupations |                |              |                 |               |              |        | Total |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|--------|-------|
|                                     | Culti-<br>vation | Carp-<br>entry | Ser-<br>vice | Small<br>trades | Lab-<br>ourer | Ser-<br>vant | Others |       |
| Cultivation                         | 63               | 4              | 10           | 7               | 4             | -            | 2      | 90    |
| Carpentry                           | 1                | -              | -            | -               | -             | -            | -      | 1     |
| Service                             | -                | -              | -            | -               | -             | -            | -      | -     |
| Sub-<br>sidiary<br>occup-<br>ations | Small<br>trades  | 5              | -            | -               | 1             | -            | -      | 6     |
| Oil<br>Pressing                     | 3                | -              | -            | -               | -             | -            | -      | 3     |
| Labourer                            | 84               | -              | 5            | -               | 19            | 1            | 2      | 111   |
| Milkman                             | 4                | -              | -            | -               | -             | -            | -      | 4     |
| Servants                            | -                | -              | -            | -               | -             | 3            | -      | 3     |
| Others                              | -                | -              | -            | -               | -             | -            | 3      | 3     |
| TOTAL                               | 160              | 4              | 15           | 8               | 23            | 4            | 7      | 221   |

In the above table it can be seen that, of the total 221 families, a total of 63 or 28.5 per cent depend on agriculture as their only occupation, a total of 160 or 72.49 per cent depend

on it as their main occupation, and 90 or 40.7 per cent have taken it as their subsidiary occupation. Of the total 97 families who depend on agriculture as their main occupation, 84 or 86.7 per cent families have the job of labourer as a subsidiary occupation. Service is the main occupation of only 15 families of which 10 have agriculture as the subsidiary occupation. Only 8 or 3.6 per cent of the families have small trade as the main occupation, and 7 out of 8 families depend on agriculture as their subsidiary occupation. Labouring is the main occupation of a total of 23 families.

The following table will give the percentages of the families involved in the main and subsidiary occupations.

TABLE NO.6  
MAIN AND SUBSIDIARY OCCUPATION  
(IN PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES INVOLVED)

| Occupation  | As main | As Subsidiary |
|-------------|---------|---------------|
| Cultivation | 72.49   | 40.07         |
| Carpentry   | 1.8     | .45           |
| Service     | 6.79    | -             |
| Small Trade | 3.6     | 2.71          |
| Labourer    | 10.4    | 50.89         |
| Servant     | 1.8     | 1.36          |
| Milkman     | -       | 1.8           |
| Others      | 3.12    | 1.36          |
| TOTAL       | 100     | 100           |

According to the figures in the above table, the great majority of families, 72.49 per cent, depend on agriculture as

the only and main occupation, and 40.07 per cent depend on it as the subsidiary occupation. Next to cultivation comes labouring which provides the main occupation of 10.4 per cent of the families, and the subsidiary occupation of 50.89 per cent of the families.

Description of the economic activities other than agriculture.

The heads of the families who have service as the main occupation, work in a soda water factory in Narayanganj and in the newspaper office in Dacca. Narayanganj and Dacca are 30 miles and 20 miles from Rajaghat and the communication from Rajaghat to Dacca is mainly by bus and from Dacca to Narayanganj by bus or train. The "service-holders" work on the basis of a daily wage. The people who work in the soda-water factory are connected with simple machinery that produces soda-water, or fills soda-water bottles. Those who work in the newspaper office, mainly work as 'sorters' of newspapers. Of the total of 15 families, 10 have some land and agriculture is their subsidiary occupation, and 5 work as agricultural labourers. During the ploughing, weeding or harvesting seasons these "service-holders" who have their families and home in the village, come back from work in towns and work in the village mainly as labourers or on their own land.

Of the men who are involved in small trade, some are ferrywallas among whom some sell garments and others have small grocery shops in the village bazaar. One of the "businessmen" owns a bus which runs between Dacca and Savar.

The occupations within the category 'others' include those of mason, cowherd, jute-broker, student, husker of rice, etc.



Most of the people who are labourers but have agriculture as a subsidiary occupation own very little or no land and have a cow or a bull. They work on their own land or on the land of other people, on a share-cropping or "contract" basis. The Agricultural labourers who work on the basis of a daily wage are called bodli. Some labourers work in the truck which carries mud to the house-building sites in towns. The primary job of the servants, all of whom are boys, is to look after the cattle and work in the fields, to milk the cow and sell the milk or do shopping.

#### Agriculture.

Agricultural work involves such activities as clearing the field, ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting. The volume and the nature of the work in the field depends on the type of agricultural crop.

Besides rice and jute, many vegetables and spices like tomatoes, potatoes, cauliflower, cabbage, turnips, pumpkins, dal or pulses, mustard, onions, garlic, chillies, etc. are also grown in Rajaghat. The greater part of the vegetables and spices that are locally grown are also used for family consumption; but some vegetables and spices are sold in the local bazaar and this gives the peasants a little cash for day to day shopping for such things as fish, vegetables, kerosene or coconut or mustard oil, soap, salt, matches, etc. which are the daily necessities. Besides, a small quantity of sugar-cane is also produced in the village and is sold for cash.

The rice that is locally grown provides food for about 7 or 8 months in the village; for the rest of the year, the

villagers must buy rice which comes either from the surplus districts in the province or from abroad and is sold by rationing through the Government. A very little quantity of the jute that is locally produced is locally consumed; most of the jute is sold to the brokers, who again sell to the big businesses in the towns or to their agents who come to the village in the right season for buying jute. East Pakistan is the highest jute producing region in the world.

There are two kinds of paddy or unhusked rice, namely aus and amon. Amon may be of two kinds - boro and winter amon. The ploughing of jute and aus paddy begins with the first rains in spring and continues till April. Sowing commences with the April rains and weeding takes about two months from May to mid-June, and generally finishes in September or October. The seeds of transplanted amon (boro) paddy are grown and sown in May and June in seed-beds. During the heavy monsoon rains in June and July lands are ploughed and prepared to form a bed of mud and mire for the purpose of transplanting the boro-seedlings. The harvesting of boro (amon) paddy finishes by late November or mid-December. The seeds of winter amon-paddy are sown and fields are weeded at the same time as with aus paddy but the harvesting does not begin till September and it continues all through October, November and sometimes December, depending on the different kinds of winter amon paddy. Aus and winter-amon paddy are grown more in quantity than boro in Rajaghat. All the vegetables and spices that are grown in the field are winter and spring crops and are generally sown after jute, or paddy, has been harvested. It needs only two to four months for most of the winter-crops to be sown and harvested, with the exception of potatoes, which take about six to eight months from sowing

to harvesting. The interval between sowing and harvesting, if ploughing is left out, is about four to six months for aus, boro and jute, six to seven months for winter-amon, and three to four months for winter and spring crops.

An agricultural calendar of the main crops are given below.

TABLE NO.7  
CROP CALENDAR

| <u>English months:</u> | <u>Bengali months:</u> |                             |                       |   |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
|                        | <u>Falgun</u>          |                             |                       |   |
| March                  |                        | Ploughing commences         |                       |   |
| April                  | <u>Chaitra</u>         | Ploughing commences         | Aus sowing begins.    |   |
|                        | <u>Baisakh</u>         |                             |                       |   |
| May                    |                        | Weeding of Aus lands        | Sowing of Amon        |   |
| June                   | <u>Jaistha</u>         | Weeding of Aus lands        | Sowing of Amon        | Sowing of Arhar                                 |
|                        | <u>Asar</u>            |                             |                       |   |
| July                   |                        | Harvesting of Aus begins    | Transplanting of Amon | Sowing of Til                                   |
| August                 | <u>Sraban</u>          | Harvesting of Aus.          | Transplanting of Amon |   |
|                        | <u>Bhadra</u>          |                             |                       |   |
| September              |                        | Harvesting of Aus finishes  | Weeding of Amon lands | Sowing of Mustard                               |
|                        | <u>Aswin</u>           |                             |                       |   |
| October                |                        |                             |                       | Sowing of Khesari, Mung, linseed, sesamum, etc. |
|                        | <u>Kartick</u>         |                             |                       | Sowing of Masuri                                |
| November               |                        | Harvesting of Amon          |                       |   |
|                        | <u>Agrahayan</u>       |                             |                       |   |
| December               |                        | Harvesting of Amon          |                       | Harvesting of Til                               |
|                        | <u>Poush</u>           |                             |                       |   |
| January                |                        | Harvesting of Amon finishes |                       | Harvesting of Arhar, Mung.                      |
|                        | <u>Magh</u>            |                             |                       | Harvesting of gram, Linseed, and mustard.       |
| February               |                        |                             |                       |   |
|                        | <u>Falgun</u>          |                             |                       |   |

Among the farmers who cultivate land and depend on cultivation as their only, main, or subsidiary occupation the following types are existent.

TABLE NO.8  
DIFFERENT TYPES OF FARMER

| Farmers   | Percentage=100 |
|---|----------------|
| Tilling all land owned  | 28.0           |
| Tilling land partly owned and partly rented on <u>Thika</u> , i.e., yearly monetary contract, or <u>borga</u> , i.e. share-cropping | 58.4           |
| Tilling all land rented on <u>thika</u> or <u>borga</u>   | 3.6            |
| Landless labourer   | 10.0           |

### HOUSING

#### Materials used for building sleeping ghors.

The most commonly used materials for building ghors in which people sleep are corrugated iron sheets called tin for the roof, and wood, tin, bamboo, jute-sticks or thatch for the wall; the floors of the ghors are generally of mud. There are 298 ghors built of tin, wood, bamboo, jute sticks and thatch, and five dalans or brick-cement built "ghors". The figures in the table (No.9) will show the total number of ghors of different kinds of materials.

TABLE NO.9  
MATERIALS USED FOR BUILDING GHORS\*

| For   | Materials                              | Number of<br>ghors |
|-------|--|--------------------|
| Roof  | Tin and wood                           | 191                |
|       | Bamboo, wood, jute sticks<br>or thatch | 106                |
|       | Tally and wood                         | 1                  |
| Walls | Tin and wood                           | 20                 |
|       | Bamboo, wood, jute sticks<br>or thatch | 274                |
|       | Mud                                    | 4                  |
| Floor | Mud                                    | 298                |

\* excluding 5 dalans

Only one ghor has a tally-wood roof, 63.42 per cent ghors have roofs of tin and wood, and 36.23 per cent have the roof built of bamboo, wood, jute sticks or thatch. Only four ghors have the walls of mud; 6.63 per cent ghors have walls made of tin and wood, but the vast majority, 91.89 per cent, have walls made of bamboo, wood, jute sticks or thatch. All the 298 ghors have mud floors.

Ratio of sleeping ghors and kitchen per family.

There are 303 sleeping ghors including the five dalans in Rajaghat - in comparison to 221 families. On average, there are 1.37 ghors per family, and each ghor has to accommodate 4.41 persons for sleeping. Generally one family has one sleeping ghor, but in joint families there are married sons

who, sometimes, want to live in a separate ghor instead of living in a separate kotha of the parents' ghor; this is the reason why each family has got .37 more ghors.

Of the total 221 families, only 135 or 62 per cent have a separate ghor called ranna-ghor as Kitchen, and a total of 86, or 38 per cent do not have any ranna-ghor and cook in the open during the dry season, and under the verandah or inside the sleeping ghor when it rains. All but two of the ghors, for sleeping or cooking, are single-storeyed.

#### Choki and other furniture in the ghor.

Choki is the most common furniture in Rajaghat. It is a wooden platform for one or more persons to sleep on. The most expensive and heavily built wooden chokis are known as khats; there are not many khats and they are owned and used by well-to-do people. Statistics show that, of the total number of families, a total of 113, or 51.13 per cent, i.e. about half, have one or more chokis for sleeping purposes, and the other half of the families have no chokies and they sleep on the hogla or patti, i.e. (a very thin thatch mattress) spread on the mud floor. There are in all only three khats owned by three families in the village. Wooden tables, chairs and almirah are the other furniture in the peasants' ghors. In the whole village of a population of 1315, there are only 51 chairs owned by 30 families, 30 tables owned by 24 families, 11 small sitting stools owned by 11 families, and 20 almirah (small) owned by 14 families. In all a total of 113 families or 51.13 per cent have no furniture whatsoever.

#### PROPERTY AND WEALTH

Land and cattle and ghors are the main form of property;

land and cattle are also the chief basis of wealth of the peasants. In the preceding section there has been a discussion on ghors. Now, land and cattle have to be discussed.

#### Land.

There are a total of 1661 Pakhi cultivatable land in Rajaghat. On average each family owns 7.52 pakhi of land, and the share of each person comes to 1.26 pakhi. The ownership of cultivatable land ranges from one pakhi or  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre to 40 pakhi or 10 acres by one family in the village. A total of 42 families or 19 per cent of families do not own any cultivatable land. Therefore each family who owns land shares about 9.17 pakhi.

#### Cattle.

There are 267 cows, 117 bullocks, 70 calves, 75 goats and 3 sheep owned by 145 families: 76 families or 34.39 per cent have no cattle of any kind. The following table will show the total cattle per family and per person in Rajaghat.

TABLE NO.10.  
CATTLE PER FAMILY

| Cattle       | Total number | Cattle per family who are actually owner | Cattle per family in general in the village |
|--------------|--------------|--|---|
| Cows         | 267          | 1.84                                     | 1.2   |
| Bullocks     | 117          | .8                                       | .53   |
| Calves       | 70           | .48                                      | .32   |
| Goat         | 75           | .52                                      | .35   |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>529</b>   | <b>3.64</b>                              | <b>2.40</b>                                 |

The cows are kept primarily for milk and ploughing land; selling milk provides the peasants with a small amount of cash for daily marketing and small savings. The bullocks are used mainly for ploughing land. The sale of a cow or a bull also provides quite a large amount of cash, which is needed especially during the ploughing season or for renting some land. The best selling time is during the Bakr-I'd when the slaughtering of the animals is a religious act for all the well-to-do Moslems. The calves and goats are sold and this brings in cash too for the peasants. The goats are kept also for their milk. There are only three sheep owned by three families in the whole village. Sometimes it saves money to slaughter a goat or a calf or even a bull if owned by the family specially during such occasions as I'd, or marriage and funeral feasts.

#### FOOD AND FOOD-HABITS

Rice is the main food of the people. Fish, dal (pulses), torkari or vegetables and occasionally chicken meat are taken along with rice. Beef or mutton is a rare or once-twice-a-year food in the village. Rice, dal and/or fish or vegetable curry is the daily diet of the peasants. The people who own cows milk their cows twice a day - in the morning and at noon. Usually the morning milk is the maximum in quantity and it is sold in the bazaar, and most of the noon-milk is for family consumption. There are plenty of different kinds of spinach grown naturally and this forms a main item of diet for many people. Many people catch fish for the family; they use local or native traps or instruments like jhanki-jal (jhanki - thrown, jal - net), rod-hook, polo (bamboo-rod knitted jar like),



and juti (spear). Sometimes during summer the whole male population go down and plunge into the tanks or ponds or river to catch fish and use all sorts of equipment. Chicken meat is a rare item of food and is offered to the most welcome guests or relatives.

Many people take three meals a day, but the majority take only two. The three meals are breakfast, lunch and dinner. Generally breakfast is taken at about 7 or 8 o'clock in the morning, lunch at about 1 or 2 p.m. and supper at about 7.30 or 8 p.m.\* The rich or upper class people take a cup of tea and sometimes along with tea some biscuits or muri (puffed rice) as breakfast. But the percentage of the tea-drinkers is very small, though it is commonly believed that the number of tea-drinkers in general in all age-groups and in every section of the community is on the increase. Many grown-up people take their breakfast quite late at about 9 or 10a.m., and lunch at about 3 or 3.30p.m., and do not take dinner at night unless they feel very hungry. This habit of taking late breakfast and late lunch and no dinner is mostly found among the poorer section of the villagers. The great majority of the people generally take a great quantity of panta-vat (cooked rice soaked overnight in water), kancha-mori, onions and salt as their late breakfast. Many people go out to work early in the morning and come back for such a late panta-vat breakfast or it is sent to them in the field where they are working during the busy farming season. The majority of the people take an average of two meals - late breakfast and late lunch only. The younger ones take breakfast with muri or panta-vat early in the morning, lunch at about 12 p.m.,

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\* Very few people in the village have any clocks or watches. Most people reckon time during day by the position of the sun in the sky, and at night by the position of the moon and stars. They know that there are twenty-four hours a day, and just guess or assume about the exact timing.

and supper at 7 or 8 p.m. Many families have an afternoon meal of rice left from lunch or muri if they can afford it, but those who cannot afford it cannot give anything to their younger ones in the afternoon.

The drinking water for the people comes mostly from the tube-wells given by the Government. There are three tube-wells in the whole of Rajaghat of three villages, with a total population of 1315. Besides the three tube-wells, there is a river and quite a few small tanks which also provide drinking water, though it is not pure and many people do not feel safe to take it; but still, many drink from the river and tanks. The villagers - men and women - take their bath in the open in public in the river and tanks. The women run into ghors or cover their bodies with sarees if they are seen by any stranger, and give every indication, including shouts, that they should feel ashamed to come and see women like this and must go away. It is considered undesirable and improper for a stranger, lesser known villager, or anyone not related to stay and see women while they take a bath. The washing of clothes and utensils, furniture, etc. takes place in the open in the river or tanks.

#### HEALTH AND SANITATION

The general health of the people is poor. Most people suffer from malnutrition. The villagers do not have any idea of the modern science of hygiene. There is no doctor in the village or in the neighbouring villages. The inhabitants have to go about a mile to Fulbaria bazaar for an L.M.F. doctor and 3 miles to Savar for an M.B.B.S, doctor. Most people

cannot even afford to call in a doctor. Fever, whooping cough, cold, diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, chicken-pox and small-pox are the common diseases in Rajaghat.

There is no drainage or sewerage system in the village. The housewives throw all wastages of cutting, cooking, washing, etc., anywhere but the court-yard of the bari. The pykhana or the bog is a small ghor built high on a pond or tank at the back of the bari. During the dry season all the domestic birds are seen eating human wastages which pile up at one spot; during the rainy season when the low-lying areas are flooded it is mixed up with the water all around and moves every where; the same water is used for washing or even for drinking purposes. There is nothing like sanitary conditions in the village.

#### DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

Sarees and blouses are the normal garments for the women and the girls, and lungi and genji and shirt are the usual dress for the men and boys in the village. Many women put on a long under-petticoat and brassiere but many use neither of them. Lungi is a box-like Burmese-style garment with top-and-bottom open which covers from waist to ankle. Some men put on loose cotton trousers called pyjamas for an occasion such as I'd or a visit to friends and relatives or government officials or go to towns. The people do not have any special clothes for night wear. The lungi that is used during the day is also used at night, or the same saree is put on both

during the day and at night, except that they change when they become wet during bathing. It is thought that after sexual intercourse the body becomes impure and both husband and wife must take a bath early in the morning before anyone can see them. This requires a change of dress.

The number of people who wear shoes is very few; the number of women or girls wearing shoes is still fewer than the number of men and boys. Many boys up to the age of 5 or 6 go naked except during the winter when those that can afford it use a piece of cloth or saree to cover their body. Lungi and genji are the usual dress or even a single lungi with nothing else is the dress specially during the hot summer days. Many women too wear only the saree and no blouse during the hot summer time. During the winter, many men and boys wrap their bodies with a cotton chaddar ("shawl"); the women and girls manage with their sarees except that those women who can afford it buy a chaddar. The use of an umbrella by many people during the hot summer days or pouring monsoons is quite common.

The women and girls are very fond of ornaments - gold, silver, plastic or glass. Gold ornaments indicate better economic conditions and higher social status. Different kinds of ear-rings, nose-rings, nose-balls, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, bangles and anklets are the common ornaments worn by women and girls. The elderly women wear more ornaments than the younger women or girls. Bangles made of plastic are very cheap and popular. Very few men wear rings on their fingers. The wearing of rings does not mean that the men are married; it is just a choice or liking to wear a ring, not necessarily

a sign of marital status. So men were found wearing rings on their fingers who were both married and unmarried; many men are married but do not have a ring; the same is true with the women.

### LANGUAGE, LITERACY AND RELIGION

#### Language.

Bengali is the mother tongue of the people. But not many people speak the "standard Bengali" which is considered everywhere as the language of educated and urban people. Those who can and do speak "standard Bengali", do so only in their conversation with educated urban people or government officials. The local Bengali has its own accent and even some words which are either purely of local origin or distorted forms of "standard words". The people of Rajaghat have an accent which is common to the whole or most parts of the Sadar-North subdivision of Dacca. There has also been some influence of the local colloquial Bengali of Dacca City proper in the village which is only 20 miles away. Some words like morod and magi for man and woman or for husband and wife are used by many people in the village. On the whole, the local Bengali used or spoken by the villagers is understandable in every respect by anyone whose mother-tongue is Bengali or who has learnt Bengali.

#### Literacy.\*

There are in all 151 literate persons in Rajaghat amounting to 11.49 per cent of the total population. There

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\*Literacy defined: In 1961 census literacy is defined as "both (1) ability to read and write as also (2) ability to read with understanding even if it meant inability to write."  
- Census Reports, 1961, (p. IV -1).



are 140 male literates and only 11 female literates and they constitute 20.83 per cent and .8 per cent respectively of the total male and female population. The following table will give the percentage of literacy in the village in the total as well as in the population 5 years of age and over.

TABLE NO.11

PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY BY SEX

| Population                           | Both sexes | Males | Females |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-------|---------|
| Per cent of total population.        | 11.49      | 20.83 | .8      |
| Per cent population 5 years and over | 13.46      | 23.77 | 2.08    |

The range in the level of education is from Class I or elementary to Class IX in the village. The following table will give the figures of the total literates in 5-year age group.

TABLE NO.12

TOTAL LITERATES BY 5-YEAR AGE GROUP

| Age Group    | Both sexes | Males      | Females   |
|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 0 - 5        | 0          | 0          | 0         |
| 6 - 10       | 33         | 28         | 5         |
| 11 - 15      | 34         | 32         | 2         |
| 16 - 20      | 23         | 21         | 2         |
| 21 - 25      | 14         | 14         | 0         |
| 26 - over    | 47         | 45         | 2         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>151</b> | <b>140</b> | <b>11</b> |

Of the total literates, 68.79 per cent are under 26 years of age. In the total population 7.88 per cent of literates are under 26 years of age. The following table will show the percentage of the total literates in different age-groups.

TABLE NO.13

PERCENTAGE OF LITERATES BY 5-YEAR AGE GROUP

| Age-group    | Percentage of total literates | Percentage of total population |
|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 0 - 5        | 0                             | 0                              |
| 6 - 10       | 21.84                         | 2.5                            |
| 11 - 15      | 22.45                         | 2.58                           |
| 16 - 20      | 15.23                         | 1.74                           |
| 21 - 25      | 9.27                          | 1.06                           |
| 26 - over    | 31.21                         | 3.61                           |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>100.00</b>                 | <b>11.49</b>                   |

There is a free primary Government school in Rajaghat, and students of both sexes come from Rajaghat and the neighbouring villages. In the

table below are given the number of boy and girl students in different classes.

TABLE NO.14

NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE VILLAGE SCHOOL\*

| Classes     | Total Number | Boys | Girls |
|-------------|--------------|------|-------|
| I           | 105          | 85   | 20    |
| II          | 30           | 21   | 9     |
| III         | 25           | 21   | 4     |
| IV          | 20           | 19   | 1     |
| V           | 20           | 18   | 2     |
| All Classes | 200          | 164  | 36    |

Of the total 200 students about 4/5ths or 82 per cent are boys and only 18 per cent are girl students. The number of both boys and girls gradually diminishes as they reach the upper classes. The reasons for this gradual decrease in the number of students of both sexes in the higher classes are, as explained by the headmaster of the school, that many boys stop education because they are needed for work in the field. Many go to the English High school at Savar, and parents not wanting to send their grown-up girls to school stop their education. The social customs demand that women and girls should stay inside the bari and work in the family, and, men believe that women do not need more education. "After all", they say, "the girls will go away to their husband's

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\* The figures are from the School Register.



bari, and will cook and look after the family. They need only a little education." There are four teachers in the school - one headmaster and three assistant teachers. The headmaster and two other teachers are Matriculate, and one teacher is non-matriculate. The monthly salary scales at the moment range from Rs\* 104/00 to Rs 130/00, Rs 80/00 to Rs 100/00, Rs 55/00 to Rs 70/00 and Rs 60/00 to Rs 80/00 respectively for the headmaster and other three teachers.

### Religion.

All the inhabitants of Rajaghat are Moslems and belong to the Sunni sect. Most of the people profess a very strong belief in religious practices, like prayer, fasting, etc. In practice, however, many admitted that they did not offer prayer regularly or keep the fast during the month of Ramadan. It is believed by many in the village that the number of people offering prayer 5 times a day regularly or keeping the fast for 30 days in Ramadan is less today than it was 5 or 10 years ago. An informant told a true story about an event in the village. About 15 or 20 years ago a man went to a prostitute in Dacca. Going to a prostitute for sexual intercourse or adultery is considered a heinous crime from the point of view of religion. So, when it was known that he had been to a prostitute, the villagers almost beat him to death. The informant ended this story with a comment, "today people will criticise but will not beat a person if he goes to the prostitute, because people have become less religious." But they could not say why there was this decline in religious practices except that

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\* 13 ruppees = 1 sterling pound

"people are becoming less religious today" or "people are poorer and busier with their work;" when asked to give reasons for thinking that there is a decline in the observance of religious practices in actual life. The truth of the above statements on religious behaviour could not be confirmed or denied due to the lack of statistical information upon religious practice.

### THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### Union Council.

The Union Council (U.C.) in the rural areas is the lowest of the five-layer basic democracy in the country. Each Union Council consists of several wards; each ward represents one or more villages. The members of the Union Councils (and Union Committees in the urban areas) form the electoral college to vote for the Presidency of the country. Besides electing the President, the U.C. members have some civil and judiciary responsibilities on behalf of the government. The activities of the U.C. are financed from the tax money collected from the villagers and from a lump-sum granted by the Government. The tax-money is primarily spent on local policing by chorokidar/dafadar and for such items as building or repairing small roads or bridges etc., and to pay for the staff of the U.C. office. The lump-sum grant from the Government is spent mainly on development works like building big roads, digging canals or building store-houses, etc. There are nine members in the U.C. who are elected by the villagers. There is a president in the U.C. who presides over the U.C. meeting and the chief executive. Besides civil responsibilities of building or repairing roads and bridges, and looking after sanitation and rationing, the U.C. holds a civil court for

minor offences and as a co-ordinating body between the Government and the people.

Shalish Committee.

Besides the legally elected U.C. which is a part of the Government of the country, there is in the village a "Shalish Committee" ("shalish" - settlement) which consists of the leading members of the village. These leading members are called matbars and they represent a part or whole of one or more villages or kingroups. There is no constitution and no election of the "Shalish Committee" (S.C.). It is based on convention and popular support. There is no limit to the number of "members" in the Committee; but there are seven matbars who dominate the "Shalish Committee" and village affairs. Besides these seven matbars, there are other responsible people who are invited to sit in the "Shalish Committee" and help solve any disputes among the villagers. The persons who are economically better off, or of more prestige and intelligence are regarded as matbars and "members" of the Committee. The numerical strength of the Committee depends on the nature and type of the dispute or problem facing the S.C.; if it is a minor dispute between two brothers on a small property or between two neighbours over fights among their children, etc., one or two local/nearest matbar and the parties concerned can sit and settle it; but if it is a matter which concerns many people, then a larger "committee" is "convened". Ordinary village affairs like collecting subscriptions for the salary of the Imman of the village Mosque, or fixing the date of I'd etc., are settled in the Mosque after Friday prayer when most leading persons are present. A U.C. member is obviously a member of the S.C.

The S.C. looks after and runs/manages the village Mosque, graveyards and I'd ground, manages funeral and marriage feasts and marriage ceremonies, punishes those guilty of adultery or of small thefts like stealing a goat or chicken, or vegetables etc., and judges disputes arising out of the dividing of the family's property or demarcation of boundary lines between two plots of land of different owners. The punishments include boycott by the village, making the people confess their guilt and do such shameful things as touching their own ears with both hands and sitting and rising up in front of the matbars and other people. But it is generally admitted in the village that in legal matters the U.C. is more powerful than the S.C., but in religious and ritual matters the S.C. is more powerful than the U.C. The S.C. always acts, or wants to act, as the guardian for the preservation and maintenance of the honour and prestige of the village and its people. It acts as a body working for "our village".

There is a difference between the "Village-Panchyat" found in Hindu villages and this Shalish Committee. The village-panchayat or "a group of five" was primarily a product of the Hindu caste system and is much more rigid in its structure and organisation than the Shalish Committee.

#### FESTIVITIES AND "RECREATION"

The two religious occasions of I'd-ul-ajha and Bakr-I'd and the marriage ceremony are the only times in Rajaghat when people rejoice. During I'd people, specially children, put on a new dress; special dishes are prepared and relatives and friends are invited. The marriage ceremony, which lasts three

days from the beginning of "gae-holud", (smearing body with turmeric) is an occasion for happiness for everyone.

The word recreation has been put in quotation marks; the reason for this is that the word cannot be used in the same sense among the peasants in Rajaghat as it is used in western society. For the peasants of Rajaghat there is no recreation. There is no place to go and see or do something for recreation. When there is no work in the evening, at night, or in a season, people just sit and gossip over a hokka and idle away time. Sometimes, they sit in the tea-stall or in a shop and listen to the transistor, or take a cup of cheap tea and chat away time. Sometimes they pay a visit to the neighbours next door or in another part of the village, smoke a bididi or hokka, chew a pan and gossip. Conversation topics are mostly day-to-day farm work, rains or drought, and who has done good or bad in the village or who fights or who quarrels with whom. The conversation hardly includes subjects beyond the boundaries of the village. The villagers are not concerned with what is happening in foreign countries. The women spend time among women and men spend time among men and never vice versa.

#### GAMES AND SPORTS

Except for some local traditional games like kabadi and dariabandha, there are no games or sports whatsoever in the village. There are no playgrounds or "sports-body" or clubs. Kabadi and dariabandha are played only by the young boys, though it is said that kabadi is a popular game for the grown-up people. The girls and the women do not have any games or sports.

During the dry season when the water subsides and the farmlands become dry and remain unused, the boys play kabadi and daribandha. During the monsoon, there are no games in the village. During winter and summer, kite-flying is a popular sport among the boys.

In demographic characteristics, occupation, housing, dress, ornaments, food and food habits, health and sanitation, education, religion, and language, etc., Rajaghat seems to be a representative village in East Pakistan. 94.8 per cent of the total population of East Pakistan are rural and their main occupation is cultivation. Rice and jute are the main crops. Rice is the staple food of the people of East Pakistan. The general construction materials for building ghors in the province are tin, wood, bamboo, jute-sticks, and most of the ghors have mud floors. Bengali is the mother-tongue of the people and 80.4 per cent East Pakistanis are Moslems. In the province the percentage of literacy of both sexes is 17.6, and male literacy is 26.0 and female literacy is 8.6 of the total population. In the total population of East Pakistan 88.6 per cent of the total literates live in the rural areas, but the percentage of the literacy in the rural areas is 20.2, and in Rajaghat it is 20.83. In customs, beliefs and traditional behaviour, the people of Rajaghat have many more similarities with than differences from the rest of Moslem population of the province. Thus the village of Rajaghat may be taken as a representative village in East Pakistan.

CHAPTER IV

LAND TENURE AND THE PEASANT SOCIETY :

AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

## CHAPTER IV

### LAND TENURE AND THE PEASANT SOCIETY: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

#### INTRODUCTION

##### Self-Sufficient Village Communities.

Since time immemorial, "India has been called the land of villages"<sup>14</sup> which were 'self-sufficient' and were regarded as "little republics" by many writers. Over 95% of India's population was rural and used to live on a simple agricultural economy. Priests, artisans, barbers, cobblers, blacksmiths and other functional groups used to serve the villagers and received their "wages" in kind annually. "The idyllic life of the village flowed quietly, far from the noise and excitement of the centres of power where ministers of Empire, commanders of the armies, governors of the provinces, the Umrah and the Manshabdars (the noble men of the royal court) played their game of politics for high stakes."<sup>15</sup>

Sir (later Lord) Charles Metcalf, who was one of the ablest British Officials in India, was the British resident in Delhi from 1811 to 1814 A.D. His general observations in 1830 on the static nature of the village communities in India are very revealing and have become almost classical. He wrote:

"The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are masters in turn; but the village communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves; a hostile army passes through the country; the Village Community

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<sup>14</sup>L.S.S.O'Malley, India's Social Heritage, London, 1934, p.100.

<sup>15</sup>Tara Chand, Society and State in the Mughol Period, Faridabad (India), 1961, p.49.



collect their cattle within their walls, and lets the army pass unprovoked; if plunder and devastation is directed against themselves and the force employed is irresistible, they flee to friendly villages at a distance, but when the storm has passed over they return and resume their occupation. If a country remains for a series of years in the scene of continual pillage and massacre, so that the village cannot be inhabited, the villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceful possession revives. A generation may pass away but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the place of their fathers, the same site for the village, the same position for the houses, the same lands will be occupied by the descendants of those who were driven out before the village was depopulated; and it is not a trifling matter that will drive them out, for they will often maintain their post through times of disturbance and convulsion, and acquire strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success."<sup>16</sup>

Metcalf is not the only one whose descriptions have given us an accurate insight into the nature of the early village communities in India. Elphinstone, a British administrator in South India writing about the Deccan village communities gives us a similar picture of static life of the village. He wrote: "These communities contain in miniature all the materials of a State within themselves and are almost sufficient to their members if all other governments are withdrawn."<sup>17</sup> In his report of the census of the Punjab, 1881, Denzil Ibleston says,

"...such industries as are necessary to supply the simple needs of the village are prosecuted in the village itself. The Punjab village is self-sustaining, it grows its own food, it makes its own implements, moulds its own domestic vessels, its priests live within its walls, it does without a

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<sup>16</sup>Percival Spear, as quoted by Twilight of the Mughols,

Cambridge, 1951, p.117.

<sup>17</sup>Elphinstone's Report on the Deccan, etc. as quoted by Gadgil, The Industrial Revolution of India, London, 1924, p.10.

doctor, and looks to the outside world for a little more than its salt, its spices, the fine cloth for its holiday clothes, and the coin in which it pays its revenue."<sup>18</sup>

Not only in the Punjab did villagers satisfy their needs within the walls of the village, but over the entire face of India the village supplied almost everything its inhabitants needed.

#### Changing village scene.

Notwithstanding the passage of time, the village system in India and in Pakistan still continues to have many of the characteristics described by Manu. Even today, the village retains its semi-autonomous character. Invariably, it has one or a few recognized headmen or leaders with some duties and functions. Groups of two or more villages still join together to form an administrative and social unit; decide important cases, and discuss and settle issues of common interests. A hundred, a thousand villages constitute a 'culture area' or at least a 'sub-culture area' and a rural community within this region invariably has a number of common cultural characteristics and social norms and values.

But in spite of the 'self-sufficient' nature of the village communities it cannot be said that they have remained the same always and are timeless, changeless and static. True, interplay of historical and sociological factors and forces have all affected the structure, organization and ethos of village communities in many significant ways.

"Conquering legions have tramped backwards and forwards over the plains of India, and over her mountain ranges; but her peasants have ploughed their fields, administered their village business, worshipped their gods, and perpetuated

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<sup>18</sup> Denzil Ibbetson, Report of the Census of the Punjab, 1881, p.18, as quoted by Gadgil, ibid, p.II.

perpetuated their families as continuously as her sages have remained plunged in thought. Yet every change of dynasty, every conquering race, has left marks on the social and economic life of the people."<sup>19</sup>

Therefore though far away from the 'centres of power and politics' the social and economic life of the peasants did not remain unaffected.

"... The isolation which secured peaceful existence was not altogether a blessing. It is true that the villager watched with supreme indifference battles fought in his neighbourhood which decided the fate of his rulers. His aloofness merited the nemesis. For politics, however remote it might seem to be, is the architectonic factor of society. Its vicissitudes may not always affect radical change; but when they do, they may influence the entire way of life, for good or evil. Then those who stand apart and merely watch may find the ground under their feet swept away and the world of their ancestors laid in a heap of ruins around. Unfortunately, such a fate befell India time and again."<sup>20</sup>

#### Land Tenure: Zamindari and Royatwari System.

Most of the discussion, especially after the 'Vedic era', has been concerned with the land tenure problem in Bengal, though, where it was necessary, the problem has also been analysed on the basis of the whole of India. Two different systems of land tenure developed in India and they have to be explained in brief before the general discussion can proceed. The system of Zamindari developed in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and some parts of Madras, while the 'Royatwari' system prevailed in the rest of India.

During the reign of the Hindu and Moslem rulers in India in general and in Bengal in particular, the Zamindari

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<sup>19</sup>J.N.Dasgupta, Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, Calcutta, 1914, p.155.

<sup>20</sup>Chand, ibid, p.50.

was an office of revenue-collection, but during the British rule it became a right of proprietorship in land. Literally the term Zamindar means the guardian or owner of land (Zamin - land and "dar" - guardian or owner). In Northern India the term has got a different meaning. It means anyone who owns land. In the Punjab, to an increasing extent, the term also means a person who belongs to any of the castes or tribes specified as 'Statutory Agriculturists Act, 1901, which has been amended from time to time.

The term Rayot or Ryot has several connotations. It has been used to describe cultivators as a class of 'subjects' of a king or ruler. It may mean independent landholders, whose tenures are not subject to any limitations, and also tenants who hold only 'occupancy rights' under them. The first category of rayots come under the Rayot - wari system, and the second type under the Zamindari system, especially during the British rule.

The rulers of the country depended on the revenue from the land as the major and most important source of income and land was the main support of life to the peasants. The peasantry might not have been greatly affected directly by the wars and revolutions in the country, and the rise and fall of the dynasties, but their social and economic positions were greatly affected by the rulers' policies which directly or indirectly altered the system of land tenure and taxation. Land tenure has been a major force for the social as well as the physical mobility of the peasant families. Therefore, in order to be able to understand the social and economic conditions of the peasants, it is essential to know something

of the very long and complicated history of land tenure in the subcontinent. Village communities are no longer self-sufficient today. They are a part of the larger, organized economic and political structure of the country and affect and are affected by the latter.

In this chapter, attention has been focussed mainly on the nature and type of the ownership in land, state-peasant relationship, kinds of revenue and the methods of collection, the nature and constitution of the village, and the economic and social position of the peasantry in their historical perspective. The whole subject has been divided into four major sections, viz., India before the Moslem rule, the Moslem period, the British period and the post-independence conditions, in accordance with the chronological order of the history of land tenure and peasant India.

INDIA BEFORE THE MOSLEM RULE: THE VEDIC ERA, AND  
THE HINDU PERIOD

The condition in India before the Moslem rule may be studied in two periods, the Vedic and the Hindu.

THE VEDIC ERA

The first reference to village life in India is available in the Rig-Veda which is generally dated back to the latter half of the 2nd millennium B.C. The period roughly before 327 B.C., the year Alexander invaded India, is taken as Vedic Era.

The nature of the village organization.

According to the Rig-Vedic source, at the bottom there was the griha (family), Kula (dynasty), and then in an ascending order grama (village), Sib (clan), janata (people or nation) and above all, the Rashtra (state). A grama was an aggregation of several grihas sharing the same habitations; each grama was headed by a chief called gramin. But the Rig-Veda does not give any details regarding the internal structure and organization or the external affiliation of the grama. In post-Vedic literature, particularly in the great Hindu Epics there is a somewhat more detailed glimpse of the existing settlements. In the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata which dates back from the 2nd Century B.C. to the 2nd Century A.D., there are references to several types of habitations and settlements such as Ghosh or Vraja (cattlefarm), palli (small hamlet), durga (fort), grama (village), which developed round the durga, pattan (town), and nagar (city).

In the Mahabharata we get an outline of the village

system and the inter-village organization. The village was the fundamental unit of administration and the head of the village was the gramin, the same title as we find in the Rig-Veda. He was the leader, chief spokesman and protector of the village. The gramin was responsible for the protection of the village and its boundaries in all directions within a radius of two miles. The administrative system was organized on the basis of the grouping of the village, each 'group' having its own recognized leader. The grouping of the villages was done in the following way: the first unit of inter-village organization was composed of ten villages and it was under a ruler called das-gramin (das-ten); two units of 20 villages were under the administration of Vimsatipa (vim - twenty), 100 villages were under sot-gramin (sot - hundred) or gram - sotadhykshya, and a group of 1,000 villages were under an adhipati or king.

Manu (the famous Hindu law giver) distinguishes three kinds of villages, namely grama, pura (town) and nagar (city). Probably Manu has defined a village (grama) as a group of inhabitants who live and work in a geographical area. In Manu's description, too, we find the title of gramin as the head of the village. Apart from the different spheres of socio-religious life in which the families, clan, caste, and the village were all equally interested, the village as a unit had a number of responsibilities of its own. Thus the maintenance and management of several public utilities such as wells, tanks, ponds, reservoirs, embankments, cow-pens, groves, parks and pastures were under the village chief. An approximate total of 1,000 villages constituted the country, and in a country there were sub-divisions of 100,

20 and 10 villages which were under sota, vimsi, dasi and gramim rulers and protectors.<sup>21</sup>

### THE HINDU PERIOD

#### The sources of information.

The materials available for the reconstruction of the economic and social history of ancient Bengal are extremely meagre. No such documents as the Domesday Book, the Court Rolls, the Guild Rolls and the craft ordinances and statutes on which a student of the early economic history of England depends for his study existed in Bengal. There were some fragmentary information from archaeology, occasional notices contained in literature, the accounts of foreign travellers and historians, and inscriptions on plates which help to inform us about the economic life of Bengal in ancient times. A large number of inscriptions of Gupta and the post Gupta period (roughly between 500 to 800 A.D.) reveal<sup>22</sup> the existence of a class of record keepers (pustokpalas): pustok (book) and pal (keeper) attached to the district and village headquarters who used to maintain records of lands with their boundaries, demarkations and titles, etc., but these records are no longer available. In Bengal documents were kept parallel to the authoritative field-to-field, or cadastral, surveys and their accompanying record of holdings and rentals.

#### The Nature of the Village.

According to the above-mentioned sources it is known that villages in ancient Bengal were of the 'nucleated type' and not of the 'single farm type.'<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup>cf. S.C. Dube, Indian Village, London, 1955, pp. 1-5.

<sup>22</sup>cf. P.C. Chakravarty, "Economic Conditions" in History of Bengal, edited by R.C. Majumdar, London, , p.642.

<sup>23</sup>cf. Ibid, p.643.



There were three well-defined parts of a village, e.g., village settlement or habital (vasta), arable land (kshetra), and natural meadow land or go-chara (go - cow and chara - field) which provided pasture for live-stock. Besides these, there were also pits, canals and tanks, temples, cattle-tracks, ordinary roads and paths. In some villages there were woodlands or jungles from which people gathered firewood and litter.

#### The Ownership of Land.

"Land was the bed-rock of ancient Bengal's political economy. It was the main source of wealth and the chief support of life."<sup>24</sup> Most of the copper plates of the pre-gupta and gupta regimes of the Hindu Period refer to the gift of waste lands for pious purposes. The estates thus created by gift were marked off from the neighbouring holdings. Boundary marks and charcoal marks demarcated the areas where no such natural boundaries existed.

#### The Ownership and distribution of Land.

It is known from the contemporary documents that the holdings were governed by a tenure-law called "Nivi-dharma" by which the "purchaser", or the person or institution on whose behalf the land was transferred after "purchase", obtained the right of perpetual enjoyment, but not of further alienation by sale, or mortgage. In other words, "the state, although it sold away plots of land out of the un-appropriated waste, still reserved to itself certain rights over the property, and the purchaser or the donee was allowed only usufructuary right over the land."<sup>25</sup> But it could not be ascertained

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p.645.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, p.646.

whether all holdings in the country were regulated by the law of nivi-dharma. And it was also not definitely known whether lands alienated by gift in the form of tenure were rent free, or, as Dr. Ghosal says, "Were liable to a progressive enhancement of revenue, till the normal rate was reached."<sup>26</sup> But it is known that in such cases the assignee enjoyed a privilege of immunity from taxation. It is found in the Arthashastra of Kautilya (Book II and Chapter 1 quoted by P.C.Chakravarty) that these holdings were created for pious purposes, and the age-old tradition of this country has been to regard pious endowments as rent free.<sup>27</sup>

During the Palas, Senas, and other contemporary Hindu Dynasties ranging from 800 to 1,200 A.D., the pious endowments were of a different character, i.e., these were made by kings in favour of temples, priests, and Brahmans with immunity from all taxes; moreover, these types of donees could receive all those taxes in kind and cash which the cultivators in the alienated villages had hitherto paid to the sovereign. In some of the subsequent grants this list of immunities and privileges is further supplemented by the addition of other concessions such as 'the rent of temporary tenants and the prohibition of entrance by regular and irregular troops.'

Therefore it seems obvious that these were grants in perpetuity, rent free and accompanied with the assignment of all revenues accruing to the crown. What is not obvious, however, is whether they made over to the donee merely the state-share of the produce and other state-rights in the land alienated, or conveyed to him the proprietorship of the land

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<sup>26</sup>U.N. Ghoshal, Agrarian System in Ancient India, Calcutta, 1930, p.41.

<sup>27</sup>cf. Chakravarty, ibid, p.10.

as well, that is made him an out and out gift of both soil and revenue. If the latter was the case, it would involve either of two assumptions - that the king was regarded as the ultimate owner of the soil or that he made the grants out of what may be called the royal demesne. It may be that the bulk of these grants transferred gave to the donee merely the right to receive the royal share of the produce; they were not intended to deprive any existing landholder of his right; in other words, they did not convey a title to the land itself. Sometimes the land donated already belonged by right of "purchase" to the donee, for whose support revenue charges were remitted. In such cases, land became what may be described as "free-hold." But it must be borne in mind that this kind of beneficial tenure never covered more than a fraction of the total agricultural land in the country. It is a matter of opinion what rights the bulk of the cultivators possessed in the soil. The copper-plate charters show that some of the cultivators were non-proprietary or exproprietary tenants and they had to pay various kinds of taxes and local cesses. But besides the payment of taxes and cesses, the holding of land seems to have entailed various other obligations, in the form of 'chata' and 'bhata'. The term 'chata' might have included the provision of food on the occasion of a king or high official visiting the locality. The other term 'bhata' seems to refer to certain services which the cultivators had to render occasionally to an army such as provision of quarters and supply of food or labour.<sup>28</sup> It must be remembered that these were not regular taxes, but customary dues paid on specific occasions. "On the other

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<sup>28</sup> cf. Ibid.

hand, the land-grants indicate that the possession of land carried with it certain privileges. These included the right to everything under the ground and above it, such as mines, wood, bush and trees including fruits. The right may have extended to the use of adjoining water, i.e. tanks or rivers and fishing therein."<sup>29</sup>

#### The Concept of the ownership of land.

The concept of the 'ownership of land' in India was shrouded in controversy and confusion for a long time. Who was the owner of land? Some writers said it was the king, but others maintained that the king was not the owner. This is a crucial question in the history of peasant-India, the answer to which, I think, cannot be dichotomised into yes or no. Rather the answer should be found, firstly, in the explanation of the meaning of the term 'ownership' in land, and, secondly, in a qualitative enquiry into the extent to which and the sense in which the king was the owner of the land in the country.

The concept of the right of ownership in land both in ancient and medieval India was understood in the context of right to the revenue on land, and the right to possess, use and transfer the land to the legal inheritors. The king had the right to the revenue on land, by virtue of his position as the administrator and protector of the country. The king, therefore, was the 'owner of soil' in so far as his 'right of ownership' was confined only to his claim to the revenue on land. He had, of course, undisputed right of ownership on such lands as were called unused, or waste, which he could on his own either make over as a gift to

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p.11.

some temples for religious reasons, or give to some revenue collectors or military commanders for their services, or use to build his palace, capital, etc., or give to new settlers who were ready to pay revenue. The peasants had the perpetual right of possession and use of land. Anyone could clear a plot of land and get the 'right' to use it by the payment of revenue to the king. The right of the peasants to the possession and use of land rested on the regular payment of the revenue claimed by the king as the administrator of the country and protector of the citizens. The amount of revenue varied from time to time and under different rulers who used to collect revenue through revenue-collectors and paid them either a share of revenue or the right to use some land as their commission. The revenue-collectors had the right to use such commission-lands only as long as they held their office of revenue-collectors; but by no means could they be perpetual owners of such commission -"estates", and they could neither transfer, sell nor dispose of such lands. Professor A.K.Nazmul Karim says: "In India the king did not in theory, create subordinate owners of land because he himself was not, in theory, the supreme owner of land. What he delegated to his intermediaries was only the specific and individual right of "Zamin", i.e., the revenue-collecting power."<sup>30</sup> Some of the Indian writers like Dr.Radha Kumud Mukherjee and Sabara Avami are also in agreement with such a view as has been expressed by Professor Karim in the above quotation. Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee quoting many ancient texts said: "We find that the law laid down by Jamim in his Purva-Mimansa (VI, 7, 3), states that the king cannot give away the earth because it is not his exclusive property but

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<sup>30</sup> A.K.Nazmul Karim, Changing Society in India and Pakistan, Dacca, 1961, p.49.

is common to all beings enjoying the fruits of their own labour on it. It belongs to all alike...."<sup>31</sup> Sabara Avami held the view that "the king cannot make a gift of his kingdom, for it is not his, as he is entitled only to a share of the produce by reason of his affording protection to his subjects."<sup>32</sup> In the Laws of Manu it is said that a field belonged "to him who cut away the wood, or who cleared and tilled it, and a deer to him who owned the arrow which first struck it."<sup>33</sup>

The second question which arises in the context of the ownership in land and has to be answered is whether ownership of land belonged to the individual family or to the whole village community. This is a controversial question and writers on land tenure and agrarian problems of India have differed on this. Most of the writers, however, are of the view that the farming lands belonged to individual families, but the "common" grazing and unoccupied and unused lands were "owned" and used by the whole village or community. In the farming lands the ownership was individual and not communal. Shelvankar maintains: "cultivation itself does not appear

to have been, in the historic period at all events, carried on by the collective labour of the village peasantry. The fields were broken up into holdings, each ploughed and sown and reaped by one of the families resident in the village with the help of labour of the members of the family and cattle belonging to them. And over these lands each family has a hereditary claim, and these separate family claims on holdings were unequal in the area."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee, as quoted by Allahabad (India), 1948, p.64.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Laws of Manu, Chapter IX, p.V-44, as quoted by Baden-Powell, ibid, p.206.

<sup>34</sup>K.S.Shelvankar, Problems of India, London, 1942, p.74.

Authorities like U.N. Ghosal, Radhakamal Mukherjee and Baden-Powell hold the above view but Sir Henry Sumner Maine and Emile de Lavebye are opposed to it. U.N.Ghosal, who is regarded as an established authority, on the land system of ancient India says: "It appears that the private ownership of land was an established institution among the Indo-Aryans in the oldest times to which their history can be traced."<sup>35</sup> To elaborate and clarify this point Ghosal further states:

"Now it is the relatively advanced stage of social evolution that the Vedic Aryans are found to occupy at the dawn of their history. Regarding the early forms of property in land, while the view made classical by Sir Henry Sumner Maine and Emile de Lavebye maintained collective ownership to have preceded the individual ownership, it was authoritatively held in later times that individual ownership was the oldest form of property, while very recently it has been argued that complex conditions of primitive communities preclude the fixing of convenient levels like 'communistic' and 'individualistic' to their idea of property. However that may be, the evidence of the Rig Veda Samhita shows that among the Indo-Aryans at any rate, arable land was held in individual or family ownership, while communal ownership was probably confined only to grass-lands lying on the boundaries of the field."<sup>36</sup>

To quote Radha Kamal Mukherjee who holds the same view:

"..... the extent of communal control and ownership of land probably applied to what was 'no-man's land'; the grass-land which served to separate one plot from another and was used as village common for purposes of pasture for cattle."<sup>37</sup>

The last but important point that must be clarified

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<sup>35</sup>Ghoshal, ibid, p.82.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, pp. 81-82.

<sup>37</sup>Radha Kamal Mukherjee, quoted by P.K.Roy in Agricultural Economics of Bengal, Calcutta, 1947, p.186.

before discussion on the Hindu Period is closed is the one of whether the right of ownership in land in ancient and medieval India meant the same as is meant in modern times by the concept of the private right of ownership. Prof. Karim<sup>38</sup> and Tara Chand think the right of ownership in land should be understood in a very restricted sense. Peasants could possess, use and transfer lands to legal inheritors, but they could not sell or alienate. Tara Chand maintains: "Property in land was hardly known; hence there was no market for land, and therefore mortgage, sale and alienation of land were a rare phenomenon."<sup>39</sup> Therefore it is possible to conclude that the concept of 'private right of ownership in land as it is understood in modern times was not to be found in ancient and medieval India and should be understood rather in a restricted sense.

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<sup>38</sup> Karim, ibid, pp. 40-41

<sup>39</sup> Chand, ibid, p.48.



### THE MOSLEM PERIOD

The basic principles underlying the concept of the rights of ownership in land, as had been found in India before the Moslem rule, remained unchanged all through the Moslem administration and lasted till the end of it; the crown had the 'right to revenue' as the ruler of the country and the peasants had the 'right of perpetual use of land' as the possessors of it, so long as they paid revenue to the monarch or ruler. But there were changes in the methods of collection and in the kind of taxes during the Moslem rule which lasted for about five hundred and fifty years from the beginning of the 13th century to the middle of the 18th century A.D. Mohammedan rulers came from outside India and settled down in the subcontinent. The whole period of the Moslem rule in India can be divided into two parts - Pre-Mughol and Mughol which covered roughly from 1200 to 1576 A.D., and 1576 A.D. to 1757 A.D. respectively. Both before, during and after the Moslem rule in India, Bengal experienced different developments in the kind of tenure and taxation as well as in the nature and type of village organization from the rest of India, especially from Northern India.

### THE PRE-MUGHOL PERIOD

Revenue on land was based on the estimate of the produce and was not determined by the measurement of land. This estimate varied with seasons and crops and consequently the amount of revenue on land also varied from time to time. There were not as many changes in taxation and tenure in the pre-Mughol Moslem rule as there were during Mughol rule in India. The systematic survey of lands, categorizing them into good, middling and inferior types, and fixation of revenue in the

yearly estimate of crops on different kinds of land began under Sher-Shah (1540-45 A.D.). Sher Shah made the state's demand of revenue on land free from fluctuations on the basis of the average yield of one bigha of land under different crops.<sup>40</sup> The changes brought in by Sher-Shah are the only notable features in the history of tenure and taxation during the pre-Mughol period.

### THE MUGHOL PERIOD

#### Land distribution and revenue collection.

Started by Sher-Shah, "The 'system' was carried to a high degree of perfection by the Mughol Emperor Akbar with the aid of his able Minister Todar Mall in 1592. It was founded on a detailed survey of the resources, ownership and qualities of land, of the area cultivated and the crops grown. It was administered by a body of officials and checked by them."<sup>41</sup> Bengal was divided into 19 sarkars and sarkars were again sub-divided into a number of mahals and parganas (or revenue estates). Todar Mall's system of revenue and land-tenure continued unaffected for over 70 years in Bengal. The Second Mughol Revenue Settlement called the "Improved Rent Rolls" was drawn up in 1682 when Akbar's great-grandson Aurangzeb was on the throne of Delhi and Aurangzeb's brother, Sultan Shuja, was the Viceroy of Bengal. According to this 'settlement;' the original 19 Sarkars created by Todar Mall during Akbar's rule were broken up into 34 Sarkars. Subsequently there was a development of the Zamindari-estates for the collection of revenue in Bengal. "Later we find that Todar Mall's 'Settlement' as well as that of Sultan Shuja was obscured by the rise of the 55 great Zamindari estates of the

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<sup>40</sup> cf. Radha Kumal Mukherjee, Indian Land System, (Appendix to Report of the Bengal Land Revenue Commission), Calcutta, 1940, p.171.

<sup>41</sup> M. Azizul Haque, The Man Behind the Plough, Calcutta, 1939, p.171.

eighteenth century and also by the rigorous revenue assessment made by Murshid Kuli Khan (the then Nawab of Bengal) in his "Jumma Kamal Tumaru" or "Complete Rent Roll of 1772", when the administrative division called the chakala was created and the whole of Bengal's revenue administration was divided into 13 chakalas in place of the 34 sarkars of Sultan Shuja's settlement of 1658."<sup>42</sup> It has been stated before that the cultivators had the right of possession, use and transfer of land as long as they paid the revenue to the state. The amount of revenue was one-sixth of the produce throughout the greater part of Hindu rule in India, but during the Mughol rule revenue was raised to one-third.<sup>43</sup>

The Mughol rulers in the very beginning imposed two kinds of taxes: Ji jia on people and Khiraj on land. Those who could pay both these taxes could retain hereditary rights on their land. In the failure of payment of either or both of these taxes, the lands would be forfeited to the Crown and given to people who promised to pay the revenue. Jijia was a tax to be paid by the 'unfaithfuls' i.e., by the non-Moslem; that is only the non-Moslem had to pay both Khiraj and Jijia for the possession, use, disposal, and transfer of lands. Under the Mughol rule one-third of the produce on land was fixed as Khiraj but some later Moslem rulers in Delhi like Alauddin Khilji made half of the produce on land as Khiraj.<sup>44</sup>

During Akbar's time (which remains to be discussed) tenure and collection of taxes were systematized and reorganized, In

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<sup>42</sup>Karim, The Modern Muslim Political Elite in Bengal, unpublished thesis, 1964, p.39.

<sup>43</sup>cf. Radha Kamal Mukherjee, Ibid, p.152.

1571 lands of the country were properly measured. Lands were divided into four categories; "Polez", land which could be used for cultivation only every two years; "chichor", land which became useless for a period of three or four years due to floods or any other cause; and, finally, "Bonjor" land which could be used every five years after it had remained unused. The first three categories were again divided into good, middling, and land of inferior qualities. The peasants could pay their taxes either in cash or in kind. This system of division of lands continued for fifteen years. Thereafter, around 1586 A.D. revenues were payable in cash only. "Ain-e-Akbari" (laws of Akbar) written by Abul Fazal (a member of the Royal Court and a close friend to Akbar) gives a detailed description of the system of tenure and taxation during the Mughol rule.

No Middle Men - Zamindari is an Office, not a Right of Ownership in land.

The important point to be borne in mind is that there were no middlemen between the state and the peasants during the pre-Moslem period; we do not find the emergence of the middlemen between the state and the cultivators during the Mughol administration, until the last quarter when the Delhi authorities became weak and regional chiefs and Zamindars became powerful and independent of the central political authority. It has been mentioned before that the Hindu Kings appointed state officials for the collection of revenue and paid them a share of the revenue as their commission of service. These officials bore different titles

like Chowdhury, Deshmukh, etc., at different places. Till the end of the Mughol rule, the Zamindars, and Jaigirdars employed by the Crown were mere 'collectors of revenue' on behalf of the State and never the proprietors of land. The position and responsibility of the Zamindars under the Mughol rulers as described by Haque were as follows: "In the Mughol revenue administration, the Zamindar was thus an agent of the Emperor for making due collection on behalf of the Emperor and was remunerated with a percentage out of his collections for his labour. The term "zamindar" is a later development in the land system of the country (meaning a proprietary class during the British rule). In the "A'yeen-i-Akbari

he (the Zamindar) was the 'AmalGuzar, or the collector of revenue and he was directed 'to annually assist the husbandman with the loans of money and revenue payments at distant and convenient periods - necessarily without interest which was unknown in Islamic law. Certain allotments of land were usually given to him rent free for his maintenance known as naukar, and there was then plenty of land which was uncultivated, fallow and unoccupied."<sup>45</sup>

Therefore it is obvious that chowdhury and deshmukh during the Hindu rule and Zamindar during the Mughol rule were office-holders, and not proprietors of land; only during the British administration did the title of 'Zamindar' become a proprietary right in land as well as an office for the payment of a large sum revenue to the State. This will be discussed in detail in the section under the "British Period." It is only towards the end of the Mughol rule that we find the regional Zamindars growing powerful and beginning to collect revenue as independent rulers. Though

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<sup>45</sup>Haque, ibid, p.214, (underlined words are the student's own).

Jaigirdars were responsible for the collection of revenue, they were actually military commanders who were given lands in return for their services, which included collection of revenue, providing troops, and war materials, and fighting in war for the Emperor. In the middle of the seventeenth century a French traveller, Francois Bernier, visited the Mughol Court in Delhi and wrote a book on the political, economic and social conditions of India under Mughol rule. He said about Jaigirdars:

"The King makes over a certain quantity (of land) to military men as an equivalent for their pay; and this grant is called jab-ghir or as in Turkey, the timar; the word jah-ghir signifying the spot from which to draw, or the place of salary. Similar grants are made to the governors in lieu of certain sums annually to the King out of any surplus revenue that the land may yield."<sup>46</sup>

These Jaigirdars used to collect revenue with the help of Sepahis (soldiers). Under the new methods of collection of revenue the former Hindu village structure was changed.

W.K. Firminger observes: "In certain parts of Bengal ... extreme doctrine of Islam may at times have been put into force, and the disappearance in Bengal, as compared with other provinces, of some vestiges of Hindu village may perhaps be accounted for in this way."<sup>47</sup> Reverend J. Long

maintained the same view and he says: "The Mussalmans when

they came to Bengal, acting on feudal principles, were opposed to that beautiful system of village government which had long been a tower of strength to the ryots; instead of it a military tenure was adopted and the revenues were collected by Sepahis. The Zamindar was a semi-military collector of revenue, which was

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<sup>46</sup> Francois Bernier, Travels in the Mughal Empire, (1656-1668 A.D) translated and annotated by Archibold Constable (1891), Second edition revised by V.A.Smith (1914), London, 1941, p.129.

<sup>47</sup> W.K. Firminger, "Introduction" to the Fifth Report, Calcutta, 1917, p.XXIV.

realized at the point of sword, a practice adopted even by the English when they first took possession of Burdawan, Birburn and Nuddea."<sup>48</sup>

Though Reverend Long's general contention about a change in the method of collection is true, it is highly controversial whether revenue was collected in all cases 'at the point of Sword' either in the Mughol period or during the beginning of the British rule in Bengal.

#### Land Tenure - Europe and India.

Writing on the differential developments of the system of land tenure and revenue collection adopted from Europe by India, Max Weber maintains in his book "The Religion of India", that while in Europe 'the system' took the shape of the 'fief', in India it became 'prebend', that is, the large army of people who became 'Zamindars', and Jaigirdars were merely collectors of revenue on behalf of the State and could remain so only as long as they held their office of revenue collection. Weber writes: "In India, as in the orient

generally, a characteristic seignior developed rather out of tax farming and the military and the tax prebends of a far more bureaucratic state. The oriental seignior therefore remained in essence a "prebend" and did not become a "fief"; not feudalization, but prebendalization of the patrimonial state occurred."<sup>49</sup>

Max Weber found out the explicit similarity of the purpose of the administration of both the Hindu and Moslem Kings. The rulers in both those administrations were mainly interested in the building up of large armies for the protection of their

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<sup>48</sup>Rev. J. Long, Selection from the Unpublished Records for the Years 1748 - 1767, Vol.I, Calcutta, p.IV.

<sup>49</sup>Max Weber, The Religion of India, 1960, p.71.

monarchy and in the collection of taxes to pay for the troops and maintain their sovereignty; they collected this revenue, as said before, with the help of paid officials. Max Weber further maintains: " .... Hindu Kings confined the interests

of administration essentially to two objectives: the raising of manpower for the army and tax collection. Particularly under the Mughols, the administration increasingly sought to secure both objectives by means of stipulation of taxes in lump sums and prebendalization. A military probendary assumed the obligation of forming a definite contingent. For this purpose, they were leased the respective tax yields for soldiers' pay, rations, and other necessities. This led to the establishment of Jaigir - prebends which were obviously modelled after the ancient temple and Brahminical prebends. When invested with the right of disposition of waste land, the Jaigirdar easily turned into a landlord even though the origin of the right was politico-military.

"The King gathered his taxes by farming out their collection or leasing them as prebend for payment of fixed lump sums. The tax farmers developed into a class of landlords known as Zamindars (in Bengal) and Talukdara (particularly in Oudh). They became true landlords only when the British administration held them liable for tax assessment, treating them for this reason as 'proprietors.'"<sup>50</sup>

#### Differential development in Bengal.

A differential development of land-tenure and revenue took place in Bengal, as distinct from the rest of India. To understand this, it is essential to discuss briefly the

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<sup>50</sup>Weber, ibid, pp. 68-69.



political developments in Bengal. The Mughol rule was preceded by the Pathan rule in Bengal. During the Pathan rule and subsequently under the Mughol rule, Bengal had twelve powerful regional rulers who were called Baro- (twelve) Bhuijans who under pressure gave a large sum as "revenue" to the central authority but otherwise ruled as independent chiefs. Sometimes they stopped paying "tax" or "tribute." Sometimes they would even revoke allegiance to the central authority. Sometimes, the Delhi authority had to be satisfied with only verbal allegiance from them. Bengal, as a whole, was never under any central authority for any length of time. The term 'Bhuiyan' has probably come from the word "Chowmic" or "ruler of land." The Baro-Bhuiyans had their own armies, fortresses, navies and police and succeeded in maintaining peace and order within their own 'territory' and repelling aggression from outside. They had their own officials for the collection of revenue. Because of the unique geographical conditions of innumerable rivers, treacherous swamps and marshy lands, it was extremely difficult for the Delhi rulers to conduct wars against any rebellion in Bengal; therefore, Delhi rulers never succeeded in imposing complete political control over the Baro-Bhuiyans in Bengal. Thus, some or all of them, at the same or different times, were independent of Delhi. When the Delhi rulers or these Baro-Bhuiyans became weak, the revenue officials or tax farmers became "owners" of the estates and took over the power of the collection of revenue. The Baro-Bhuiyans in Bengal were not tax-collectors or Zamindars on behalf of the state, about which there has been some

discussion in a previous paragraph. The Baro-Bhuiyans were independent or semi-independent rulers who ruled their "territory" accepting or rejecting Delhi's sovereignty over them. Sometimes, one or more of the Baro-Bhuiyans only owed allegiance to Delhi in name but did not pay any revenue or tax as tribute to the Emperor. Professor Karim makes the following observation on the position of the Baro-Bhuiyans in Bengal:

"Here, possibly we have to make a distinction between the revenue collectors called the "Zamindars" and the semi-independent or independent chiefs called the "Baro-Bhuiyans". It seems that the Bhuiyans captured political power with the decline and fall of the Pathan administration, and set up their small kingdoms. They in their turn appointed revenue collectors who in course of time themselves turned into "owners" of the estates due to the political vicissitudes, and the decline of the power of the Bhuiyans."<sup>51</sup>

Murzhid Kuli Khan and other Nawabs preceding the British rule in Bengal tried to systematize the methods of collection of revenue but they failed to make any change in the existing system. However, they succeeded in increasing the revenue in order to meet their growing financial needs as well as those of the central authority and collected the increased revenue under different heads, viz., "nozranas", "jarmuthot", etc. Time and again the tax-farmers and Zamindars collected much more revenue from the peasants than they were officially entitled to, and they misappropriated the extra amount. As a result, the economic condition of the peasants in general deteriorated. The phase of the revenue administration during the Mughol rule in Bengal has been described by Atul

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<sup>51</sup>Karim, ibid, p.37.

Chandra Guha in his "A Brief Sketch of the Land System of Bengal"; as "the excessive growth of the system of farming

which marked the later days of the Empire after the death of Aurangzeb. As the authority of the Mughol emperor grew less and less, the local governors of Bengal became more and more independent of the court of Delhi. They also became careless of the details of administration, and the official organization for the control of the land revenue disappeared. The farmers became masters of the situation and were allowed, on payment of the stipulated sum, to appropriate the revenue for themselves and to do as they liked with the tenants. They were not slow to take advantage of a tottering administration and fortify their positions till they developed into great landlords, whose pretensions gradually extended to the ownership of the soil." <sup>52</sup>

In his "Tagore Lectures" in 1874-75, Arthur Phillips describes in brief the influence of Mughol administration on the village community:

".... the village communities ceased to develop and tended to decay under Mohammedan rule. ....

.... We find that Zamindars did arise and become powerful in Mohammedan times, displacing to a great extent the village headman; the village fiscal administration fell into decay, and its growth and development were arrested.... The village community appears to have gradually sunk, and to have lost its importance as a fiscal unit, although it may have retained and, perhaps, intensified its social importance." <sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Atul Chandra Guha, A Brief Sketch of the Land System of Bengal, Calcutta, 1915, p.72.

<sup>53</sup>Arthur Phillips, Tagore's Law Lectures, as quoted by Karim, ibid, p.19.

### THE BRITISH PERIOD

The battle of Plassey between the forces of the Nawab of Bengal and the East India company in 1757, decided the fate of India for the next 200 years. The victory of the company's forces heralded the beginning of the British rule, first, in Bengal, and, then gradually, over most of India. The impact of 200 years' of British rule on the socio-economic and political life of the people is greater than that of the previous few thousand years. The introduction of proprietary rights in land and the establishment of the zamindary class were some of the basic changes which affected the whole social structure of the society. Land-revenue was the chief source of income for the state and the government was seriously concerned for its regular collection. But the economic conditions of the peasantry deteriorated for, firstly, they could not understand nor could they safeguard their own interests against different acts and laws that were occasionally passed. Secondly, the vast number of middlemen responsible for revenue-collection, on behalf of the state and, between the state and the peasants, exploited every opportunity to collect more than the officially determined amount and misappropriated it. In the following section an attempt will be made to enquire into the system of land tenure under the rule of the East India company and the British Crown. This period stretched from 1757 to 1857 and from 1857 to 1947 respectively.

LAND TENURE DURING THE COMPANY'S RULE

Power to collect revenue and to rule.

After their victory at Plassey, the East India (E.I.) Company took over the control of the revenue-collection of Bengal, Bihar and Oudh, but the responsibility for the maintenance of peace and order remained with the successive Nawabs who were merely puppets of the Company and who had practically no power and resources to do their job properly. This system of administration in Bengal which is known as the "Dual-Rule" continued till 1765. Then, eight years after the battle of Plassey, the ruling Nawab of Bengal, Nazmuddullah, and the Emperor Shah Alam at Delhi decided to hand over the Dewani (the power and authority of revenue-collection as well as of police administration) to the East India Company if the latter agreed to pay an annual revenue of 5.4 million and 2.6 million rupees to both of them respectively. The E.I. Company agreed to pay and thus took over the right of administration and revenue-collection. The news that the Company collected an annual revenue of 14 million rupees led the British Government to pass a law (Act of Parliament, April, 1769) which made the Company pay 4 million rupees annually as tax to His Majesty's Government. The Company increased the revenue on land and used all means to collect it in time. The economic condition of the people became worse, which, added to drought and other natural calamities, occasioned the first famine in the history of Bengal. This is known as the Great Famine of 1770 A.D. (1176 B.S.) in which about 2 million died.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>cf. W.W.Hunter, Annals of Rural Bengal, London, 1868, p.418.

Hastings Reforms.

It was in 1772 at the end of this calamity that Lord Warren Hastings came to Bengal as the Governor General. Right away he set about reforming the system of land tenure and revenue. In the first phase of his reform, the salaries of the revenue collectors and their assistants were immediately increased. This was followed, in the second phase, by a new method of revenue-collection under a five-years' contract known as the Quinquennial settlement of 1777. The amount of revenue was decided in auction and the highest bidders won the contract. As a result, many old Zamindars or revenue-collectors lost their office, and many new collectors were installed who promised to pay more. One of the main defects of the five-years' contract system was that it did not define the relationship between the Zamindars and the farmers; moreover, the amount of revenue decided in auction was neither uniform nor just in all cases. Many contractors failed to collect and pay fixed amounts of revenue; the main sufferers were the farmers who had to pay much more than ever before. Indeed, the five-years settlement scheme failed. At the end of the settlement Hastings continued this policy of land reform with yearly settlement of contract for over twelve years till 1789. Each time many old Zamindars lost their office and new ones emerged, and the farmers payed more and more. After all this chaos and confusion, Hastings appointed a commission and at the recommendation of the commission he abolished the former Provincial Revenue Committees, and, instead, appointed Metropolitan Revenue Committees. These, in turn, recommended that the Zamindars be given the possession of the right to ownership in land. "This committee . . . . recommended that

the plan most convenient and secure for the government and the best for Raiyats and the country is, in general, to leave the lands with the Zamindars making settlement with them."<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, the British Parliament passed a law (1784) to inquire into the rights of the Zamindars, Talukdars and the Jaigirdars. They wished to estimate how much revenue was paid by them to the Company. Also they wished to discover if the people, whose rights of ownership were abolished, could be paid any compensation. On the other hand, the Board of Directors of the company in London proposed a ten-years' settlement with the revenue-collectors, at the same time preserving the rights of others. But the real intent of the Board of Directors was to achieve a permanent settlement on the basis of the old settlement. Lord Cornwallis came to India in the autumn of 1789 bringing these proposals and suggestions.

#### Lord Cornwallis' Permanent Settlement.

Finally, under Lord Cornwallis, a ten-year settlement came into force in an act under regulation 8 of 1790. But Cornwallis personally wanted to extend the settlement beyond the ten years tenure. He sought to make it permanent. This was also the desire of the Company. Cornwallis wrote to the Board of Directors in London for their official blessing. But British Cabinet Ministers, like John Shore, were not in favour of the permanent settlement proposal by Lord Cornwallis. After two years of deliberation and discussion, the Board of Directors at last were able to approve Cornwallis' proposal for a permanent settlement in land tenure. Accordingly, Cornwallis declared the previous

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<sup>55</sup>Baden-Powell, Land System of British India, Vol.I, p.397.

for a permanent settlement in land tenure. Accordingly, Cornwallis declared the previous 'ten-years' settlement as the Permanent Settlement on the 22nd March, 1793. The declaration stated, "The Governor-General in Council

accordingly declares to the Zamindars, independent Taludars and other actual proprietors of land, with or on behalf of whom a settlement has been completed that at the expiration of the term of settlement (i.e., the Ten Years Settlement) no alteration will be made in the assessment which they have respectively engaged to pay, but that they and their heirs and lawful successors will be allowed to hold their estates as such assessments for ever."<sup>56</sup>

In Section 8 of Regulation I of the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, Lord Cornwallis promised that, "It being the

duty of the Ruling Power to protect all classes of people and more particularly those who from their situation are most helpless, the Governor-General will, whenever he may deem it proper, enact such regulations as he may think necessary for the protection and welfare of the dependent Talukdars and Raiyots and other cultivators of the soil."<sup>57</sup>

The purpose of this regulation was to protect the cultivators from the oppression of the Zamindars, on the one hand, and on the other, to ensure the safe-collection of revenues from the cultivators by the Zamindars. It was thought that the exchange of "Patra" or document between the Zamindars and the Raiyots was essential, to ensure that the Zamindars could not collect more than what was specified in the "Patra". Accordingly, Regulation VIII of the 1793 Act stated that

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid, p.400.

<sup>57</sup>Lord Cornwallis, Section 8 of Regulation I of the Permanent Settlement Act, 1793, quoted by Hrishikesh Sen, "Banglar Krishoker Kotha", (The History of the Peasants of Bengal), Chondon Nagar (West Bengal, India) 1313 B.S., p.29.



the Zamindars must give the Raiyats "Patra" in which it would be written down how much the Raiyats would give as rent, and the Raiyats would not give more than what was already mentioned. The said regulation also provided that the Zamindars need not go to the courts for the collection of unpaid rents; they could confiscate all the crops, cattle, and property including the land belonging to the Raiyats. On failure of payment, the Raiyats could also be arrested and kept in confinement. The Zamindars enjoyed this unlimited power for as long as twenty years. Finally, the Government passed Regulation V in 1812 which abolished the power of arrest of the Raiyats by the Zamindars. However, the power to auction or take away all the property of the Raiyats remained unchanged. It may be noticed that neither in the original declaration, nor in subsequent laws, was there ever any mention of the farmers. It was almost as if they did not exist, though it was they who had lands in their possession, which they ploughed and owned as long as they paid revenue. The farmers paid one sixth of their produce as revenue during the Hindu rule and one-third of the produce during the Moslem rule. Therefore the peasants who had the 'right to perpetual use of land and the right to transfer to legal inheritors' in former times lost their right to the Zamindars who became proprietors overnight by a stroke of the pen. Sir Henry Bummer Maine's comments on the creation of the proprietary class of Zamindars and this impact has become classical. He writes: "A province like Bengal proper, where the village system had fallen to pieces of itself, was the proper field for the creation of a peasant proprietary; but Lord Cornwallis turned it into

a country of great estates, and was compelled to take his landlords from the tax-gatherers of his worthless predecessors. The political valuelessness of the proprietary thus created, its failure to obtain any wholesale influence over the peasantry, and its oppression of all inferior holders led not only to distrust of the economical principles implied in its establishment to believe in the existence of any naturally privileged class in the provinces subsequently acquire."<sup>58</sup>

On the one hand the revenue collectors became the proprietors of land, and on the other the exact relationship between the peasants and Zamindars and Talukdars remained undefined and unsettled as formerly. For the first time in the history of land tenure, middlemen appeared between the King and the peasants. But this was not the case during the pre-Moslem and the Moslem periods in India. During Akbar's rule each Sarkar or Parghana would have one "Amin", a revenue-collector who used to collect revenue and deposit with the rulers; but when the rulers did not like to be bothered about the 'way of collection', he appointed a contractor; this system, however, did not last long. There was a great difference between the contractor under Moslem rule, and the contractor under Permanent Settlement during the Company's rule; the contractor under Moslem rule used to get less than ten per cent of the total revenue collected, and did not work under a contract giving a fixed sum for his labour. He was never the proprietor of land but was just an official. But, the contractor under the Permanent Settlement could get about three hundred per cent or even more, as nobody could check his demands. In addition, he had proprietary rights of ownership in land.

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<sup>58</sup> Sir Henry Sumner Maine, Village Communities in the East and West, London, 1872, p.154.

Consequently under the Permanent Settlement, the revenue increased many times and the peasant economy was hard hit. However, the Zamindars did not fare any better either.

In Section 52 of the Regulation VIII of the Act of 1793, it was decided that those who collected revenue had to give an amal-nama, i.e., a receipt, and that no new tax could be imposed by the Zamindars, the purpose being to save the farmers from the Zamindars' extortions. But actually the law legalized all the previously illegal actions of the Zamindars thereby allowing an increase in the revenue which the Zamindars imposed upon the farmers. Even the law restricting the imposition of any new tax could not stop the Zamindars from extracting any amount they liked, and they succeeded because the farmers were too poor and helpless to be able to challenge the legality of the imposition of more revenue upon them. The result was that the farmer could use his land only as long as he could give as much rent as was demanded by the Zamindars. If he failed, his land would be taken away and would be given to others who promised to pay. On the other hand, as was said before, many Zamindars could no longer retain their position. They could no longer maintain their social position and power, if they failed to pay revenue to the Government by a fixed date. Therefore not only did the fate of the farmers change overnight, the Zamindari also changed hands from time to time.

Though there was a fixed date for the Zamindars to pay revenue to the Government, there was not any fixed date for the farmers; so they were subjected to all kinds of inhuman physical torture to extract the revenue. Failure for the

Zamindars to pay meant his confinement in Hazot, (Zhil) but by a new regulation No.3 of 1794, this rule of imprisoning Zamindars was abolished and instead it was laid down that their estates should be taken away and sold in auction. The Zamindary under Permanent Settlement were the foundation of the British administration in India. They were treated favourably by the ruling power. After only 22 years regulation VIII of 1819 was passed to enable the Zamindars to transfer their estate if they failed to pay revenue. As a result the actual power of revenue collecting from many estates passed from the old Zamindars to the new ones. Thus many Zamindars could retain their permanent rights over their estates only through a fixed amount, called a salary, from patni-dar. The latter became a third party between the real Zamindar and the farmer. The patain-dar again hired another middleman to collect revenue on his behalf. Gradually there arose a dozen or so middlemen between the Zamindar and the farmer and consequently the revenue also was increased up to ten or twelve times. This occurred because one in the chain-of-middlemen had a share and interest in the collection. Baden-Powell says, "This rent is calculated so as to leave a

margin of profit over and above the sum payable to the Zamindar and revenue payable to the Government - a margin which it depends on the lessee's skill and ability to make more and more... In some places there are as many as a dozen between the Zamindar at the top and the cultivator of the soil at the bottom. .... Such a person (as the Patindar) had no other interest, but to amass the largest profit to himself, regardless whether, on going out, he left behind him an estate sucked dry and tenants verging on misery."<sup>59</sup>

This was one of the terrible results of the Act of Permanent

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<sup>59</sup>Baden-Powell, ibid, p.638.

Settlement introduced by Cornwallis in 1793. But this was not all. The raiyats could actually challenge the validity of the application of the provisions in the Permanent Settlement, because this was a contract between the Zamindar and the Government. Hence it did not affect their rights in land. But neither were the peasants able to safeguard their interest, nor was there anyone who could fight for them. The position was clarified by Sir Courtney: "The Permanent

Settlement then was simply a contract between the Government and the Zamindars as to the amount of land-revenue payable by the latter to the former. The parties to the Contract were the Government, on the one hand and the Zamindars on the other. The Raiyats were not consulted about the arrangement and were in no sense a party to it; and, according to the most ordinary principles of Contract, it could not affect any right which they had or might thereafter acquire."<sup>60</sup>

The Permanent Settlement itself as a law had no clarification and exact definition of many of its technical terms and provisions. These remained obscure and vague and easy to use by the Zamindars and the ruling power for this interest. One such important term was proprietorship. Sir Courtney said further about this: "But then it was said that at the time

of the Permanent Settlement, and as part of the same arrangement, a formal declaration was made declaring the property in the soil to be vested in the Zamindars; that throughout the Regulation of 1793, which conformed and gave effect to the Permanent Settlement, the Zamindars are described as the 'Proprietors' or 'Actual Proprietors' of the land; and that this declaration and description are inconsistent with the notion of proprietary

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<sup>60</sup> Sir Courtney Ilbert, Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, 13th March, 1883, by Lord Repon, quoted by Haque, ibid, p.231.

rights in the land being vested in any other class of persons. As to the use of the term 'Proprietor', no serious argument can be leased upon it. I have heard of the magic of property. But I never understood that there was any such magic in the phrase 'Proprietor' as to wipe out any rights qualifying those of the persons to whom the phrase was applied; and it would be specifically difficult to show what it had any such effect in the Regulation of 1793."<sup>61</sup>

Comparing the English landlord with the Indian Zamindar, Courtney writes again: "In the first place, everybody

knows that a large portion of the money paid by an English tenant to an English landlord as rent represents interest on capital which has been expended on farm buildings, drainage and the like. But what portion of the money paid as rent by the ordinary Bengali Raiyat represents interests on capital?

"In the next place the English landlord knows pretty accurately, or, if he does not, his agent knows for him, who his tenants are, what rent they pay and where their lands lie. But these are just the facts which the Zamindar complain of when he and his agent have so much difficulty in finding out, and which he is always asking us to try and help him find out. Imagine an English landlord coming to Parliament and asking it to help him in making up a proper rent roll.

"No; the English landlord is one thing, the Bengal Zamindar is another. A revenue payer we found the Zamindar, a rent receiver we made him; but a landlord or a landowner in the English sense of the word, neither we nor his own efforts have ever succeeded in making him."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid, p.232.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid, pp.242-243.

In 1819 the Court of Directors in London observed in their minutes that they confessed with regret "The absolute subjugation of the cultivators of the soil to the discretion of the Zamindars."<sup>64</sup> A senior judge of the Sadar Dewain Adal recorded in the year 1827, that "In many parts of the country the resident cultivators are the actual slaves of the landlords and liable to be mortgaged, or let to hire, the same as his oxen and his goats, at his will and pleasure."<sup>65</sup> Sir Frederick Halliday quoted with approval the following testimony of a District Officer as reflecting the conditions of Bengal generally in the fifties in the last century: "The curse ... is the insecure nature of the Raiyats' land tenure. The cultivator, though nominally protected by Regulations of all sorts, has practically no rights in the soil. His rent is continually raised, he is oppressed and worried by every oppressive Tikadar until he is actually forced out of his holding and driven to take shelter in the Nepal Terai."<sup>66</sup> In the year 1889, the Government of India confessed:

"We concur in Mr. West Maccotts' remark that although at the time of the Permanent Settlement it was clearly laid down what the Government was to receive from the Zamindars, there was, almost universally, an omission to perform the other half of the work and to declare what was to be paid by the Raiyat. Such a declaration was made by Mr. Hatch in Dinajpur and, perhaps, by a few other collectors elsewhere; as a rule it was neglected, and, then, whilst we protected the Zamindar against ourselves by fixing the payment to be made by him in perpetuity, we gave the Raiyat no adequate protection against the Zamindars."<sup>67</sup>

In the reference of the Government of India we find note of

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<sup>64</sup> Revenue Letter to Bengal, dated the 15th January, 1819, quoted by Haque, ibid, p.25.

<sup>65</sup> Bengal Revenue Consultations, dated the 8th March, 1827, quoted by Haque, ibid, p.253.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

the "Violent and lawless character of some of the Zamindars and of the agents of others. There had been affrays in which men were killed by spear wounds. Swordsmen had been sent to make collections, and cases of attacks by clubmen and of kidnapping are mentioned in the reports."<sup>68</sup>

The Zamindars, too, on the other hand, had to bear many more extra costs for local police administration and provision of troops, etc., who passed through their estates. Therefore, the Zamindars collected more revenue every year from the farmers whose financial position gradually deteriorated. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in his address to the Legislative Council in 1883 himself admitted this.<sup>69</sup>

Above have been given a few of the innumerable quotations and statements of different writers and authorities, in different positions, on the causes and effects of the Permanent Settlement Act. Like all previous laws, the Permanent Settlement Act also failed, and the British Government stepped in to take control of the Government of India after about 60 years of the Permanent Settlement Act and about one hundred years of the Company's rule.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid, p.254.

<sup>69</sup>"In that interval of 66 years, that is between 1793 and 1859, while the proprietary body grew in strength and prospered in wealth, village communities perished, the parganah rates (by which the assessments of the resident cultivators' rent was limited) disappeared, and almost every vestige



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of the constitutional claims of the peasantry (if ever such existed beyond a small privileged class) was lost in the usurptions and encroachments of landlords.

"The Zamindars were made every year more and more responsible for the peace and order of the districts in which their estates were situated. They had to supply provisions for the military expeditions and marches of troops passing through their properties; they had to maintain at their costs the rural constabulary required for the public tranquility; they were chargeable at their own expenses for the performance of many duties which, if they relieved the Government, enhanced the Zamindars' influence and independence and while the Zamindars' power grew and strengthened, the rights of the cultivators of the soil gradually diminished and almost disappeared.

"The Government of the country never took any practical steps to act up to its earlier reservations of the rights of the cultivators. Indeed such influence as it did exercise was in the direction of the right of the landlord to enhance rents (Regulation V of 1812), and by the State Laws of 1841 and 1845 to declare his power of eviction of all but the settled resident cultivators. It was only when, some 25 years ago, the oppression of the landlords threatened an agrarian revolution that the Government stepped in by a legislative enactment to arrest the natural increase of rent in Bengal, and the result was the Land Law of 1859". - The address of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, "The Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council" 13th March, 1882, quoted by Haque, ibid, p.256.

LAND TENURE UNDER THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

End of Company's Rule.

The British Government took over the power of administration from the East India Company just after the outbreak of the great Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. Thus the Company's rule in India came to an end. Immediately after taking over the power of administration, the British Government decided to remove the shortcomings of the Act of 1793 and to improve the conditions of the tenants and this they tried to accomplish by the enactment of laws. Some of these are known as Tenancy Act of 1859, Tenancy Act of 1885, Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act of 1928, and Amendment Act of 1938 and these are discussed below in brief.

Subsequent Acts.

According to the regulations of Tenancy Act of 1859,

"The rights of all resident Raiyats to the occupancy of the lands cultivated by them so long as they paid the established rent" and "All Raiyats and cultivators of land (other than hereditary Raiyats holding at fixed rates) were entitled to receive Pattas according to the rates of rent for the time being established in the Parganah in which the land was situated or, if there were no known and recognized Parganah rates, then according to customary rates payable for land of a similar description in the places adjacent." <sup>70</sup>

The Act divided the tenants into three broad classes: (1) those holding land at a fixed rent in the Permanent Settlement, (2) those holding land for 12 years whether at a fixed rent or not, and, (3) those holding for less than 12 years. According to the provisions of the Act the first

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid, p.254.

class got the right to hold land at a fixed rate if they could prove that their rent had not been increased for the preceding twenty years. The second class Raiyat who either held land himself, or through his legal predecessors for twelve years continuously, could not be evicted so long as he paid the rent on it. In the Regulation X of the Act of 1859, it was laid down that the Zamindars could take away only the crops from the land, on which rent had not been paid. It may be mentioned again here that according to the Regulation I of the Permanent Settlement, the Zamindars were given powers to take away all crops and all property, including land, in case of Raiyats' failure to pay rent. The above Regulation of 1859 also required the Zamindars for the first time to give receipt of rents payed by the Raiyats. But the farmers could not read or write and so they did not know what, or how much rent, had been written on the receipt. Moreover, in most cases the Zamindars or their agents did not give receipts at all and the helpless peasants did not dare to ask for them. So the purpose of the Regulation which was to ensure the safety of the peasants from the oppression of the Zamindars failed). "But once again the landlords succeeded in defeating the occupancy right by taking advantage of the defects in the land."<sup>71</sup> But no attempt was made on the part of the Government to enquire into and record the permanency of occupation in land of the tenants, and the matter was left between the parties, i.e., between the all powerful Zamindar on the one hand and the poverty stricken and helpless Raiyats on the other. This was the defect of the Act. The result was obvious. "Such is

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<sup>71</sup>S.A.Q uader, Village Dhaneshwar, Dacca, 1960, p.5.

the power of the Zamindars and so numerous and effective are the means possessed by them for inducing Raiyats to accept agreements, which, if history, custom and expediency be regarded, are wrought and contrary to good policy, that to uphold contracts in contravention of the main purpose of the Bill would be in our belief to condemn it to defeat and failure."<sup>72</sup> And, moreover, "One of the most prevalent forms of oppression on the part of the landlords is their habit of breaking up the holdings of their tenants, and compelling them to change the field they cultivate, with a view to the destruction of occupancy rights, or rendering them indistinct where they exist, and preventing the accural in the case of tenants-at-will."<sup>73</sup>

The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was passed as a remedy against the defects of the Act of 1859. It divided the tenants into holders, raiyats and under-raiyats. There were provisions in the Act that enabled a tenant who had held any land for twelve years in a village, whether it were the same plot or not, to retain occupancy right over all the plots of land held by him. "It allowed enhancement of the money rent

of the occupancy Raiyat by the landlords on the grounds that, during the currency of the present rent, other occupancy Raiyats with land of a similar description with similar advantage in the same village were paying higher rent, that average local prices of staple food crops increased effected by or at the expense of the landlord, or by fluvial action. The Act protected the occupancy Raiyat against frequent enhancement of rent by laying down that, once the rent was increased, a period of 15 years must elapse before it could be increased again."<sup>74</sup>

According to the Bengal Tenancy Amendment Act of 1928,

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<sup>72</sup>India's Despatch to the Secretary of State, dated the 21st March, 1822, as quoted by Haque, ibid, p.260.

<sup>74</sup>Quader, ibid, p.7.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

the occupying raiyat got the definite right of transferring his holding. The landlord became entitled to 20% on the sale value of this land with the added right of pre-emption. In order to encourage consolidation of holdings the Amendment Act provided a smaller fee to be paid to the landlord in case of exchange. The Act also conferred a substantial right on the class of under raiyats. His rent could not be increased in a period of 15 years if it were once increased. The aim was to protect him from any arbitrary eviction. His land became heritable but not transferable, except with the consent of the landlord.

The last amendment took place in the year 1938, which is known as the Amendment Act of 1938. It "Repeated the

provision requiring that occupancy Raiyats in whole or part, could be freely transferred, and stated that the landlord was bound to recognize all transfers, and to subdivide holdings if the resulting rent was not less than rupee one. The right of pre-emption was taken away from the landlord and given to co-sharer tenants instead. All provisions relating to the enhancement of rent were suspended for a period of ten years."<sup>75</sup>

The conditions of the tenants did not improve, though the power of the Zamindars was restricted to some extent. The peasants did not understand laws and whatever safeguards were provided in subsequent Amendment Acts for the safeguard of their interests could not be used. On the other hand the Zamindars too did not always fare well. Occasional natural calamities, mismanagement and misappropriation by

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<sup>75</sup> Report of the Land Revenue Commission, as quoted by Quader, ibid, p.7.

subordinate revenue collectors and middlemen made it impossible for many Zamindars to collect revenue in time, and pay the Government. As a result, many Zamindars lost their estates overnight and slowly perished; new Zamindars emerged, took their place and rose to the peak of prestige and power. The situation continued till the Zamindari Abolition Laws in 1950, after independence, when all Zamindari and middlemen's rights in land were abolished and the peasants were made the proprietors of land. The peasants and the State thereafter were the only parties in direct relation, with no intermediaries in questions on land.

#### POST INDEPENDENCE CONDITION

##### Abolition of the Zamindari System.

The history of land tenure after independence in 1947, is short but decisive and its effects were far reaching. Towards the end of the British Rule in India, the Government of Bengal appointed a Land Revenue Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir Francis Floud. The Floud Commission published its report in 1940, and "The Commission recommended the abolition of Zamindari by eliminating all superior and middle rights in the land and the bringing of the cultivators into direct relation with Government."<sup>76</sup> After independence, Bengal was divided into two parts and East Bengal became the eastern part of Pakistan. In pursuance of the Floud Commission recommendations the provincial Legislative Assembly passed the East Bengal State Acquisition Act in 1950 abolishing all Zamindari System in East Bengal, and the Act was signed by the Governor-General of Pakistan in 1951. But

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<sup>76</sup>Quader, ibid, p.7.

it was not until 1956 that the law was put into force and all interests of the rent receivers in their estates, taluks, holdings and tenancies, were abolished. The Government became the only rent-receiving party and the peasants became the proprietors. Under the State Acquisition Act, no one was allowed to have more than 375 bighas of land, and all the Zamindars and rent-receiving interests were to be given compensation. All excess khas lands and lands under old and different rent-receiving interests were to be distributed amongst the landless agriculturists.<sup>77</sup>

The immediate effect of this abolition of the Zamindari system was that the Zamindars lost their proprietorship in lands and lost their rent-receiving interests, which in most cases were the only source of income for the Zamindars. It was through this income that they were able to hold high position in the social hierarchy. Therefore the loss of income, from the Zamindari, in turn, brought economic hardships to many Zamindars and their relatives and dependents who lived on the income from the estate; their status position in the village was affected too. At present, empirical data is not available on the post-abolition period condition of the old Zamindars and their relatives. But it is a hypothetical proposition that with the deterioration of their former wealthy economic conditions and administrative power, they no longer have the same prestige as they once had. In general the financial condition of the peasants has deteriorated, though in many cases torture and harassment by the Zamindars and their people have stopped.

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<sup>77</sup>cf. Information Department: Government of East Pakistan, Land Reforms in East Pakistan, Dacca, n.d., pp.12-13.

In the following is given a summary of the problem discussed earlier in this chapter.

The Indo-Pakistan subcontinent was, and is, a land of villages. In the historic past villagers could meet all needs within the village and hence villages have been regarded by many writers as "self-sufficient". Monarchies rose and fell and political authority in the cities fluctuated. The administration of the country also changed hands. All this was of little significance to the peasant community which had a self-sufficient economy and a stable cultural life all through the vedic and historic period. We find the first evidence of settled organized village life in India over several millenium B.C. in the Vedic treatise.

The king of the country in ancient and medieval times was not the absolute owner of land. He had the right to the revenue on land as the administrator of the country and protector of the citizens. The peasants had the right to possess, use land and transfer it to the legal inheritors. The peasants could possess and use land as long as they paid the revenue to the ruler. The king, however, had a general right of ownership on the unused, fallow and unoccupied land of the country which he could give to the Jaigirdars, Zamindars, and all revenue collectors as a commission for their service; he could also make a gift of such land to religious institutions, or could use it for rebuilding his palace or capital. This system continued all through the Hindu and Moslem rule in India. During Hindu rule, the amount of revenue was one-sixth, but it was raised to one



third during the Mughol rule. Sher Shah first took up the reform of land tenure but even during the Mughol rule under Akbar, lands were surveyed and categorized and revenue-administration was systemized during pre-British India. There were no middlemen between the State and the peasants and the Zamindar and Jaigirdars held the office or revenue-collection, and were not to be proprietors of land. But under the East India Company's rule in India during the British period the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 gave the Zamindars and Jaigirdars the permanent proprietary rights in land in exchange for fixed amounts of yearly revenue which had been non-existent in pre-British India. The Permanent Settlement was preceded by <sup>Ten Years' Settlement Act</sup> / and, the yearly Settlement Act, under which, in a contract system the highest bidder in auction would get the zamindary right of revenue collection. Before, as well as after the Permanent Settlement Act, there were a chain of middlemen including the Zamindars between the peasants and the State. These middlemen realized unlimited amounts of revenue from the peasants in kind and cash in different forms and under different excuses. In the Permanent Settlement Act, the relationship between the Zamindars and the peasants was not defined. After about one hundred years of Company's rule, the British Government took over the administration of India from the East India Company, and tried, through subsequent Amendment Acts, to put a stop to the oppression of the Zamindars and ameliorate the conditions of the peasants. But the condition of the peasants did not improve. In 1940 the Floud Commission recommended the abolition of the Zamindary system and middlemen-interests between the State and peasants. Before his recommendation could get any official blessing, India was given Independence in 1947. On the basis of the Floud

Commission Report, the East Pakistan State Acquisition Act was passed in 1950, by the Provincial Legislative Assembly and it took effect in 1956. The Act abolished the Zamindari system and all middlemen revenue interest in land. The peasants became the owners of soil, and there were no middlemen between peasants and the State which became the only revenue-receiving party.

The peasant society was directly affected by the system of land tenure primarily with the introduction of the Permanent Settlement Act and its subsequent abolition. Under the Permanent as well as the Ten Year's Settlement which preceded the former, the amount of revenue was decided in auction and the highest bidders were made Zamindars. Revenue was not fixed according to the quality of land or amount of crops produced. The Zamindars collected much more revenue than the amount payable to the State, because the excess was needed for their maintenance, and for the maintenance of their innumerable relatives and dependants, for constabulary of their regions, and for occasional payment for the provisions of the troops passing through their estates. The Zamindars did not themselves collect the revenue, but created such middle-owners as "Shinga", "Talukdars", etc., who were the little "Zamindars" under the Zamindars, and they again appointed officials and agents. As a result, the actual tillers of the land had to bear all the demands of all parties and had to pay unbelievably high amounts of revenue in cash and kind which varied from time to time and under different Zamindars. The Zamindars began to live luxuriously some, or most of the year, in towns and as a

result of this "absenti-landlordism", the local conditions of peace and order, health and other social needs suffered. The conditions of the land deteriorated through neglect both by the Zamindars and the peasants. The Zamindars were interested only in revenue, not in the welfare of the farmers, or in improvements of land. The farmers found their position in tenure of the land most insecure and unstable, since they were liable to eviction at the very wish to the Zamindars, so they also stopped taking any interest in improving the land. So the production from the land dropped. The economic conditions of the peasants suffered greatly, many were ruined and perished. Some, of course, who succeeded in getting the favour of the Zamindars, fared better. The low yield, drought, floods and famine, sometimes made it impossible for the Zamindars to collect revenue in time and to pay it to the State; so many lost their position, and new Zamindars rose. The Zamindars did not take care of their estates because, they were not sure if their zamindar-right would last forever. The ultimate abolition of the Zamindar System after independence deprived the many hundreds of rich and upper-class Zamindars overnight of the only source of their income; they lost power and prestige and many faced economic annihilation.

Therefore, with the changes in the economy, i.e., with the improvement or worsening of financial position, families lost or gained prestige, and influence. This in turn has affected the structure and organization of the peasant family. Land tenure, in short, has been a major historical force affecting the social as well as the economic position of the peasants.

CHAPTER V.

ECONOMIC CHANGES AND THE STATUS OF THE FAMILY

## CHAPTER V.

### ECONOMIC CHANGES AND STATUS OF THE FAMILY

#### Introduction: Social and Economic Factors of Change.

In the previous Chapter on land tenure, it has been said that the introduction of the zamindari system and its subsequent abolition was a major historical force which is thought to have affected the social as well as the economic position of the people, particularly of those who directly or indirectly depended on land and agriculture as the major source of income. W.W.Hunter, an authority on land tenure and Indo-Pakistan problems once said: "One hundred and fifty years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born man to become poor, at present it is almost impossible for him to continue to be rich."<sup>78</sup> Hunter was speaking about the economic condition of the 'well-born' people which existed about two and a half centuries ago. A general survey of the economic condition of the peasants may reveal that not only has Hunter's 'well-born' man's economic condition changed, but probably also the economic condition of the peasants in general.

The factors that have brought changes in the economic and social positions of the peasants may be broadly divided into two categories which I shall call social and economic. Land tenure was a social factor. But it was not the only social force. Joint family and rules of inheritance are other social forces that have affected the economic as well as the social position of the people. The social force affected the status position of the families both directly and also indirectly through economic changes brought by them. The economic factors that might have affected the status

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<sup>78</sup>Hunter, The Indian Mussalman, London, 1871, p.155.

position are population increase, low product in land and fragmentation of holdings. There has already been discussion in the previous chapter on land tenure as a factor of change and hence it is considered unnecessary to repeat the same here. Customarily a joint family is a sign of prestige and break-up of it affects the status position of the family. The break-up of joint family as a direct factor of change of social status will be taken up in the chapter on the structure of the family (at page/60.) But the break-up of joint family into two or more independent single families and rules of inheritance also cause division and subdivision of the existent land of the joint family. With the increase of population, the amount of land owned by each person is becoming less and less. In every generation with the break-up of joint family the lands are fragmented and the size of each holding is becoming smaller and smaller which is very uneconomic from the point of view of cultivation and income. Consequently the economic position of the people may have changed and this, in turn, may have affected the status position of the families.

The nature of investigation in this chapter is necessarily involved in a comparative analysis of statistical information on population, land and main agricultural crops covering a considerable period of time. Unfortunately such information on Rajaghat was not available for some years, and it is necessary to rely on a general analysis based on information on East Pakistan as a whole. It is believed that Rajaghat has experienced the effects of economic change due to economic as well as social factors in more or less the same way, though maybe not to the same extent, as the rest of East Pakistan.

Rajaghat is a tradition-bound Moslem society. In social customs and tradition, religious beliefs and ideas as well as in physical conditions and occupation etc., Rajaghat appears to be a typical village of East Pakistan. The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants rely on farming as the main occupation. In the living memory of the people, there has not been any migration of people of the village to any other area. The village has experienced the same conditions of subdivision and fragmentation of holdings due to the break-up of joint family and the rules of inheritance. There had never been any change in the use of agricultural tools, or equipment in Rajaghat, and there is no adequate reason for expecting any increase in agricultural products. For all these reasons, it is possible to assume that an historical analysis of the general economic condition based on information of East Pakistan as a whole may throw some light on the changes in the economic as well as the status position of the people of Rajaghat.

In this chapter, it is intended to write on peasant economy and on the social and economic position of the people as it is affected by economic factors.

#### PEASANT ECONOMY

The peasants till the lands and mostly consume what they produce locally. There is not much variation in their need and their production is limited. Raymond Firth has studied peasantry from an economic standpoint. To quote him: "The term 'peasant' has an economic reference. By peasant economy one

means a system of small scale producers, with a simple technology and equipment often relying primarily for their subsistence on what they themselves produce. The primary means of living is cultivation of soil."<sup>79</sup> Robert Redfield has added one more criterion to the above definition of the peasant-economy of Firth. According to him, peasants have, at least, this in common; their agriculture is a livelihood and a way of life, not a business for profit; those agriculturists who carry on agriculture for business and reinvestment or profit, and who look on land as capital and commodity, are not peasants.<sup>80</sup> Frich Wolf<sup>81</sup> also shares the views of Redfield on the definition of peasant economy. Therefore, in economic terms, a peasant is a small-scale producer who produces usually through cultivation and mainly for his own domestic consumption but he also produces something to exchange in a market for other goods and services.<sup>82</sup>

In East Pakistan, 94.8 per cent of the people are rural and the majority depend on agriculture as their primary livelihood. Rice is the staple food. Jute is the main cash crop. Tomatoes, potatoes, cucumber, pumpkins, turnips, cauliflower, cabbage, garlic, onions, chilli, etc. are other vegetables and spices that are locally grown. Sugar cane is also grown in many areas and is an important cash crop. The greater portion of the agricultural crops is locally consumed and a small part of it is sold in the market to obtain cash for buying necessary goods and services. The agricultural implements used by the peasants consist of Kodal (spades),

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<sup>79</sup> Raymond Firth, Elements of Social Organization, London, 1951, p.87.

<sup>80</sup> cf. Robert Redfield, Peasant Society and Culture, Chicago, 1956, p.27.

<sup>81</sup> cf. Frich Wolf, "Types of Latin American Peasantry"; a Preliminary Discussion, American Anthropologist, Vol. LVIII, No. 3, part I, (June, 1955), pp.452-471.

<sup>82</sup> L.A. Fallers, Are African Cultivators to be Called "Peasants" in Current Anthropology, (April, 1961).



Konta (knife for weeding), lungol (plough), moi (for leveling and breaking ground), ita-mugur (for breaking ground), and Kanchi (knife for reaping). These agricultural implements are old, simple and out-dated.

Rice and jute are the principal crops in Rajaghat. Rice is the staple diet, jute is the main cash crop. Rice, jute and many vegetables and spices that are locally grown are mostly used for domestic consumption; only a little portion is sold in the local market for a little money to buy such necessities for daily life as salt, kerosene oil, cocoanut and mustard oil, matches, fish or vegetables, rice and clothes, etc. Agricultural implements are old and simple all over East Pakistan.

#### THE FACTORS OF CHANGE

It has already been said in this chapter that factors basically affecting the peasant economy, are population growth, land and rate of agricultural production. Here the rate of the population growth, decrease in land per head and a fall in the agricultural products which might seem to have affected the general economic condition of the peasants, and which, in turn, is thought to have affected their status position, will be discussed.

#### Population.

The population of East Pakistan has doubled during the last fifty years. The increase in population is far higher

than the increase in production during the same period, though all the available cultivable lands have been brought under cultivation; if the increase of population is considered in terms of the total agricultural land and yearly production per acre, it might seem that, in general, the economic conditions of the peasants have deteriorated.

According to the Census reports of 1961, the population of East Pakistan was 28,928 in 1901, but it shot up to 50,840 in 1961: That is, the rise was almost double. The following table will show the total and percentages of rise in population during the last 60 years in East Pakistan.

TABLE No.15  
RISE IN POPULATION\* OF EAST PAKISTAN<sup>83</sup>

| Years | Total population<br>(thousands) | Increase<br>(percentage) |
|-------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1901  | 28,928                          | -                        |
| 1911  | 31,555                          | 9.1                      |
| 1921  | 33,254                          | 5.3                      |
| 1931  | 35,604                          | 7.1                      |
| 1941  | 41,997                          | 18.0                     |
| 1951  | 44,932                          | 0.25                     |
| 1961  | 50,840                          | 21.2                     |

\* excluding non-Pakistani

The figures in the above table show that there was an average yearly increase of about 1.15 per cent. This increase

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<sup>83</sup>A. Rashid, Census of Pakistan, Karachi, 1961, p.II-6.

means that every year 367,000, or every day 1005.48, or every six minutes 4.14 hungry mouths were born and added to the population to be fed and clothed. The vast majority of this increased population lived in the village and depended on land and agriculture for livelihood. This is obvious from the fact that there has been very little migration of population from the rural to the urban centres. In 1961 the rural and urban ratio of population in percentage was 94.8 and 5.2 respectively; and in 1951 it was 95.7 and 4.3 respectively; in other words, during a ten year period from 1951 to 1961, only .9 per cent rural people migrated to urban centres. For want of facts which could be obtained only by a separate study, it is not possible to prove but it is generally thought by many, that a great section of the labourer and clerical members of the urban population receive income in kind or cash from the yields of the land they own in their native village. Therefore, it may be that the percentage of the urban population who live entirely on earnings from their work in towns may be still smaller than is indicated by the Census figures.

Land:

It has been said that rice and jute are the main crops. The lands that are used for the cultivation of rice, jute or sugar cane are also used for growing various kinds of vegetables and spices. A discussion on the available land for rice and jute cultivation in the province may show that though there has been a little increase in the total lands due to the recovery of unused and fallow lands, the overall increase was much less in comparison to the rise of population. The analysis will cover the statistical figures of the post-independence period only. The following table will show the

increase of the total cultivable land for rice and jute since 1947.

TABLE NO.16

TOTAL LAND FOR RICE AND JUTE CULTIVATION

| Years   | Average of Rice <sup>84</sup><br>(in 000 acres) | Average of Jute <sup>85</sup><br>(in 000 acres) |
|---------|---|---|
| 1947-48 | 19,006  | 2,059   |
| 1948-49 | 19,424  | 1,877   |
| 1949-50 | 19,528  | 1,561   |
| 1950-51 | 20,007  | 1,711   |
| 1951-52 | 20,301  | 1,799   |
| 1952-53 | 20,778  | 1,907   |
| 1953-54 | 20,010  | 965   |
| 1954-55 | 21,336  | 1,243   |
| 1955-56 | 19,486  | 1,716   |
| 1956-57 | 20,055  | 1,230   |
| 1957-58 | 20,235  | 1,563   |
| 1958-59 | 19,643  | 1,528   |
| 1959-60 | 21,151  | 1,375   |
| 1960-61 | 21,885  | 1,518   |
| 1961-62 | 20,963  | 2,061   |
| 1962-63 | 21,484  | 1,723   |
| 1963-64 | 22,259  | 1,700   |

In 1947-48, the total land in the province for rice cultivation was 19,006,000 acres, and it increased to 22,259,000 acres in 1963-64 period; that is, there was a total increase of 3,253,000 acres in 17 years.

During the same period the land under jute cultivation

<sup>84</sup>Government of East Pakistan, Statistical Digest of East Pakistan, No.2, Dacca, 1964, pp.62-63.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid, p.81.

decreased from 2,059,000 acres to 1,700,000 acres - a total decrease of 359,000 acres. Jute is exported overseas for cash and its prices are dependent on the situation in the international market and have to be fixed by the Government. The Government has also to fix the annual production of jute. So the farmers could not produce as much as they wished for more cash, and again as more hungry mouths needed rice, so unused and fallow areas had to be brought under cultivation to increase the supply.

In the following table, the yearly increase/decrease of total population and land is shown.

TABLE NO.17  
YEARLY ESTIMATE OF POPULATION AND LAND

|            |                        | Increase | Decrease |
|------------|------------------------|----------|----------|
| Population |                        | 367,000  | -        |
| Land       | Under rice cultivation | 191,353  | -        |
|            | Under jute cultivation | -        | 21117.7  |

The figures in the above table show that the yearly increase of population was almost double the yearly increase of land under rice cultivation; on the other hand, jute land decreased by about 17 times. The growth of population has far outstripped any rise in the agricultural crops and acclamation of cultivable lands. About half a century ago per capita land in Bengal in general was on average 2 acres or 8 pakhis,<sup>86</sup> and in Rajaghat now per capita land

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<sup>86</sup>Hrishi Kesh Sen, "Banglar Krishoker Kotha" (The History of the Peasants of Bengal), West Bengal, 1925, p.1.

on average is only little over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pakhi (p.139).

Agricultural Products - Rice and Jute.

The figures on per acre production of rice and jute during post-independence period show that there has been some increase. The following table will give figures per acre on rice and jute crops.

TABLE NO.18

YIELD PER ACRE OF RICE (CLEANED) AND JUTE IN  
EAST PAKISTAN

| Years   | Rice <sup>87</sup><br>(in lbs) | Jute <sup>88</sup><br>(in lbs) |
|---------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1947-48 | 794                            | 1329                           |
| 1948-49 | 885                            | 1167                           |
| 1949-50 | 847                            | 854                            |
| 1950-51 | 822                            | 1403                           |
| 1951-52 | 776                            | 1424                           |
| 1952-53 | 790                            | 1431                           |
| 1953-54 | 839                            | 1497                           |
| 1954-55 | 796                            | 1501                           |
| 1955-56 | 734                            | 1304                           |
| 1956-57 | 914                            | 1794                           |
| 1957-58 | 841                            | 1586                           |
| 1958-59 | 789                            | 1570                           |
| 1959-60 | 898                            | 1616                           |
| 1960-61 | 974                            | 1175                           |
| 1961-62 | 1,012                          | 1352                           |
| 1962-63 | 910                            | 1463                           |
| 1963-64 | 1,052                          | 1411                           |

<sup>87</sup>Government of East Pakistan, Ibid, pp.62-63.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid, 81.

The statistical figures in the above table show that after partition in 1947, there has been an increase in the production of rice and jute per acre. In the year 1947-48, rice production was 794 lbs per acre, after 12 years it rose to 1052 lbs or about 12 mds 33 seers - a total increase in the whole period of 258 lbs or 3 mds 12 seers. The yearly average increase is about 15 lbs or about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  seers. The table No.18 also shows that in 1947-48 the jute production per acre was 1329 lbs or about 16 mds and 8 seers. In the year 1963-64, i.e., after seventeen years, it rose to 1411 lbs or 17 maunds 8 seers. The total increase of jute per acre in the same period is, therefore, 82 pounds or one maund and the annual increase is 4.8 pounds or about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  seers. From these figures it seems clear that the rise in the production of rice, the main food crop, and jute, the main cash crop has been far below what is needed for the increased population, and, as a result, food stuff has had to be imported from abroad.

The inhabitants of Rajaghat do not seem to have any major source of income which can bring large sums of money from outside the village. On the other hand, the peasants must buy many daily necessities like cloth, building materials, etc. for which they have to pay in cash. In other words, there was probably relatively more outflow of money from the village to the town than inflow from the town to the village. This might suggest that the village economy has suffered while the urban economy has flourished, and that the ever increasing population has meant an ever increasing pressure on land as the means of subsistence. The high prices of daily

necessities, cloth, building materials, etc. and, at the same time, the absence of any subsidiary sources of income may have adversely affected the peasant economy. However, it should not be assumed that every peasant family in the village has become poorer. Due to inheritance, wisdom and hard labour, business, or even corruption, etc., some families may have prospered, but the economic condition of the majority may have deteriorated.

There is nothing like any insurance scheme or any other measures for the villagers against any damages to life and property from such accidents as fire, flood, cyclones or storms, etc. When I arrived in the village I found empty mud floors of four ghors in one bari and investigation showed that six months ago these ghors were destroyed by fire but could not be rebuilt for want of money, so the families affected were living with relatives. It has been shown before (p.44) that there are not many kitchen or ranna-ghor in Rajaghat. This was because about a year ago, many kitchens were blown away by big storm but the owners could not rebuild them afterwards for want of money. Flood and cyclone, are almost annual phenomena and they cause extensive damage both to the life, property and live-stock of the village. There is no aid organised for the villagers from outside. This situation in Rajaghat is to some extent parallel to one described by Professor Bailey in his study in the Bisipara village in Orissa. He writes: "At the present day, there is increasing influence upon the lives of the cultivators arising from the conception of the role of government as a positive agency of welfare, rather than an



evil necessity. Since Independence, this function promises to be greatly magnified. But in the history of this village, welfare activities have played a small part."<sup>89</sup> It appears that in the history of Rajaghat also welfare has played almost no part at all.

The main purpose of this short chapter was to show in a rather broad way that the economic condition of the peasants may have changed, and not to make a detailed study of the economic condition supported by export-import figures, per capita income, and expenditure and gross national income. It was feared that any detailed study on the peasant economy would need much more space than can be afforded and might overshadow the main purpose of investigation into the changes of family and kinship relation, and hence was not attempted.

In Rajaghat land and the relative economic position are regarded as the basis of social prestige and influence (p.57). The subdivision and fragmentation of land and the changing economic condition of the peasants may have affected their attitude and behaviour towards traditional values as well as the status position, which will be discussed in the following chapters. But first it is felt necessary to define the term social status and it is done in the next chapter.

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<sup>89</sup>F.G. Bailey, Caste and the Economic Frontier, Manchester, 1957, p.13.

CHAPTER VI

SOCIAL STATUS AND STATUS GROUPS

## CHAPTER VI

### SOCIAL STATUS AND STATUS GROUPS

So far, the term 'social status' or 'status' has been undefined and unexplained. Therefore, it is necessary to define this important concept which is so closely related in this thesis to the theoretical framework of the problem before any further discussion can proceed.

In the two previous chapters it was observed that the main theoretical proposition centres around the changes in the social and economic positions of peasant families. It was found in the chapter on land tenure that the system of tenure was one of the important factors making for the social and economic mobility of families. Land was, and is, the main basis of wealth and the chief means of livelihood in the village. It is also the principal determinant of status position. Increase of population, decrease in per capita land, and the low productivity in land are some of the other factors which have affected the social as well as the economic conditions of the peasantry.

In this chapter I shall discuss the social status and status groups, techniques used to study social status, the family as the unit of the status groups, land as the main determinant of social status, "class" culture, and the status differentiation in the attitude and behaviour of the people.

### SOCIAL STATUS DEFINED

The term social status is used here to mean "social estimation of honour" as it has been defined by Max Weber<sup>89</sup> or,

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<sup>89</sup>H.H.Gerth and C.W.Mills, from Max Weber; Essays in Sociology, London, 1964, p.187.

more elaborately, as defined by MacIver, "the social position that determines for its possessor, apart from his personal attributes or social service, a degree of respect, prestige and influence."<sup>90</sup> When an individual enjoys social honour by virtue of his performance in one or several roles, it is esteem which should not be confused with prestige or social status. The latter is "the relative social honour accorded a position in a social system irrespective of the qualities of the individual or individuals occupying the position".<sup>91</sup> There is no necessary connection between prestige and esteem. This distinction was first drawn by K. Davies.<sup>92</sup> There are peasants in Rajaghat who are skilled and experienced cultivators and enjoy high esteem from the rich and the poor alike; but this does not change their social status which is mainly determined by the amount of land and the relative economic position in the village. Dr. Littlejohn found the same distinction among the shepherds in Westrigg: "Several shepherds are highly esteemed by both other shepherds and farmers, but their position in the class system remains unaffected by this - they occupy the same position in it as other shepherds."<sup>93</sup> The difference in the conceptual meaning of 'status' and 'social status' should be made clear too. "Status, as used by Linton, Parsons, and others, has no direct or necessary reference to position on a scale or in a hierarchy. But 'social status' is now in general used to

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<sup>90</sup>R.M. MacIver and C.H. Page, Society, New York, 1961, p.350.

<sup>91</sup>James Littlejohn, Westrigg, London, 1963, p.78.

<sup>92</sup>cf. K. Davies, 'Conceptual Analysis of Stratification' American Sociological Review, 7, 1942, pp.309-321.

<sup>93</sup>Littlejohn, ibid.

denote position in the hierarchy of social prestige."<sup>94</sup>

The concept used throughout the thesis is 'social status' and not 'status'. Therefore whenever there is any use of the term 'status' only, it will mean 'social status' and not status as such.

### STATUS GROUPS

When asked, the peasants in Rajaghat could not discuss or define social status or status grouping in the village, but it seems that in many ways they understand the meaning of social status and are aware of the differential positioning of families in a status hierarchy within the village. It should be pointed out here that the village under study is within an entirely Moslem populated area and therefore the society is not as rigidly structured as that within a Hindu caste system. In a Hindu caste situation the people know clearly of the existence of the different caste groups and know their relative prestige position in the community. Hence the problem that I had to deal with was of a different nature and to some extent a more delicate one.

The local terms used for social status or prestige is "maan" or "sommaan" or "maan-sommaan". When people say of someone that "he is a maani lok (lok-man or people)" they mean that his status position is high (literally, it means he is a man of prestige). When the villagers were asked

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<sup>94</sup> T.H. Marshall, Sociology at the Cross Roads and other Essays, London, 1963, p.214.

to divide the families according to their relative status position or "maan-sommaan-er dik die", they divided them into the three broad categories of Unha (Upper), Moidhya (middle), and Nimno (low). I have taken these three broad divisions of the families in Rajaghat as status categories and have later called them the upper, middle and lower classes. From the analysis of the field data it seems that land is the main criterion for the classification of the families into three broad status groups in the village (p.134), besides land, relative economic position of the family, education and long residence are some of the other important requirements for gaining more prestige in the community (p.142).

Techniques used to study the status groups.

Enquiry shows that there is a "Village-standard" by which the peasants understand what is social status and know their relative position in the status hierarchy in the village. First I used a device which was almost similar to that one used by H. Kaufman<sup>95</sup> to find out how this village standard is determined. The techniques used are as follows: Twenty informants (which constitute about the ten per cent of the total head of the families) were selected at random and asked to arrange 40 cards, each carrying the name of the head of a family, according to the social status of the family. Forty heads (making about 20 per cent of the population) were selected at random and are thought fairly to represent the total population of the village. During and after each

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<sup>95</sup> cf. H. Kaufman, Prestige Classes in a New York Rural Community, Agricultural Experimental Station, Cornell University Memoire, 260.

interview, I discussed the subject with the informant in every possible detail and from every possible standpoint. Secondly, I talked to and studied the village matbars who are generally of high social position. Third, I observed how people address each other, and behave with one another in any assembly in tea-stalls, bazaars, shops, Mosques, community baithok (meeting), and I'd congregations. I also observed those words used by some people but not by all, and the differences in dress and type and number of ghors.

#### FAMILY - THE UNIT OF THE STATUS GROUPS

It has been observed that the unit of the status groups is the family and not the individual in the society.

It is difficult to get a Bangali word used by the villagers synonymous with the English word 'family'. The term family is generally defined as a married couple and their children. The words that are locally used for 'family' are khana, poribar, and shongshar, some of which have more than one connotation. Under the local government the word khana is used to mean a unit for the imposition of local taxes and issuing of ration cards to the people. A khana is generally defined as a household consisting of one or more persons who cook and eat together. A khana has to pay Union Council taxes and is entitled to be issued with a ration card to buy such goods as rice, paddy, sugar, oil, etc. which are sold by the government at a fixed price and are cheaper than the prevalent market prices.

The word poribar generally means the whole group of parents and their children. As for instance, "how is everyone in your poribar"? It may also mean only the wife, e.g. "my poribar is ill." The word poribar when used to mean the whole group of parents and their children, may consist of married couples and their unmarried children, or married couples, their unmarried children, married sons and their wives and children. Generally one poribar of parents and children own the property in common, work and cook and eat together. Sometimes, married sons may have joint ownership of property and joint responsibility for its management, but may have separate cooking and household arrangements from the parents' poribar; now, according to the rules of the Union Council taxation, the group will be called a separate khana, because the members of the group cook and eat separately. In the present research the joint ownership of property and the joint responsibility for its management have been taken as the basic requirements for defining the family or poribar in Rajaghat. Hence, according to this criterion, there may be one or more than one khana in one poribar; and one poribar can be one khana, but one khana may be one poribar, or a group within the poribar. Only the division of the property of the family and the separation from the natal family will give the married son/s the chance or position to make a separate or independent poribar. Therefore, the word poribar or family is used here to mean a group consisting of one or both parents, their unmarried children, and/or married son/s with their wives and children who work and live together; and most important, the original members must have the



joint ownership in the property of the family. By 'original members' those who are born into the family or are adopted into it, as well as the two founding members or parents are meant. The daughter-in-laws who achieve membership of the family by the tie of marriage are not considered as original members of the family. According to the rules of inheritance, husband, wife, sons and daughters and the adopted members, if any, are entitled to inherit the property of the family. According to the patrilocal residence system, the girls must leave their parents after marriage but they retain their right of inheritance in the property of their natal family. Unlike the married sons who live in the family and jointly share the responsibility for the management of the family's property, married daughters cannot share any such responsibility.

The word shongshar may either mean the family as defined above, or something like "wordly-life" or "wordly affair", or "wordly-business"; for example, the word shongshar is used to mean family when it is said "shongshar shukher hoi romonir goone", i.e., there may be happiness in the family if the wife/woman is virtuous or accomplished. When something like "shongshar jibon michhe" or "wordly life is meaningless" is said, the word shongshar means "the wordly life."

In the present work I am concerned with the family or poribar, and not with khana or shongshar. The families in Rajaghat have been broadly divided into three categories; single or elementary, joint and widowed. A single family

is defined as a group consisting of married couples and unmarried children. A joint family is defined as a group consisting of the married couples, their unmarried children and the married son/s and their wives and children. A widowed family is defined as a family in which one of the parents is dead, divorced or deserted. But the inquiry shows that there are a number of variations which must be taken into consideration before classifying all the families of Rajaghat into the three broad categories as described above. It has been regarded as a joint family if one or both of the existent parents and his/her unmarried children live with one or more married sons and wives and children, or if both parents are absent and the unmarried children live with married sons and their wives and children. The following table will clarify any remaining ambiguity.

TABLE NO. 19  
VARIATION IN THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAMILIES.

| Type of the Family   | Composition of members   |
|----------------------|--|
| Single or Elementary | (a) Married parents and unmarried children.  |
| Joint Family         | (a) Married parents, unmarried children, married sons and their wives and children.<br>(b) One of the existent parents, unmarried children, one or more married sons and their wives and children.<br>(d) Both parents are absent. Unmarried children and married sons and wives and children.<br>(e) Both parents are absent. Married sons and their wives and children with or without any unmarried children. |
| Widowed Family       | (a) One of the existent parents and unmarried children.  |

In all there are 221 families in Rajaghat. The great majority of the families are single or elementary, and they make about 66 per cent of the total. The size of a single family is smaller than that of a joint family. Joint families constitute about 1/5 of the total. In a minority are the widowed families which make up little more than 1/7 of the total number of families. The following table will show the total number of families, their percentages and population.

TABLE NO.20

DIFFERENT TYPES OF FAMILIES, THEIR  
PERCENTAGES AND POPULATION.

| Type of families | Number Total | Percentage | Population Total | Percentage | Average size of family. |
|------------------|--------------|------------|------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Single family    | 146          | 66         | 812              | 61.7       | 5.4                     |
| Joint family     | 45           | 20.4       | 403              | 30.6       | 9                       |
| Widowed family   | 30           | 13.6       | 100              | 7.7        | 3.3                     |
| Total Percentage | 221          | 100        | 1315             | 100        |                         |

LAND - THE MAIN DETERMINANT OF SOCIAL STATUS

Land is the primary criterion of wealth and main form of property. It is the chief source of livelihood. Land is also the principal determinant of the social status of the people.

Land is not only a sign of prestige and a source of power and influence but it is also security for the future. "No one can take away your lands. If you buy gold it might be stolen, but if you buy land no one can steal it" is the proverb in the village. Land is the safest and most rewarding and at the same time a very easy form of investment. Most people said that they would buy more land if they had more money.

Why land is regarded as a sign of prestige and source of power in peasant society is a question which can only be answered by digging into the whole socio-economic and political history of the subcontinent. The problem has been discussed earlier in two separate chapters entitled "Land Tenure and the Peasant Society: A Historical Analysis", and Economic changes and status of the Family. Since the beginning of history till the present day in India "the main economy is agriculture and the social relations that exist are based on such an agricultural economy."<sup>96</sup> Over 90% of the people live in the villages and their main occupation is agriculture. Rice is the staple food and jute is the main cash crop. Most of the necessities in the form of food, housing, elementary agricultural tools and so on are met from products within the village, which has been regarded by many authors as "self-sufficient." Peasants are born and brought up in the village; they work on the land, and depend on its harvests for their existence. A good harvest means prosperity for all. There will be more food and cash; festivities and rest, peace and happiness. There can also be saving but only upper and middle class people can save. More and better crops mean more and regular collection of

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<sup>96</sup>Karim, op.cit, p.21.

revenue for the government. A bad harvest means poverty and starvation, oppression and misery, disease and death for the farmers. More land brings more food and cash and this means economic prosperity for the peasants. Most of the small savings which some farmers are able to make goes towards buying land. Land gives people economic prosperity, influence and prestige. More land means more income, more influence and more social status. Land is everything to the farmers. They love land next to their own children, sometimes even more. Land is their heart and soul.

Land has been found to be the scale by which to measure the social as well as the economic position of peasant families. According to the "Village-Standard", the inhabitants of Rajaghat may be classified into three status groups of upper, middle and lower, as has already been noted. The families having no land or up to five pakhi are regarded as the lower class. The families who have more than 16 pakhi of land are considered as the upper class. Each upper class family owns about three times more land on average than a lower class family.

TABLE NO.21  
LAND AS THE SCALE OF STATUS POSITION

| Classes | Amount of land (in pakhi)<br>owned by different classes |
|---------|---|
| Lower   | 0 - 5   |
| Middle  | 6 -15   |
| Upper   | 16 - over   |

Out of the total 221 families more than half belongs to

the lower class, 1/7 to the upper class, and the rest, i.e., about 1/3 to the middle class. If the total families are divided according to their class position in relation to the total cultivable land owned by each class, the following figures are obtained.

TABLE NO.22  
CLASSES IN RELATION TO THE AMOUNT OF LAND  
OWNED BY EACH CLASS

| Classes              | Families |            | Population |            | Land* |            |
|----------------------|----------|------------|------------|------------|-------|------------|
|                      | Total    | Percentage | Total      | Percentage | Total | Percentage |
| Upper                | 31       | 13.6       | 273        | 20.8       | 796   | 48         |
| Middle               | 67       | 30.4       | 390        | 29.7       | 598   | 36         |
| Lower                | 127      | 56         | 562        | 49.5       | 267   | 16         |
| Total/<br>Percentage | 221      | 100        | 1315       | 100        | 1661  | 100        |

\* in pakhi

In the above table it can be seen that the upper class, which makes only 1/7 of the total families, and about 1/5 of the total population, owns nearly half of the total land in the village. The lower class, which consists of over half of the families, owns only about 1/6 of the total land. The remaining one third of middle class families own about one third of the total land.

If the retail price (local) of land at Rs.3000 per pakhi is calculated, the ownership of land in terms of money by the

different classes will be as follows:

TABLE NO.23  
WEALTH IN TERMS OF PRICES OF LAND OWNED  
DIFFERENT CLASSES

| Classes | Land price<br>(in rupees)* |
|---------|----------------------------|
| Upper   | 796,000                    |
| Middle  | 598,000                    |
| Lower   | 267,000                    |

\* 13 rupees = one pound sterling

The figures in the above table show that the upper class possesses more than three times the wealth in land in terms of market value money than the lower class, and over a half more than the middle class in the village.

When the figures of per capita land and its prices are calculated the following results are obtained:

TABLE NO.24  
PER CAPITA LAND IN DIFFERENT CLASSES

| Classes | Average size of family | Total land*owned by |            | Estimated price**of total land |            |
|---------|------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------------------|------------|
|         |                        | One person          | One family | per person                     | per family |
| Upper   | 8.8                    | 2.9                 | 25.4       | 2900                           | 25,400     |
| Middle  | 6                      | 1.5                 | 8.9        | 1500                           | 8,900      |
| Lower   | 5.5                    | .4                  | 2.2        | 400                            | 2,200      |

\* in pakhi

\*\*in rupees

The size of an upper class family is about twice that of a lower class family, but one upper class person owns about 7 times more land than that of a lower class person. The reason for the upper class and the middle class families being larger in size than the lower class families is that they include about 84.8 per cent of the total joint families, each of which consists of about 9 persons. The lower class families consist mostly of single and widowed families, the average size of which is about 5.4 and 3.3 persons respectively.

On an average, each pakhi of land in Rajaghat will give annual crops worth about from Rs.150/00 to Rs.200/00. Now, if the optimum produce of each pakhi of land, that is in value Rs.200/00 per year, is taken into account, an estimate can be made of how much (in the form of yearly agricultural products) each person gets within each different class.

TABLE NO.25

PER HEAD AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

| <u>Classes</u> | <u>Yearly produce per head<br/>in terms of rupees.</u> |
|----------------|--|
| Upper          | 580  |
| Middle         | 300  |
| Lower          | 80   |

In the above table we can see that one lower class person gets an annual product of only about eighty rupees which is the equivalent of a daily income from land of about 22 paisa (100 paisa - one rupee) or about four pence; on the other



hand, a person from the upper class gets about two rupees and sixty paisa (or about four shillings and fourpence) which is about 13 times more than that of a Lower class person. The lower class man also works as a labourer on the land of the others in the village. It should be noted that the head of the family (who is always a man if the husband is alive) and the able bodied sons or male members are the only persons who work and earn; other members, i.e. the minors and the females are only the consumers.

Unfortunately detailed information about the budget of the family or expenditure on such basic necessities as food, clothing, etc. for each person or family are not available. Without such detailed information it is not possible to give an exact picture on the pattern of expenditure. But from what is known by general observation and interview with the people, it seems possible to draw a fairly accurate account of the amount of money spent by each person or family to meet the basic needs. For want of data, the discussion will have to be limited to the expenditure on a few basic things only.

An account of how much is spent annually; according to the village standard, on food and clothing, etc., by an average family of two adults and three children is given

below.

TABLE NO.26YEARLY ESTIMATE OF THE EXPENDITURE OF AN  
AVERAGE FAMILY.

|   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Expenditure on food and daily necessities -                                       |                   |
| Rice*   |                   |
| @ 3 seers or 6 pounds per day<br>at the cost of three rupees:                     | Rs. 1095.00       |
| Spices, salt, matches, soap,<br>kerosene, oil, mustard-oil,<br>cocoanut oil, etc. |                   |
| @ .25 paisa per day   | Rs. 91.25         |
| Fish, vegetables, etc.  |                   |
| @ .50 paisa per day   | Rs. 182.50        |
|   | Total: Rs.1368.75 |
| Expenditure on clothing -   |                   |
| Ten pieces of lungis and sarees -   |                   |
| @ Rs. 3.00 per piece :  | Rs. 30.00         |
| Ten shirts/genjis and blouses   |                   |
| @ Rs.2.00 per shirt / blouse:   | Rs. 20.00         |
|   | Total: Rs. 50.00  |
|   | <u>Rs.1418.75</u> |

From the above account it appears that an average family of five members - two adults and three children - spend at least Rs.1418.75 in a year, or Rs.118.23 in one month for the bare necessities of food and clothing. This comes to Rs.283.75 yearly or Rs.23.65 monthly for each person in the family. It must be noted that this account does not include

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\* one seer of rice costs about one rupee but it varies at different seasons in a year.

any expenditure on such things as medical treatment, housing, winter clothing, marriages of children, occasional entertainment of relatives and friends, and any miscellaneous expenses. It has been said earlier that one pakhi of land brings crops worth about two hundred rupees annually. But optimum products in one pakhi of land are dependent on adequate and timely rains and sunshine, etc. which are sometimes uncertain. Anyhow, if everything goes well and one pakhi of land grows crops worth about two hundred rupees, each person, on an average, will need approximately 1.4 pakhi of cultivable land for keeping the body and soul together. If all the expenses on such items which were not included before in the account as housing, medical treatment, marriage of children, occasional entertainment of guests, etc. are taken into consideration, one person will presumably need more than two pakhi of land in the village. As stated before, our statistical figures show that at the moment one person on an average owns only .4 pakhi in the lower class and 2.9 pakhi in the upper class.

Besides ownership of land, strict adherence to the traditional customs and religion, good manners (~~p.171-174~~), education, long residence, the quality and type of ghors (p.143) etc., also add (in varying degrees) to prestige in the village. The inhabitants of Rajaghat have great respect for education and the educated people. Because of my education I was respected by the rank and file in the village. But in view of the fact that only a very small minority of the villagers are literate and the highest level of education is only class IX or secondary, it could not be determined exactly

what effect education has in measuring the prestige-scale in Rajaghat, though education was found to be the privilege of the upper class (p.51 ). Those who have been long resident in the village are apparently held in esteem on this account but since families seldom move and there were no new comers to the village, no comparison could be made.

Though neither I nor my interviewers could find out the wealth of the peasants in terms of cash, savings or monthly income, we were able to get data on such things as land, house, cattle, clothes, education etc. and it was possible on my part and on the part of the villagers to determine the class position of the people and the social status enjoyed by them.

#### CLASS CULTURE

It has been found that there are differences in the type and number of ghors, dress, ornaments, food and in the level of education of the people belonging to different classes, and these differences reveal differentiation in status between classes.

Working on the economic development and social changes in two South Indian villages, Epstein writes: "The type of house a man owns is a matter of prestige in both villages. The poorest villagers, who live in mud huts with thatched roofs, look up to those who live in mud houses with tiled roofs, and these in turn look up to those who built new houses."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> T.S.Epstein, Economic Development and Social Changes, Manchester, 1962, p.331.

The type and the number of ghors do show some status position in Rajaghat. Generally, the upper class families have three ghors - for sleeping, cooking and keeping cows. A middle class family normally owns only two ghors - for sleeping and cooking-cum-cow stabling. A lower class family has only one ghor which is used for sleeping only. If a lower class family has a cow or a goat, they keep it under a tree during the day and under the verandah at night. The lower class people in the village cook mostly in the open in the courtyard, or under the verandah or inside the ghor, if, and when, it rains. The following table will show the materials used by people of different classes to build their ghors:

TABLE NO.27  
MATERIALS USED BY DIFFERENT CLASSES  
TO BUILD GHORS.

| Number of <u>ghors</u> |             | Upper       | Middle   | Lower                 |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|-----------------------|
| Roof                   | Most or all | *tin+wood   | tin+wood | bamboo/jute<br>sticks |
|                        | Few         | **bricks    | -        | tin wood              |
| Wall                   | Most or all | tin+wood    | tin+wood | bamboo/jute<br>sticks |
|                        | Few         | bricks      | mud      | mud                   |
| Floor                  | Most or all | mud or wood | mud      | mud                   |
|                        | Few         | bricks      | -        | -                     |

\* tin - corrugated iron sheet

\*\*bricks - brick and cement built: There are only two dalans or brick-built ghors, except for three brick-built Mosques in the village.

All the upper class people and most middle class people sleep on the wooden "choki" or "khat". But the lower class people sleep on a thin thatch mattress spread on the mud floor.

Lungi and gengi are the common dress for men and boys; saree and blouse are the normal dress for women and girls in the village. Wearing a shirt over the gengi and pyjamas instead of the lungi and shoes are signs of higher social status in Rajaghat.

The following table will provide some information on the different kinds of dress worn by the people of different classes in Rajaghat:

TABLE NO.28

DRESS OF THE PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT CLASSES

|       |              | Upper                                       | Middle                              | Lower                      |
|-------|--------------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Men   | Always       | <u>lungi</u> , vest, shirt.                 | <u>lungi</u> , <u>vest</u> , shirt. | <u>lungi</u> , <u>vest</u> |
|       | Occasionally | shoes, pyjamas                              | shoes, and pyjamas                  | <u>shirt</u>               |
| Boys  | Always       | <u>lungi</u> , shorts, <u>vest</u> , shirt. | lungi and vest                      | <u>lungi</u> , <u>vest</u> |
|       | Occasionally | Pyjamas and shoes                           | -                                   | -                          |
| Women | Always       | saree, blouse, long petticoat and brassiere | saree and blouse                    | saree                      |
|       | Occasionally | shoes                                       | long petticoat                      | blouse                     |
| Girls | Always       | frocks, saree, and blouse                   | saree and blouse                    | saree                      |
|       | Occasionally | shoes                                       | -                                   | blouse                     |

Pyjamas are used only by the upper class and the upper-middle class people. Shoes are a rare luxury in Rajaghat. Only the upper class people wear shoes, but even among them the number of people who use shoes is very small and can be counted on one's fingers. The upper class women wear shoes only when they go to see relatives or on such occasions as the I'd Festival or a marriage ceremony etc. Boys and girls up to the age of about 5 or 6 go naked in the village. But this is more so among the poor people than among the rich. The lower class boys and girls go naked almost all through the year except in cold weather when they wrap their body with a thin cotton cloth, or the girls put on a saree and the boys a lungi. Upper class boys and girls of the same age group do not always go naked but cover their body with a lungi, shirt and vest or saree and blouse respectively. Middle class and lower class women do not wear brassiers or petticoats. Even many upper class women do not use brassieres.

Use of gold and silver ornaments is a sign of social status as well as of a better economic condition. Upper class women will always put on gold earrings, nose-ring, nose-ball, and occasionally necklace or armlets. Gold rings are not always used either by married or unmarried men/women. These are used again to show the wealth and status. Bangles are very popular among women and girls. Bangles of gold or silver, plastic or glass, are used always by the women and the girls in Rajaghat.

The upper class people will have three meals a day - breakfast, lunch and dinner. Sometimes a cup of afternoon tea is considered necessary by the upper class people. The

middle class people also have three meals a day, but never afternoon tea. The lower class have only two meals a day - late breakfast-cum-lunch and a late day meal at about 3 or 4p.m. and no dinner.

Education is limited to the upper and the middle classes who are not only able to bear the expense but can also afford to take their children away from work. On the other hand the lower class boys start work at the age of 5 or 6 as servants or labourers. Female education is very poor even among the upper and the middle class people. The highest level of female education in the village is Class VI. Matriculation is the highest qualification for the men in Rajaghat. The general attitude of the people towards female education is that the women do not need very much education and an ability to write and read letters in the vernacular, to read simple Bengali books and undertake some religious education is considered to be all that is necessary. Upper class people want to send their sons up to University. The middle class people think that they cannot afford the expense involved.

#### STATUS DIFFERENTIATION AS REFLECTED IN THE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR OF THE PEOPLE

Status differentiation is noticeable in the attitude and behaviour of the people of different classes towards the wearing of a particular kind of dress, sitting on a chair or standing in the front or back row during prayer in the Mosque and towards some manual work. The naming system, the way people greet and address one another and their use



of particular 'words' all express their attitude towards status distinctions.

To wear trousers and jackets, or clean shirts and pyjamas, and shoes is a sign of "bhodrolok" or a gentleman and is suited only to those of the upper class and some upper middle class people. If a boy from the lower class puts on shoes or a clean shirt and pyjamas people will mock him with such remarks as "here comes the son of a landlord or Nowab," or "he has become a 'babu' (meaning a clerk who works under Europeans)", or "here comes a police-inspector but his father is a cobbler." I asked a lower class old man about his thoughts on this; he said : "Babugiri (style of being a babu) suits only the upper class people. We should not do this." The wearing of shoes is a special sign of prestige and power in the village. A man from the upper class said, "Oh, I must put on shoes, especially when I go to see government officials, or to the Bazaar or to the Community meeting; otherwise what will people think of us?" But most people do not wear shoes when they are in the village, or when they walk or work in the field.

There is a roadside tea-stall near the village, with a bus-stop in front, and this tea-stall provides a meeting place for the people of Rajaghat. In the morning, in the evening, at night and day, I found people there. The stall is a small tin-shed hut where one can get a cup of cheap tea or milk, biscuits and pan (a kind of leaf with beetle-nut and lime), and it remains open from 7 in the morning to 8 at night,

i.e., during the time when buses run along the road. There are some old wooden chairs and benches spread inside as well as in front of the stall. Chairs are for the bhodrolok or upper class people and benches are for the middle class or for the lower class people. In the absence of any upper class people any one can sit on the chairs, but if some bhodrolok or upper class people appear the middle class people will vacate the chairs and take the benches, and the lower class people will vacate the benches and will remain standing. The young always show respect to the old and minors will always offer their chair to the old people whatever their social status in the village. A lower class man will be careful not to use any bad language to a Bhodrolok, because if he does he will be warned by almost all present who will say "you must talk properly with a bhodrolok." A bhodrolok is also cautious in his manners because people will rebuke him by saying, "you are a bhodrolok, or you look like a bhodrolok, you should not behave or talk, like that, etc." I observed this attitude of the people everywhere - in shops, in the bazaar, in the tea-stall, and in the community meeting. In the village Mosque where every one is equal by virtue of being a Muslem, I found an attitude of status differentiation among the people, concerning who will stand in the front row, or in the middle or last row while offering prayers in the Mosque. If some lower or middle class people have taken their places and the prayer has already started, the upper class people will take whatever space they can get; but before the start of the prayer a low or middle class man will always offer

the front seat to an upper class man. I asked a middle and an upper class man what they think about this kind of deferential behaviour to people in a place where every one is equal in prayer. The middle class man said, "tara mani lok (they are men of honour)." The upper class man said, "I don't like to get respect in this way in a Mosque but you see they give it to us. If I refuse the front seat they will be offended. I should not offend them."

I also observed this behaviour of 'subordination-superordination' in the big religious congregations which assemble twice a year in the open field of the village to celebrate I'd and in the marriage and funeral feasts. During a feast the women and children will take their meals separately from men. Though there will not be much class-differentiation in the seating arrangements for men of the middle and upper class, there will be separate arrangements both for upper class women, middle class women and lower class women. While men of the middle and upper class will sit and eat together the lower class men will have separate places. The important thing I noticed is that though people are aware of this class differentiation, they don't like to make it a 'great thing', by talking, discussing or feeling until the actual situation or happening occurs. Then they accept it more in a spirit of resignation than jubilation or hatred. People believe that it is as natural as one hundred and other things to do with daily social and family life. Nothing important happens if there is any break in the 'class-rigidity' by any one, upper or middle or low; people accept it also as something

natural. This situation, however, can never be called a Hindu caste system.

People show their attitude of superiority and subordination in the naming system and in 'salutation.' An upper class man will be addressed by the people of the middle or lower as well as of his own class by his name followed by the word "shaheb" or simply as "shaheb;" for example, "Is Samsul Shaheb at home?" or "When will shaheb come home?" etc. An American or a European was and is addressed by the name followed by the word "shaheb" or simply as shaheb which means a person of superior economic and social position, prestige and power. Gradually the Indians and Pakistanis began to be addressed as shaheb, by their subordinates, juniors and poor lower class people. Most people do not have any surname and have only one name. In Rajaghat some people have got a surname like Munshi or Mia and a first name such as Muhammad which is hardly used except at the time of registration etc. and is hardly known. This is so even in the case of upper class people. The lower class people have not any first name or surname, though some like to add the word Muhammad before their name. All the lower class and most of the middle class people are addressed by their first name. A lower class man feels embarrassed if addressed as shaheb and will say "I have not reached that stage." The word Shaheb is also used to ridicule or mock a lower class person if he is found talking, behaving, or even dressed, as an upper class person and people will say "What a shaheb you are" or "you must stop talking or behaving like a shaheb" or "he comes from a lower class but behaves like a shaheb," etc.

A somewhat similar position in the naming system was found in Westrigg by Dr. Littlejohn: "among the male parishioners deference is institutionalized in the naming system, the essence of which is that a person of higher class status may address a person of lower class by his christian name but the person of lower class status must address the person of higher status by the title of 'Mr.' followed by the surname. Mr. is a symbol of middle class status; the men of the working class always address each other by christian names and are apt to think they are being made fun of if addressed as Mr. One, whom I addressed in this way, said: 'Don't call me Mister. I have not reached that status and probably never will.' Middle class men address each other as 'Mr' if they are not class friends. They expect this deference from the working class, as the latter know."<sup>98</sup> Therefore the Bengali word shahab acts more or less like the English word 'Mister.' There are three Bengali words "apni", "tumi" and "tui" for one English word 'you'. The word apni is used to mean superior, senior and higher class people as well as strangers, the word tumi is used to mean subordinates, juniors and people of lower class, and the word tui is for the people of same age group or class friends, juniors and people of very humble position. A higher class man will address most middle class and all the lower class people as tumi but will expect to be addressed and is addressed as apni by the middle and lower class people. The people of the lower class are sometimes addressed by the upper class and the middle class as tui. On the other hand, the lower class people will address the middle and upper class people as apni. A Moslem is expected to greet another Moslem saying "salaamol-aleikom" (the arabic expression

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<sup>98</sup>Littlejohn, ibid, p.85.

meaning 'peace to you') and the receiver will return by saying 'alaikom-salam' ('to you peace'). As else where, the subordinates, juniors and people of the lower class will always take the initiative in addressing a person in Rajaghat, and never vice versa. A higher class man always expects to be, and always is greeted first by the people of the lower class.

The people of different classes have different attitudes towards various kinds of manual labour. There is some physical work done by both the upper and lower class people, and some which the upper class people think of as "low work", and do not do. Agriculture, which involves physical labour is the main occupation of the villagers and the upper and lower classes alike do it. But certain kinds of manual labour like canal digging, road building, or working as a daily labourer do raise the question of prestige. The upper class people think that "this is low work" and for the sake of their prestige they cannot do it. The lower class people do all kinds of manual work. When asked, they said "we are poor people; we must do all work." But they conceded that if they were rich they would not do such work as digging the canal, building a road, or working as a labourer; when further asked to explain if it was only money which decided whether that work was done or not, they admitted that it was a matter of prestige too. Working as a labourer in agricultural work is not considered as "low" as digging a canal or building a road, but I could not find out any particular reasons for this. "We do all this because we do not have prestige ("amagor abar maan ki.")

CHAPTER VII

NETWORK AND KINSHIP

## CHAPTER VII

### NETWORK AND KINSHIP

The examination of field-data would suggest that the attitude and behaviour of the individual towards traditional values and norms inside as well as outside the family differs in different classes, and that there is variation in the density of the kinship network in upper and lower classes. The kinship network appears to be denser and closer in the upper class than in the lower class. The variation in the density and closeness of the kinship network in different classes seems to be a significant variable in affecting the attitude of the individual towards conforming to traditional values and norms in the society. In the present and following chapters it is proposed to discuss kinship network and the differences in the attitude and behaviour of the individual in different classes.

After Barnes,<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth Bott successfully analysed and used the network model.<sup>100</sup> The analysis and discussion of the network relationships of the family in the present study will rely on the explanation of the network model given by Bott. In her research on the urban families in London she found that the external relationships of the family assumed the form of network rather than the form of an organized group. She explained the difference: "In an organized group, the component individuals make up a larger social whole with common aims, independent roles, and a

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<sup>99</sup>J.A.Barnes, 'Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish,' Hum. Relat. VII, I, 1954.

<sup>100</sup>Elizabeth Bott, Family and Social Network, London, 1957.



distinctive sub-culture. In network formation, on the other hand, only some, and, not all, of the component individuals have social relationships with one another."<sup>101</sup> But every 'network connectedness is not the same, and some may be 'close-knit' and some 'loose-knit'. In a 'close-knit' network' there are many relationships among the component units, but in a 'loose-knit network' there are few of such relationships. Nonetheless, 'close-knit' should be understood as signifying 'close-knit' relative to 'network' of other research families and similarity 'loose-knit' relative to the networks of other research families. In any case, it should not be assumed that these two extreme forms of 'network connectedness' are polar opposites; they may be seen as 'shorthand expressions of relative degrees of connectedness!<sup>102</sup>

In the present study, however, the words closer and denser will be used instead of 'close-knit' and density instead of 'connectedness'. This is because in the present situation the words 'close-knit' and 'connectedness' seem to be stronger than can be supported by statistical facts on the frequency of visits, etc. Hence, the less strong expressions of denser and density have been preferred.

In this research kinsmen appear to be the primary components of the network density. Therefore, it seems necessary to discuss kinship also in this chapter. There will be six sections in this chapter, namely, kinship terms, the rules of marriage, kinship network, network density and different classes, and network density and the observance

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<sup>101</sup>Bott, ibid, p.58.

<sup>102</sup>cf. ibid, pp.58-59.

of the traditional values and kinship obligations. A brief statement about the kinship terminology will introduce the discussion on kinship.

#### KINSHIP TERMS

Among the peasants in Rajaghat, the kinship terms are classificatory in the widest sense, especially in address, though in reference there is a wide use of descriptive terms. This situation is like that discussed in Leache's "Pul Eliya"<sup>103</sup>. Like the Ceylonese in "Pul Eliya", the Bengalis in Rajaghat have complete discrimination of kinship terms as to sex - and also as to generation. Both men and women use the same terms. There are five generations of grandparents, parents, own, children's and grand-children's who are addressed or referred to by kinship terms, and above or below these five generations kins are thought to be too remote to be reckoned or identified. The villagers do not have any genealogical documents, and they only try to remember all known relatives. Most people were found to be rather apathetic in regard to remembering old relatives. Consequently, most people cannot give any names of persons before or beyond grandparents or their spouses. In the generation of parents, own and children's, ego makes a terminological distinction between father's relatives and mother's relatives. In particular, father's brother is distinguished from mother's brother, and father's brother's child (who is classed as ego's sibling) is distinguished from mother's brother's child (the cross-cousin). There are the usual logical extensions.

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<sup>103</sup>E.R. Leach, Pul Eliya, Cambridge, 1961.

Mother's sister's husband rates as father's brother and his children as ego's siblings; and father's sister's husband rates as mother's brother and her children as cross-cousins.\*

### KINSHIP

The local terms used to refer to kinsmen are attiya and kutumb; the term attiya has a wider meaning than kutumb and includes affinal as well as cognatic kin, but kutumb refers to only affines. There are two other terms namely, pokho and bongsho or kul which are used in relations to kinship terminology. The term pokho means literally 'side', e.g. which side or pokho do you belong to, etc. but in kinship terminology it means which side in the line of kinship relationship does one belong to. The term pokho is also used to refer to successive wives, if there are more than one, e.g. he is the son of second pokho, i.e. of the second wife. Generally, like the term kutumb, the word pokho is used to refer to affinal kins, i.e. shoshur - pokher attiya (i.e. relatives on the side of father in law). The term bongsho or kul is generally used to mean 'line of descent', e.g. "there is nobody in his father's bongsho or kul". While the term pokho refers to near relatives, the term bongsho or kul is used to identify the oldest or the founding

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\* As the statistical figures stated later reveal that only less than one-third of the total marriages in Rajaghat are among relatives and that about half of the marriages in the upper class and less than one-third marriages in the lower class are among relative, it was thought that presumably no striking results could be expected in a study on the question of 'alliance' and 'contraction of marriage.' Hence, no detailed enquiry was made on this problem. It seems that both the terminology and 'alliance' are 'symmetric'. For want of information it is not possible to show the difference in the number of marriages with the matrilateral and patrilateral cross- and parallel-cousins in different classes. A detailed list of kinship terminology is given in the appendix which might seem interesting to the reader.

member of the lineage. From the word kul has come the Hindu high caste or kulin (Brahmin). In Rajaghat, the term kul is not as widely used as bongsho, but I could not find out the reasons for this. In the present discussion, however, local kinship terms will be used as little as possible and instead the widely used anthropological kinship terms will usually be used.

#### Cognatic Kin.

Social custom demands that the seniority of the grandparents, paternal or maternal, be respected. They must enjoy certain privileges and rights because of their old age and contribution to the family. They have a friendly and joking relationship with the grandchildren. A man may be very strict and harsh to his sons but very lenient and kind to his grandchildren. By comments and jokes they sometimes amuse their grandchildren, who, in turn, amuse their grandparents. Sometimes people complain that grandparents 'spoil' grandchildren by giving them too much freedom, kindness and forgiveness. Grandchildren are sure to be excused by their grandparents for an offence which will not be pardoned by parents. So if a grandchild does something wrong, or makes a mistake and this makes his parents angry, he will go to his grandparents to avoid punishment from his parents, because he knows that he will receive shelter and protection from his grandparents. In a lower class family, grandparents are not always respected and are abused or sometimes physically hurt by grandchildren when they are angry. Irrespective of class position, there are differences in the degree of intimacy and frankness between those of the opposite or same sex in the grandparents-

grandchildren relationship. For example, the research data show that the relationship between grandfather and grandson is more intimate and frank than between grandmother and grandson; or the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter is more intimate and closer than between grandmother and grandson. The grandson will learn from his grandfather of experiences or skills in farming, repairing, etc. The granddaughter will learn about domestic work from her grandmother before marriage. Generally any discussion or talk on sex or sexual matters is forbidden. But sometimes the grandfather by hints or subtle comments will try to say jokingly something about sex-life after marriage. The grandmother does the same thing with the granddaughter; but these comments never occur between grandmother and grandson or between grandfather and granddaughter.

Father's brothers have a position outside as well as inside the family just like that of the father, or at least similar to it. Therefore they must be respected and obeyed like the father. Paternal uncles are expected to be as loving as a father and more forgiving than parents. Sometimes children have certain things done by paternal uncles which their father would not do for them. A younger brother or the father, even though junior, must be obeyed and respected. He may have a friendly relationship in private with his brother's son, who is of his age, but in public, the nephew will show respect to his uncle. The relationship between uncles and niece is like that between father and daughter. But while a niece can meet her father face to face or talk and exchange

things directly with her uncle, she must maintain a relationship of daughter-in-law and father-in-law, i.e., a relationship of avoidance, though it is not as rigid between them as between daughter-in-law and father-in-law. By virtue of his kinship position as the mother's brother, a maternal uncle holds the same prestige-position as the father's brother. The Mother's brother whether younger or older, must be respected and obeyed by his sister's children who in turn expect love and affection from maternal uncles. In the degree of friendship and intimacy, kindness and co-operation, the relationship between the sister's children and mother's brother is closer than that between the brother's children and father's brothers. The relationship between sister's son and mother's brother of the same age is more intimate and friendly than that between brother's son and father's brother; though the relationship between the mother's brother and sister's daughter is not as informal and intimate as that between the mother's brother and sister's sons, still it is less formal and more cordial than that between the brother's daughter and the father's younger brother. The Sister's children receive more kindness and hospitality from the mother's brother than from the father's brother; and hence there is the proverb: "Mamar barir abdar," i.e. request of sister's children in the house of mother's brother, or in the bari of mother's brother are never turned down, is borne out wherever people want or like their wishes to be fulfilled irrespective of their genuineness or suitability.

According to long standing social customs, the mother's brother feels obliged to do his utmost to fulfil his sister's children's desires and wishes. The sister's son

trusts his maternal uncle more than his paternal uncle and vice versa, a sociologically interesting point which will be discussed later.

The children of the father's brother and sister and mother's brother and sister are classificatory ~~as~~ brother and sister, and have a friendly and intimate relationship among themselves. They also have a joking relationship. If they are of the same age group they can also be future marriage partners. The majority of 51.6 per cent relative-marriages were among classificatory brothers and sisters. Seniority is counted among classificatory brothers and sisters, and a senior/brother/sister is expected to be respected, and also in turn is expected to love and protect the younger ones.

During the ploughing, weeding or reaping seasons, classificatory brothers, father's brother and brother's son and mother's brother and sister help one another. In return or exchange for their physical labours they get one or two meals depending on the length of time taken to complete one piece of work, or they simply co-operate without receiving either food or money. If someone dies, cognatic relatives and also affinals must be informed. They come and mourn and help in the burial work. In the fateha or the after-death feast, the people who helped in the burial work alongside near relatives must be invited. If there is a marriage, the brother and sister of both parents are consulted. During I'd

and other religious festivals they invite one another to a dinner.

In sentiment and feeling, there is some difference between agnatic kin and maternal kin. There is more co-operation between mother's brother and sister's son than between father's brother and brother's son; it has been found that when someone needs a loan, he prefers to go to his maternal uncle rather than his paternal uncle. For advice on monetary matters, etc. he prefers to go to his maternal uncle, rather than his paternal uncle, though by descent and kinship, paternal uncles are nearer than maternal uncles who may or may not be in the same village. This is so because according to the rules of descent and inheritance, brother's son can inherit his father's brother's property if they have no children, and they can only inherit the property of vaista if he has no children; this prospective heir-  
position has created a kind of mistrust which stands between father's brother and brother's son preventing their establishing an honest relationship especially on monetary matters or property rights. A sister's son cannot inherit his mother's brother's property and vice versa and this has resulted in a good trustworthy relationship between them. That is why, the mother's brother rather than the father's brother is approached in time of need. One afternoon I met Abdul Ali, an upper class interviewee, while on his way to visit his mother's brother who lives in another village. He was going to consult his mother's brother about buying a bus and also to ask for a loan. He said in brief that he was going to his mother's brother because "he can trust his



mother's brother but cannot trust his father's brother who looks on his property as baj-pakhi (hawk). If he leaves behind no children, he, (the paternal uncle) will inherit." Logically when someone has got a future claim on an inheritance, he should help the person from whom he may inherit. But in Rajaghat it works the other way. Due to the share in the father's and the grandfather's property, there also remains a kind of "emnity" and bitterness between the father's brother and the brother's son. As a result, on such important matters as monetary or property affairs, they do not exchange advice nor help one another. But no such bitterness arises out of previous divisions of property between the mother's brother and sister's son and, since they cannot inherit each other's property, they are normally on good terms with and ready to help one another. Living in close proximity leads to the sort of relationship between father's brother and brother's son already mentioned; there is a proverb in the village, "jare-dekhi nit nit, ga kore khit khit", i.e. "you feel sick of someone that you see every day." According to the patrilocal residence system, a mother's brother lives in a different village unless he is a relative; even if he is a relative his physical proximity is not as close in most cases as that of a father's brother. Moreover, a man cannot be on good terms with his mother if he is not on good terms with her brother, who tries to help his sister's son and husband so that his sister may be happy. Therefore, the presence of the mother itself is a factor making for the close relationship between mother's brother and sister's son.

The relationship between father's sister and brother's

son is one of respect and obedience, on the one hand, and kindness and affection on the other. Father's sister and her husband must be respected and obeyed. She has a right to warn, "abuse" or "punish" her brother's children just like their father; in return, she is expected to be kind and loving towards her brother's children. The father's sister's husband is rather remote and formal in his relationship with his wife's brother's children.

The Mother's sister is regarded in the same way as the father's sister; she must be respected and obeyed just like one's own mother. She is very kind and loving towards her sister's children. The relationship between mother's sister and sister's daughter is all the more cordial, frank and friendly if the latter is of the same age as the former. The mother's sister's husband stands in the same position as the father's sister's wife in respect of his wife's sister's children. Sister's and brother's children have a right to demand better treatment and kindness from their Mother's and father's sisters who show affection for them by making good curries, cakes and other food and occasionally sending a small fowl, a pumpkin or some other things. Sister's children and brother's children also exchange gifts when they are married. The cousins - parallel or cross - are very friendly and informal towards each other but social custom demands that seniority among them must be respected. They are classificatory brothers and sisters. In other words, while there should be a cordial and friendly relationship between patrilateral and matrilineal cross and parallel cousins, one must respect and obey a senior cousin.

### Affinal Kin.

If any affinal relative comes, the first person to see him coming, gives a shout, "Kutum aisse re," i.e., some affinal relation has come, and immediately all the members inside the bari/ghor will come out in their gladness to see or hear of their coming. This enthusiastic welcome for any affinal relatives, especially for in-laws, lasts for a year or sometimes a few years or more, specially if visits by either side are infrequent and they live far away from each other. The difference in the response of cordial hospitality offered to a cognatic and an affinal kin is that the former is regarded as an old attiya and a "part of the family" who is satisfied without an enthusiastic welcome, whereas the latter may feel neglected or overlooked if he does not get such hospitality and kindness. Moreover, people understand that a relationship which is based on the marriage-tie, relies on friendship, kindness and cordiality for it to grow and flourish; in any case, the welcome for any affinal relative is happy and spontaneous.

Those foremost in building and cementing the affinal tie are the jamai or bridegroom and the bou or bride. The local word jamai is so popular and frequently used that I have decided to use it instead of the term bridegroom. The role and the relationship of the daughter in law will be described in the chapter on "The Structure of the family", and, hence, a repetition of it here seems unnecessary. Jamai is the first and most important person to his wife's parents' bari or family. He is the most welcome and most

wanted guest and visitor in his father-in-law's bari, unless, of course, the relationship between jamai and father-in-law has previously been badly strained for some reason. People of the bari of wife's parents know that the happiness of their girl in the bari of her husband's parents depends primarily on the jamai who, therefore, must be well treated and satisfied. Next to the jamai, come his parents and brothers and sisters who are, too, most cordially welcome and greeted by his wife's parents and relatives; they, in turn, offer kind hospitality and friendship particularly to the in-laws of their son. Among the affinal relatives those who are most closely concerned with their relationship with the jamai and who are immediately and actively affected by this relationship are his wife's parents and siblings.

Four days after the marriage ceremony, the newly-married couple pay a formal visit to the girl's parents; this is a short but most cordial visit. After this formal visit, the contacts by a married daughter, her husband and her affinals with her relatives become less frequent. If both the married couple and their parents come from the same village, the exchange of visits is more frequent, almost daily, but, of course, these are not so cordial as those which occur at longer intervals when the relatives stay far away in another village or district.

The Jamai will always get the best possible hospitality in his wife's parents bari, and hence there is the proverb that "shoshur-bari jamair abdar", i.e. the jamai always receives cordial hospitality in the father-in-law's bari.

His wife's parents will try to offer the best possible food, and "bedding" to the jamai according to their financial position. In most cases the slaughtering of a chicken during his visit and the offering of a chicken-curry along with plain, or preferably fried rice (pillao) are considered to be the customary way of offering cordial hospitality to the jamai. His mother-in-law will take special care in the making of this chicken and rice for the jamai and meye (daughter) months ahead of their visit. The Meye, or daughter, gets equal treatment when she visits her parents after marriage. The wife's mother also takes special care to cook payesh (rice pudding) and "bibikhana pitha" (pitha -cakes) and other different kinds of cakes from powdered rice of special quality. In return the daughter, or her shashuri, or both, reciprocate in sending cakes, etc. to her parents and brothers and sisters. This exchange of delicacies takes place not only through jamai and bou but also through jamai's in-laws or bou's in-laws whenever they make a visit to his or her relative's bari. On occasions like I'd or marriage, a well-to-do jamai will buy clothes for his in laws. In return, his parents-in-law will buy a shirt, a genji or a lungi and send them to him and a saree-blouse to his mother and wife. But this exchange of presents of clothes depends very much on the economic condition of the families concerned. Sometimes the jamai will help his father in law and mother in their farm work and in the repair or construction of a ghor. They help one another by providing loans, advice and co-operation in their work. On occasions like a marriage and religious festivals or funerals, they invite one another. On occasions like these affinal relatives must invite and be invited.

The wife's parents hold a position comparable to that of the jamai's own parents, and therefore must be respected and obeyed by him. On the other hand, the wife's parents are expected to be affectionate towards their jamai, and, in some cases, the jamai is treated with more affection than his own sons. The relationship between the jamai and father-in-law, though affectionate, is formal and of avoidance. The jamai must look humble and keep his head bowed in front of wife's parents. He is expected to talk gently, calmly and in a low voice with them, almost in the way the daughter-in-law talks and behaves with her parents-in-law. Between the jamai and his mother-in-law the relationship is distant and of avoidance. She puts a veil over her head or retires if her jamai appears. The wife's parents do not address the jamai by name, but will address him as the father of a grandson or a granddaughter. The jamai will call the wife's mother ma or amwa (mother) and his wife's father taloi and they mostly address each other in the second person, i.e. 'you' or 'your'. The jamai will not take his meal with his father-in-law and never with his mother-in-law; he will take his meal alone or with his wife's brothers, and is served mostly by his wife if she accompanies him, or by her mother-in-law, or wife's younger sister.

The relationship between the jamai and the elder sister of the wife is like that between the daughter-in-law and her husband's elder brother, and will be discussed in the chapter on the structure of the family. He maintains 'distance' and 'avoidance' in his relationship with his wife's elder sister. They do not talk directly or stand/sit face to face, or give or exchange things directly. She retires or puts a long

veil on her head if he appears. The wife's elder brother is also slightly formal in his relationship with the jamai. The relationship between the jamai and the wife's younger brother and sister is very cordial, informal, friendly and intimate. He has a joking relationship with them. In practice it is these brother and sister-in-laws who visit him and his wife more than other affines. They carry messages or "gifts" from the wife's parents to the jamai. They also help the jamai or their dula-bhai by working with him in the field, looking after his cattle, or catching fish in the tank for his family, or doing the shopping.

He obeys and respects the uncles and aunts of the wife, who stand in the position of his parents in law, and they treat him with affection. He has a 'joking' and informal friendly relationship with his wife's grandparents, who stand in the kinship position of his own grandparents. The classificatory brother and sister of the wife are just like his own classificatory brothers and sisters. With the older classificatory brother and sister of the wife he maintains a little formality and 'distance' in his relationship, while with the younger ones he has a 'joking' and friendly relationship.

#### THE RULES OF MARRIAGE

A total of 70, or 31.6 per cent families married relatives. The percentage of marriage among relatives is more in the upper class than in the lower class family. More than

half of the upper class families married relatives, but less than one-third marriages are among relatives in the lower class families. The following table will show the total and percentage of marriages among relatives in different classes.

TABLE NO.29

SOCIAL CLASSES AND MARRIAGE AMONG RELATIVES

| Class  | Families |            | Marriages among relatives |            |
|--------|----------|------------|---------------------------|------------|
|        | Total    | Percentage | Total                     | Percentage |
| Upper  | 31       | 13.6       | 16                        | 51.6       |
| Middle | 67       | 30.4       | 24                        | 35.8       |
| Lower  | 123      | 56.0       | 40                        | 32.5       |

The upper class families who are a minority in the village have a higher percentage of marriage among relatives than the lower class families who are in the majority in Rajaghat.

The percentage of marriage in the same village is also more in the upper class than in the lower class. Though the difference between upper and lower is less significant. The following table will show the total and percentage of marriages



among different classes in the same village.

TABLE NO. 30

SOCIAL CLASSES AND MARRIAGE IN THE SAME  
VILLAGE.

| Class  | Marriages |            |
|--------|-----------|------------|
|        | Total     | Percentage |
| Upper  | 13        | 42         |
| Middle | 18        | 27         |
| Lower  | 46        | 37.4       |

About half of the total marriages among relatives in the upper class were in the same village, but two-fifths of the total marriages in the lower class were in the same village. The following table will give the total and percentages of marriages among relatives in the same village in different classes.

TABLE NO. 31

SOCIAL CLASSES AND MARRIAGES AMONG RELATIVES  
AND NON-RELATIVES IN THE SAME VILLAGE.

| Class  | Marriages among relatives |            | Marriages among non-relatives |            |
|--------|---------------------------|------------|-------------------------------|------------|
|        | Total                     | Percentage | Total                         | Percentage |
| Upper  | 4                         | 25         | 9                             | 60         |
| Middle | 6                         | 25         | 12                            | 28.2       |
| Lower  | 16                        | 40         | 30                            | 36         |

The figures in the Table No. show that the lower class families who are the majority in the village marry more among relatives in the same village, but there is not a big difference in the percentage of marriages among relatives in the different classes in the same village. The figures also indicate that three-fourths marriages among non-relatives in the upper class were in different villages, but about one-third lower class families married non-relatives in different villages. Most of the marriages with relatives were with cousins or classificatory brothers and sisters. Social custom permit one to marry bilateral cross or parallel cousins. According to the social customs and religious injunctions practised in the village one can marry all but the following relatives: father's mother, mother's mother, step-mother, foster-mother, foster sister (who is breast fed by the same mother), own sister, and daughter, half-sister, mother-in-law, father's sister, mother's sister and nieces. One can marry his classificatory sisters, except grandmothers who also stand in the relationship of classificatory sisters. The classificatory sisters include the daughters of maternal and paternal uncles and aunts of the person and his wife's own sisters and daughters of her paternal and maternal uncles and aunts. Both the sororate and levirate marriages are permissible. One can also marry his father's brother's wife and mother's brother's wife after they have been divorced or widowed, but there has not been any such marriage in Rajaghat, and people do not normally welcome such unions.

### KINSHIP NETWORK

It has been said earlier that the kinsmen are the primary components of the kinship network among the peasants in Rajaghat. The factors that tend to affect the density and closeness of kinship network appear to be joint family, marriage, cooperation and contacts among kinsmen.

The size of the joint family is bigger than the single or widowed family in the village. On average there are 9 members in every joint family, 5.4 in every single family and 3.3 in every widowed family. The behaviour and attitude of the members seem to influence each other more in the joint family than when they are separated from the natal family, and establish their own independent households. Economically and socially, sons and daughters are relatively more closely knit together and more dependent upon parents when they all live in the joint family than when the children are married and separated. A father is held responsible for the behaviour and deeds of his children outside the family and the children will be identified through their parents and especially through their father outside the family. The children depend economically, socially and politically on parents, especially on the father who is the master of the family, more particularly when they live in the joint family. When the children are married and separated the control and influence of parents upon them becomes less or ceases altogether. This tends to make the relationships within the joint family and in the network of relationships of many joint families denser and closer. Not only are the relationships between parents and

children closer in the joint family but those between siblings are also. According to tradition values younger siblings must respect the elder ones and the former must protect and love the latter. In other words, in the joint family siblings influence one another more when they live in a joint family. Similarly, by virtue of the seniority of age and kinship position in the family uncles and aunts in the family command respect from the nephews and nieces who, in turn, receive affection and protection from the former. Uncles and aunts exercise control over nephews and nieces more when all live together in the joint family than when they have been separated. This does not mean that uncles and aunts altogether lose the respect of their nephews and nieces or that the latter lose all kindness and affection for the former when separation takes place. It means that the depth or intensity of respect which the younger have for the elders and the affection in which the elders hold the younger lessens because they no longer depend on one another economically and socially to the same extent as they do when in the joint family. In other words, the network of joint families have more individual components and are closer and denser.

The second factor that seems to have affected the network density is marriage among kin. A marriage among kin strengthens the already existent kinship relation. For example, father's brother's wife who comes from another family will find herself in a new family which would become closer than before through the marriage of her daughter to her husband's brother's son. The same is true in the case of a

marriage of the mother's brother's daughter with the father's sister's son. That is, marriage between cousins, parallel or cross, patrilateral or matrilateral, tends to make the already existent kinship relationships closer, denser and even wider. To further clarify this point I shall use the words near and distant to describe kinship relationship and kinsmen. I shall call the marriage with a cross or parallel cousin, as discussed above, a marriage with near kin, and a marriage with a classificatory brother or sister, like brother's wife's sister, who also stands in the relationship of cousin in the local context, a marriage between distant kin. Now, a marriage with a distant kin no doubt brings distant relatives closer and this seems to make the network denser. The marriage with a non-relative, on the other, whether in the same village or in a different village, only makes new relatives. In Rajaghat about one-third marriages are among kin.

Cooperation and contacts among kinsmen are some of the other factors that appear to have affected the network density and closeness. Traditional values require kin to help one another. Through mutual help and cooperation the kinship bond tends to become closer and more intimate. Through visits on formal or informal occasions also the kinship bond is strengthened. The villagers may work on each other's land, help to build a ghor, and also give assistance in various ways at times of birth, marriage, death and burial, and different social and religious occasions. Kin are expected to invite and are invited by kin on occasions like

these and this provides opportunities for kin to see, work with, and talk to kin, criticise or admire kin for their behaviour and attitudes both inside and outside the family. More contacts make kinship network denser and this in turn acts as a watch dog on the behaviour of the kinsmen and thus acts as an external control on them to ensure conformity to traditional values and norms.

#### KINSHIP NETWORK IN DIFFERENT CLASSES

The kinship network in the upper class appears to be denser and closer than in the lower class. It is intended to discuss the density and closeness of the network in different classes on the basis of the number of joint families and marriages among kin and on the extent of cooperation and contacts in the upper and lower classes.

It has been shown later that there are more joint families in the upper class than in the lower class (p. p. 192). Of the total 31 families in the upper class, 63.2 per cent are joint and 36.8 per cent are single. Of the total 123 families in the lower class the vast majority of 71.5 per cent are single and only 5.7 per cent are joint. There are no widowed families in the upper class but 22.8 per cent in the lower class. On average there are 9 persons in a joint family, 5.4 persons in a single family and 3.3 persons in a widowed family. The total families in the upper class comprise 13 per cent and the total families in the lower class constitute 56 per cent of the families in the village.

But in terms of total population the upper class comprise 20.8 per cent and the lower class 49.5 per cent (p./37). This is because there are more members in a joint family and there are more joint families in the upper class. Unfortunately, for want of data, it does not seem to be possible to indicate the total number of kinsmen in different classes.

The fact that there are more members in every joint family and that there are more joint families in the upper class may show that the network is denser in the upper class than in the lower class. As stated earlier, the existence of more members in the joint family and more joint families tend to create a denser network. It appears that in the lower class in which the overwhelming majority of families are single and widowed, the traditional values of family unity are less strongly maintained; and also the control of parents, specially of the father as head of the family, over the married sons who are separated and live in their own families seems to be less.

Earlier in this chapter it has been said that the percentages of marriages among kin are higher in the upper class than in the lower class (p. 170). 51.6 per cent marriages in the upper class are among kin and 32.5 per cent marriages in the lower class are among kin. The percentages of marriages in the same village are also higher in the upper class than in the lower class. About half of the marriages in the upper class were held in the same village against 37.4 per cent marriages in the lower class (p. 171). The

statistical figures, of course, show that the marriages among relatives in the same village are relatively few and there are more in the lower class than in the upper class but this did not seem to have in any significant way affected the network density of the lower class. The important fact that the overall marriages between kin are more frequent in the upper class than in the lower class may show that the network in the upper class is denser and closer than the network relationships in the lower class.

The primary reason for more marriages among kin in the upper class in Rajaghat appears to be to keep property in the hands of relatives and to maintain social status. According to the customary rules of inheritance both sons and daughters and a widowed wife can inherit the property of the family, though a son receives double the amount of a daughter (p.196). Therefore, it was found that there was a general desire among the majority of the upper class families in the village to give priority to marriages among relatives. It is held that this prevents the property of the family being taken away by non-relatives. Secondly, due to the fact that the upper class are more conscious of their higher status, they seem to prefer to marry among relatives. The larger and closer kin group which is considered important for prestige and influence in the village seems to encourage upper class



people to marry kin.<sup>104</sup> There is a system of arranged marriages and, hence, the young prospective bridegrooms or brides do not have any choice of their own but must marry one selected by their parents and elderly relatives (p./93 ). The reason for marriages among kin in the lower class appear primarily due to the desire to have a larger kin group. The higher percentage of marriages among kin in the upper class seems to have produced a closer and denser kinship network.

The figures quoted earlier (pp./70-71) also indicate that not only do the upper class families marry more among relatives than the lower class families, but the total upper class marriages is greater than the total marriages of the lower class families in the same village. Though the difference in the total marriages in the same village by the different classes is very small (p./77), nevertheless it is significant from the point of view of kinship network. The reason for more marriages among relatives in different villages is that the upper class people are conscious of their long-range prospects of inheritance and also of prestige. It is a sign of prestige and pride to be able to say "Mr.X is my relative in that village," specially if the kin are important people in the community.

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<sup>104</sup>In his study on the Moslem residents of two Turkish villages, Paul Stirling found that "Parents choosing a bride for their son look for honour and efficiency." The girl's physical attraction is secondary or a matter of less importance in her being selected as a bride. There is an arranged marriage system among the Turkish villagers and "more than half the marriages are between people with some kinship ties." (Paul Stirling, Turkish Village, London, pp.189-201.

The strong desire to achieve or maintain honour from the matrimonial relationship and at the same time the high percentage of marriages among kin in Stirling's research may mean among other things that the marriage among kin in Turkish villages as in Rajaghat create larger kin group which itself is a sign of honour.

It has been stated earlier that the upper class families have much more lands than the lower class families. Many lower class families do not own any land at all (pp.134-137). The upper class people can work on their own land, or if necessary, can invite relatives or hire other people to work for them. By having more marriages among kin the upper class have a closer kinship network (p.176). The traditional values require individual kin to help one another and any divergence from this norm will bring social criticism particularly from kin. So the denser kinship network in the upper class puts pressure on kin to follow this tradition of mutual help. And because of relatively better economic position and more land the upper class kin can afford to work on the land of one another either for small "wages" or for nothing. The lower class families do not have close kinship network as in the upper class. So the network pressure for mutual cooperation is also less in the lower class. Moreover, they have not enough land to occupy or maintain themselves and they must work on the land of other people on share-cropping, contract basis, or as daily labourers. At the time of the year when there is no farm work they work as wage-labourers with different contractors in such work as building the floor of the 'houses', digging canals or building the roads. The employers mostly come from the towns and contact with them is lost as soon as business with them finished. In other words, the employers of the lower class people, whether in the village or outside, change at different times of the year and also from year to year, but the "employers" of the upper class do not change. As a result, the number of

relationship are fewer and less inclined to orientate the behaviour towards the traditional values in the network of the lower class than in the upper class. In other words, this seems to have produced a closer network for the upper class than for the lower class.

The observance of traditional occasions like marriage and the marriage feast, the funeral feast, circumcision ceremony and feast or dinner on such occasions as I'd matters for the upper class people who can afford to spend money and invite relatives and friends to dinners and festivities. The exchange of gifts on such occasions as marriage and circumcision ceremonies is customarily almost obligatory and only the upper class people can maintain this costly tradition. The visits and contacts on these various occasion help to strengthen the 'network' in the upper class. Moreover, because of more prestige and influence, the people, especially men, in the upper class meet many more people than men in the lower class in both private and public capacities on various occasions, such as paying a social visit, settling disputes, meeting government officials, etc. This also results in making the 'network' closer.

The kin-opinion acts as an external pressure on the members to conform to the traditional values like respect for age and kinship position, and kinship obligations of mutual help and cooperation. In other words, the density of the kinship 'network' seems to be a result and at the same time a cause of the observance of kinship obligations. On the one hand, the upper class families marry more among relatives and cooperate more with kin and this results in the denser and

closer 'network'; on the other, because of the denser network, the upper class families are more open to criticism by kin and this makes them conform more to the observance of the traditional values of showing respect for or offering help to kin.

'NETWORK' DENSITY AND TRADITIONAL VALUES AND  
KINSHIP OBLIGATIONS IN DIFFERENT CLASSES.

Earlier in this chapter the kinship relationships have been discussed. Those were mostly an ideal type of the kinship relationships. In practice the observance of the traditional values of showing respect to the seniors and giving help and cooperation to kin is affected by the density of the family's kinship 'network'. The closer the network the stricter the observance of the traditional values and kinship obligations.

By virtue of their position in the status hierarchy, the upper class families consider themselves the champions of the traditional values in the society. The denser 'network' which is a product of more property and higher status, is also a cause of stricter observance of traditional values and kinship obligations.

Respect for age and kinship-position.

In the upper class families, the older kin are respected and obeyed by the younger, who, in turn receive kindness and forgiveness from the former. A man must respect his paternal, maternal and affinal uncles and aunts and their

spouses. Father's brother and sister have the same position as father, and mother's sister and brother have the same position as mother. Therefore, even if they and their spouses are younger, by virtue of their kinship position, they must demand respect from their nephews and nieces. In the lower class families, older kin are not always respected, and are sometimes abused or beaten when tempers are lost or anger displayed. In the upper class families, sometimes, the older kin members avoid certain situations that might provoke the anger of the younger ones and thus save themselves from being insulted by the younger ones; they do so because they are aware of their kinship position and the impact of any such "happenings" on their families and because they tend to believe that the younger members cannot always be relied upon to act according to reason. But not only do older members in the lower class families not care to remember their kinship position, they also deliberately provoke the younger ones and get involved personally and physically in the exchange of abusive words and fights. Hence the father's brother in the lower class may be seen shouting at his brother's son or quarrelling with his sister's son. As will be found in the relationships within the family in the following chapter, the members of the lower class families do not observe the ideal of respect for age and kinship position in practice.

#### Mutual help and co-operation.

A kin or attiya always expects help and co-operation from his fellow kin, and is, in turn, expected to offer whatever assistance he can whenever his fellow kin need it. But, in practice, the 'connectedness' of the family's

kinship 'network' and the status position of the family determine the nature and the amount of co-operation and help that are exchanged among kin.

The blood-tie, on which is based the agnatic kinship relation, is believed to be stronger than the marriage tie, and hence, an agnatic kinsman has by custom a stronger demand over his agnates for any help he needs, because he comes from the same "bongsho" or "gora" (root). But this is only in theory. This is a point which will be analysed as we discuss the whole problem of mutual help and co-operation. Help is usually given in the following circumstances: If someone gets involved in a quarrel with his neighbour, contests an election, falls ill, needs some assistance in building, repairing or weeding etc., he gets help from his kin; if the head of the family is away from the bari for a day, an attiya will do the shopping, sell the jute or rice for him, milk the cow, sell milk in the bazaar, and give water and grass to the cattle. Sometimes, if the head of the family is away for the night and there is no elderly male member in the bari, a kin (male) will come and stay at night to guard the family against thieves. In most cases the nearest kin, whether agnatic, cognatic or affinal comes and helps. During the advanced stages of pregnancy or during the first few days after delivery when the mother cannot work, or if she is ill and cannot work, a man's mother-in-law is the first person to come and help, however far away she may live from her daughter. A married girl needs help in cooking, looking after children and for other domestic work when she falls ill or immediately before or during or immediately after giving birth to a baby,

and most often her mother, or mother's sister or father's sister or a sister will come and help her. If a married man needs any help in a quarrel, to canvass for him in his election, to work in the field or in building or repairing the house, his father's brother and mother's brother will come first to help him; but, again, the spatial distance between their baris very much influences who will come first to help. Other kinds of help include giving money in loan, working on land or working for kin during an election. As said earlier, the upper class families co-operate with one another more than the lower class families. On the one hand they can afford to offer almost all kinds of assistance and, if they fail to do so, they will face criticism from kin.

#### Rights and duties of kin.

A kin must be invited to a marriage ceremony, I'd or other religious festivals, or in a fateha (locally called "jiafot") or funeral feast. But the frequency of invitation to kin depends primarily on two important factors; firstly, on the general economic condition of the people, and secondly on the extent of the pressure of kin. The lower class people are extremely poor. Any marriage and funeral feasts which they arrange are confined primarily to the people of the same family and one or two of the closest relatives and mathars, and/or people who are directly involved in the preparation for the occasion. On the religious or other festivals like the two yearly I'ds etc. which are important in the social life of the villagers, the lower class people observe the festival with only one payesh and ordinary meals or with

only ordinary meals, and hence they do not invite nor are they invited by kin. The upper class people have good meals on those occasions and invite, and are invited by, fellow kin. It was found in the enquiry that the upper class kin from other villages are also invited. The importance of and the need for social functions on such occasions for meeting people and cementing solidarity or attiya - are gradually decreasing. This is admitted by most interviewers. Even upper class people do not invite as many kin nowadays as they did in the past, say, five or ten years ago. However, the size of the gathering in the funeral and marriage feasts is much larger in the upper class than in the lower class. This is mainly because the social value of inviting friends and relatives to a meal on any ordinary day or on an I'd day actually matters less to the people than the significance which is attached to it by the expectations of the kin. "What will our relative think of us" is the fear that motivates the upper class people still to offer bigger funeral or marriage feasts. If any upper class man fails to offer a big marriage feast or funeral feast and invite as many relatives as his father or anyone in the family did, or more, he will be subject to criticism and he is afraid of this criticism because he thinks this will lower his prestige in the eyes of the relatives and the people at large.

It is generally believed in the village that a kin has a duty towards his fellow kin. With money, physical labour, advice or company, he must help his fellow kinsmen. This 'sense of duty' begins at home. Brothers must help brothers

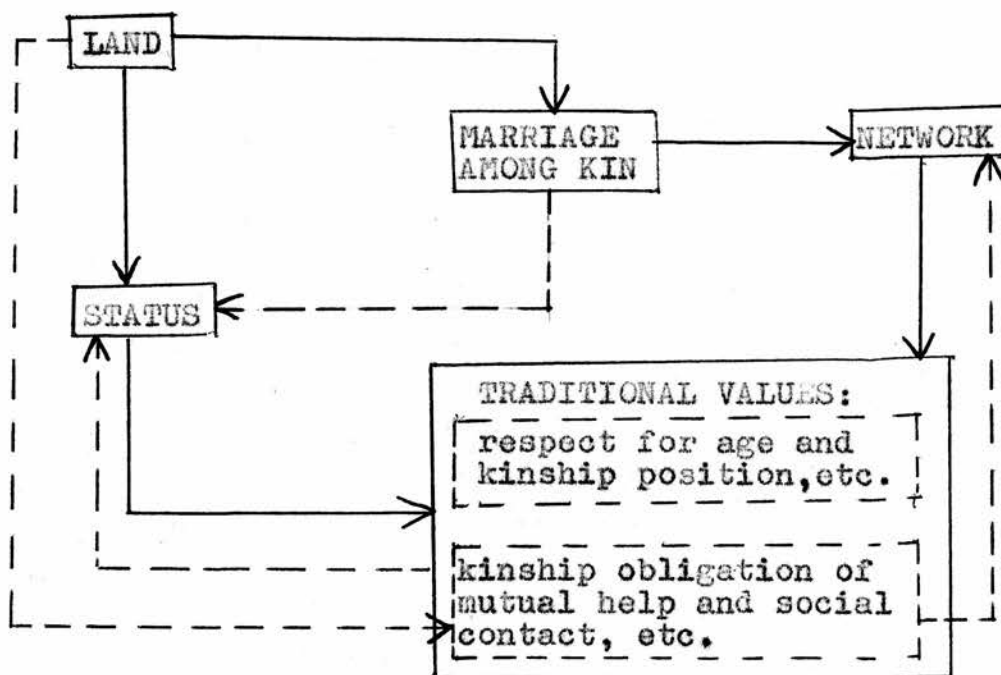


and parents must help sons and daughters and vice versa. But this mutual exchange of help depends as much on personal relationship as on the type of the help, or the nature of kinship 'network'. The 'closer' the 'network', the more people observe kinship obligations. Normally, if a kin does not help a needy kin, he will be criticised by his kin and neighbours. This ideal of mutual help differs in practice in different classes. A lower class man can save himself from criticism by kin by the excuse that he is not able to help; but an upper class man cannot, unless the help needed is exceptionally great and beyond his capacity. An upper class man is susceptible to outside criticism; so, even if unwillingly, he offers help to his needy kin. A lower class man has nothing to lose in the form of fame or prestige by the criticism of kin or neighbours and, so, sometimes, he can refrain from doing his kin-duty even when he is really able to do so. But the general position as was found from interviews and observations is that in practice there is apathy among people in general towards helping the attiya, in both the upper and the lower class alike. The people quote the proverb that nowadays "chacha - apon bancha" which means one should help only oneself (literally "hellow, chacha, sorry, I must save myself"). But this is more so in the lower class than in the upper class.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LAND, SOCIAL STATUS,  
MARRIAGE AMONG KIN AND NETWORK IN RAJAGHAT

From the discussions we have had so far it shows that land, status position, marriage among kin, network, and the observance of the traditional values are closely related with

one another, though in differing degrees. I intend to make clear the relationships between them, with the help of the following diagram.



Land is the primary determinant of status position (p./34 ). The ownership of land leads to more marriages among kin (p./78 ). Marriage among kin itself is regarded to some extent as a sign of prestige among the peasants. Higher status position requires the individuals inside as well as outside the family to conform to the traditional values of respect for age and kinship position, family solidarity, kinship obligation of mutual help and social contact, etc. More marriages among kin result in the closer network density which, in turn, affects and is affected by the traditional values. The criticisms of kin act as an external pressure on kin to

conform to the traditional values. The closer the network connectedness, the greater the pressure. On the other hand, from increased cooperation and social contacts, the network connectedness becomes closer. Land not only determines the status position of the family, but also, as an economic factor, determines the extent of the ability to assist kinsmen and maintain the expensive social obligations of the observance of the traditional ceremonies and various occasions in which relatives and friends must be invited and entertained. These occasions, again, provide the opportunities for more contacts and make the network still closer and denser.

There has previously been a discussion on the traditional values outside the family among kin and the status position and network. Therefore, in the following chapters it is proposed to discuss the traditional values inside the family, the status position and the network connectedness.

CHAPTER VIII

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

CHAPTER VIIITHE STRUCTURE OF THE FAMILY

The three classes of people in Rajaghat have the same types of family and marriage, the same system of descent and residence, and the same rules of inheritance of the family's property. But the behaviour and attitude of the members toward one another in the family differs in different classes.

In the preceding chapter it has been said that the 'variation' in the connectedness of the family's 'network' in different classes affects the attitude of kin to the traditional values of showing respect to elderly and senior kin and the observance of kinship obligation of giving help, etc. to kin. The 'network' connectedness not only influences the behaviour of the individual as a kin outside the family but also his behaviour as a member inside the family itself. The structure of the family depends on the observance of certain traditional values or 'ideals,' like respect for age and kinship position, keeping family matters, secrets, etc. but these are not observed in the same way or to the same extent in different classes. The upper class families believe that they must follow the traditional values on which the structure of the family depends, and they try to observe them in practice. The denser and closer 'network' in the upper class acts as an external pressure on the members to observe those ideals.

In this chapter it is proposed to discuss the types of

family and marriage, the systems of descent and residence, the rules of inheritance, the position of women, and the relationships within the family.

### THE TYPE OF THE FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

#### The Family

The monogamous is the prevalent unit among all classes of people. One hundred per cent of the families are made up of one husband and one wife. Many men have been married more than once, but that was only after the death or divorce of the previous wife or wives and none had or have more than one wife at one time.

The great majority of families are single or elementary. There are, in all, 66 per cent single families, 20.4 per cent joint families and 13.6 per cent widowed families in the village, 42.2 per cent joint and 8.23 per cent single families belong to the upper class, and 15.6 per cent joint and 60.27 per cent single families belong to the lower class. There are no widowed families in the upper class, over 90 per cent widowed families belong to the lower class. The

following table will show the total and percentage of the different types of families belonging to different classes.

TABLE NO. 32  
SOCIAL CLASSES AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF  
FAMILIES.

| Classes              | Joint |                 | Single |                 | Widowed |                 | Total/<br>per-<br>centage |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|---------------------------|
|                      | Total | Per-<br>centage | Total  | Per-<br>centage | Total   | Per-<br>centage |                           |
| Upper                | 19    | 42.2            | 12     | 8.23            | -       | -               | 31/13.6                   |
| Middle               | 19    | 42.2            | 46     | 31.5            | 2       | 6.7             | 67/30.4                   |
| Lower                | 7     | 15.6            | 88     | 60.27           | 28      | 93.3            | 123/56                    |
| Total/<br>Percentage | 45    | 100             | 146    | 100             | 30      | 100             | 221/100                   |

From the Table No. it can be seen that the upper class is composed mainly of joint families and the lower is made up mostly of single and widowed families.

In the following table is given the percentage of different types of families in different classes.

TABLE NO. 33  
PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES BELONGING TO DIFFERENT  
CLASSES

| Class  | Joint | Single | Widowed | Percent-<br>age |
|--------|-------|--------|---------|-----------------|
| Upper  | 63.2  | 36.8   | -       | 100             |
| Middle | 28.2  | 68.7   | 3.1     | 100             |
| Lower  | 5.7   | 71.5   | 22.8    | 100             |

The figures in the table No. indicate that in the upper class over- two-third families are joint and only one-third families are single, and in the lower class only 5.7 per cent families are joint and the great majority, 71.5 per cent families are single.

Traditionally a joint family is a sign of prestige among the peasants, and its break up is regarded as a mark of disrespect for the old values. The fact that the upper class is composed mainly of joint families, gives them more prestige. The denser 'network' in the upper class puts pressure on kin to maintain the unity of the family and not to break it up.

#### Marriage.

A boy has nothing to do with, and no responsibility for, his own marriage. His parents or guardians think of this as their responsibility and concern. The parents of the boy will decide his marriage, look for a suitable girl, and finally arrange and conduct his marriage. At the final ceremony the boy and the girl do say 'yes' to the marriage because they have to give their consent although this is just a formal matter. One hundred per cent of the marriages in Hajaghat were arranged and carried out either by the parents or guardians. The average age of marriage is 20 for men and 11 for women. Most of the married couples had not seen each other before marriage. Many husbands and wives had met each other once or twice but never had the chance to talk to each other before marriage. In my sample which was the whole universe of



my research, about 21 per cent of the husbands saw their wives and talked to them before marriage, and about 36.8 per cent of the husbands neither saw nor talked with their future wives before marriage.

As I was told, in the past people were not serious about the registration of the marriage and the girls' parents did not insist on having "kabin-nama" or an officially registered marriage document, which categorically states the responsibility of the husband for the provision of food, clothing, shelter and 'mohr' or lump sum dowry for the wife in case of divorce. This document is considered a security for the daughter if her husband neglects, deserts, or divorces her. But nowadays most girls' parents believe that the marriage should be registered. Only 10.5 per cent of marriages were officially registered and had "kabin-nama", 10.5 per cent of marriages were not registered and did not have any "kabin-nama" but had marriage conditions written down in "khoshra" or in informal document written in the presence of guardians from both sides and village matbars. The vast majority, i.e., 79 per cent of marriages were neither registered nor did have a "kabin-nama", or "khoshra", or any kind of document whatsoever. 57.8 per cent of the husbands said they got nothing from the girls' parents or her other relatives, and 42.2 per cent of husbands said they received things like one or two shirts, a lungi, or some copper/brass plates, glasses and bodna (jars).

One hundred per cent of the marriages were held in the girls' parents' bari. The marriage ceremony lasted only

one day. On the auspicious day the "bor-jatri" or bridal party come to the bari of the girls' guardians, have a dinner and after the marriage is solemnised by a Mushi or Imam of the Mosque in accordance with the Islamic law, they leave with the bride. After staying four days in the 'boy's parents' bari, the newly married couples paid a return visit to her parents and stay a day or two, when the son-in-law receives the best possible food and hospitality from the girl's parents and relatives. After this short stay, they return to the boy's parents' bari where they live for the rest of their lives.

#### THE SYSTEMS OF DESCENT AND RESIDENCE

##### Descent.

Patrilineal descent is the prevalent practice in Rajaghat. Succession of the title of the family goes from father to son. A son will be known and recognised by the name and genealogy of his father and his father's lineage. A girl, after marriage, goes to live with her husband's parents' family and she and her children become part of her husband's family. It is a patriarchal society in which the dominant figure in the family is the father or the eldest male member. A man is the father, bread earner and protector of the family. A woman is the mother and manageress of the domestic work.

##### Residence.

Patrilocal residence is the prevalent practice among the people. A son after marriage lives with his parents'

family. His wife, who comes to live with him, becomes a part of his parents' family and father's generation. His sons will also be part of his and his father's family and lineage, while his daughter will go to live with and become part of her husband's family after marriage. Married girls have very little contact with their parents except for some occasional visits on social or religious occasions. Such visits are frequent if the married daughter lives in the same village as her parents. There are only four cases where married daughters and their husbands live in the girl's parents' bari. These four cases cannot be taken as indicating a matrilocal residence system since they are exceptions to the rule. Upon enquiry it was found that those who live matrilocally in Rajaghat come from the neighbouring villages and their ghor-bari had either been burnt by fire or destroyed by the erosion of the river. These married couples live in a separate ghor, have separate cooking and household managements, and the husbands have separate and independent occupations and incomes. Therefore these are rather accidental cases of a matrilocal residence type, and cannot be taken as the usual practice.

#### THE RULES OF INHERITANCE AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

##### The rules of inheritance.

Every member of the family - son, daughter, or mother - is socially and legally entitled to inherit the property of the father at his death. The father has absolute rights over all his property - moveable and immoveable, and he can favour some members of the family by giving them more

or the better part of the property; or he can make a gift of the whole or part of his property to anyone inside or outside of the family, or to any one or more organizations or institutions, for any reason whatsoever, without explanation to any one. He can make such a gift during his life-time or by a "will" to be executed in this regard after his death. Normally, however, a father does not give his property to anyone but to his own sons, daughters and wife. In a hundred per cent of the cases the father's property was inherited by his sons, daughters and wife in Rajaghat. According to Islamic law, which is customarily followed in the village, "All the sons will get equal portions of their father's estate. In addition, there are also daughters who receive shares in the proportion of one to every two received by the sons"<sup>105</sup> A wife gets about 13 per cent of the total property, the rest of which is distributed among sons and daughters. Besides her share in the husband's property, the widowed wife is also the sole owner of all the property - ornaments, lands, etc. - which she either received as dowry at marriage from her parents or as her share in her father's property; she can use this property for herself, or give it to anyone inside or outside the family during her life-time, or can leave a "will" to be executed after her death. This is in accordance with the customary law which the people follow. "According to Muhammadan's law a woman has a legal right over her own fortune and she can dispose of it as she pleases."<sup>106</sup> Therefore no one - husband, son, or daughter - can get the property of the wife/mother unless she voluntarily gives it to

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<sup>105</sup>R. Levy, Social Structure of Islam, Cambridge, 1957, p.107.

<sup>106</sup>Syed M.H Zaidi, Position of Women under Islam, Calcutta, 1935, p.135.

them. Normally she allows her husband to own and use all her property. A widowed mother lives with one of her sons; in most cases with the youngest son if there is more than one son, and gives him all her property in return for his providing for her.

But complications arise if the father dies leaving behind him no son-heir. In most cases, the distribution of property is made on the arbitrary judgment and decision of the village matbars and/or of the father's brother who becomes an heir and thinks of self interest only. Customary rules also become quite arbitrary in effect, giving rights to inherit the deceased's property to daughters and widows. A widow gets about 13 per cent of the total property and daughters get about 26 per cent, the rest goes to the father's brother who is responsible for the brother's family and for the marriage of his unmarried nieces when they grow up. If the father dies leaving only minor sons and daughters and a widow, the father's brothers will become de jure guardians of the whole family; but in many cases, if the widow does not remarry, she can become the guardian and head of the family, managing the property and looking after the children. For certain things, such as marriage of the children, selling of the land or ghor, obtaining a big loan, or for any major investment in anything, she must consult with and take advice from her husband's brother.

The division of property takes place before responsible relatives and village matbars. In cases of the division of

small property, members of the family can settle it among themselves with the help of relatives and one or two matbars only. It is the custom in Rajaghat that the youngest son, especially if he is unmarried and a minor, has preference in the sharing of the property. For instance, if there is only one ghor and some spare pieces of corrugated iron sheets etc. left for distribution, the matbars will decide that the youngest son should get the ghor, the elder sons, the iron sheets, etc. Of course, in such a case, the youngest will have to pay to the elders their due share of the price of the ghor if that exceeds the price of the iron-sheets, etc. or of any other ghor they may obtain or have already obtained. In most cases, the widowed mother lives with the youngest son, gives him her property, and looks after him till he becomes grown-up and married. When married he in turn, looks after his mother in her old age.

#### The position of women.

"As a woman she proceeds from the same species and origin, and from the same essence and nature as man. She is an independent co-sharer and a true partner of man. As a minor girl she enjoys the protection and care of her parents or guardians, and when of age she is as much an independent member of and living factor in society as man."<sup>107</sup>

In the empirical investigation of the village of Rajaghat this proved to be merely a matter of theory and, in reality, the position of women is inferior to that of men and they are subordinate in many respects. They are dependent on men for their living and protection. They are confined to

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid, p.14.

the bari and are allowed to do only the domestic work which the men think of as women's work and feel ashamed to do. Women are not as free as men to go anywhere within or outside the village. As females they are thought to be physically weak and helpless and unable to defend their chastity or womanhood without the help of men and unable to earn and support themselves like men. There is little chance of their holding any social or political position inside or outside the village. The men also think of them as inferior because "they do not understand things like men", or "are not as intelligent as men." Whether in family affairs, or in social, political or economic life, their position is still inferior to that of the men. The man is the head of the family and master of the society.

"As a wife she is not only distinct individually but a queen in her home; and in fact a Muslim wife is as free as a bird. As a mother she has a unique prestige of having the very paradise under her feet. As a divorced wife or a widow she is perfectly free to do what is decent and reasonable, and she has an adequate provision for her maintenance during the period of probation, and throughout the life of a dignified widowhood."<sup>108</sup>

This ideal position of Moslem women is, again, something which does not exist in reality. She is not free at all. She is tied down and confined to her inferior position in the family as well as in the society. She is not free to go out, or move about as a man is. She cannot go out and shop, catch fish in the river or in the tank, or work in the field as men can do. She is not free even to take decisions

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

for herself, or for the family. In general, as a wife, she does not have any right or authority to take a final major decision or make a final major plan for building a ghor, buying a cow or bullock, or land. A man's decision and judgment can override those of a woman and never vice versa. As a wife, a woman has a relatively higher position in a family of the lower class than in a family of the upper class. Decisions as to the education of the children, that is, at what age children should be sent to school, where and what they should study, which is an upper class "luxury", are certainly a matter for the father. A woman's position in the family as a mother is very much determined by her economic dependency on grown-up children specially when the father is not alive. She must depend on their support and protection. The position of women in this respect in an upper class family is worse than in a lower class family. In lower class families, a woman sometimes, as said before, contributes to the income of the family and this gives her some economic independence, whereas a woman in an upper class family can never work and earn. Ideally, both father and mother are superior and must be respected and obeyed, as paradise for the children lies under their feet but, in practice, it is the father who is more obeyed and feared.

Socially her position is much inferior to that of a man. She cannot take part in any community affairs in public outside the home. She has no place or voice in the arrangement of funerals, funeral feasts, marriage feasts, in any community work such as building Mosques, etc., or in any religious affairs like employment and payment of an Immam (priest) of the village Mosque. If a tube-well is



allocated by the Union Council to the village, it is men who will decide where and when it should be installed. The woman is never a member of any formal or informal organization inside or outside the village. All the members, including the President of the Union Council and the member who represents Rajaghat, are men. Never in the history of Rajaghat has a woman represented the Rajaghat Ward in the local Union Council (formerly known as Union Board). The women in the village do have a right to vote and elect the members of the Union Council and at the time of election they do cast their votes under the escort of their respective close male relatives; but they have nothing to say or do and don't even know how the Union Council is run or managed. Sometimes, men criticise the members for their activities in the Union Council. When I asked villagers why women are not elected as members in the Union Council, or are not consulted in any community or religious affairs, they gave the same answer as when I asked them why they (men) are the chief decision-makers in family affairs. The answers were like this in both cases; "Oh, they are women (implying by their tone that women are inferior by sex), they don't understand," "This is men's work, not women's work", "they are meant only for cooking and looking after children." Most men think that women are less intelligent than men and are also inferior to men. Women in the village cannot go to the roadside tea-shop and chat or talk away an afternoon or evening with the fellow villagers over a cup of one-penny tea or have a "social evening" there or listen to the small transistor-radio in the shop. Traditions and custom demand that she stay inside the home and does not go out alone in public. In this respect,

women of the lower class enjoy a certain amount of freedom relative to that of upper class women. Women in the village cannot be educated beyond primary level or cannot have a job in the town like the educated men. This is the general attitude in the village towards female education: "They don't need education. The ability to read and write letters (in simple Bengali) and a reading knowledge of the Holy Quran are enough for girls. After all, they will do domestic work and will go to live with their husband's parents' family after marriage." In other words, men in Rajaghat think that if boys are given education they can take a job to earn money and support their parents and family, but a girl cannot take a job and her main duty is to look after her children and husband, cook for them and do all domestic work; and to educate her would be like "watering a neighbouring plant" since she will not belong to the family of procreation but will go to live with her husband's parents' family; there is therefore no point in spending money on an education for girls.

Therefore we can sum up by saying that as a wife, mother and member of the community, the woman holds an inferior and subordinate position to that of the man in the social, economic and political life of the

Society.<sup>109</sup> The position of women in the lower class families in some respects appears to be relatively higher than that of women in the upper class families.

#### RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE FAMILY

##### Traditional value or 'ideals' of the family.

The structure of the family is thought to be founded on its recognition of some traditional values or basic 'principles', such as respect for seniority of age and position in the kinship, superiority of the male, and the need to keep certain family matters within the cognisance of the elderly and responsible members of the family.<sup>110</sup> But the practice of these 'basic principles' or 'ideals' varies in different classes. The members in the upper class families not only strongly believe in these 'ideals' but also actively try to realize them in practice. The 'close knit'

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<sup>109</sup>The position of women in Rajaghat seems to be similar in many respects to the position of women in Stirling's Turkish villages, that is, in both the cases the women are subordinate to men outside as well as inside the family. Stirling writes: "Men wield authority. No woman was head of a household with a grown man in it, and where a husband chooses to be unreasonable and selfish, the only recourse of a woman is flight. Wives are occasionally beaten by their husbands; open references to such beatings always arouse much mirth. Men decide all matters concerning the farming routine, all major sales and purchases, the marriage of children, visits to the doctor, in fact, everything of importance." (Stirling, *ibid*, p.112). It appears from the comparable study of Stirling that in theory Islam gives to women high and respectable positions of equality to men but in practice the results of empirical researches in Rajaghat and in Stirling's Turkish villages seem to indicate that in many respects women have an inferior and subordinate position than men in society.

<sup>110</sup>cf Duže, *ibid*, p.138.

'network' in the upper class puts pressure on kin constantly to conform to those 'ideals'. On the other hand, the more one climbs down the ladder of the status hierarchy the more one finds that in practice these 'ideals' begin to be 'diluted', and while in the middle class families they are considerably 'diluted', at the bottom, that is in the lower class families, they are very much 'diluted.'

In an upper class family great emphasis is laid on the correct behaviour towards the different members according to their age and kinship position in the family. Junior members must not use any abusive language in referring to or addressing the elders. If there is any disagreement between junior members and superiors, it should be expressed only in certain permitted ways. It is unthinkable to use any physical violence against the elders in the family. Women should never be observed by strangers. They should never even appear, or talk to, an outsider, or a man other than a close relative, and should always stay indoors. Family secrets are always discussed in hushed tones and all possible efforts are made to prevent them from leaking out. When husband and wife quarrel, the shouts and cries must not be heard outside the home. The woman should not cry loudly and attract the attention of people outside the family, even if she is bitterly beaten by her husband. One must try to stop the amours and intrigues of a member of the family, or at least to keep them secret and prevent them developing into open scandals. Any kind of dispute among members within the family should be settled through the

mediation of the leaders. If misunderstandings between members continue, property should be partitioned, members should be allowed to separate and establish their own families. Every member should try to prevent any family affair becoming a subject of local gossip or criticism. So a member must try not to say or do anything that might lower the prestige of the father or of the family in the eyes of the people as well as of the kin.

In middle class families, there is still respect for age, and the elders are honoured and obeyed; but when somebody gets angry and loses his temper, the elders may be abused and ill treated. The offender might later beg an apology but will repeat his misbehaviour again if annoyed. This kind of behaviour towards the elders is, of course, not the general behaviour of all middle class people, and it is also socially criticized, but none the less it is tolerated. The members understand the value of solidarity and unity in the family but are not always willing to make personal sacrifices and concessions for the sake of the family. Like the upper class families, middle class families too, are dominated by men, and women are confined indoors and are thought to be inferior to men. But sometimes middle class women do go out to bring water from a nearby tube-well or tank, or cattle from nearby fields. The man sometimes beats his wife and does not think that his angry outbursts heard by outsiders will cause damage to the prestige of the family; she does not think that she will lose face if beaten

semi-publically. A beaten wife sometimes runs back to her parent's home. "In many cases, efforts are made to conceal family secrets but when passions are roused, a father and son, or two brothers... will openly quarrel in the courtyard or the village lane, and in the course of a hearty exchange of abuse these secrets may be broadcast by them at the top of their voices. Family differences are discussed privately and occasionally in public as well, but even when the property is divided and the separation is completed, mutual bickerings and the exchange of harsh words continue for several months in most cases."<sup>111</sup>

People in the lower class say that it is wrong to beat wives and it is bad to insult or hurt the elders in the family; but in practice they do the opposite. Members of the family do not show respect to the elders and sometimes don't hesitate to use physical violence against them. Sometimes they don't bother to beg an apology from the injured elders who accept the insult as something they can do nothing about. Nor do the elders care very much about their position or prestige in the family. The grown up sons work and earn money and don't hesitate to defy parental control and authority at the slightest opportunity. Men think that women are inferior to them, but in practice, lower class women enjoy relatively more freedom in work and movement than upper or middle class women. In their behaviour and attitude towards their husbands they are relatively more independent and bold. If the men beat them, they beat the men too. They will cry and abuse the men loudly and the men will beat and shout in public. Sometimes neighbours come and witness their quarrel. The members of

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid, p.140.

the family don't care about family secrets and thus anyone from outside can know them.

The relationships within the family will be discussed below under four headings, namely, husband and wife, parents and children, siblings, daughter-in-law and other relatives within the family. In the following discussion of the relationships within the family, more emphasis will be laid on the characteristics and differences in the relationships in the two extreme cases, namely, the families of the upper and lower classes; because of the intermediate position of the middle class families, there will be little discussion of relationships within families in this class.

#### Husband and wife.

The husband is the head of the family. According to traditional norms 'an authoritarian husband and a docile wife is the ideal.' He earns money and supports the family; she does domestic work and looks after the children. He is the 'master'; she is his 'subordinate.' According to a local proverb, "her paradise lies under the feet of her husband," which means that she can get paradise after death if she can satisfy and make her husband happy by her love, devotion and service. She depends on him for her living and protection; he has the right to claim obedience and service from her. He is the chief planner and decision-maker of the family; he is responsible for the support and protection of his wife. She should maintain 'purdah' and protect the family's prestige; she should always refrain from doing or

saying anything that might provoke the anger or anxiety of her husband; she should tolerate passively any beatings or abuse that he gives her.

This, the ideal husband and wife relationship, is mostly found in the upper class family in Rajaghat. An upper class wife cannot appear before elder male relatives; she cannot be observed by outsiders or strangers. If she goes out, she covers her whole body with a black pipe-like (tubular) over-all which covers her from head to toe, except for two little holes to see through. She is afraid of being divorced. It is not considered as bad for a man to be divorced as for a wife. Moreover, it is not always easy for a woman to get married a second time if divorced. This makes her depend on her husband more and tolerate him more. She is extremely concerned with the prestige of her husband and will not do or say anything that might cause damage to his position. Therefore, even if she is beaten, she will not cry loudly and let people hear it and thus criticises her husband.

In the lower class family too the wife depends on her husband for a living and he is the master, but not to the same extent as in the upper class. She can work outside home as a part time maid or part time wage earner, separating jute-sticks from jute-fibre, or husking paddy, or making and weaving 'quilt'. She is not afraid of divorce and her husband cannot threaten her by saying that he will divorce her. It is not so difficult for her to get a second husband, as it is with an upper class wife. Therefore, she does not feel so subordinate to her husband as does an upper class wife. If he abuses and beats her, she abuses



him and hits him back. She does not care for the prestige of status of her husband. She openly tells outsiders if he has any shortcomings or defects or if he ill-treats her.

In their sex life, too, the lower class wife is more open and demanding than the upper class wife. She will threaten to leave him if he looks only for his own satisfaction. Though I don't have any figures and villagers are extremely reluctant to admit this because it is the affair of the village, they admitted that illicit sexual relationships are more common in the lower class families than in the upper or the middle class families. This is because an upper class wife would be afraid of any scandals that would damage her husband's and family's status, and, secondly, she has a 'close-knit' kinship network which acts as the watchdog over her behaviour. It would not be a "bolt from the blue" if a lower class wife were discovered having illicit sex-relationship with another man. The affair would be criticised but would hardly damage the status of the husband or of the family.

An upper class husband does not feel obliged to ask for his wife's opinion or permission to build or buy or sell anything; but a husband of a lower class family does; if he does not, his wife will argue and, sometimes, shout or quarrel with her husband.

The selection of a girl for the son is made and his

marriage arranged by his parents. In the majority of cases the boy cannot even see his future wife till he marries her. This is more so in the upper class family; a lower class boy will have more chance to see his future wife (if she comes from the same village) and talk to her on the road, in the field, or at her home because she is not strictly confined to her home like an upper class girl. After marriage, the girl begins to live at his parents' home under the parental control and authority. For the first few months or even a year she is a stranger in her husband's family and cannot appear before elderly male members or other male relatives of the family. She spends most of her time with female relatives. She meets her husband only at night. The husband is as dominant in family affairs as his father, ignores his wife and sides with his mother in most respects. Traditions demand that he should not be obedient to his wife, rather ignore her, but must obey and honour his parents. Her sisters-in-law will say "What can you do?" He is just like our father. All men of our "bongsho" (descent or kingroup in father's side) are like that." This early husband-wife relationship is mostly found in the upper class family. In a lower class family it takes a far shorter time for the newly married daughter-in-law to join in household work and become a member of the family. Her association and meeting with her husband in domestic matters is frequent and public. The husband, too, sides more with his wife than a husband in an upper class family. This is one of the important reasons for the early break-up of a lower class joint family. These are discussed later in more detail in the chapter on 'developmental cycle.' (p. ).

It has been noticed above that in husband and wife relationships in the upper class the wife follows most of the traditional values of obedience to her husband and excuses his mistakes etc. while the wife in the lower does not follow those values, or will observe them less strictly. The need for the lower class wife to work occasionally for money under different employers with the resulting freedom has given her a 'loose-knit' network. While the wife in the upper class does not have the economic pressure to do any work outside the family. Traditionally a woman's work outside home is looked down upon and the closeness of the kinship 'network' will not allow an upper class wife to work outside home. As a result, she has considerable time free from the claims of domestic work, and she spends her spare time in visiting relatives and helping them. Unfortunately it cannot be proved by statistical information but general interview and field observation help to reach the conclusion that the wife in the upper class spends more time paying visits to relatives than the wife in the lower class. This also strengthens the presence of a denser network in the upper class.

The traditional values of respect and obedience to the elder and senior members in the family are also observed more in the upper class than in the lower class in the parent - children relationship, or in the relationship among siblings or in the relationship between in-laws; these are discussed in the following.

### Parents and Children.

A son is regarded as an asset, and a daughter as a liability. A son belongs to the family, but a daughter does not. After marriage she goes to live with her husband's parents' family and becomes a part of her husband's family. A son remains in the family, works with his father and supports his parents when they are old even long after separation. He is regarded as a "lathi" (stick) of the family and helps his father and brothers and kin physically in any quarrel between them and the neighbours or outsiders, which frequent in the village. A father wants a son because he wants to leave behind him an heir to his name, fame and property; without a son there will be nobody to "speak for the bongho" (lineage), and the property will be inherited by others after his death which no father likes or welcomes. This traditional attitude of people towards sons and daughters has lasted through the centuries and still exists in families of all classes in Rajaghat.

Obedience to parents is regarded as the highest virtue for the children to have. Children must show respect to their parents and do or say as they demand. Children are not supposed to question whatever their parents say or do. They have no right to argue over the judgement or decision of their parents. They must not use any bad or abusive language to them. They must never hurt them physically or injure their feelings. It is a most heinous crime to beat a parent. They must do what their parents ask and must behave in the way parents ask them to behave, and must learn what parents want or ask them to learn. "To hurt or injure

the feelings of parents is to strike against the holy 'Kaba-Mosque' of Allah in Mecca", which means that it is an unpardonable crime. Children must help and support their parents when they grow old. They must nurse and attend their parents when they are ill or physically invalided. They must touch the feet of their parents with both hands to express their profound respect and obedience to them; because under their feet lies paradise for the children. This means that children can reach paradise if they can please and satisfy their parents by honour and obedience, service and support, love and sympathy. Ideal children, even when grown-up, are not expected to stand erect, face to face, and stare directly into the eyes of the parents. They must stand in a humble position, with head bowed down and eyes directed towards the ground.

Parents are responsible for the upbringing, support with food, clothing, shelter and other necessities, care and attention, education, discipline and marriage of their children. But the roles and responsibilities of parents are a little different towards sons and daughters and this is as a result of the different attitude they hold towards boys and girls as have been described above. Parents are always more kind and sympathetic to sons than daughters. A son will always get the bigger and better part of the cakes or fish or curry. His wants and demands are always given priority by the parents over his junior as well as his senior sisters. A son is closer to the father, but a daughter is closer to the mother by virtue of their different sex. Again, the behaviour of both parents is not the same towards

the children. "It is the father who loves a smiling son and it is the mother who is to pacify their crying."<sup>112</sup> Indeed it is the mother who is responsible for bringing up and looking after the children. She will do all washing, cleaning, dressing, feeding, making the beds and putting them to sleep, and nursing them if they are ill. On the other hand, it is the father who will work and earn and provide maintenance to support the children. Both parents are responsible for the training and discipline of children, though the father is regarded as more responsible for it. He has to be and is more strict than a mother and sometimes is very harsh with the children, and specially with sons, who sometimes are not so afraid of the mother, from whom it is very easy to run when she is angry, but not from the father. Father can observe and know the behaviour of children outside the home. It is the father who will physically punish children, specially sons, more than the mother. As the children grow up, some become attached to the father and help him in his work, and girls become attached to the mother and help in her work. When they reach the age of marriage, parents will look for and select their partners and get them married. Sons and daughters are not supposed to object to marrying the partners chosen by their parents. After marriage, a boy lives with his parents, a girl goes to live with her husband's family, although she pays occasional visits to her own parents. Sons and daughters grow up to look to their father as a shelter from which they are sure to get all support and protection. They learn to depend on the father for economic security. On the other hand, parents tend to look to

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid, p.148.

sons as an insurance; expenditure on them is like a future investment which will pay dividends in time. Therefore, as long as the father is alive, and it is economically profitable for sons to remain with their family, in most cases, he manages to keep the family united.

This is the ideal parent-child relationship mostly found in the upper class families. In a lower class family, mother is as strict and harsh as father, and sometimes, when angry, she runs after the son or daughter in the field to catch and beat him/her. She punishes children more than an upper class mother. Children do not obey or respect their parents as much as they are respected in an upper class family. Lower class children know that they should obey and honour their parents, and do or say as they ask them to. But in practice they do not obey them and when in anger do not hesitate to use foul language to parents, and sometimes physical violence, which is almost never found in the upper class family. If the children are beaten by parents, they sometimes hit back which would be unthinkable for upper class children. After they have cooled down, they apologise to their parents, but they will do the same when their temper flares up again. There are no 'norms' or 'expected behaviour' which are strictly observed between parents and children in a lower class family. Even, if the ideal parent-child relationship is known and understood by the lower class family, it is much more flexible, while it is most strictly observed in the upper class family. Any kind of misbehaviour, maltreatment or torture by lower class children of their parents is criticised by neighbours, but eventually

this criticism dies down, because people think it is not something unexpected or abnormal in a lower class family. On the other hand, this kind of behaviour in an upper class family, even in the mildest form, would provoke the strongest criticism among neighbours as well as relatives, and it would be difficult for the wrong-doers to stand it and stay in the family. Sometimes a lower class son is seen quarrelling with his elder sisters and mother and beating them, which never happens in an upper class family. This does not mean that the parent-child relationship in the lower class family is always like this, i.e. they quarrel with one another all the time, and it is always bitter and sad. These are the extreme situations which arise in parent-child relationships only when some one is angry and a quarrel ensues. Otherwise, parents and children do depend on one another, cooperate and live in peace. It is true however that generally the parent-child relationship in a lower class family is more aggressive, bitter and unhappy than in an upper class family.

"The nature of the parent-child relationship changes with the age status of the children. The traditional standards of correct treatment during infancy and early childhood are very different from those of children and adolescent. Similarly, when the sons and daughters enter the phases of youth and subsequently of adulthood, the tone of the parent-child relationship undergoes a significant modification."<sup>113</sup>

Everyone in the family is fond of the infant, who gets care and attention from all in the family. Every time he

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid.



cries the mother suckles him at her breast and tries to pacify him. She also makes various sounds and signs and swings him holding him in her arms to stop his crying or to make him laugh. There must be, and is, someone always available for an infant when mother is otherwise busy. Sometimes someone stays by him when he sleeps, even at day time. If the baby suddenly wakes up and cries out and if there is no one beside him, the mother will rush to him from anywhere and stop any work.

Lois Barclay Murphy, the wife of the author of the book "In the Minds of Men", spent much of her time in India surveying the life and needs of children. She writes:

"Since crying is so often taken for granted in the children of the western world that it is even thought by some people that "it is good for babies to cry for a while each day," I have hesitated to remark that babies are almost never heard to cry in many sections of India. Lucy Sprague Mitchell, who stayed longer and is an experienced observer of children, commented that during a whole year in India she never heard a baby cry. Since they are put to the breast as they get restless, they don't have much chance to practice "crying for what they want."<sup>114</sup>

Mothers, in the village, does not feed her baby in accordance with any time table; she feeds him whenever he cries. Even if he cries out because of any physical pain, trouble, or injury, the mother will put him to the breast. Most babies have developed a habit of sucking at the mother's breast, even when they are not hungry, and not in need of any food, and they will cry just to be put to the breast.

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<sup>114</sup>Lois Barclay Murphy, "Roots of Tolerance and Tension", in In the Minds of Men, by Gardner Murphy, New York, 1953, p.47.

I heard babies crying in Rajaghat but of course, it stopped immediately. I realised that either mother had put him to the breast, or someone had tried to pacify him by some other means.

This parent-infant relationship is found more or less in families of all classes, except that in a lower class family sometimes a baby is "neglected", even slapped, or very rudely pushed aside by mother if he cries. When she works as a maid or wage-labourer, her baby is all the more "neglected" whereas this does not happen in an upper class family. As stated before, a lower class son begins his work with his father or as a paid labourer at a very early age, when an upper class son goes to school or does nothing. A lower class daughter begins her domestic work and responsibility much earlier than an upper class daughter. An upper class family can afford to have servants or "helpers" who will work for them while they can look after their babies. Therefore, a baby in a lower class family does not have as many members to fulfil his needs as in an upper class family. A lower class mother and her young daughter will have to do all domestic work themselves.

Children of minor age are under much more strict control and authority from their parents than the grown-up ones. A grown-up son of 15 or 20, or a daughter of the same age, is expected to be more responsible and to behave in a more gentle way. People will say: "You are no more a little boy (or girl) and you must behave properly", or "Now you have grown up and this kind of behaviour does not

suit you," or "you are a grown up boy (or girl) and you should be more responsible and considerate etc." and so on. The grown-up sons and daughters are also expected to help parents more and support the family in every way they can. Parents, on the other hand, take notice of the growing age of children and become cautious of using abusive language or physical violence, as they were inclined to do when their children were minors. Parents will be warned by elderly relatives of their own prestige which might be in danger if they beat or rebuke grown-up children and if they return in kind. As stated before, a father or a mother in a lower class family does not hesitate to use abusive or foul language or physical force when he/she is angry and loses his temper, and, as a result, they are often insulted too by the grown-up children. This rarely happens in an upper class family. This is the general condition, although there may be a few individual variations in every class.

A lower class son, as said before, begins to work at an early age and earns a living by working as a servant, cow-boy, labourer, or assistant in a shop. Because of his growing and important contribution ~~on~~ to the economy of the family, he becomes more independent in his voice and behaviour, and very often defies parental control and authority, which does not happen with an upper class son whose contributions to the family's economy begins much later and whose father's property and income are big enough to overshadow his own income or earning. An upper class father does not have to depend on the earnings of his sons, as do lower class family fathers. Consequently, an upper class father can be authoritarian and have a stable authority in the family, while

a lower class father is less authoritarian and his position and authority are unstable. Max Weber writes on this point:

"In spite of all, the economic realities intervene in a compelling manner. First, there are characteristic differences depending on whether the economic gain is attributed to common work or to common property. If the former situation obtains, the household authority is usually basically unstable, no matter how autocratic it may be. Mere separation from the parental household and the establishment of an independent household is sufficient for a person to be set free from household authority. This is mostly the case in the large household communities of primitive agricultural peoples.

"On the other hand, the household authority is typically stable wherever ownership of livestock and property in general, forms the prime basis of existence. This is particularly true when land ceases to be abundant and becomes a scarce commodity. For reasons already alluded to, family cohesion is generally an attribute of the landed aristocracy. The man without any landed property or with only little of it, is also without the corporate lineage group."<sup>115</sup>

In the lower class family the solidarity and unity between parents and sons is far less than in the upper class family, and, as a result, a lower class joint family breaks up much earlier than an upper class family. This is a point which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on "Developmental Cycle."

Earlier it has been said that over two thirds of the

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<sup>115</sup>Max Weber, "The Household Community" in Theories of Society, Vol. I, edited by Talcott Parson and others, New York, 1961, p.302.

families in the upper class are joint, but only small percentage, 5.7, are joint families in the lower class. While the prospect of future economic gain and the pressure of the kinship 'network' keep the members united in the joint family, this in turn results in more cooperation between father and sons, and between sons in the upper class. While a joint family breaks up into two or more single families, or when a married son is separated (which happens more in the lower class) the degree of cooperation decreases much more between separated father and sons or between sons. Hence, we find that there is less cooperation between father and sons in the lower class than in the upper class.

#### Siblings.

According to tradition, the younger brothers and sisters should obey and respect the elder ones, and the elder ones should love and look after the younger ones. The elder brothers and sisters should take care of the younger ones, and the younger ones should not misbehave or illtreat the elder brothers and sisters. Even if rebuked or beaten by elder brothers and sisters, the younger ones should not, in return, abuse or beat their elder brothers and sisters. Elder brothers and sisters, and, specially, if they are married, are like parents and must be obeyed and honoured like parents. Family prestige demands that there must be unity and solidarity among all siblings, specially among brothers who are inheritors of the father's name, fame and property, and bearers of the tradition and reputation of the family. In the community as well as in the family "united they (brothers) stand, divided they fall" is the lesson they must learn from the elders in the family. There must be a

spirit of selflessness and sacrifice among all children, specially among the elder ones for the younger ones. The eldest brother whose position is next to the father in matters of respect and responsibility among the siblings should be the most selfless, loving, considerate and helpful on the other hand, he has a right to demand obedience, respect, help and cooperation from all siblings.

The elder siblings have some authority and control over the younger ones, who, in turn, can excuse some of their mistakes since the responsibility is borne by the elder brothers and sisters. The elder brothers and sisters look after, guard and protect the younger ones. Younger ones must follow them, so elder ones must be of ideal character and behaviour and must not say or do anything wrong or bad. If younger ones commit mistakes or break family rules or traditions, or misbehave with any senior siblings, elder ones immediately bring this to their notice, or warn them not to repeat it, or sometimes punish them by slapping, caning, and finally by drawing attention of the parents. The younger brothers and sisters, on the other hand, have the privileged position of being 'young' or 'minors'. They can claim favours from elder brothers and sisters. The elder ones must make concessions to the younger ones over anything which is to be distributed among siblings or which is made or bought by parents for them. The best weapon of the younger ones, specially if they are minors, to arouse sympathy for favourable treatment, is to cry or refuse to take meals which instantly causes anxiety in a mother who is concerned for her children's health. In

most cases of their tactics succeed. Most of the elder brothers and sisters will forego their own share to appease the younger ones. They will sometimes be abused by parents if they do not show kindness or give concessions to the younger ones. "He is young ("choto") or "He is your younger brother ("choto bhai), or younger sister (choto bon) but you are elder (boro). They do not understand but you do." These are the comments or "rebukes" that come from parents when elder siblings do not make concessions to the younger ones. On the other hand, if a younger sibling is slapped or beaten abused, he/she is not supposed to retaliate. If they ever do, comments or rebukes that come from parents and relatives are like this; "He (or she) is your elder (boro) brother (Bhai), (or sister). He (or she) can slap you or beat you, but you cannot do the same to them."

People prefer a son to a daughter. Sons have a favourite and dominant position over their sisters in the family. Up to the age of five or six brothers and sisters work, play, and live together because at this age they are regarded as 'sexually neutral and morally irresponsible.' But segregation by sex begins after that age and sisters become attached to feminine work and are unable to go out or move and play freely with their brothers and with the opposite sex. Brothers learn the work of men and associate with men. A definite attitude of pride or humiliation grows up even long before segregation of sex begins in both brothers and sisters towards each other's work and activities. A boy feels ashamed, or even humiliated, in the eyes of his contemporaries if he has to do a girl's work which, mostly, he is not asked or expected to do. Brothers have a superior attitude to their sisters, and have learnt to believe that they have

authority over sisters, young or old. They will do men's work. If sisters come and criticize their work, they will shout back such comments as "Go and do some cooking," or "Go and do the washing (or sweeping)", or "this is not a woman's work and what do you know about it?" etc. Sisters are expected to make concessions or sacrifices for brothers. Sisters were found to be more quiet, passive and gentle than brothers who were found more obstinate in their demands and more active in their work. The unity and solidarity among siblings, especially among brothers, must not be broken even after they have been separated and parental property has been partitioned. They are expected to help one another and give and take advice at times of need, and invite one another at the time of festivities and ceremonies and exchange gifts. Any deviation from this 'norm' will bring criticism and condemnation from kin.

The above relationship among siblings, which is mostly found in upper class families, sometimes differs in certain respects from that in the lower class families. In the lower class family, the relationships among brothers and sisters are more often "selfish" and younger ones show less respect and obedience to the elder brothers and sisters. The spirit of self-sacrifice and the making of concessions is less ready among elders in a lower class family than in those of an upper class family. In the lower class too the brothers and sisters feel the need to maintain unity and solidarity among all siblings but in actual practice they do not maintain unity or solidarity and break away from the joint family often or earlier than in an upper class



family. In the lower class family younger ones are found abusing or hitting back at the elder ones which could hardly happen in an upper class family. When a lower class boy finds his earnings are being enjoyed by other brothers and sisters, he becomes jealous, which leads to quarrellings and ultimate separation from the younger ones. The younger ones in the lower class family know too that they should obey and respect the elder brothers and sisters and the elder ones know that they should love and protect and look after the younger ones, but in actual practice they do not follow these ideals. When angered or in bad temper, the younger ones in the lower class family do not hesitate to use foul language or beat the elder brothers and sisters, who, in turn, do not give up their own interests or gains for the younger brothers and sisters. The sense of unity and solidarity is very weak among siblings in the lower class family and it becomes still weaker when brothers are separated from the parental household, while in the upper class family the unity and solidarity among brothers remains even after they have been separated from their parents' family.

Enquiry in Rajaghat showed that in the lower class families there is no high family status or position, or hope of a share in the father's great property, to compel or induce the siblings to work for unity, solidarity and cooperation in the family and uphold its 'ideals'. Moreover in their 'loose-knit' kinship 'network', the pressure to conform to family 'ideals' is very slight.

The Daughter-in-law.

After marriage a girl comes to live with her husband's parents' family. Till he is separated, which normally does not happen till his father is dead or sometime after his father's death, she is a part of a large family consisting of her husband, his parents and brothers and sisters. Except in cases where the husband was a relative before marriage and his family is known, she comes as a daughter-in-law to a new family and environment where everyone and everything is unknown and new to her. She finds herself in a new world where she will have to obey and honour, work and serve, love and live with, people she has not seen before, and whose principles and ideas, tastes and attitudes, wants and worries she knows nothing about. She feels shy and lonely, afraid and worried. Before marriage she has heard about 'cruel and heartless mothers-in-law', 'cunning and deceitful sisters-in-law', and 'selfish and mother-loving husbands'. She has also heard before coming to her husband's home that her behaviour, movements and activities will be closely watched by her affinals and will be criticised by them for the slightest mistake or fault. Moreover, she knows that her own parents and other relatives will be judged, admired, criticized or laughed at, by her own taste, work, behaviour and character. She remains silent and pensive and talks as little as possible. She is afraid of saying or doing anything because she is not sure and does not know what will make them happy or pleased, or angry and annoyed. She tries to respect or avoid most people in her new home. But certainly she receives sympathy and help from the younger

brothers of her husband from the very beginning of her arrival as a daughter-in-law.

Most people in the husband's family try to be friendly and kind to the newly arrived 'bride' and at the same time are most curious about her behaviour and tastes, work and skill. For the first few months when she remains almost a stranger, she receives the best possible treatment and kindness. Everyone, specially the parents of the husband, are careful for her timely "goshel" (bath) and meals, sleep and rest, and, sometimes, she is mildly rebuked by them if she does not maintain regularity and does not look after herself. Everyone seems to accept the fact that she is "notun-bou" (new wife or bride) who is not supposed to do any work but to enjoy kindness and sympathy from all in the family. People will say, "let her take time and know things; then she will be able to do everything herself." For the first few months, the daughter-in-law does very little, or no, domestic work. Sometimes she washes a shirt or two for her husband or for her father-in-law, or a saree or two for her mother-in-law. Sometimes, she keeps the "bodna" (earthen or metal water jar) filled with water in readiness for her father-in-law and mother-in-law for the "ouju" or ritual purification by washing the hands, feet and face, before prayer. She also keeps the "lungi" and "gamchha" (towel) ready for her husband or father-in-law before they come home from the fields or from outside and go for a bath in the river or tank. She also sometimes cleanses the hookka, changes the old water for fresh, and puts out tobacco and matches if they are wanted by the father-in-law, mother-in-law or husband. After meals, she 'makes' "pan" with betel-nut

and lime for her husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law. All these things she does for her father-in-law but never appears in front of him nor talks to him directly; her meetings with her husband are also very limited at day time. Sometimes she sees him only at night. While all her contacts and exchanges of words with her mother-in-law, husband and husband's younger brothers and sisters are direct and personal, she has to maintain 'distance' (and avoidance from direct contact in her meetings and conversation with her father-in-law, the elder brothers, cousins and uncles of her husband; in other words, her relationship with all the female relatives inside and outside the family is direct and personal; her relationship with all the male relatives of her husband, except his younger brothers, is indirect, and avoiding; she has a personal and "joking" relationship with the younger brothers of her husband. She talks to her father-in-law, her husband's elder brothers, and his elder cousins and uncles in a very low voice from the other side of the wall in the ghor, or from a distance with a big ghonta (veil) on her head and standing in a submissive attitude with bowed head and eyes downwards. When she is in the company of women members and alone, she does not have to put on a ghonta but with the appearance of an elder male relative of her husband, she will instantly put on the ghonta and will at once hurry inside the ghor or leave the place where they come to stand or sit down. The slightest dishonour or deviation from this tradition will instantly bring severe criticism and rebukes, sometimes, in abusive language, first directly from the mother-in-law and grown-up brothers and sisters of her husband, and then directly from her father-in-law who will most often state his criticisms to her

mother-in-law, but sometimes also to her husband, who will again privately rebuke her for her mistakes or faults. Some husbands do criticize severely or openly rebuke their wives in abusive language. Her place and happiness in the husband's family depend very much on how wisely and skilfully she can satisfy everyone by her behaviour and work.

After the first few months have passed, things began to change. She remains no more a "notun-bou". By this time she has come to know the customs and traditions of the family, the habits of domestic work, and the tastes and temperament of different members in the family. The first confrontation of the daughter-in-law starts with her mother-in-law. Her father-in-law, as custom demands, maintains a relationship of 'distance' and 'avoidance' with her and has no direct and face to face talk or meeting with her, nor does he exchange things from hand to hand with her. Her virtual guardian and "master", is her mother-in-law, till her husband is separated and she has her own independent home and family. Her relationship with her mother-in-law is direct, personal and close. Her mother-in-law is the person who will always guard her, watch her every activity and behaviour, and criticise and abuse her if she does anything wrong. Again, she is also the person who takes care of her more than others in the family. The daughter in law massages the feet of her mother-in-law at night before she falls asleep and this will certainly please her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law wants her to observe all the customs and taboos. She will rebuke her daughter-in-law if she does not offer prayer, and does not keep fasting during Ramadan,

goes out at night, or in the evening at the bank of the pond, or walks at night with her hair loose, etc. She will teach her not to look at the mirror at night or stand on the middle of the bed where her husband sleeps, actions which are thought to be wrong and will bring misery and unhappiness to the family. The mother-in-law is most anxious to see her daughter-in-law become pregnant, because a grandson will inherit the family's name and property. The birth of a child, preferably of a boy, will give her real and practical rights in the family. Before she was a stranger, but after the birth of a baby, she becomes a part of the family. She will be liked and loved more by almost everyone in the family. Her words will have weight and she will be able to make comments or give judgments in the family's affairs which she could not do before. Failure to give birth to a child, specially a son, will cause her to be neglected and overlooked and is thought to be a sign of misfortune for the whole family, even if the defect lies not with her but with her husband. Everyone will blame her and not her husband. Gradually she will become almost an eye-sore to members of the family, specially to her mother-in-law, who begins to find fault in everything she does or says. Unless she is lucky in winning love from her husband who can stop her suffering by separation from the family, she will have a most miserable life in her husband's parents' family. Her husband will be forced by his parents to remarry which will make her life all the worse. Sometimes, she tries to return to her parents' home, but she cannot remain there for ever. Much of the old and contemporary literature is full of stories of such unfortunate

daughter-in-laws. Sometimes she takes the extreme course and commits suicide. There is not any known case of suicide in Rajaghat but people told me that not long ago a few daughters-in-law, committed suicide in the neighbouring villages. I am not sure if this is true and it may not be taken as a fact.

The relationship between the daughter-in-law and the younger brothers and sisters of her husband is informal, personal and intimate. But this does not affect her position of being the elder brother's wife who should be respected like a mother and who is responsible for breast-feeding and their general upbringing when their mother is dead, divorced or deserted. While social custom demands that they should not cross certain limits, the husband's younger brothers and sisters have a joking relationship with her. The younger brothers of the husband act as 'aides' to her in bringing or buying goods, carrying a message somewhere, or accompanying her to her parents' bari. The daughter-in-law will 'oil' and comb the hair of her sisters-in-law who will do the same for her. Some daughters-in-law are on good terms with their sister-in-law, some are not. Quarrels and the exchange of abusive language become regular affairs between daughters-in-law and sisters-in-law and the latter usually win unless the husband takes his wife's aide. When the younger sisters and brothers marry, the former intimate, personal and informal relationship between them and daughter-in-law begins to change. Married sisters-in-law go to live with the husband's parents' family, and the married younger brothers of the husband become attached to their wives and more formal to their elder brother's wife.

The relationship between the daughter-in-law and members of the husband's family, as described above, are found more or less in the same form in all classes of family in Rajaghat. But still there are some differences in the relationship between the daughter-in-law and her in laws in the husband's parents' family between the upper and the lower class families. The period of being a "notun-bou" is much shorter in the lower class family than in the upper class family. She takes up domestic work earlier in a poor-class family. She respects her parents-in-law but does not hesitate to shout back or quarrel with her mother-in-law when angry once the 'introductory' period of being "notun-bou" is over, in a poor class family. The relationship between her and her father-in-law is less 'avoiding' and 'distant' and they sometimes do exchange things from hand to hand, talk directly or meet face to face. In the upper class family the husband usually sides with his mother and sisters in a wuarrel with his wife, while in the lower class family he will usually side with his wife. The quarrels and exchanges of abusive language between her and the younger brothers and sisters of her husband are more frequent than in the upper class family. There are not as many taboos and customs for her to observe rigidly in the lower class family as in the upper class family.

#### Other relatives within the family.

I shall make here a brief reference to the position of grandparents and uncles in the family. Social customs demand that the seniority of age and position of the grandparents must be respected. Moreover, they enjoy certain privileges



and rights because of their old age and their contribution to the family. They have a friendly and joking relationship with grand children. A man may be very strict and cruel to his sons but very lenient and kind to his grandchildren. By comments and talks they sometimes amuse their grandchildren, who, in turn, amuse their grandparents. Sometimes people complain that grandparents spoil grandchildren by giving them too much freedom, kindness and forgiveness. Grandchildren are sure to be excused by grandparents for an offence or mistake which will not be pardoned by parents. therefore, if a grandchild does something wrong, or commits a mistake and thus makes his parents angry, he will go to his grandparents to avoid punishment from his parents, because he knows that he will receive shelter and protection from his grandparents. In a lower class family, grandparents are not always respected, and are abused, even sometimes beaten, by grandchildren when they are angry or in a bad temper which does not happen in an upper class family.

Uncles (paternal) have a position in the family just like that of the father, or, at least, similar to it. Therefore they must be respected and obeyed like the father. Uncles are expected to be as loving as the father and more forgiving than parents. Sometimes nephews and nieces receive certain things from their uncle which their father would not give. An uncle, even though junior, must be obeyed and respected. He may have a friendly relationship with a nephew who is of the same age, but, in public, the nephew will show respect and obedience to his uncle. The relationship between nieces and uncles is like that between daughters and father. But while a niece can meet her father face to face, or talk and

exchange things directly, she must maintain a relationship of daughter-in-law and father-in-law with her uncle. A niece will look to her uncle for all possible help and protection in much the same way as she will look to her father. In the absence of her father she is sometimes sure to get more favour, and forgiveness from her uncles than she might from her own father if he were alive and more than the uncles' own children could expect. The respect for age, as stated above, and as in any other relationship in the family, is less in the lower class family than in the upper class family. Sometimes, in the lower class family the relationship between uncles and nephews and nieces is not as loving and respectful as it is mostly found to be in the upper class family.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> S.C. Dube found a system of relationship within the family in a South Indian village called Shamirpet which is very similar to that found in my research in Rajaghat as described and analysed above. "The character of the relationship found between different members of the family is different in certain respects between the poor and the upper class. In an upper class family seniority of age is always respected and unity and solidarity in the family are given priority over individual interests; this is hardly found in a poor class family. Dube has called the different groups of people 'levels'. He classified the population of Shamirpet into three broad levels of upper, intermediate, and lower, (which are so strikingly similar in many respects to that of my classification in Rajaghat). The 'upper' level consisted of Brahmins, rich Reddies and Muslims and others who had urban contacts and education in the city. The 'intermediate' level was made up of all ordinary agriculturists, clean occupational casts, and Muslim tradesmen. The 'lower level' was comprised of the untouchables and poor Muslims. The families of these

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three levels differ in their attitude and outlook towards relationships within the family. The four basic principles on which the structure of the family is founded, namely respect for age, and kinship position, superiority of the male, and the need to keep family secrets private, are not observed or upheld in the same way in different classes or levels of families. Dube writes: "The people in the upper level not only believe in these ideals (i.e., four ideals or principles on which the structure of the family is founded and stated above), but most of them consciously strive to achieve them in actual practice... when we consider the actual behaviour of the people on the intermediate level, we find that many of these ideals are very considerably diluted. On the lower level the ideals get diluted so much that it is difficult to find any traces of them in actual practice." (Dube, ibid., pp.131-160).

CHAPTER IX

THE CONJUGAL ROLE-RELATIONSHIP IN THE FAMILY

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#### 'NETWORK DENSITY' AND CONJUGAL ROLE-RELATIONSHIP

The upper class families appear to have a denser kinship 'network' and 'segregated' conjugal 'role-relationship', and the lower class families appear to have 'joint' conjugal 'role-relationship' but not as dense a network as in the upper class. This is contrary to the hypothesis of Elizabeth Bott who found the working class family having 'close-knit' 'network' and 'segregated' conjugal 'role-relationship.' But her basic theory about "the closer the network, the more segregated the conjugal role-relationship,"<sup>117</sup> appears to be applicable in the present study also.

The traditional roles of husband and wife in the peasant families in Rajaghat were in the form of "the men to the field and the women to the kitchen"<sup>118</sup> but this is not true in the case of every peasant family; there is variation in the segregation of the 'conjugal role-relationship' in different classes. In some families there is a sharp division of labour between husband and wife; there the husband has his tasks, and the wife has hers; he has his place and time of leisure, she has hers; he earns money and supports the family, and he thinks his wife should not interfere in his plans and work; she thinks she is alone responsible for domestic work and taking care of the children; they have accepted the fact the 'the husband is to order and the wife is to obey', and never vice versa.

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<sup>117</sup>Bott, ibid, pp.52-61.

<sup>118</sup>Oscar Lewis, A Mexican Peasant and His Family, London, 1964, p.69.

In other families, the husband shares the work of the wife, spends more time with her, and seeks her opinion before doing something. Besides these two extremes, there are still other families in which the division of labour between the husband and wife is not very rigid, on the one hand, and, on the other, there is not much co-operation between them. The first type of conjugal role-relationship is termed 'segregated', the second 'joint' and the last one 'intermediate.' Here the 'segregated role-relationship' means "a relationship in which complementary and independent types of organization predominate"<sup>119</sup> and (joint) conjugal role-relationship means "a relationship in which joint organization is relatively predominant."<sup>120</sup> It must be explained here that this variation in the performance of conjugal role-relationship is a matter of degree. Considering the quality of segregated, 'joint' and 'intermediate' conjugal role-relationship, it would be more correct to say that conjugal role-relationship is 'segregated' relative to other research couples, 'joint' relative to other research couples, and 'intermediate' relative to other research couples.

#### 'SEGREGATED ROLE-RELATIONSHIP' AND THE UPPER CLASS STATUS

The conjugal role-relationship in the upper class family appears to be 'segregated.' The roles of husband and wife will be analysed within the five major spheres of activities in the family; these activities are: earning and spending of money, decision-making, economic activities, domestic work,

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<sup>119</sup>Bott, ibid, p.53.

<sup>120</sup>ibid

and child care.

The husbands are the bread-earners. They are the masters of the family. The wives are their subordinates. Husbands are responsible for working earning money to support the family. They must provide their wives and children with food, clothing, shelter and protection. Husbands think that it is their responsibility to work and maintain the family. They decide what things should be bought and how much should be spent on them. Although the wives know if anything like spices, oil, salt or vegetables, etc. are needed for cooking, it is the husbands who go for shopping and spend as much as they think they can afford. The husbands do the selling of all farm products as well as shopping for the family. They earn and spend it too. They hardly ever ask their wives for their opinion or advice on buying anything, and never for selling anything.

All cash is kept in a "safe" which the wives guard when their husbands are away. The keys are kept by the wives but their privilege of keeping the keys does not mean that they are able to open the "safe" and take out money or spend it. When a husband has to go out to work in the field or to visit someone and cannot do any shopping, he will take out some money from the "safe" and give it to his wife for necessary shopping. With the help of sons, male relatives or servants (males) the wife does the shopping. Before buying land or cattle, or building a ghor, some husbands tell their wives what they intend to do. But the final decision for the actual buying or building comes from the husbands alone. The husbands think they are wiser than the wives. "The women do not

understand all these things" is the comment that is heard from the husbands. An upper class woman said: "They (the husbands) are men. They maintain us. They are free to decide how to spend money."

Most of the economic activities may be divided into two categories and may be described as external and internal. The external activities include such outdoor work as ploughing, sowing, weeding, reaping, carrying the crops home, storing them and finally selling them in the market, looking after the cattle, milking the cows and taking milk to the market for selling, etc. All the external activities are the husbands' or mens' work. When it was said before that men are the bread earners, it was meant that the responsibility and the main burden of the economic tasks lie with the men; but the women do not earn wages and thus contribute nothing to the income of the family. Most of the internal economic activities are done by the women or wives. When the jute-sticks are mature in the field, they are cut and bundled and kept under water to let them get "rotten". When the jute-plants are "rotten", i.e., the jute-fibre becomes easily separable from the sticks, they are carried home. All this work is done by the men; but once the jute-trees are carried home, it is the task of the women to separate the fibre from the jute-sticks. Men again will be responsible for washing the fibres and drying them in the sun. When the paddy in the field is ripe and ready for reaping, the husbands cut the tops of the paddy-plants and take them home and separate the grains either by pressing them under their own feet, or



driving the cows and bulls on them. Once the grains are separated, it is the job of the women to boil, clean and dry the paddy-grains and finally to husk and clean the rice and store it. When vegetables like potatoes, tomatoes, or cauliflower, etc., are ripe they are collected and taken home by the men, and are cleaned and stored by the women. The cattle have to be taken to the field, given drink and grass, and put at night in the cow-shed, all of which is a man's job. When necessary, the farm products like rice, paddy (unhusked rice), jute or vegetables are sold and this is again a man's job.

There is a clear-cut division between the men's and the women's work in the village. In brief, all the external or outdoor work, and some of the heavy internal work is done by men, and most of the internal work is done by the women. Keeping poultry is a profitable "enterprise" which is purely a woman's work. In the upper class, a husband feels ashamed of doing any woman's job as described before, and both the wife and the husband think that if the wife does any of the men's work his position will be lowered in the eyes of other people. They maintain strict segregation in their sphere of activities.

As said earlier, in Rajaghat, 'men to the field and women to the kitchen' is the rule which is strictly observed in the upper class families. Both the husband and the wife strongly believe that all the domestic work which includes cooking, washing, sweeping the floor, making the bed, etc.,

is woman's work, and the wives alone should do it. In the morning most of the wives get up earlier than their husbands, wash and clean all the dishes, plates, pans and crockery; sweep the floor and make preparations for breakfast. The wives do not, and cannot, expect any help in their work from their husbands, who feel ashamed to do any of it. An upper class man said, "people like us never cook or take care of children. That is the women's work and they alone should do it." In the upper class family, both the husband and wife strongly believe that the prestige of the family will be maintained if they observe a sharp division of labour between them. An upper class man observed, "Wives come (from their parents' bari) to cook food and rear up children. They must do all the domestic work themselves. My mother used to do all the household work herself and my father never helped her. People will criticise (us) if I cook food, or wash my clothes. I feel ashamed to do any domestic work which is purely a woman's job."

Child-care or looking after the children at an early age, is purely a woman's work. She must wash and clean them, feed and clothe them, and put them to bed. But in such matters as discipline, education and character training, fathers are primarily responsible for the children, especially when they are grown-up. The fathers will decide at what age and to which school the children should be sent for education, or if they should be sent at all. The grown-up girls become attached to their mothers who are responsible for teaching them all domestic work. The grown-up sons become attached to their fathers and must help their fathers in their work. The fathers in the upper class families

punish the children, especially sons, physically for their mistakes, and they are held more responsible than the mothers for teaching the children good manners and the norms of the family.

#### 'JOINT ROLE-RELATIONSHIP' AND THE LOWER CLASS STATUS

It has been maintained before that in the joint role-relationship the complementary and independent type of organization predominates; it has also been said that it would be more correct to say that when the conjugal role is 'joint', it is 'joint' relative to other sample couples. In the lower class families the conjugal role-relationship appears to be 'joint.'

Both husbands and wives in the lower class families believe that the husbands are the masters of the family, but they also believe that the wives have some 'say' in family matters. The husbands are responsible for the support and maintenance of the wives and children. They must work and provide the family with food, clothing, shelter and protection. The volume of goods to be bought and sold is obviously less in the lower class families than in the upper class families; however, the husbands do consult with their wives over many matters.

Like the upper class husbands, husbands in the lower class families are the bread-earners and the masters of the family, and control the budgeting of the family. But there is an important difference in the roles of husbands and wives in the two extreme classes in the matter of earning

and spending money. The lower class women do some such work as maid, husker, etc., and make some contribution to the income of the family; As a result they have relatively more voice than the upper class women in family matters, including the spending of money. The lower class women will shout and quarrel with their husbands to achieve their rights. The purse is kept with the wives.

The men see to most of the external, or outdoor, and many of the internal economic activities. It has been said before that the upper class women do some jobs like separating the fibre from the jute-sticks, drying and storing grains, etc., but the participation of the lower class women in the internal as well as external activities is more than that of upper class women. The lower class families have very little, or no, land; the upper class men have more lands and more agricultural products; the lower class men work on the lands of the upper class, the lower class women also work in the house of the upper class; they do such jobs as splitting fibre from jute sticks, drying and husking paddy, and so on, and thus bring home 'wages' either in kind or cash. This direct contribution by the lower class women has given them some power to "bargain" with their husbands on many matters. Except for such heavy fieldwork as ploughing, sowing, weeding and harvesting, the lower class women do some of the jobs which the upper class families recognize as purely men's jobs. For example, sometimes the women look after the cattle, when they are at home, or take them to the field near the bari; they give grass and drink to the cattle and milk the cows;

sometimes, if the fields are not too far from the bari, the women collect the mara (remaining parts of the dried paddy plants) and bring them home. Nara is used for various purposes - as a food for the cattle, wall or roof building, material or fuel. By bringing nara home, they actually clear the field for the next ploughing. Sometimes men help women in drying paddy grains and storing them. Then women also help husbands in their work of repairing the walls of the ghors. The building and occasional polishing of the mud-floors of the ghors is purely a woman's work in the upper class families; but in the lower class families, sometimes the husbands help their wives in building or polishing the mud-floors.

In the domestic work, the husbands sometimes help their wives. The men do not think it lowers their prestige if they help the women in their household duties. A husband said: "We are poor people. We are not mani-lok (mani - respectable, lok - people). Though the women are primarily responsible for doing all the household work of cooking, washing, cleaning, sweeping the floors and courtyard, serving food, making beds and holding them, etc., the husbands do help them sometimes. If the wife is otherwise busy, she will ask him to take care of the boiling pan in the kitchen, or to wash his own clothes, etc. which the husbands normally do not do. But he dislikes to wash and never washes the clothes of his wife. One husband was once seen sweeping the courtyard.

Though the rearing and taking care of children is primarily a woman's job, husbands do help their wives.

Sometimes fathers will carry their little sons and daughters to the tank and pond or river and wash and clean them, oil and comb their hair, dress and feed them, and play with them; sometimes, the fathers are also seen carrying a baby and looking after him while the mothers are probably otherwise busy or engaged. An upper class husband will hardly ever be seen carrying or looking after a baby. The children are physically punished more by the fathers than by mothers; and it is primarily a man's job to train or discipline the children. But the women too take the initiative in enforcing the rules of good conduct in the children. Sometimes they will chase, beat and abuse the children which is not ordinarily seen in the upper class families.

#### 'INTERMEDIATE' ROLE-RELATIONSHIP AND THE MIDDLE CLASS STATUS

Besides the two extreme cases of the segregated and the joint conjugal role-relationships that have been found in the upper and the lower class families respectively have been described above, there is another type of conjugal role-relationship which has been called the intermediate. The intermediate type of the conjugal role-relationship is found in those families of middle class status. In the intermediate role-relationship, the division of work between husbands and wives is not very rigid as found in the upper class families, on the one hand, and, on the other, there is not as much co-operation between them as in the lower class families.

The husbands are aware of their middle class position. They help their wives only when they think their status-position or prestige is not in danger. They are afraid of "What other people will think of us." In most things they do not seek advice from their wives, because they believe that "the wife does not understand everything and moreover she does not have enough intelligence." (buddhi) The middle class women do not go to the field, nor look after cattle; they mostly do the internal work. If the wives are ill or absent from bari, the husbands might cook or wash clothes, but again depending on whether any female relatives are available to do these things; if they are available the men do not do the work of women. Occasionally the husbands do take care of grown-up children, and do clean them but do not feed or dress them like the lower class husbands.

CHAPTER X

THE LIFE-CYCLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT CYCLE OF THE 'DOMESTIC' GROUP



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After a human baby is born, he is only a little helpless creature whose very existence depends on the mother's love and care. This period of infancy does not last long. Gradually, the child grows up, becomes an adult, and, then, marries. In other words, in the period between birth and marriage an individual passes through what Meyer Fortes has called, certain 'phases', and according to him there are four 'major' phases from birth to marriage in the life-cycle of an individual. The first 'phase' in his life-cycle begins with birth and lasts only for a few days; the second 'phase' starts a few days after birth and lasts for a few months; the third one begins after weaning and with the acquisition of the ability to walk and continues for several years; the fourth or final 'phase' in the life cycle of an individual commences when he gets control over property and 'enters into the politico-jural domain' and this stage culminates with marriage. The 'phases of his physical growth are deeply connected with the relationships of the individual outside as well as inside the family. His roles and relationships, rights and obligations, change in different 'phases' of development. The changes in the biological and physical constitution of the body in the different 'phases' of development are not as important for discussion on the individual's life-cycle as the changes that occur in the relationships of the individual. Like the 'phases' in the life-cycle of the individual, a 'domestic group' also passes through certain 'phases' of development, namely,

'expansion', 'dispersion' and 'replacement.' The first 'phase', i.e. the 'phase of expansion' lasts from the marriage of two persons until the completion of their family of procreation. The biologically limiting factor in this 'phase' is the duration of the wife's fertility. The 'phase of dispersion' which overlaps the first one, begins with the marriage of the oldest child and continues until all the children are married. The third 'phase' or the 'phase' of "replacement" begins where 'by custom the youngest child remains to take over the family's estate.' The 'phase' of "replacement" ends with the death of the parents.<sup>121</sup>

In this chapter it is proposed to discuss the applicability of the theory of the life cycle of an individual and the developmental cycle in the peasant family. In the first section of the chapter the four phases of development will be preceded by a brief discussion on "acts" of delivery and all rituals which are associated with the birth of the baby and the treatment of the mother. In the second section the subject matter will be discussed under such sub-sections as membership and succession in the family, principles of inheritance and the partition of the family's property, and the three 'phases' of developmental cycle of the 'domestic group'.

#### THE LIFE-CYCLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

##### Village-dai and birth of the baby.

The village-dai performs the functions of midwifery in Rajaghat. She is an illiterate woman. In the village,

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<sup>121</sup> of. Meyer Fortes, "Introduction" in The Developmental Cycle of the Domestic Group, edited by Jack Goody, Cambridge, 1958.

midwifery is a profession which follows on from mother to daughter, grand-daughter or to daughter-in-law. A prospective dai gets instruction from an experienced dai, and accompanies her to some actual deliveries. Gradually she begins to do a case or two in the presence of the experienced dai, and thus she herself becomes a dai. In most cases an elderly woman is thought to be more reliable, because the older she is, the more experienced she is supposed to be. The dais belong to the age-group of (anything from) 30 to 60 years. She gets one or two sarees, preferably new, two seers (about four pounds) of rice and one rupee (about one shilling and six pence). Those who can afford it always give new sarees and, often, invite her to a meal.

At the time of birth, the proshuti, or pregnant mother, cries aloud in pain and, sometimes, her cries are audible from the other side of the village. Each of her cries lasts as long as it takes to breathe out and seems a groan of agony. All the women surrounding her or crowding in the ghor, utter the word "Allah" repeatedly in a low voice entreating Allah for a quick and easy delivery. This one word prayer becomes louder with every louder cry of the proshuti. No men or boys above three years are allowed to enter the ghor and see the pregnant woman at the time of delivery. Someone from the family goes to the village Imman who gives some water mixed with some prayer from the Quran for the pregnant woman to drink. It is strongly believed that this relieves delivery pain and helps delivery. As soon as the baby is born, a male member of the family, usually the father or the grandfather of the child, offers "ajan" which is originally offered as a sacred call to all faithfuls to

come and offer prayers. With the call of ajan everybody knows that a baby has been born.

The method used for cutting the umbilical cord seems very unhygienic, but surprisingly, there has not been a single case in Rajaghat in which the baby has suffered from any wound infection of the umbilical cord. A piece of bamboo skin (about an inch or so broad and about 8 to 10 inches long) is cut from a fresh bamboo tree in between two knots which gives very sharp edges; this bamboo skin "knife" is used to cut the umbilical cord of the newly born baby. All "wastage" from the mother's body in connection with the birth of the baby is buried underground. Everything in connection with the birth of the baby which includes all "wastage" and clothes, place, furniture, etc., used by the mother are considered impure; and anyone, including the mother, who touches them or comes in contact with them must take a bath and purify the body before he/she can offer prayer, and cook and serve food or touch or use anything in the ghor. After seven days, the mother takes a bath, and everything used by her is washed and rinsed. The idea and practice of modern medical science is completely absent in the whole work of midwifery in the village. All the rituals and taboos followed by the mother of the newly born baby are old and traditional. A detailed discussion of this subject would need more space than can be afforded and hence is dropped.

The First 'Phase' - from birth to a few days.

A newly born baby has no identification except through

his mother. For a few days after birth he is a part of the mother. He does not even have a name. He is referred to or addressed as son or brother of "someone." He is not left alone for a moment. His mother is his constant companion. When she has to go out in response to any natural call, somebody is asked to stay beside the baby. He is breastfed, and any time he cries the mother puts him to breast. If he dies in his infancy during the first phase of his life cycle he is not given janaja (religious prayer) before burial, and no fateha (funeral feast after death) after burial. It is a common belief that the baby is a pure and innocent shishu (baby) who has not committed any sins and will not have to give any explanation of his activities to Allah, and will go to Behesth (heaven). So janaja and fateha are important and necessary for all but shishu.

The Second 'phase' - from a few days to a few months.

After a few days, the members of the family and relatives begin to hold the baby in their arms and look after him. He is regarded as a member of the family. Everyone is fond of him. He is given a name. During this time the baby becomes the responsibility of both mother and father. She feeds, and nurses, and looks after him, and he becomes concerned with the provision of food and clothing for the baby. The baby lives on breast-feeding by the mother, and this breast feeding, which varies from individual to individual, may sometimes last a few months or even a year. Sex difference gives a status to the baby, and a baby son is more welcome in the peasant family than a baby daughter. However, this does not mean that a baby son is given more attention than a baby daughter. Practically every baby, boy

or girl, gets equal treatment at this stage.

The Third 'phase' - from a few months to a few years.

After the weaning and with the acquisition of the ability to walk, the third 'phase' begins in the life cycle of the individual. It is not always easy to stop breast feeding a baby who has become used to his mother's breast since birth. He does not like cow's milk or soft "jau" or "payesh" of boiled rice (like soft rice pudding). Mothers adopt several methods to stop breast feeding the baby. Sometimes they smear their breasts with some bitter "stuff". They collect nim-pata (a kind of bitter leaf) and smash them and then put them all round the breasts and this makes their milk very bitter and the baby is slowly compelled to take some other food. During this phase when breast feeding is stopped and the baby is, for the first time, introduced to rice, a ceremony is observed which is called Akika. In this ceremony, friends and relatives are invited to a dinner. But I have been told that nowadays few people hold this Akika ceremony for the babies, which is always an occasion for the upper class people in Rajaghat. Lower class people do not hold this Akika. When I asked them why they do not have this Akika, a villager replied, "we are poor. We cannot give food to people."

The third 'phase' lasts several years. The baby has, by this time, grown up and is no more regarded as a baby. Sometimes during this phase the boy has to go through a painful initiation ceremony called circumcision which is a

'must' for every boy. As far as I can conclude from my field data, there is not such a 'period' or 'ceremony' for the girls. The age at which the circumcision is performed varies from person to person. Some parents prefer the early years of their sons, some later. Normally, it is done when the boys are between four and eight years old. The performance of circumcision makes a definite change in his status as a boy and brings him certain rights and obligations in the religious as well as social life. The circumcision itself is a big and important social event which is called Musolmani in the village. The actual operation of cutting the skin is done by an ordinary man in the neighbouring village who is known as Hajam; it is a profession which passes from father to son. A Hajam is an ordinary farmer but performs the circumcision operation as a part-time job which is well paid in the village. He receives two rupees and two seers of rice and a meal, and sometimes a lungi from the boy's parents. The whole operation of circumcision is unhygienic and lacking in medical care. With the whole body first smeared with powdered turmeric, the boy takes a bath, puts on new clothes, and must have in his possession some gold or silver, either in the form of a piece or ornaments. A close male relative, preferably a brother-in-law, or male cousin, holds the boy from the back with the two hands of the boy under his legs in a sitting position. The operation is done by a sharp knife which is specially kept and has been used for this purpose only for ages. After the operation, in which some boys give a short and piercing cry, some ashes of burnt cloth wet with oil are put around the wounds and kept there. The whole body of the boy trembles and it is quite some time before he can be relieved of the pain from

the wound. He is laid on a bed and the cut skin is kept under his pillow for seven days, the period during which he must not be touched by any "impure person." He cannot take fish or meat and lives only on boiled rice and vegetables. After seven days the "skin" is buried underground, the boy takes a bath, and gets a fish curry meal. During the seven day period he was confined to the ghor; now he can come out, walk, or go anywhere, provided, of course, the wounds are healed. A dinner party is held in which relatives, friends and neighbours are invited. It is customary and obligatory to give gifts to the boy. After dinner, the father of the boy makes a list of gifts given by people and will keep this list. He will have to repay a gift of similar value to the boy if he is invited by the boy's parents to such a circumcision dinner party. A return gift is as customary and obligatory as is receiving a gift in a circumcision dinner. Like Akika, a circumcision dinner is also an upper class family event.

The circumcision marks a new phase in the life of a boy. It definitely gives him a new "status" in the religious and social life of the community. After circumcision the boy enters into the world of "adulthood" and responsibility. Before circumcision he was a minor, but after he becomes an "adult", or a "mature" and responsible person. Before circumcision he is not permitted to ritually slaughter a bird or animal for food, but after circumcision, he is entitled to. Physically circumcision does not make a boy overnight into a man; but it gives him right to enter into the responsible world of men in social and religious affairs.



In this 'phase', boys become attached to their father, and girls become attached to their mothers. They carry the younger brothers and sisters in their arms or sit nearby and guard them when they are sleeping, especially when the mother is otherwise busy or engaged. They bring water from nearby tanks, ponds, or tubewells, sweep the floor of the ghor and courtyard, and help parents in their work. Girls help their mothers in the cooking and domestic work. Boys do the shopping, catch fish for a meal for the family, go to work in the field with their fathers, or go to school, look after the cattle, take them to the field and bring them home, give them grass and drinking water and put them in the "goal-ghor" (cowshed) at night. The boys also help their fathers in building or repairing the wall or roof of the ghor. In the second 'phase' boys and girls sleep with their mothers, but now in the third phase segregation of sexes begins. Boys are no longer allowed to sleep with their mothers or sisters, and girls are not allowed to sleep with their brothers or fathers. The boys spend more time at work with, or in the company of, their fathers; the girls spend more time working and living with their mother. The girls learn all the skills of domestic work from their mothers; the boys learn from their father how to plough, sow seeds, reap the crops etc. and how to repair and build ghors. They learn how to milk the cows, sell milk in the bazaars, which needs skill and cleverness in bargaining. Boys and girls must know family rules and are required not to break them. They become answerable to parents or older brothers and sisters for any mistakes. They are expected to follow the customs and traditions of the family and are, sometimes,

punished if they break them. They are expected to obey and honour their elders and seniors and love and protect the younger ones in the family. They are regarded in this phase as responsible members. Boys and girls have not yet achieved any right or control in property and productions. They are under the authority and control of parents and are dependent on them. A peasant boy or a girl does not obtain any right in their father's property or production until he or she is married and division of the property and separation from the parents takes place.

The Fourth 'phase' from a few years till marriage.

The fourth or final 'phase' in the life cycle of an individual begins with his acquisition of control over property and entrance into the 'politico-jural domain' of the society, and it ends with marriage. Field data suggests that the peasant sons and daughters do not obtain any right in the property or productions of the family until they are married. Until they are married, the boys and girls are under the control and authority of the parents, especially of the father who is the bread-earner and master of the family, and they are socially, politically and economically dependent on him. Anything regarding sons and daughters inside or outside the family will directly concern the father who is their chief spokesman, arbitrator, decision maker, and head. For any matters concerning them, people will talk to their father, hold him responsible and demand explanations, etc., if any, from him for them. In community baithork, the father will sit and represent the whole family. He will decide what is to be done for members of the

family. He has every right to direct children until they are married, and even after their marriage, if property is undivided. Therefore, in such an economic, social and political situation, it seems that Fortes' ideas about the fourth or final 'phase' in the life cycle of an individual in Rajaghat, do not apply. It is obvious from the above facts that the third 'phase' and fourth 'phase' are rather undelineated or unmarked and both are overlapping. In Rajaghat, marriage for a girl or for a boy, as said before, is not a responsibility of the girl or of the boy, but is a responsibility of their parents. Parents will decide when they should marry after they have attained physical maturity. According to social customs and traditions, it is much easier for the dissatisfied father to "drive away" a deviant son giving him nothing, if he is unmarried. He can, even legally, make any son a tejjoputro ("given up" son) which will stop his claiming anything in his father's property or production, and this is applicable to both married sons and unmarried sons, though in practice it can happen more often in the cases of unmarried sons than in the cases of married sons for their family burden arouses sympathy and kindness in relations and friends as well as in parents who are inclined to think seriously before taking any such measures. So long as the father is alive, he is the head of the family and the chief planner and decision-maker for, and on behalf of, the family. No son or daughter can claim or get any share in the production or property of the family unless he decides to give it to them, and in the majority of cases, as will be shown in the next section, division of the property and separation from the parental family do not take

place, even after sons are married, so long as their father is alive. On the other hand, it is found that a married son in the family has got more voice in the family as well as in the society outside the family, than an unmarried son. A married son, though he lives jointly with his parents' family, is considered more responsible than his younger unmarried brothers. And in the absence of the father, he will be the spokesman of the younger ones and will talk on their behalf and represent them. Sometimes he represents the whole family if the father is away and if he wants to do so. But this does not change his position of being under the authority and control of his parents. He is dependent on them economically, socially and politically. Now it can be concluded that the children do not get any right of control over property and production, whatsoever, before they are married and before parents give them their share in the property which comes following the division of property and separation of the children from the parental family. Hence, the fourth 'phase', which begins with the acquisition of control over property and entrance into the politico-jural domain, does not occur in the life cycle of an individual till separation takes place after the father's death in the peasant families under study. Rather, the third 'phase' continues until marriage with changes in structural relationships in the form of increased duties, responsibilities, obligations, and some privileges for the grown up children within, as well as outside, the family.

THE 'DEVELOPMENTAL CYCLE' OF THE 'DOMESTIC GROUP'

The families in Rajaghat have been classified under three broad categories; widowed, single and joint. Either of the parents is dead, divorced or deserted, in the widowed family and hence they have been dropped from the research sample. A single family is made up of two generations, but a joint family is often made up of three successive generations. A joint family in the present study constitutes a single household unit and a single productive and consuming unit. There is a 'nuclear' elementary family of the original parents in a joint family and around it lives one or more "single families" of married sons and their wives and children. A joint family is like a 'workshop of social productions'. It provides the social as well as material resources for its members. The "single families" within it are related to and identified with the society outside the joint family only through, and by, the joint family. Even after separation from the parental family when married sons have their own independent single families, the married sons and their single families are related to the parental family in various ways. When the "original two" in the joint family die, they leave behind a social and cultural heritage which 'sustains and replenishes' the surviving members in the outside world. Therefore it seems that the joint families in the present research may be taken as the 'domestic groups' defined by Fortes;<sup>122</sup> and information on and about them can be analysed and interpreted for the examination of the

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

'phase' of the 'developmental cycle' of the 'domestic group.' Henceforth, the term 'domestic group' will be used in the thesis to identify joint families as surveyed in the present research.

Before field data are analysed for the examination of the 'phases' of the 'developmental cycle' of the 'domestic group', it seems essential to have a brief discussion on certain related and relevant subjects, namely, membership and succession in the family and the major principles of inheritance and the partition of the family's property.

#### Membership and succession in the family.

There are three different ways by which one can be a member of the family. Firstly, by virtue of birth one can be a member. Secondly, by marriage, and thirdly, by adoption one becomes a member of the family.

The birth of a child into a socially accepted and legally recognised marriage of two people, gives him the natural membership of the family. But such a natural right of membership by birth can be nullified by the dissatisfied parents if they wish. They can legally declare a son as "tejjoputia." He will not only lose his membership of the family, and family's title, but also will lose his natural right of inheritance of his father's property, a case which has never occurred in Rajaghat as far as the villagers can remember. Membership can be obtained by marriage. So marriage gives a girl membership of her husband's family, but in acquiring this new membership, she loses her old and natural membership in the family of procreation. Before

marriage, a girl remains, by virtue of birth, a member of her parents' family; but after marriage she becomes a member of her husband's family, and she and her children will acquire the title of her husband, who gets this, in turn, from his father. Until she is married, a girl has a natural right to depend on her parents and paternal relatives for food, clothing, shelter and protection. After marriage this responsibility falls on her husband. Nonetheless, the loss of her original membership in the family of procreation, and the shift of responsibility for her maintenance after marriage, do not deprive her of her legitimate share in the property of her father. The place of residence by a boy or a girl after their marriage is never a matter of arbitrary choice, but is a matter of the rule of succession and descent and the type of authority. In Rajaghat, people practice a system of patrilocal residence. In the research families, a boy succeeds to his father's title, in other words, the succession of title and descent follow the father's or male line only. It is a male-dominated society. The oldest male member is the head of the family. Moreover, though all sons and daughters are entitled to the father's property, a boy gets twice as much as a girl. Therefore, after marriage, a son stays on with his parents' family and agnatic kin, while a girl leaves hers to go to live with her husband's family. According to the ghor-jamai system, a boy, after marriage, moves over to live with the wife's parents' family, but this does not change the system of the succession of title; i.e., his children will inherit his title, not that of their mother or of their mother's parents. Enquiry in Rajaghat does not reveal any such case of the ghor-jamai system.

An adopted son (Palok-Putro) or daughter (Palok-Meye) obtains full or part membership according to the conditions before adoption. Normally, childless parents, or son-less parents, will adopt a son. The parents can give the adopted son or daughter a full or part share in their property. If no arrangements are made and settled by the parents before their death, the adopted son or daughter has a right to receive a share as a natural son or daughter. Adopted children not only inherit the foster-parents' property, but also succeed to their title. The reasons for adoption are the same as those for giving birth to children; i.e., someone has to look after the parents in their old age, inherit the family's title and property, and maintain the continuity of the generation (Bongsho). There is no case of adoption in Rajaghat.

The principles of inheritance and partition of property.

It has been stated earlier that all sons and daughters are entitled to inherit their fathers' property. But a boy gets more than a girl. According to Islamic laws, each son gets double the share of a daughter, and the widowed mother gets about 13 per cent or one-eighth of the share of the deceased husband's property. Besides her legitimate share in the landed property of her father, she also can get at the time of her marriage, ornaments, furniture, clothes, and a transistor radio as a dowry. This is different from her right of inheritance in her father's property. According to social custom, no member can claim any share in the father's property until he dies or wants to give anyone his/her share on his own initiative.



Social custom demands that the youngest son, especially if he is a minor, should have the right to the better part of the landed property, ghors or cattle. After marriage, each son is given either a portion of the parents' ghor or separate ghor built for him to live in, with his wife and children. Therefore, provided all married sons have their own ghors, the youngest one can claim the parents' ghor, for which he sometimes has to pay compensation in cash or kind to the mother, if the difference in the prices and quality of the parents' ghor and those of the brothers become too big. Other things, including furniture, clothes, ornaments, utensils, are equally divided among sons. A daughter is also entitled to a share of those things, but normally she claims her share in gold ornaments and landed property; she does not claim the other things because she "has those things in her husband's family" and this is the customary rule in the village. If the partition of property takes place before the death of the father, then the father keeps the shares of minor sons and daughters, plus a "portion" for his own and his wife's maintenance and if anything remains after his death it goes to the son who is still a minor or living with his parents. If the partition of property is done after the death of the father, either the widowed mother or the eldest married son, or even any married son, can be in charge of minor brothers and sisters and responsible for their maintenance and for looking after their property. Since the rules of inheritance have already been discussed once before (p. ) it is not intended to enter into a detailed discussion again here.

The phases of 'expansion', 'dispersion' and 'replacement' in the 'domestic group.'

An average man marries at the age of 20 and an average woman when she is about 11 years old. People do not use any means to control birth. Therefore, within a year or so, a child will be born to a newly married couple, provided that they are physically sound. Gradually, the original group of only two parents expands into a large family. Children grow up and get married. The 'phase of dispersion' begins, with the marriage of the first child. Enquiry shows that in most cases, the 'phase of dispersion' does not occur with the marriage of the eldest child, especially if the child is a son, but it does if the child is a daughter. In the former case, a son stays with his parents' joint family even after marriage; in many such cases separation from the parents' family and division of property do not take place until the father dies; in other words, in such a case, the 'phase of dispersion' does not occur at all. This is the crucial point which will be discussed and analysed in the light of the field data with the help of as many statistical figures as are available.

Fortes' theory of the different 'phases' of the developmental cycle appears to be an abstract concept which has not clearly stated any possible variation that may arise in a different social situation. The findings of J.D.Freeman<sup>123</sup> on the Iban bilek family and of Jack Goody<sup>124</sup>

<sup>123</sup>J.D.Freeman, "The System of the Iban of Borneo," in Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups, edited by Jack Goody, Cambridge, 1958, pp.15-52.

<sup>124</sup>Jack Goody, "The Fission of Domestic Groups among the LoDagaba" in Developmental Cycle in the Domestic Groups, edited by him, Cambridge, 1958, pp.53-91.

on the LoDagaba people may be compared with that of Rajaghat in order to illuminate this point.

The term bilek is used to mean a 'walled-room or apartment in the Iban long house'; but the word is also used to refer to 'the separate family group which owns and occupies one apartment of a long house.' Freeman has used the term bilek mostly to refer to the family. The siblings of a bilek family have equal rights in the family estate and an adult married sibling wanting separation from his/her natal bilek "may claim his/her share of the family estate, secede from the ancestral bilek, and set up a separate domestic unit" and "...although bilek families are always linked by cognatic ties, they are fully autonomous units both socially and jurally, and of independent and equal status."<sup>125</sup> The residence after marriage is virilocal or uxorilocal according to the free choice of the married couple. In either of the cases, an extension is made in the long house of the boy's or girl's natal bilek family for the newly married couple who will have their own independent domestic unit.

In the peasant families of Rajaghat, in most cases, the life of a newly married couple does not begin as an independent unit after marriage and the married son and his wife begin to live in his parents' family, and under the control and authority of his parents. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that marriage does not automatically give birth to an independent family until, in most cases,

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<sup>125</sup>Freeman, ibid, pp.39 and 40.

the father of the married son is dead and he is separated from the parental family and property is partitioned. The married sons do not have any social, economic and political control or authority inside or outside the family as long as the father is alive and they are not separated from their natal family. Therefore, in my research among peasant families, it is the actual separation and partition of property and not marriage with which 'dispersion', or fission in the domestic group begins. According to the rules of succession, descent, inheritance and residence, a boy remains in the parents' family after marriage while a girl goes to live with her husband's family, and whereas he succeeds his father's title, she becomes a member of her husband's parents' family. Hence the 'phase of dispersion' in the 'domestic group' occurs only if the oldest child is a girl; otherwise it seems that in cases in which married sons live with the joint family, the 'phase of dispersion' does not occur.

In his study of fission of the domestic group among the LoDagaba of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, Jack Goody informs us that 'a father will deliberately oust his senior son for his own good, keeping the junior son to farm with him', because the people follow the matrilineal inheritance of wealth.<sup>126</sup> Unlike the LoDagaba, the peasants of Rajaghat have a patrilineal inheritance of property. After the death of the father, his property goes to his sons,

<sup>126</sup> "when a man dies, his wealth is inherited by a member of his matriclan, and because of the rule of exogamy this can never be one of his own sons. If therefore the sons continue to farm with their father, they will certainly fill his granaries and give him a good surplus which he can sell and use to buy livestock. But when he dies, this surplus is claimed by the uterine heir and the sons have no claim on the goods which have been bought with the sweat of their brows. Consequently it is of advantage to the sons to have their own granaries and to build up their own flocks. Their father will encourage them to do this when he considers the time has come." - Goody, ibid, p.69.

daughters, widowed wives, and, in their absence, to his brothers and brothers' sons. Therefore, unlike a LoDagaba father, a peasant father in Rajaghat will not welcome the secession of his son after marriage, but rather he will encourage him to stay on with the joint family and tries to stop separation. More able bodied sons mean more physical labour, more crops and more income. Therefore, fission does not take place in most cases till the death of the father.

The significant point observed in the empirical findings of the families in Rajaghat is that the frequency with which the partition of the family's property and separation from the natal family takes place before the death of the father is greater in the lower class families than in the upper class families and it takes place earlier and more often after marriage in the lower class families than in the upper class families.

As stated earlier as well as in the previous chapter, a united joint family among Rajaghat peasants will have more sons to work, greater productions, a better income, larger property and more prestige, especially in the upper class families.<sup>127</sup> The joint families of the lower class do not have as much land as the upper class families. Hence, as stated in the previous chapter, the "external pressures" for the maintenance of social prestige in the family, and the possibility of economic gain tend to unite the upper

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<sup>127</sup>Stirling also found in Turkish Village that the sons bring honour and wealth. "The mere begetting raises a man's prestige, and the existence of sons increases the power and wealth of his household." (Stirling, ibid, p.225).

class family, therefore 'dispersion' takes place late, or at least not as frequently or as early, as it occurs in the lower class families. In the lower class families, both the external pressures for the maintenance of the family's high prestige and the chance of the married sons being economically rewarded are absent, and hence fission takes place earlier and more often.

The total sample for intensive interview was 19 families which constitutes about 10 per cent of the total single and joint families in Rajaghat. The tables and provide some technical information on general points and are not necessary for the understanding of the different 'phases' of the developmental cycle. The sample families make up the following percentages in the different class categories.

TABLE NO. 34

PERCENTAGE OF THE SAMPLE FAMILIES  
IN DIFFERENT CLASSES

| Class  | Total | Percentage |
|--------|-------|------------|
| Upper  | 7     | 22.6       |
| Middle | 5     | 7.7        |
| Lower  | 7     | 7.4        |

The above figures show that the percentage of the upper class families is more than the lower and the middle class families.

This is because there are more upper class families than lower class families in the village in comparison with the sample taken for research. There are 31 upper class, 65 middle class and 95 lower class families (single and joint), and these have been taken as respective units for respective classes in obtaining the above percentages.

The point which needs clarification at this stage is that not all heads of the total families came of families consisting of more than one son; there were many families which consisted of only a single son. Hence, the following table will show the number of families having more than one son who are present heads of families.

TABLE NO. 35

HEAD OF THE FAMILIES COMING FROM FAMILIES  
OF ONE OR MORE SONS

|        | <u>More than</u><br><u>one son</u> |                               | <u>Single son</u> |                               |
|--------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
|        | <u>Total</u>                       | <u>Per-</u><br><u>centage</u> | <u>Total</u>      | <u>Per-</u><br><u>centage</u> |
| Upper  | 28                                 | 90.3                          | 3                 | 9.7                           |
| Middle | 56                                 | 86.1                          | 9                 | 13.9                          |
| Lower  | 86                                 | 86.3                          | 13                | 13.7                          |

The field data suggests that separation is earlier and more frequent in the lower class families than in the upper class families. In the upper class families, separation

occurred in all the seven cases after the death of the father. In the middle class families, separation took place only in one out of five cases before the death of the father, and in four cases after the death of the father. In the lower class families, two cases out of seven had seceded from the parents' family before the death of the father.

Put in the percentage terms, we obtain the following table.

TABLE NO.36  
SEPARATION BEFORE AND AFTER  
FATHER'S DEATH.

|        | Before father's death | After father's death |
|--------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Upper  | 0.0                   | 100.0                |
| Middle | 20.0                  | 80.0                 |
| Lower  | 28.6                  | 71.4                 |

The figures in the above table show that in the upper class families one hundred per cent separation took place after the father's death. In the middle class families, one-fifth of the families had separated before the father's death and in the lower class families about one-third of the families seced before the father's death. That is, the 'phase of dispersion' or fission did not occur in one hundred per cent of cases in the upper class families in four-fifths of the



cases in the middle class families, and in more than two-thirds of the cases in the lower class families.

The number of separations in the early years after father's death is more in the lower class families than in the upper class families. Separation took place within five years of father's death in one hundred per cent of the cases in the lower class families, and in about 50 per cent of the cases in the middle class families, and in only about 15 per cent of the cases in the upper class families. The following table will show this difference in frequency of separation in terms of percentage.

TABLE NO. 37

SEPARATION AFTER FATHER'S DEATH  
IN YEARS

| Classes | Years |        |              |
|---------|-------|--------|--------------|
|         | 0 - 5 | 6 - 10 | 11 and after |
| Upper   | *14.4 | 42.8   | 42.8         |
| Middle  | 50.0  | 50.0   | 0.0          |
| Lower   | 100.0 | 0.0    | 0.0          |

\* Percentage of cases.

Enquiry shows that within five years of marriage one hundred per cent of the cases had separated in the lower class

families, none in the upper class and only about 20 per cent in the middle class families. The following table will give us the necessary information:

TABLE NO. 38  
SEPARATION AFTER MARRIAGE

| Classes | 0-5 yrs | 6-10 yrs | 11 yrs & after |
|---------|---------|----------|----------------|
| Upper   | *0.0    | 42.9     | 57.1           |
| Middle  | 20.0    | 60.0     | 20.0           |
| Lower   | 100.0   | 0.0      | 0.0            |

\* Percentage of cases

The figures in the table No. show that in the upper class families separation of the married sons from their parental family began after six years of their marriage and more than half the married sons separated after eleven years of their marriage. But figures also indicate that in the lower class families one hundred per cent of the married sons separated from the parent's family within five years of their marriage.

The prospect of economic gain and the pressure from the denser and closer kinship 'network' kept the domestic group united for a longer time in the upper class than in the lower class in which the very slight or complete absence of any such prospect for future economic gain and 'network' pressure were responsible for the early separation of

married sons. Max Weber also maintained that it is the prospect of economic gain in property and productions that brings maximum unity among married sons who prefer to stay with the domestic group. Jealousy and envy are at the root of most of the quarrels in the family which ultimately lead to separation. Maladjustment between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is also one of the important causes of separation. Sometimes family quarrels begin with very trifling things, as for instance washing clothes, sweeping the floor, cooking and serving food. When a boy buys something for his wife, his sisters and sisters-in-law become jealous and begin to grumble over everything and begin to express dissatisfaction with other members, especially with the sister-in-law involved. Sometimes, the mother-in-law takes sides and quarrels on behalf of her daughters with the son who bought the gift for his wife. Other brothers side with their own wives and quarrels and foul language begin. As long as the father is alive he can manage to maintain duty; but after his death none seems to have the power in the family to maintain unity and as a result it ultimately breaks up. I was told by the majority of interviewees who had separated from the natal family after the death of their fathers that there would have been no separation if the father had been alive. They maintained among other things, that some brother thinks he works harder than others and this starts bickering and quarrels which are responsible for dispersion. In those cases where separation took place before the father's death, the interviewees said that it was due to the ability of married

sons to earn not on their father's farm, but independently as a hired labourer, etc. When he finds that he earns and his money is being used for the whole family, for the brothers who do not earn, he wants separation so that he can earn for his own wife and children only. As stated in the previous chapter, the ideals like respect for age and seniority of kinship position in the family, dominance of the male sex, and the need of keeping family affairs secret and private are not observed in practice in the lower class families as in the upper class families. This is also responsible for quarrels and quick separation.

A married son, whether eldest or youngest, can and in many cases does stay on with the joint family after marriage, but a married daughter must leave her parental family. In such a situation as is prevalent among the peasants in Rajaghat, the theory of 'phase of dispersion' may be applied in a rather limited sense. That is, in one hundred per cent upper class families and 28.6 per cent lower class families in which married sons separated only after the father's death, the 'phase' of 'dispersion' has a limited applicability, because only married daughters left but married sons did not leave the parents' family.

When the parents grow very old, many of their functions and the responsibility for the management and control of the family and property are taken over by the eldest married son. In other words, the eldest married son replaces the old father in many of his functions and

responsibility. But it seems that this replacement of father by son conflicts with one we are concerned with in the thesis, one in which 'by culture the youngest child remains to take over the family's estate.' In the present case, in the joint families in which married sons and their wives and children live together with their parents and unmarried brothers and sisters, the youngest child cannot take over the property of the family until the married sons have been separated and the property have been partitioned. In a joint family, if the youngest child is a daughter, she must live under the guardianship of either parents or brothers and after marriage goes to live with the husband's parents family. But if the youngest child is a son, he may live with the parental family even after marriage, but has no authority, or control over property except over his share which he gets after separation from the parental family. In other words the 'phase' of 'replacement' does not begin with the youngest child's taking over the control over property. Therefore in one hundred per cent families of the upper class and 28.6 per cent families in the lower class in which division of property took place only after father's death, it appears that the 'phase of replacement' did not occur.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

## CHAPTER XI

### CONCLUSION

The present work is the result of the field investigation which was carried out for five months in three villages in East Pakistan.

The three villages under study have been referred to as Rajaghat. The area experiences heavy monsoon showers during the rainy season and low lying areas go under water. The climate is tropical -- hot and humid. The peasants live in houses or ghors built of such materials as corrugated iron sheets, wood, bamboo, thatch and jute sticks. The inhabitants are Moslems and speak Bengali. The level of education is very low and the percentage of literacy is very small among the people. The majority of the population live on small scale cultivation. Petty trades and daily labour also provide a livelihood to many in the village. Rice and jute are the main crops. Most of the agricultural crops that are locally produced are used for local consumption. In geographical and climatic conditions, demographic characteristics, occupation, housing, dress, food, language, religion and beliefs, etc. Rajaghat appears to be a typical village in East Pakistan.

In Rajaghat, land seems to be the chief basis of wealth and the main form of property. It is regarded as the primary determinant of social status. According to the ownership of land the inhabitants of Rajaghat have been broadly divided into three status groups which have been called the upper class, middle class and lower class. The status differentiation of the families which are the

units in the status groups is noticeable in the ownership of land, in the type or number of ghors, dress, salutation and greeting, and behaviour and attitude of the people. Land tenure, the break up of joint family and the rules of inheritance are some of the variables which seem to have directly or indirectly affected the status position of the families.

The monogamous family is the prevalent unit. There are three "types" of families, namely, single, joint and widowed. The peasants practice the patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence systems. According to the rules of inheritance, sons and daughters and widowed wife are entitled to inherit the family's property. Women appear to have a subordinate position to men inside as well as outside the family.

Elizabeth Bott's hypothesis on the conjugal role-segregation and the status position of husband and wife, and the theory of Meyer Fortes on the developmental cycle of the 'domestic group' have been tested by the findings of the present research. The examination of field-data would suggest some variations in their theories. Like Bott's findings, in the present study it also appears that the degree of segregation in the conjugal role-relationship is correlated with the density and closeness of the family's kinship 'network', that is, the denser and closer the 'network', the greater the degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife. But contrary to her hypothesis, in the present situation it seems that the upper class has a denser network and 'segregated role-relationship',



and the lower class has 'joint role-relationship' but as dense a network as in the upper class. It would seem that Fortes' ideas of the 'phases' of the developmental cycle of the 'domestic group' have a rather limited application in this particular case. For example, marriage in Rajaghat does not automatically give the married sons and daughters the right and control over the family's estate, nor with marriage does fission in the joint family begin automatically. After marriage girls must leave their parents' family but sons can stay on and, in many cases, specially in the upper class, the married sons continue to live in the joint family of their parents and do not 'disperse' until father dies. During the old age of their father, the married sons in the joint family may take over some of his functions and responsibilities for the control and management of the family's property, but still father is the dominant figure in the family, and the youngest child cannot have any right or control over the property until the father dies and the married sons are separated.

The analysis of field-data would also suggest that the status position and the 'network connectedness' of the family affect the attitude and behaviour of the members outside as well as inside the family towards the observance of the traditional values of respect for age and kinship position and kinship obligations of mutual help, etc. It would seem that in the upper class the people not only strongly believe in those values and obligations, but they actively strive to follow them in practice; in the lower

class however the people tend to overlook them. In the upper class family there is respect for senior members and an attempt is made to keep the family matters private, but in the lower class there is less respect for the seniority of age and nothing like family secrets exist. In the upper class kin are inclined to help one another and maintain social contacts, but in the lower class it seems that the exchange of mutual help and cooperation and the exchange of social contacts are less. The greater density of the network appears to be the result of more marriages among kin, joint families and more cooperation and contact among kin, but, on the other hand it is also a cause, because it acts as an external pressure on the upper class people to conform to the observance of the traditional values of respect for age and kinship position and keeping family matters secret, etc. and kinship obligations such as the exchange of mutual help and social contacts, etc.

Land tenure appears to have affected the economic as well as the social position of the peasants. What has been found earlier in the discussion on land tenure may to some extent be summarised in the words of Professor Bailey:

"Although the great dynasties exercised no positive political function inside the village and left it to manage its own affairs, nevertheless their ruling hand lay heavily upon the cultivator. Tribute was heavy, so heavy that at times the proportion claimed by the State reduced the peasant to the level of bare subsistence. The tax-collector removed the surplus. Without a reserve in the times of natural calamity, the farmer

was defenceless. Indian history is marked by famines, which, although primarily acts of God, can rightly be called acts of God reinforced by the scandalous exactions of the State. Even in normal times the demands of the tax-gatherer or the tax-farmer left the peasant with neither the resources nor the incentive to experiment, since increased yield meant only increased taxation."<sup>128</sup>

Owing to this legacy of the peasant economy in pre-independence times and the continued subdivision and fragmentation of land with increase of population and very little or no increase in the total cultivable land and agricultural yields, it would seem that the general economic condition of the peasants has deteriorated, though, no doubt, there are variations among districts in the extent to which it has been affected. For example, in places where peasants derive income from commerce the effect will be different from in areas where peasants depend on agriculture for their subsistence.

East Pakistan is primarily a peasant society with a 94.8 per cent rural population, the vast majority of which exists on small scale cultivation. Traditional values and ideas dominate the life of the peasants. Nevertheless, today's society is not as it was in the past. It is changing. But for want of reliable studies it has not been possible to know the exact nature and extent of the change of social phenomena and the causes of such change. It is supposed that with the establishment of more and more

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<sup>128</sup>Bailey, ibid, p.4.

factories, expansion of the urban centres, the spread of education, improvements in inland communications, closer contact with the technologically developed countries, etc., the peasant society will face the challenge of great and rapid changes. However, it seems to be quite inaccurate to think, as is usually assumed, that such factors as urbanization, industrialization, higher education, the partition of the subcontinent, influx of refugees, world wars, western influence, and the like, have as yet 'greatly changed' the traditional social structure in East Pakistan without the support of facts of any synchronic empirical study on specific problems followed by diachronic research. An enquiry into the rate of change of some of the factors already cited would soon substantiate this. According to the statistical figures provided by the Census Reports of Pakistan (1961), in 1951 the urban population was 4.2 per cent and in 1961 it rose to 5.1 per cent, that is, during ten years from 1951 to 1961, the urban population increased by .9 per cent. This very small increase in the urban population in the Province does not leave any doubt about the extent of the rise in the industrial population.

No one exactly knows what has been the increase in the rate of literacy in the province during the ten years from 1951 to 1961. In 1951 the percentage of literates in the total population was 21.6, and in 1961, it was 17.6. The figures show an apparent decrease in the percentage of literacy in ten years, which might seem to be absurd. According to the official explanation for this 'decrease' in the percentage of literacy, "1961 literacy percentages

are not comparable with the 1951 data in view of the conceptual difference" in the definition of the term literacy in the census. The conceptual difference is this: In the 1951 Census literacy was defined as "ability to write and read clear print in any language." Thus one person who could read the Quran in Arabic was classed as literate in 1951, but these "literates" have been dropped from the 1961 figures, in which the emphasis was put both on ability to read and to understand any language.<sup>129</sup> In view of the obvious fact that the number of educational institutions and the students have increased,<sup>130</sup> it is possible to assume that the percentage literacy has also increased during the ten years from 1951. But it is not known what is the increase in the percentage of literacy in the province. So it is all the more difficult to measure the effect of education on the traditional norms and values without objective field-study. Provided time and space were available, it could be shown by quoting statistical figures that there were little increases in the rate or percentages of the factors of change (p.282) and consequently their effect on the society was probably not significant.

Quoting official figures Mahbubul Haque says that per capita income in East Pakistan is only 56 dollars, 280 rupees a year or twenty-three rupees and thirty-three paisa per month (per capita annual income in Pakistan is 63 dollars or 315 rupees) which he has called 'starvation level'.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup>cf. A. Rashid, Census of Pakistan (Population 1961, Karachi, n.d., p.IV-2.

<sup>130</sup>cf. East Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Govt. of East Pakistan, Statistical Digest of East Pakistan, No.2, 1964, pp.188-190.

<sup>131</sup>Mahbubul Haque, The Strategy of Economic Planning; A Case Study of Pakistan, Karachi, 1963, p.6.

In Rajaghat per capita income from land is, on the average, twenty six rupees and fifty paisa per month (p.139). It shows that Rajaghat may roughly represent the average income level for the area in East Pakistan. It must be remembered that this figure of per capita income in Pakistan includes the income of both the rural and urban population and the average income for every rural resident is far less than that of average urban settler.

The results of the empirical study of the peasants families in Rajaghat may provide the reader with ample evidence of any change. Rajaghat is only 20 miles from the Provincial capital but the life and work there have been little affected by urban influence or education or by any other factors as stated earlier. Therefore, in view of the modern trend of research in social sciences and the need for empirical evidence, the tendency to make sweeping generalization about social change in East Pakistan without the support of objective field-study ~~presents~~, may be regarded as premature and unfortunate.

During ten years from 1951 to 1961 there was yearl increase of the population by 367,000. In the same period the land under rice cultivation increased annually by 1584 acres, but land under jute cultivation decreased by 281 acres in East Pakistan, which means that there was an overall increase in the land under both rice and jute cultivation of only 130.0 acres annually. In the same period production of rice increased annually by 152 pounds per acre, and jute production dropped annually by 228 pounds

per acre. This means that the total production of both rice and jute together decreased by 7.6 pounds per acre. This shows, in brief, that population increased by 367,000 but production in rice-jute decreased by 7.6 pounds annually.\* Earlier it has been shown that in ten years the urban population rose only by .9 per cent. Therefore, the fact that there was little increase in the urban population, indicates that there was little migration from the rural to urban areas, and that there was increasing pressure on land both from the point of view of residence and means of living. Land was divided and subdivided among the inheritors and per capita land decreased. As a result the general economic condition of the peasants deteriorated. All these directly and indirectly affected the status position of the peasant families. It has been observed before that in the present study the upper class people observe more strictly the traditional values of respect for age and kinship position and kinship obligations of mutual help and cooperation, etc., than the people in the lower class. In other words, there have been changes in the traditional values and behaviour more in the people of the lower class, who have little or no land, than in the people of the upper class, who own most of the land in the village. This emphasises the fact that the life of the peasants has been affected more by land-man relationships than by any other factors.

It has rightly been maintained by many that the need for historical research has not diminished in this part of the world and that its importance will still be there for

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\* Though the statistical figures for the years since Independence (1947) till 1964 show a general increase in the rice-jute production by 19.8 pounds per acre per year (p. ), it may not be considered as a big increase in comparison to the rise in population and may not mean a general economic prosperity for the peasants.

many years to come. There is also a need of ethnographic field-study of our society. But it is necessary to remember that research in social sciences in the world is at a very advanced stage today and it requires to be guided by theories and supported by empirical results. Professor Karim who is an authority on the Indo-Pakistan problems has supported this view when he says: "... theoretical and historical study to be fruitful must also be empirical. But a great deal remains to be done in this field."<sup>132</sup> Therefore, it may be thought that it is time for at least a beginning of scientific empirical research on the peasant society in East Pakistan. The fact that there had been little empirical anthropological research on the peasant society of East Pakistan in the past, and that today it stands on the threshold of an era of rapid and greater change indicates the need of making such a study as has been attempted in this thesis. It is hoped that this little effort will encourage future objective research on the peasant society of East Pakistan.

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<sup>132</sup>Karim, ibid, p.11.



PLATE 2

THE BARI ("HOUSE") OF A VILLAGE MATBAR (CHIEF)  
 The dried jute sticks are stored on the tree, probably for want of accommodation, and also as a precaution against spread of fire.

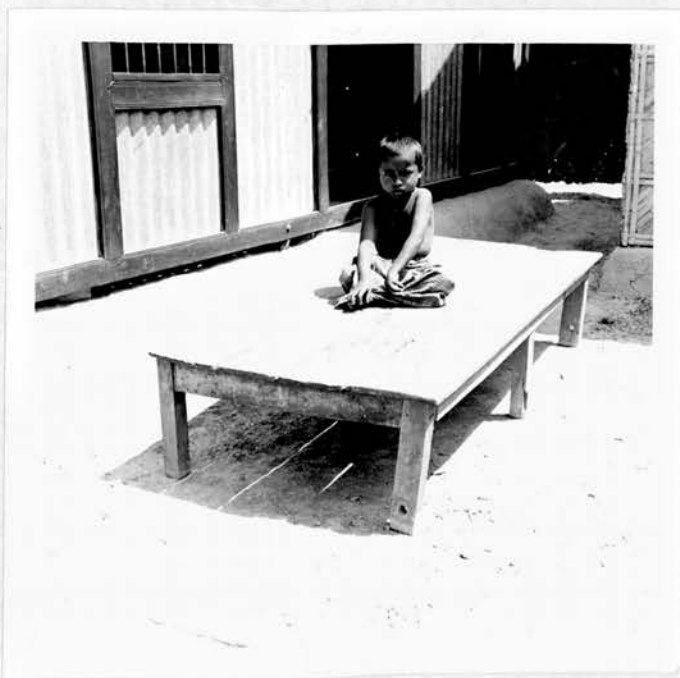
PLATE 3AN OPEN-AIR KITCHEN

A young husband is seated on the floor at the door. The walls of the ghor (dwellings) are made of jute-sticks. A mud oven and earthen pans or haris and a jar are kept near the oven.

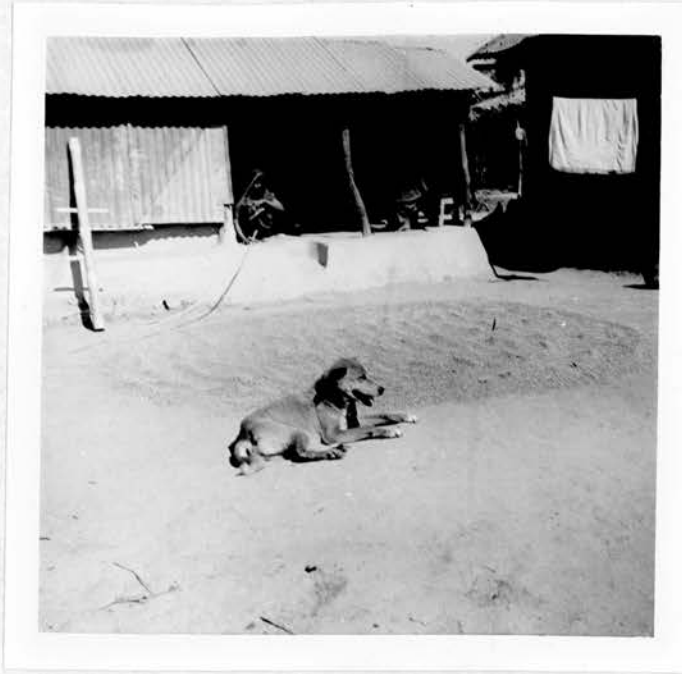


A MAN IS BUILDING A BAMBOO WALL.

PLATE 5



A LITTLE BOY IS SEATED ON A CHOKI  
(low wooden platform used for sleeping)

PLATE 6

A WOMAN IS GUARDING DRIED PADDY FROM CROWS.  
She is wearing a saree and has put a ghomta (veil on her head) in front of a stranger.

PLATE 7

A WOMAN IS HUSKING RICE.  
She has covered her body with the saree in front of a stranger.  
Her husband is seated nearby with their little daughter. A  
saree is drying on the wall.



A CATTLE-FEEDING PLACE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE COURTYARD.  
A woman is carrying a jar (kolshi) of water. A bodna or small  
jar for washing is on the ground.



A MAN IS MILKING THE COW.

PLATE 10

A SCHOOL GHOR.

It is built of corrugated iron-sheets and wood. It is built on raised ground so that it does not go under water during the rainy season, when low lying areas are flooded.

PLATE 11

A GROUP OF BOYS ARE ON THEIR WAY TO SCHOOL.

PLATE 12

A PAIR OF PLOUGHS IN THE FIELD

PLATE 13

TWO MEN ARE BREAKING AND LEVELING THE DRIED LAND WITH A MOI  
 DRAWN BY FOUR CATTLE AFTER PLOUGHING.  
 They are wearing lungi drawn half above the knee and genji.

PLATE 14

A MAN IS GOING TO THE FIELD WITH A PLOUGH ON HIS SHOULDERS.

PLATE 15

A MAN IS BREAKING THE LAND WITH AN ITAMUGUR.

PLATE 16

A MAN IS WEEDING GRASS FROM A  
TOBACCO FIELD.

PLATE 17

A BRICK-BUILT MOSQUE AND ITS IMAM.

He is wearing the traditional long white shirt  
and white cap.



PLATE 18



A GIRL IS DRAWING WATER FROM A WELL.

PLATE 19



A WOMAN AND A GIRL ARE FILLING THE EARTHEN JAR WITH WATER FROM A TUBE-WELL.

The woman has covered her body in front of a stranger.

PLATE 20

A WOMAN IS FILLING A JAR WITH WATER FROM  
A TANK.

A half of the tank is covered with water-hyacinths. The whole tank goes under water during the monsoon. Photo is taken from quite a long distance.

PLATE 21

MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE BATHING IN THE CANAL.  
Photo is taken from quite a long distance.

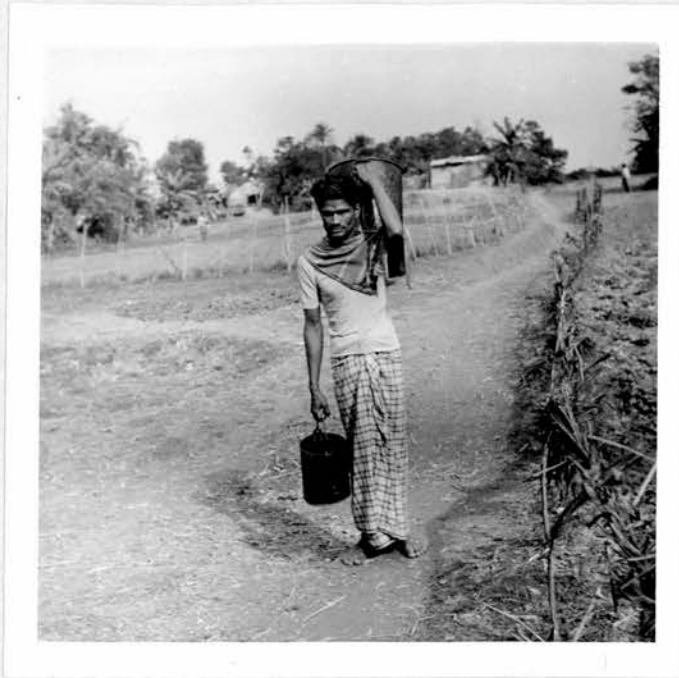
PLATE 22

MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN AND CATTLE ARE WASHING IN THE  
SAME TANK.

The photo was taken from a long distance.

PLATE 23

A COBBLER IS REPAIRING SHOES.

PLATE 24

## A MILKMAN

He is wearing a lungi and a genji. A gamcha (towel) is around his neck. He is carrying two tin milk-containers.

PLATE 25

## AN OLD MAN IS GOING TO THE BAZAAR.

He is carrying dried jute-sticks on his head to sell. He is holding in his hand a bamboo-woven basket for shopping.

PLATE 26

A GROUP OF BOYS ARE PLAYING IN THE FIELD.  
The field is ploughed and almost half-ready for sowing.

PLATE 27

A WOODEN BRIDGE

A man is holding an umbrella to protect  
him from the hot sun.



A BY-WEEKLY BAZAAR IN SESSION.

PLATE 29



A ROAD-SIDE TEA-STALL AT THE BUS-STOP.

The customers are covered with chaddor (cotton shawl) in a winter morning. This is a meeting place for the villagers. Here they idle away time over a cup of tea - or just sit and chat.

PLATE 30



A MAN IS DRIVING A BULFALLO-CART

PLATE 31



A PASSENGER-BUS THAT RUNS ON THE DACCA-SHAVAR ROAD.

A woman is boarding the bus. The bus-conductor is standing nearby.

APPENDIX I  
KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

| <u>Relationship</u> | <u>Term of Reference</u><br>(local) | <u>Term of Address</u><br>(local) | <u>Reciprocal</u><br><u>Relationship</u> | <u>Term of Reference</u><br>(local)                      | <u>Term of Address</u><br>(local) |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. FaFa             | DADA                                | DADA                              | 1. SoSo/da                               | NATI/natin   | BHAI/bubu/by name                 |
| 2. famo             | dadi                                | dadi                              | 2. SoSo/da                               | NATI/natin   | BHAI/bon/by name                  |
| 3. moFa             | NANA                                | NANA                              | 3. daSo/da                               | "  | "                                 |
| 4. momo             | nani                                | nani                              | 4. daSo/da                               | "  | "                                 |
| 5. FaFaBr           | DADA                                | DADA                              | 5. BrSoSo/da                             | "  | "                                 |
| 6. FaFasi           | dadi                                | dadi                              | 6. BrSoSo/da                             | "  | "                                 |
| 7. moFaBr           | NANA                                | NANA                              | 7. BrdaSo/da                             | "  | "                                 |
| 8. moFasi           | nani                                | nani                              | 8. BrdaSo/da                             | "  | "                                 |
| 9. Fa               | BABA                                | BABA                              | 9. So/da                                 | My Son ( <u>chelle</u> )/<br>My daughter ( <u>meye</u> ) | BABA/ma/by name                   |
| 10. mo              | ma                                  | ma                                | 10. So/da                                | "  | "                                 |
| 11. FaBr            | CHACHA/KAKA                         | CHACHA/KAKA                       | 11. BrSo/da                              | VAISTA/vaista  | "                                 |
| 12. Fasi            | fufu                                | fufu                              | 12. BrSo/da                              | "  | "                                 |
| 13. FaBrwi          | chachi/kaki                         | chachi/kaki                       | 13. HuBrSo/da                            | "  | "                                 |
| 14. FaBrSo          | CHACHA-to-BHAI                      | BHAI/DADA/by<br>name              | 14. FaBrSo/da                            | chacha-to BHAI/bon                                       | BHAI/bubu/by name                 |
| 15. FaBrda          | chacha-to-bon                       | bu/bubu/by name                   | 15. FaBrSo/da                            | "  | "                                 |
| 16. FasiHu          | FUFA                                | FUFA                              | 16. wiBrSo/da                            | VAISTA/vaisti  | BABA/ma /by name                  |
| 17. FasiSo          | fufa-to-BHAI                        | BHAI/DADA/by<br>name              | 17. moBrSo/da                            | mama-to BHAI/bon   | BHAI/bu/by name                   |
| 18. Fasida          | fufa-to-bon                         | bu/bubu/by name                   | 18. moBrSo/da                            | "  | "                                 |
| 19. moBr            | MAMA                                | MAMA                              | 19. siSo/da                              | BHAGNE/bhagni  | BABA/ma/by name                   |
| 20. mosi            | khala                               | khala                             | 20. siSo/da                              | "  | "                                 |
| 21. moBrwi          | mami                                | mami                              | 21. HusiSo/da                            | (Husband's)"   | "                                 |
| 22. moBrSo          | mama-to-BHAI                        | BHAI/DADA/by<br>name              | 22. FasiSo/da                            | fufa-to BHAI/bon   | BHAI/bubu/by name                 |
| 23. moBrda          | mama-to-bon                         | /bubu/by name                     | 23. FasiSo/da                            | "  | "                                 |
| 24. mosiHu          | KHALU                               | KHALU                             | 24. wisiSo/da                            | (Wife's)BHAGNE/bhagni                                    | BABA/ma/by name                   |
| 25. mosiSo          | khala-to-BHAI                       | BHAI/DADA/by<br>name              | 25. mosiSo/da                            | khala-to BHAI/bon  | BHAI/bubu/by name                 |
| 26. mosida          | khala-to-bon                        | bu/bubu/by name                   | 26. mosiSo/da                            | "  | "                                 |
| 27. Br              | Apon BHAI                           | BHAI/DADA/by<br>name              | 27. Br/si                                | Apon(own)BHAI/bon  | BHAI/bu/by name                   |
| 28. Brwi            | bhabi (elder)<br>ma (younger)       | bhabi/ma                          | 28. HuBr/si                              | BHASHUR/DEBOR or<br>jal/nanad                            | BHAI/bu                           |
| 29. BrSo            | BHAISTA                             | BABA/By name                      | 29. FaBr/si                              | CHACHA/KAKA or Bubu                                      | CHACHA/KAKA or bubu               |



| <u>Relationship</u> | <u>Term of Reference</u><br>(local)         | <u>Term of Address</u><br>(local)               | <u>Reciprocal Relationship</u> | <u>Term of Reference</u><br>(local)                | <u>Term of Address</u><br>(local)                                |
|---------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 30. Brda            | bhaisti                                     | ma/by name                                      | 30. FaBr/si                    | CHACHA(KAKA)/fufu                                  | CHACHA(KAKA)/fufu  |
| 31. si              | (Apon) bon                                  | bubu/by name                                    | 31. Br/si                      | Apon (own)BHAI/bon                                 | BHAI/bubu/by name  |
| 32. siHu            | DULA-BHAI/boner JAMAI                       | DULA-BHAI/by name/<br>second person             | 32. wiBr/si                    | SHALA/shali(younger)<br>SHOMONDI/jeth-shali(elder) | BHAI/bubu or by name(younger)<br>BHAI/Second person/third person |
| 33. siSo            | BHAGNE                                      | BABA/by name                                    | 33. moBr/si                    | MAMA/khala   | MAMA/khala   |
| 34. sida            | bhagni                                      | ma/by name                                      | 34. moBr/si                    | "  | "  |
| 35. wi              | bou/stri                                    | Second person/by name                           | 35. Hu                         | Father of Children                                 | Second person  |
| 36. wiFa            | SHOSHUR                                     | BABA  | 36. daHu                       | JAMAI  | BABA/Second person/by name                                       |
| 37. wimo            | shashuri                                    | ma/amma   | 37. daHu                       | "  | BABA/Second person   |
| 38. wiBr            | SHOMONDI(elder)<br>SHALA (younger)          | BHAI/DADA/by name                               | 38. siHu                       | Husband of my sister<br>(younger)                  | Second person/by name<br>(younger)                               |
| 39. wisi            | jeth shali (elder)<br>shali (younger)       | bubu/by name                                    |                                | DULABHAI (elder)                                   | DULABHAI (elder)   |
| 40. Hu              | SWAMI/Father of<br>children/third<br>person | Second person                                   | 39. siHu                       | "  | "  |
| 41. HuFa            | SHOSHUR                                     | BABA/Second person                              | 40. wi                         | bou/stri   | second person/by name  |
| 42. Humo            | Shashuri                                    | ma/amma/Second person                           | 41. Sowi                       | The wife of my son                                 | Second person/ by name   |
| 43. HuBr            | BHASHUR (elder)<br>DEBOR (younger)          | Second person/third person<br>(elder)           | 42. Sowi                       | "  | "  |
|                     |   | BHAI/by name (younger)                          | 43. Brwi                       | bhabi(elder)/wife of<br>my younger brother         | bhabi (elder)/<br>ma or second person(younger)                   |
| 44. Husi            | bhashur-ja(elder)/<br>nanad (younger)       | bubu/buji/by name                               | 44. Brwi                       | "  | bhabi(elder)/by name(younger)                                    |
| 45. HuBrwi          | ja  | bubu/buji/by name                               | 45. HuBrwi                     | ja   | bubu/buji/by name  |
| 46. HuBrSo          | SON of BHASHUR/<br>DEBOR                    | BABA/by name                                    | 46. FaBrwi                     | CHACHI/KAKI  | CHACHI/KAKI  |
| 47. HuBrda          | Daughter of<br>BHASHUR/DEBOR                | ma/by name                                      | 47. FaBrwi                     | "  | "  |
| 48. HusiHu          | JAMAI of bhashur-ja/<br>nanad               | Second or Third person<br>BHAI/by name(younger) | 48. wiBrwi                     | bou of SHALA/SHOMONDI                              | bubu/by name   |
| 49. HusiSo          | Son of bhashur-ja/<br>nanad                 | BABA/by name                                    | 49. moBrwi                     | mami   | mami   |
| 50. Husida          | daughter of bhashur-<br>ja or nanad         | ma/by name                                      | 50. moBrwi                     | "  | "  |
| 51. wiBrwi          | wife of SHOMONDI or<br>SHALA                | bhabi/ma/third person                           | 51. HusiHu                     | JAMAI of nonod                                     | DULABHAI (elder)<br>(Second person(younger))                     |
| 52. wiBrSo          | Son of SHOMONDI/<br>SHALA                   | BABA/by name                                    | 52. FasiHu                     | FUFU   | FUFU   |

| <u>Relationship</u> | <u>Term of Reference</u><br>(local)      | <u>Term of Address</u><br>(local) |
|---------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 53. wiBrda          | daughter of SHOMONDI/SHALA               | ma/by name                        |
| 54. wisiHu          | JAMAI of jeth-shali of shali/BHAIRA BHAI | BHAI/by name                      |
| 55. wisiSo          | Son of jeth-shali or shali               | BABA/by name                      |
| 56. wisida          | daughter of jeth-shali/shali             | ma/by name                        |
| 57. HumoBr          | <u>HIS</u> MAMA                          | MAMA                              |
| 58. Humosi          | <u>HIS</u> khala                         | khala                             |
| 59. wimoBr          | MAMA of wife/her MAMA                    | MAMA                              |
| 60. wimosi          | khala of wife                            | khala                             |
| 61. HuFaBr          | <u>HIS</u> CHACHA/KAKA                   | CHACHA/KAKA                       |
| 62. HuFasi          | <u>HIS</u> fufu                          | fufu                              |
| 63. wiFaBr          | CHACHA/KAKA of wife                      | CHACHA/KAKA                       |
| 64. wiFasi          | fufu of wife                             | fufu                              |
| 65. So              | (My)CHELE                                | BABA/by name                      |
| 66. Sowi            | wife of son bou CHELER                   | ma/third person                   |
| 67. SoSo            | NATI                                     | BHAI/by name                      |
| 68. Soda            | natni/natin                              | bubu/by name                      |
| 69. da              | (my) Meyer                               | ma/by name                        |
| 70. daHu            | JAMAI of daughter                        | BABA/by name/second person        |
| 71. daSo            | NATI                                     | BHAI/by name                      |
| 72. dada            | natin/natini                             | bubu/by name                      |

| <u>Reciprocal Relationship</u> | <u>Term of Reference</u><br>(local) | <u>Term of Address</u><br>(local)         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 53. FasiHu                     | FUFA                                | FUFA                                      |
| 54. wisiHu                     | BHAIRA-BHAI                         | BHAI/by name                              |
| 55. mosiHu                     | KHALU                               | KHALU                                     |
| 56. mosiHu                     | KHALU                               | KHALU                                     |
| 57. siSowi                     | BHAGNE-bou                          | ma/third person                           |
| 58. siSowi                     | BHAGNE-bou                          | ma/second person/by name                  |
| 59. sidaHu                     | bhagni-JAMAI                        | BABA/second person/by name                |
| 60. sidaHu                     | bhagni-JAMAI                        | BABA/third person                         |
| 61. BrSowi                     | BHATIJA-bou                         | ma/third person                           |
| 62. BrSowi                     | BHATIJA-bou                         | ma/second person/by name                  |
| 63. BrdaHu                     | bhaisti-JAMAI                       | BABA/second person/by name                |
| 64. BrdaHu                     | bhaisti-JAMAI                       | BABA/second person/by name                |
| 65. Fa/ma                      | BABA/ma                             | BABA/ma                                   |
| 66. Hufa/mo                    | <u>His</u> BABA/ma                  | BABA/ma                                   |
| 67. FaFa/mo                    | DADA/dadi                           | DADA/dadi                                 |
| 68. FaFa/mo                    | DADA/dadi                           | DADA/dadi                                 |
| 69. FA/mo                      | BABA/ma (amma)                      | BABA/ma (amma)                            |
| 70. wiFa/mo                    | SHOSHUR/shashuri                    | BABA/ma or second person/<br>third person |
| 71. moFa/mo                    | NANA/nani                           | NANA/nani                                 |
| 72. moFa/mo                    | NANA/nani                           | NANA/nani                                 |

APPENDIX IIINTERVIEW SCHEDULE\*

No. of Interview -

Name of the Informant  
(Head of the family) -

His/Her Age -

His/Her Relationship in the Family -

Name of the Interviewer -

Date of Interview -

Total time taken for interviewing -

1. (a) How many members are there in your family?  
(b) Their age and marital status.
2. Do all the members cook and eat together?
3. Is the property (specially land) of the family divided or jointly owned by the members?
4. How long have you been married (or in which year did you marry)?
5. (a) Was your wife/husband a relative of yours before marriage?  
(b) What kind of relative was she/he?
6. How long have you/your father been living in this village?
7. Where did you/your father live before you/your father came to the village?

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\* This is a model of the interview schedule used for the collection of data on the background information of every individual family in Rajaghat.

8. How do you earn your living?
9. (a) Do you do any other work besides the one you mentioned just now?  
(b) Which one is your main work for livelihood?
10. How much cultivable land do you own?
11. Do you/your family cultivate your land or do you give it to other people for share-cropping/contract money?
12. Do you work on your own land, or on the land of others, or on both?
13. What ghors do you have?  

|                |        |                    |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|
| Purpose of use | Number | Building materials |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|
14. What furniture do you have?  

|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| Kinds | Number |
|-------|--------|
15. What domestic animals do you have?  

|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| Kinds | Number |
|-------|--------|
16. Is any one literate in your family?  

|         |                           |
|---------|---------------------------|
| Members | Type or level of literacy |
|---------|---------------------------|
17. Does any member of your family hold any official or community position in the village?  

|        |          |
|--------|----------|
| Member | Position |
|--------|----------|

Note for the Interviewer: Give your own comments in brief about the honesty of the informant in his answers. The interview should end in the most friendly way, with a warm smile and handshake with the informant. You MUST THANK THE INFORMANT for his/her cooperation. Tell him/her that we may come again for some information, and note the reaction of the informant.

APPENDIX IIIAIDE-MEMOIRE\*(A) LIFE HISTORY OF THE INFORMANTEarly Life:

1. Date and place of birth.
2. Who reared him/her.
3. How he/she was treated by his/her guardian - remarks about food, clothing, shelter and behaviour, etc.
4. Early life friends - their present residence and occupation.
5. Early time games, recreation, and interesting things or events.
6. People and places visited.
7. Education of the informant - the reasons for giving up school.

Early professional life:

8. At what date he took up job - type of job - reasons for accepting and giving up.
9. Subsequent jobs.

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\* This is slightly modified form of the aide-memoire used in the interview. It consists mainly of the questions which were asked to collect detailed information on selected sample families in Rajaghat.

Married Life:

10. Who selected the wife/husband and arranged marriage?
11. Did he/she see and talk to her/him before marriage?
12. Things received or given at the marriage.

Family of Procreation:

13. Residence and occupation of parents and grandparents.
14. Age, residence, and occupation of siblings.
15. Separation from parents' family - before or after father's death in years - before or after marriage in years - reasons for separation.

(B) ORGANISATION OF THE FAMILIAL ACTIVITIESDiary:

1. List of all work done inside and outside home yesterday.
2. List of normal work on average day.

Decision Making:

3. List of property - land, cattle, furniture, "houses", etc. built, bought or sold after marriage.
4. Who made the decisions for buying or selling them?
5. If he/she consults the wife/husband. On what matters is the wife or husband consulted?
6. If the husband/wife should consult the wife/husband?  
- the reasons.
7. Who spends most of the money and how?

Financial Support:

8. Occupation - earnings - people in the job.
9. Wife's job. Do you approve the wife working - reasons?

Housework:

10. List of specific items of work.
11. Who did it?
12. Who was responsible for doing it?
13. Attitude towards wife/husband's work.

Economic Activities:

14. List of work - in the field and at home.
15. Who did it?
16. Who was responsible for doing it?
17. The attitude of husband towards women's work ( and vice versa).

Recreation:

18. How is free time spent - mostly with wife/husband or with other people - at home or outside home?
19. Main form of "recreation".

(C) RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE FAMILY

1. The duty of husband towards wife.
2. The duty of wife towards husband.
3. The duty of parents towards children (and vice versa).
4. Husband-wife relationship - is it same or different in different families - reasons?
5. Parents-children relationships - are they same or different in different families - reason?
6. Relationships among siblings - are they same or different in different families - reasons?

(D) KINSHIP

1. Duty and obligations of kinsmen towards one another - are they same or different among all people in the village - reasons?



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