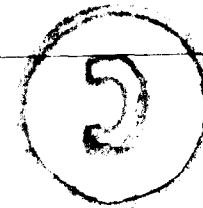


VILLAGE SURVEY MONOGRAPH ON
MADHUR BHASA

Investigation, Tabulation & First Draft
SWAPAN KUMAR GUHA

Editing & Final Draft, Supervision & Guidance : **SUKUMAR SINHA**



VILLAGE SURVEY MONOGRAPH ON
MADHUR BHASA

CENSUS OF INDIA, 1961
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VILLAGE SURVEY MONOGRAPH ON

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Deputy Director
Census Office, West Bengal

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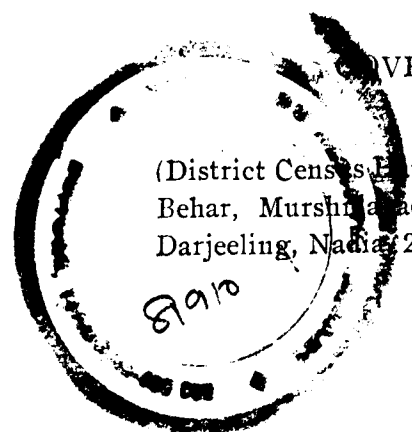
ARUNABHA DATTA
SENIOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANT

Charts & Diagrams

JALADHI BHUSAN DASGUPTA
DRAUGHTSMAN

BIJAN KUMAR MAZUMDER
DRAUGHTSMAN

SUBIR KUMAR CHATTERJEE
DRAUGHTSMAN



FOREWORD

Apart from laying the foundations of demography in this subcontinent, a hundred years of the Indian Census has also produced 'elaborate and scholarly accounts of the variegated phenomena of Indian life—sometimes with no statistics attached, but usually with just enough statistics to give empirical under-pinning to their conclusions'. In a country, largely illiterate, where statistical or numerical comprehension of even such a simple thing as age was liable to be inaccurate, an understanding of the social structure was essential. It was more necessary to attain a broad understanding of what was happening around oneself than to wrap oneself up in 'statistical ingenuity' or 'mathematical manipulation'. This explains why the Indian Census came to be interested in 'many by-paths' and 'nearly every branch of scholarship, from anthropology and sociology to geography and religion'.

In the last few decades the Census has increasingly turned its efforts to the presentation of village statistics. This suits the temper of the times as well as our political and economic structure. For even as we have a great deal of centralization on the one hand and decentralization on the other, my colleagues thought it would be a welcome continuation of the Census tradition to try to invest the dry bones of village statistics with flesh-and-blood accounts of social structure and social change. It was accordingly decided to select a few villages in every State for special study, where personal observation would be brought to bear on the interpretation of statistics to find out how much of a village was static and yet changing and how fast the winds of change were blowing and from where.

Randomness of selection was, therefore, eschewed. There was no intention to build up a picture for the whole State in quantitative terms on the basis of villages selected statistically at random. The selection was avowedly purposive; the object being as much to find out what was happening and how fast to those villages which had fewer reasons to choose change and more to remain lodged in the past as to discover how the more 'normal' types of villages were changing. They were to be primarily type studies which, by virtue of their number and distribution, would also give the reader a 'feel' of what was going on and some kind of a map of the country.

A brief account of the tests of selection will help to explain. A minimum of thirty-five villages was to be chosen with great care to represent adequately geographical, occupational and even ethnic diversity. Of this minimum of thirty-five, the distribution was to be as follows:

- (a) At least eight villages were to be so selected that each of them would contain one dominant community with one predominating occupation, e.g. fisher-

men, forest workers, jhum cultivators, potters, weavers, salt-makers, quarry workers etc. A village should have a minimum population of 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.

(b) At least seven villages were to be of numerically prominent Scheduled Tribes of the State. Each village could represent a particular tribe. The minimum population should be 400, the optimum being between 500 and 700.

(c) The third group of villages should each be of fair size, of an old and settled character and contain variegated occupations and be, if possible, multi-ethnic in composition. By fair size was meant a population of 500-700 persons or more. The village should mainly depend on agriculture and be sufficiently away from the major sources of modern communication such as the district administrative headquarters and business centres. It should be roughly a day's journey from the above places. The villages were to be selected with an eye to variation in terms of size, proximity to city and other means of modern communication, nearness to hills, jungles and major rivers. Thus there was to be a regional distribution throughout the State of this category of villages. If, however, a particular district contained significant ecological variations within its area, more than one village in the district might be selected to study the special adjustments to them.

It is a unique feature of these village surveys that they rapidly outgrew their original terms of reference, as my colleagues warmed up to their work. This proved for them an absorbing voyage of discovery and their infectious enthusiasm compelled me to enlarge the inquiry's scope again and again. It was just as well cautiously to feel one's way about at first and then venture further afield, and although it accounts to some extent for a certain unevenness in the quality and coverage of the monographs, it served to compensate the purely honorary and extramural rigours of the task. For the Survey, along with its many ancillaries like the survey of fairs and festivals, of small and rural industry and others, was an 'extra', over and above the crushing load of the 1961 Census.

It might be of interest to recount briefly the stages by which the Survey enlarged its scope. At the first Census Conference in September 1959 the Survey set itself the task of what might be called a record in situ of material traits, like settlement patterns of the village; house types; diet; dress; ornaments and foot-wear; furniture and storing vessels; common means of transport of goods and passengers; domestication of animals and birds; markets attended; worship of deities, festivals and fairs. There were to be recordings, of course, of cultural and social traits and occupational mobility. This was followed up in March, 1960 by two specimen schedules, one for each household, the other for the village as a whole, which, apart from spelling out the mode of inquiry suggested in the September, 1959 Conference, introduced groups of questions aimed at sensing changes in attitude and behaviour in such fields as marriage, inheritance, moveable and immoveable property, industry, indebtedness, education, community life and collective activity, social disabilities, forums of appeal over disputes, village

leadership, and organisation of cultural life. It was now plainly the intention to provide adequate statistical support to empirical 'feel', to approach qualitative change through statistical quantities. It had been difficult to give thought to the importance of 'just enough statistics to give empirical under-pinning to conclusion', at a time when my colleagues were straining themselves to the utmost for the success of the main Census operations, but once the Census count itself was left behind in March, 1961, a series of three regional seminars in Trivandrum (May, 1961), Darjeeling and Srinagar (June, 1961) restored their attention to this field and the importance of tracing social change through a number of well-devised statistical tables was once again recognised. This itself presupposed a fresh survey of villages already done; but it was worth the trouble in view of the possibilities that a close analysis of statistics offered, and also because the 'consanguinity' schedule remained to be canvassed. By November, 1961, however, more was expected of these surveys than ever before. There was dissatisfaction on the one hand with too many general statements and a growing desire on the other to draw conclusions from statistics, to regard social and economic data as interrelated processes, and finally to examine the social and economic processes set in motion through land reforms and other laws, legislative and administrative measures, technological and cultural change. Finally, a study camp was organised in the last week of December, 1961 when the whole field was carefully gone through over again and a programme worked out closely knitting the various aims of the Survey together. The Social Studies Section of the Census Commission rendered assistance to State Superintendents by way of scrutiny and technical comment on the frame of Survey and presentation of results.

This gradual unfolding of the aims of the Survey prevented my colleagues from adopting as many villages as they had originally intended to. But I believe that what may have been lost in quantity has been more than made up for in quality. This is, perhaps, for the first time that such a Survey has been conducted in any country, and that purely as a labour of love. It has succeeded in attaining what it set out to achieve; to construct a map of village India's social structure. One hopes that the volumes of this Survey will help to retain for the Indian Census its title to 'the most fruitful single source of information about the country'. Apart from other features, it will perhaps be conceded that the Survey has set up a new Census standard in pictorial and graphic documentation. The schedules finally adopted for this monograph have been printed in an appendix.

New Delhi

ASOK MITRA
Registrar General, India

“Tryst with Destiny”

“In a country as large as India with its social diversities and with a growing population, the problems of reconstructions are bound to be colossal and the needs whether in the spread of education, growing of sufficient food, provision of housing or other basic amenities to the people, are continuous and everincreasing. But in meeting these needs our unshakeable aim is the building of an equitable society and an economic system in which there will be no exploitation of man by man.

“We have yet a long way to traverse before we can make any claim to success. We have resources in land, water and minerals such as very few countries have. Even making allowance for the vagaries of the weather, the country is capable of achieving self-sufficiency in regard to the basic requirements of our people. An integrated service-oriented programme is an essential pre-condition for this. I have always advocated that planning for development, to be realistic, has to start from the village level. I am glad that there is today an increasing realisation of the need for this. Plans and programmes are not intended to be mere assessment charts of arithmetical projections of national resources. Our commitment to the gigantic but inescapable task of the removal of poverty is a mandate from our people, and it has to be fulfilled in the quickest possible time and in the smoothest possible manner.”

Shri V. V. Giri
President of India

It may sound like the riddle of sphinxes of olden Egypt. Still, in the ‘Chequer-board of Nights and Days, where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays,’ some unknown people in an equally unknown village, somewhere in West Bengal, muster strength and spirit to resist periodic cataclysm of nature’s wild furies with a grit to survive. Very seldom are they left free from human neglect, if not exploitation, at individual or collective level. Systematically exposed to the annual deluge of a river, they find no escape from the erratic behaviour of a waterway. In a region abounded by untamed

rivers remaining untrained for countries, the people with their redoubtable resilience are neither cowed nor ever subdued. Poverty and want visits the humble huts every moment of the people's oppressed and humiliated life. Yet, the human spirit has not been enslaved in any visible or invisible bondage to 'concepts of inferiority due to race, colour, caste or sex.' The villagers, despite their hardship, focuss 'their gaze on a vision of the future.'

What else can be my impression of the people living in Madhur Bhasa, a tiny village in Cooch Behar district in West Bengal almost bordering Assam, at the end of a frustrating experience of a socio-economic survey of their life? It presents indeed a picture of grim reality of stark poverty, crippling wants, untreated diseases, mounting debts, distressing impoverishment and unfolds an uneventful drama of human tragedy and sorrow, yielded by an unsuccessful yet relentless struggle against the vagaries of flood and drought and the consequential ravages wrought by an uncompromising nature. I often wonder what sweet dreams resuscitate their faith, so cruelly wrecked by reality. I have no tale of any earthly success or any triumph of human spirit to salvage my lost hopes and to elevate me to an ecstatic mood of optimism. The people, reconciled to fate, only patiently look forward to the construction of a *Bundh* (Embankment) which, they imagine, will mark the dawn of a new era free from the ingress of the Raidak, a typical specimen of the rivers of North Bengal. The people live under an illusion that the ex-Maharaja of Cooch Behar as the sole representative of God was gifted with the powers of a protector and patriarch to save them from their present plight and that the present officialdom is bereft of any foresight or penetrative look into what human misery and suffering could bring to the modest habitats of the poor. In such a context where the languorous attitude of the atrophied people is peculiarly conditioned by the complex of a mediaeval feudal society, I have only to view the complicated interplay of the interactive forces of tradition and modernity with an intensified curiosity. I am also no less shocked to have to come to the finale willy-nilly that the people with no expectation only wish, they had a *Bundh*. The village has no school, no shop, no tea-stall, no club and, in a word, no vestige of any modern socio-economic institution. Yet its humble folk implores the officials for an embankment, instead of gratuitous relief, financial help or technical know-how of a green revolution. They hopefully await the present survey to usher in the day of fulfilment of their long-cherished dream. Or else, they feel, they have no emancipation from an economic crash and total waste of human resource. The story of human bondage of an unnamed and unknown boy, whom his father had to pledge to an anonymous creditor for a paltry sum of rupees three hundred may cause a shock and dismay to an enlightened urban observer. But, the story will repeat itself and the ill will recur to plague the moral fabric of the social body-politic of the village. What more could the village poor do but to pawn to the rich the human body, the only tangible asset in a visible form, available to the majority, living well below the line of subsistence? Yet, they do not arraign the well-off section of their society as their worst enemy, even though a father might lose a son in servitude to his financier and some widow, a house. They are poised in their primitive spirit against the wingy

mysteries of nature with no powerful shield to protect themselves. Faced with such a miserable life of the villagers, I have only the pious wish to sense their desire and as a conscientious chronicler, faithfully record their prayers, far less with any effective power, to fulfil their dream.

The *Bundh*, I hear, is now a reality. 'If ever I had visited the village once more, I would have been accorded a Hero's welcome at the entrance to the village,' remarks Sri Swapan Guha, the Investigator for the present village, when asked by me about the possible repercussion of the great event on the village-life. Whether Sri Guha has received a 'deep-mouthed welcome' as a conquering Hero coming to the village is a different matter. But, when I recollect emotion in tranquillity, I have the pleasure to record that Sri Guha has been spared the bad epitaph of ill fame living immutably the memory of the villagers.

The jeep moved on its wheels, slowly crawling on the narrow embankment, while I was driven along the village-path leading to Madhur Bhasa. I went into a rapture at the subconscious thought that trumpets would be sounded and drums beaten to greet my arrival in the village. I confess, I could not transcend the human avidity for recognition and weakness for honour. But, what a reception it was there for me! The swirl of dust all along the track in the trail of the jeep had attracted a few young rustics grazing their cattle in the fields. Soon I was surrounded by a small crowd of nude children and lanky cowherds with itches all over their bodies. They maintained a cautious distance from me, as they were profoundly amazed at the sight of a lean and fragile-looking stranger laden with loose papers, field notebooks and other personal belongings, almost to his breaking point. The children 'gazed and still their wonder grew'. One or two pariah dogs—the pets of the young kids—could not measure, however, the distance which would not affect the dignity of the visitor, possibly because of complete absence of human understanding, came very close to me, brushed against my trousers, sniffed at my feet to guess if I was an agreeable person, started barking soon after and raised a long-winded pathetic whine. Not conversant with the significance of canine language and the symbolic message of the whimpers, I wondered whether the poor whelps sought any relief from me. I did not feel confident enough in such a situation where the ice was broken by a few stray dogs but no attempt was made by the human group to familiarize myself with their way of life. I accosted a tiny not with a pleasant 'Hello' and brushed my theoretical knowledge of anthropological techniques and methods of field enquiry. I nudged at a little child with a smile and hugged another warmly and lifted the feather-weight child on my arms. But destiny had in store for me an embarrassment. I was perhaps not very tactful in tenderly handling the delicate yet delectable child because I had hurt the itching sores on its limbs. I was taken aback at the sight of blood oozing out of the chronic sore and tears welling up in the eyes of the sobbing child. Thoroughly nonplussed, I considered it prudent to relax my clasp and let the child slip out. I had a gentle shock of mild surprise, when I looked around to find a

glimmer of naughty smile in the child's eyes glistening with tears. A pall in its company tried to tone up its morale, exhorting it to be more courageous, even though he himself did not budge an inch from his own position. However, I was soon rescued by the approaching village statesmen with looks profound and a gait of authority in their carriage of body. They had in their company a retinue of the rural posse of turbaned *Dafadars* and *Chowkidars* in their antique blue uniform, cleaned and starched for the occasion, and with their long bamboo clubs, seasoned with oil. The officious welcome protocolled by the village elders and rural leaders chilled my desire for free movement and independent observation inside the village. In fact, I required an enormous effort to wriggle out of the formalities of the functions. Besides, I had a prick of conscience that the affection and respect profusely shown to me probably emanated from a mistaken identity that I was the prime mover behind the construction of the earthen dyke-type embankment. The earthen work of the type was so often undertaken as a measure of famine relief in execution of Test Relief Schemes to relieve the distress of the agriculturist poor in drought, flood or any other calamity and also to minimise the suffering of the unemployed rural people during the lean months of agriculture. I felt, I had appeared on the scene as an impostor to appropriate the credit and good name for an otherwise routine official scheme, formulated by an imaginative Sub-divisional Officer approved by a sympathetic district official and executed by an energetic Block Development Officer. I had no special mission to the village except observing the straitened condition of the village and making an on-the-spot study of the distressed villagers about whom I had waxed eloquent in the Monograph.

* * *

It was late November, 1970 when I had planned a visit to the district of Cooch Behar for Training the Census Officials on the methods and concepts of enumeration of 1971 Census. Immediately before, I was briefed by Shri Bhaskar Ghose, I.A.S., Director of Census Operations, West Bengal, about the same district, where he had been the Deputy Commissioner, before joining the present office. Needless to mention, he was deeply in love with the district and its people. So, he encouraged me to move about and see as much as I would have liked. He readily approved my proposed visit to Madhur Bhasa and kindly posted me with the information that the village had an embankment, the construction of which was completed during his tenure of office as Deputy Commissioner, Cooch Behar. The idea of a dyke had struck Shri Amiya Kumar Mitra, Subdivisional Officer, Tufanganj, who at one stage was a Deputy Director in the Census Organisation.

The background information had made me alert to watch every detail of the life of the people of Madhur Bhasa. The embankment was a concrete illustration of a change in the physical configuration of the village. But, a *Bundh* by itself did little spell out any outward palpable change in the life of the villagers. I, therefore, craved a rapid reconnaissance as a village-trotter to walk along every village-alley and to note what was there around the village to reflect a changed style of life. The crowd swelled as if I was a V.I.P. I had to elbow my way out of the people around to race for new

sights and sounds inside Madhur Bhasa. My eyes were soon glued to a torn poster on a tamarind tree. I closed near to find a handbill-like advertisement of an open-air country theatre (*Yatra*), affixed there by a professional group of showmen under the banner, 'Ghosh Company Yatra Party' under the proprietors, Sarvashree Amulya Chandra Sarkar and Radhashyam Ghosh, of 356/2, Rabindra Sarani, Calcutta.' The drama was entitled, '*Martei Yara Janme*' (মরতেই যারা জন্মে), literally meaning, *Born Only For Death*. The title of the drama did not convey the theme at all. Euphemistically, however, it fitted in with the tenor of life of the people of Madhur Bhasa in the style of the Greek tragedies. Nevertheless, the village existed with its villagers alive, as if to rejoin in a banter to the demoralising undertone of the thematic content of the drama.

I walked to the riverside to cast a look at the placid waters of the Raidak, which was as tranquil as a child lulled to sleep. The baulk, very steep indeed, reminded me of the Grand Canyon of the river Colorado or the deep ravines of the river Chambal. The steepness of the bank because of high gradients caused by the eroding undercurrents of the river was awe-inspiring. I was at a loss to make out why the river was not maligned and deserted. Instead, I saw housewives and village belles washing their utensils, filling in their pitchers and taking their bath while the village children splashed about in the river water. I appreciated, however evil the river might turn during and after the monsoon, it had not yet alienated the villagers as the witch of *Grim's Tales*. The people had learnt to adjust themselves to the ecology of the place, knowing well that the river would behave as erratically in future as it had done in the past. For the Raidak was a Himalayan river.

After a stroll along winding paths, I came to an open meadow, an incultivable waste land, where there was a singlestoried hut. I enquired of Sri Madan Burman, a sexagenarian villager with no education, about the same hut. In pride and glee Sri Burman told me that it was their village school. It was a piece of news to me, for nowhere in the Monograph I referred to a village-school. To be doubly sure, I repeated the question if Madhur Bhasa had really a school. I received the same answer. I was immobile for some time and speechless too, for I was reckoning within myself the abuse and criticism I would be flooded with face for a vital mistake in the event of publication of the Monograph. The villagers were painfully shocked to find that the school within the village did not delight me at all. They wondered if I was an urban snob disfavouring the spread of education among the rural people. In my last bid to get the truth. I asked the villagers once more, 'Did you have any school earlier?' 'No Sir, we didn't have any before 1968.' Madhur Bhasa Primary School was established in 1968, babbled Sri Burman breathlessly. I was relieved to hear that. The village boys, in the absence of a school within Madhur Bhasa in earlier days, had to attend the educational institution in Singimari. In the monsoon the little children had to move out of doors without an umbrella, a raincoat or a headgear. Often they got drenched in the rain and became indispensed. Besides, the people of Madhur Bhasa felt humiliated at the derisive remarks of their neighbours in Singimari who posed like big brothers, enlightened

elite and dispenser of learning, because Madhur Bhasa had no school of its own within its heart. It could hardly afford to have run it. But, things looked up after the construction of the *Bundh* in 1967-68. The river could no longer interlope into their fields to spoil their crops. Their crops saved, they felt the urge for a school. They had no longer had to beg anybody for any aid. The villagers constructed their own school themselves on voluntary labour and with materials donated by all of them. Sri Hem Kanta Burman and Sri Premananda Burman with education upto Classes X and VIII respectively in Singimari High School, both residents of Madhur Bhasa, agreed to follow the pedagogue's profession of school-mastering and teach 50 students comprising 35 boys and 15 girls exclusively from the village, reading in Class I and Class II, free of tuition fee. With classes also held outside because of dearth of space, Madhur Bhasa Primary School had in its list of assets, two tables, two chairs, five benches and two attendance registers. None of the children was required to overstep the limits of the village for pre primary schooling facility. The two dedicated young teachers were contented with their meagre salary of Rs. 375.00 *paise* paid in kinds. For payment of salary of the teachers the villagers ungrudgingly contributed two *Maunds* of jute, five *Maunds* of *Aus* and six *Maunds* of *Aman* paddy, produce of the kitchen gardens and sundry other articles.

Sri Abichan Burman, a middle aged village-elder, scrutinised my face, when I enquired of him what he wished for the villagers in general and the young generation in particular. He closed his eyes as if in meditation and calmly replied in a serene voice, 'we do not have a lofty hope. We wish our kids are educated well. Education alone will take care of them later. We pray too that we may live ever in future in peace and amity, if not in prosperity.'

And that set the tune of the changed life of the people of Madhur Bhasa. Now the embankment saved a significant portion of their produce, hitherto wasted in the floods. They had now drawn their strength in quietness and in confidence to meet the challenge of life in squator and poverty. They rightly understood that education formed the common mind and so, they founded the village school. This change in outlook might be beyond my report, thought or belief.' But, the people were determined to change the old order, to eradicate poverty, to emancipate society from rigid stratification, evil customs and superstition.'

* * *

And at last I boarded the jeep. The children drew near me with a soft gloom in their look in the dim twilight. The dogs wagged their tails, probably assured that I had befriended the villagers. The engine started and the jeep moved on. I craned my neck out of the door space and looked at Madhur Bhasa slowly getting invisible in envelope of dust. I could only hear the hilarious uproar of the children and the sound of barking dogs screened off by the haze of dust and the mist of evening darkness. The sight lingered in my memory though I lost track of the sound as the jeep picked up its speed and raced on top gear.

II

This is the eighth in the series of the Village Survey Monographs published as a part of the programme undertaken in 1961 Census, the parameters of the study having been clearly explained in the preceding Foreword. The details about the number of villages selected for socio-economic study and the principal guidelines of selection have been enumerated in the prefatory account entitled, 'In The Place of A Preface', included in the 'Village Survey Monograph' on Raibaghani, published earlier in this Series as Monograph No. 4. The schedules adopted for the present village are shown in Appendices to Monograph No. 4.

Apart from a thorough Census of the households, structure questions on households, ethnic groups and the village, group-discussions, interviews and participant-observations have yielded much useful data on the village and its people. Some observations are based on impressions may be subjective, but most of them have behind them the support of case-studies. Analysis of statistical tables has led to objective conclusions largely, yet at times subjective approach could not be dispensed with. When figures fail to convey any meaning, eloquence has saved the situation in describing the attitude and behaviour of the rural man, who inspite of his simplicity and lack of sophistry has a complex mind.

The study was conducted in 1964-65, 1966-67 and in 1970. The delay in publication this Monograph, if any, owes an apology to the reader. No person or institution is to blame for it. The manuscript was handed over to the Press in 1969-70 after the official sanction was received for printing the Monograph in a private press. Despite best efforts, Press could not expeditiously print the Monograph because of operational problems and also the great political unrest in the metropolitan city.

As the Monograph was prepared and sent to the Press before the emergence of the independent sovereign Republic of Bangla Desh, reference was made to East Pakistan.

The opinions, here and hereafter, are exclusively mine, made in personal capacity of a thinker and writer, not representing the official views of the Government.

Calcutta
The 4th September, 1972

Sukumar Sinha

A HALLELUJAH

*'The cry of the Little Peoples goes upto God in vain
For the world is given over to the cruel sons of Cain'*

'The Lord prefers common-looking people. That is the reason he makes as many of them', remarked Abraham Lincoln. The Indian prototype of the Lord of the common people may be found in *Ganesa* or *Gananatha*, also the deity of success. The present treatise is not designed as a hymn to the mythological god who, according to custom and tradition, enjoys the most privileged position in the rank of precedence, claiming always the first offering from the devotees even when the worship is instituted for another deity. Instead, I take the opportunity of paying my tribute first to the suffering mute villagers of Madhur Bhasa who met the challenge of life with success in the end. If the dream of the people of the village under study has been realised even in part, it only marks the fruition of their ardent nuncupative will. I bow to them in regard and admiration, remember them with affection, but apologise to them beseechingly for my inadvertence, if any, to observe their socio-economic life in its proper perspective. To pen a socio-economic account of the people of Madhur Bhasa has indeed been a consecrated task for me and a rare pleasure too.

Cooperation of every person is a basic precondition for any socio-economic study. But, even then, the assistance and help of a few select persons can only invest the enquiry with a penetrative insight. To Sarvashree Dinesh Sarkar, Hemanta Burman and Naresh Das of Madhur Bhasa, Sri Tarini Sarkar of Singimari, Sarvashree N. K. Sen Gupta, I.A.S., Bhaskar Ghose, I.A.S., Barada Charan Sarma, I.A.S., the Deputy Commissioners, Cooch Behar, Sri Alok Bose, W.B.C.S., District Census Officer, Cooch Behar, Sri A. Kapas, W.B.C.S., S.D.O., Tufanganj, Panchayat Extension Officer, Tufanganj, *Pradhan* and members of Singimari *Anchal Panchayat* I owe an unrequited gratitude as a recipient of their best assistance.

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aptitudes of many a bureaucrat and administrator. But, as a tiny creature with a mediocre intelligence, chained to rigid and formal outlook inherent in the tradition of the provincial civil service of my generation in my state, I could never dream before that I would be called upon to pursue the present vocation. I am proud to admit that I have not at all been sick of the duties entrusted to me. I do not propose to impudently express my gratitude in platitudes and high falutin's cliches. Instead, I propose to revere and love him in the solitary niche of my mind.

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Calcutta,
The 4th September, 1972

Sukumar Sinha

CONTENTS

	Page No.
FOREWORD	VII
"TRYST WITH DESTINY"	XI
A HALLELUJAH	XIX
CONTENTS	XXIII
CHAPTER I	1
The Village	3
Introduction—3. Approach to the village—3. Reasons for selection—4. Location—4. Physical aspects—5. Flora and fauna—5. Area and number of households—6. Residential pattern—6. Transport and communications—8. Places and institutions of importance—13. Water-supply—13. Drainage—13. Crematorium—14. History of the village—14. History of residential settlement—15. Legend—19.	
CHAPTER II	21
People and their Material Culture	23
Ethnic account—23. Rajbanshi Kshatriya—24. Namasudra—24. Tantubaya—25. Housetype—26. Bedroom—26. Kitchen—26. Cowshed—27. Construction—27. Building materials—30. Functional use of rooms—32. New Construction—34. Ceremonies—34. Dress—34. Ornaments—35. Hair-dressing—36. Footwear—36. Household goods and furniture—36. Consumer goods—37. Use of soap—38. Food and drink—39. Food for the infants—47. Utensils—47. Fuel—49. Life-cycle—49. Birth—49. Marriage—52. Death—54.	
CHAPTER III	55
Economy	57
Land—57. Distribution and ownership of agricultural land—58. Manner of acquisition—59. Distribution and ownership in father's time—59. Price—62. Owner-cultivator—62. Owner-cultivator-cum-rentier—63. Owner-cultivator-cum-share-croppers—63. Landless share-cropper—64. Terms and conditions of share-cropping—66. Agriculture—66. Cultivation of paddy—67. Cultivation of jute—69. Cultivation of pulses—70. Cultivation of oilseeds—72. Cultivation of sugarcane—72. Technology practised—72. Utilisation of produce—73. Storage of produce—74. Marketing—74. Livestock—74. Feeding—76. Utilisation of milk and other product—76. Fishing—77. Occupational pattern—77. Primary and secondary occupation—80. Workers and	

xxiii

non-workers—81. Unemployment—83. Occupational mobility—83. Income and expenditure—35. Monthly income-group—86. Gross income and sources—87. Expenditure—88. Indebtedness—88. Nature of loan—92. Rate of interest on loans in cash—92. Rate of interest on loans in kind—94. Terms of repayment—95. Utilisation of loan—96. Nature of security—98. Economic growth or impoverishment—98.

CHAPTER IV

Social and Cultural Life

Demography—111. Type of family—112. Headship of a family—114. Age and sex-wise distribution of population—118. Literacy and education—120. Educational facilities—124. Educational expenses—125. Attitude towards education—126. Language—127. Place of birth—127. Emigration—129. Health and sanitation—129. Diseases and their treatment—130. Medical amenities—135. Family-planning—135. Daily life—141. Leisure and recreation—142. Religion and gods—145. Ceremonies and festivals—146. Tulsi puja—47. Manasa puja—147. Banspuja or Madan chaturdashi—148. Bura thakur puja—149. Puja of tosa kubir and sur kubir—149. Gabur thakur puja—150. Miscellany of gods and goddesses—150. Leadership-pattern—152. Formal and informal leadership—153. Structure of social control and social organisation—155. Statutory socio-political organisation—157. Community development and welfare—166. Attitudes and views to socio-economic changes—168. Inter-community relation—171.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Description	Page No.
1	Generations of residential settlement	15
2	Duration of residence (year)	16
3	Households and population	23
4	Rooms and households	28
5	Rooms and conjugal life	28
6	Space-utilisation in a living room	28
7	Materials of roof, wall and door	30
8	Use and occupation of rooms	32
9	Distribution of homesteads	33
10	Ornaments and their materials	35
11	Use of furniture	37

Table No.	Description	Page No.
12	Consumer goods	38
13	Number of daily meals	39
14	Consumption of protein diet	40
15	Staple food for infants	47
16	Constituent materials of the utensils	48
17	Utensils and constituent materials	48
18	Land-utilisation pattern	58
19	Ownership and distribution of agricultural land	59
20	Land owned by father	60
21	Size of land in two generations	61
22	Land owned and cultivated by the owner-cultivators	62
23	Owner Cultivator-cum-share-cropper	63
24	Landless share-cropper	64
25	Period of share-cropping	65
26	Utilisation of mandays in the cultivation of paddy	68
27	Mandays spent on the cultivation of jute	70
28	Production of two main crops	73
29	Livestock	74
30	Ownership pattern of livestock	75
31	Sale of milk and ownership of milch cows	76
32	Industrial classification of heads of households	78
33	Industrial classification of workers	78
34	Workers, ethnic groups and occupations	79
35	Workers, age-groups and occupations	79
36	Secondary occupation	80
37	Worker and non-workers	81
38	Non-workers	82
	Mobility with reference to traditional occupation	84
39	Occupational mobility with reference to the occupation of the father	84
40	Monthly income and occupation	86
41	Monthly income and ethnic group	87
42	Gross annual income and sources	87
43	Range of indebtedness and industrial classification	88
44	Indebtedness and income-groups	90
45	Non-resident creditors for big loan	91
46	Non-resident creditors for small loan	91
47	Debt in kind	92
48	Interest on mortgage	93
49	Compound interest on loans in kind	95
50	Purpose of loans	96
51	Sale of assets	99
52	Purchase of assets	100
53	Demography of the village	111
		xxv

Table No.	Description	Page No.
54	Size of household	112
55	Classification of families	112
56	Families by size and kinship	114
57	Index of headship	117
58	Village population	118
59	Age and marital status	119
60	Age at marriage of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya	120
61	Literates and the educated	122
62	School-going Children	123
63	Educational expenses	125
64	Reasons for not attending school	126
65	Place of birth	128
66	Households using soap	130
67	Diseases and patients	131
68	Vaccination and inoculation	132
69	Treatment of disease	133
70	Desire for children	136
71	Heads by cause of the desire for children	136
72	Heads of households and number of children	138
73	Attitude to family-size according to age of the head of the household	138
74	Attitude towards family size	140
75	Demography of the constituents of the Gram Panchayat	158
76	Demographic profile of Singimari Gram Panchayat	158
77	Demographic profile of Rampur Anchal Panchayat	162
78	Socio-religious expense	170

ILLUSTRATIONS

Maps

1	Residential pattern of Madhur Bhasa	7
2	Settlement pattern of Madhur Bhasa	18

Line-drawings and Sketches

1	Sketch of lay-out of the houses	6
2	Households by duration of residence	17
3	Households and population	23
4	Households and bedrooms	27
5	Households by per capita space	29
6	Households and housing	30
7	Households and rooms	32
8	Bracelet and bangle	35
9	Materials of ornaments	36
10	Consumption of protein diet	40

Table No.	Description	Page No.
11	Land-utilisation	57
12	Ownership of landed area	58
13	Land in two generations	61
14	Paddy and manpower	67
15	Cultivation of jute	69
16	Agricultural implements	71
17	Industrial classification of heads of households	77
18	Industrial classification of workers	78
19	Workers and non-workers	81
20	Monthly income and ethnic group	87
21	Monthly income and indebtedness	90
22	Households in debt	97
23	Use of furniture	100
24	Households and income group	101
25	Family-types	112
26	Demographic pattern	118
27	Age at marriage	120
28	Education at a glance	121
29	School-going children	123

Photo Plates

1	Highway open to the country swain	9
2	The little old-world village	9
3	When these woods were hungry	10
4	The creak of a lumbering cart	10
5	Icy current and compulsive course down the torrent of fate	11
6	The benevolent dictator	11
7	Well of living waters	12
8	Over the lea	12
9	Sunny spots of greenery in a green shade	41
10	Leafy sentinels of green swell against the storm	41
11	So very humble	42
12	A man's house is his castle	42
13	And that has made all the difference	43
14	Little nest in the gilded cage	43
15	Modest dress, neat but not gaudy	44
16	Not a pompous show, 'still deceived with ornament'	44
17	Simple 'maiden of bashful fifteen' and 'every lass a queen'	45
18	Rude breath of winter wind	45
19	An index of economy and status	46
20	Co-operation for forage in a farm	46
21	Heavy steps of the ploughman	103

Table No.	Description	Page No.
22	Upon the brow of labour the crown	103
23	Home-task for women	104
24	Fish and fishing in river for pastime	104
25	Rowing one way and looking another	105
26	Ace of trumps not up their sleeves	105
27	Earthy haven of heavenly deities	106
28	Fear first in the world-made Gods	106
29	Plant of virtue	107
30	A divine illusion	107
31	Future India	108
32	Mobility and power	108

THE VILLAGE

Introduction
Approach to the village
Reasons for selection
Location
Physical aspects
Flora and fauna
Area and number of households
Residential pattern
Transport and communications
Places and institutions of importance
Water-supply
Drainage
Crematorium
History of the village
History of residential settlement
Legend

THE VILLAGE

INTRODUCTION

One is not certain if phonetism and dialect have got anything to do with the semantic changes in the name of a village, known as Madhur Bhasa. But, one is ruefully apprised of the hydrographic powers of a river, flowing close by the village, when one learns than the quiet-looking, innocuous river Raidak threatens every year with consistent promptitude the existence of village-life by its menacing flood. Literally the word Madhur Bhasa means sweet (*Madhur*) language (*Bhasa*). But, the name is believed to have been different many years ago as it appears now, in the opinion of the village-people. Earlier, the village went in the name of Madhurbasa, etymologically meaning a beehive or home (*Basa*) of honey (*Madhu*), or in the alternative the home as sweet as honey.

In the Revenue Survey Map of 1869-70 the present village was shown as Madoor-basa in Tufanganj Police Station. In the Village Directory of the Presidency of Bengal relating to Cooch Behar (Vol. XVIII, page 16) compiled in 1885 by the Postmaster General, Bengal, the present village was shown as Madhurbasa in Tufanganj Police Station. In the Map, prepared in 1912-1919 by the *Deoan*, Cooch

Behar State, the village was spelt for the first time as Madhurbhasa in Tufanganj Police Station. The spelling has not registered any change since then. The *Mouza* Madhur Bhasa, coterminous with the village, is situated in the district of Cooch Behar, bearing the number 1192 in the Revenue Jurisdiction List of the Police Station of Tufanganj before the Revisional Settlement conducted by the Settlement Officer, Cooch Behar, Government of West Bengal. The Jurisdiction List No. has since been changed to 18 now. The term *Village*, henceforth used, will apply to the *Mouza* of Madhur Bhasa. The village, in the jurisdiction of the Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* within the subdivision of Tufanganj, is located in the extreme interior of the district, about 16 miles from Tufanganj.

APPROACH TO THE VILLAGE

It is not too pleasant a journey to reach the village by road from Tufanganj. Arriving at Cooch Behar Railway Station of the North East Frontier Railway, one will have to avail oneself of the bus, run by the North Bengal State Transport Corporation, the Depot being situated in the heart of the town of Cooch Behar. Bus services upto Jaldhoa Ghat *via* Tufanganj are available here and the distance covered

MADHUR BHASA

by the bus is about 27 miles from Cooch Behar upto Jaldhoa Ghat. The journey from Cooch Behar Railway Station to the bus terminus is generally made by a cycle-rickshaw. Buses do not ply regularly upto Jaldhoa Ghat throughout the year. The rainy season hampers the services almost every year during the period from June to September, for the unmetalled road in the bus-route becomes unpliable for a mile upto Jaldhoa Ghat on account of slush and mud. So, the bus stops about a mile back from Jaldhoa Ghat during the rains. If one travels upto Jaldhoa Ghat without luggage, the journey will not perhaps be much harrowing. One will have to carry oneself the heavy luggage for the stretch of a mile's journey, as one would not find there any coolie or labourer to carry the load upto Jaldhoa Ghat and everyone carries the load himself. The river Raidak is ferried by boat in the rainy season but is fordable in summer. The sandy beds of the river exposed in winter and summer elude an observer giving him the impression that it overflows its banks in the monsoons. From Jaldhoa Ghat one has to walk a mile again. During inclement weather buses are not available for this stretch. The bus service arranges four trips daily upto Kumargram in the district of Jalpaiguri. The road, though entirely metalled, does not make the journey by bus very much comfortable. At Rampur, about five miles from Jaldhoa Ghat, a *Kutch* road takes off, leading to Madhur Bhasa at a distance of two miles from the bus-route. Though Madhur Bhasa is at a distance of 16 miles from Tufanganj, the journey takes four to four hours and a half, depending, however, on the smooth and punctual running of the bus. In summer the journey takes only two hours or at most two hours and a half. An alternative route to Madhur Bhasa offers

little advantage over the route, described above. From Jorai Railway Station of the North East Frontier Railway one may come to Rampur by bus, travelling a distance of two miles by the Kumargram-Jaldhoa Ghat Bus Service, run by the North Bengal Transport Corporation. From Rampur the route will be common to the one detailed before.

REASONS FOR SELECTION

It was ascertained from the district authorities in Cooch Behar after a local visit by the Investigator that the village was predominantly inhabited by the Koch people. Believed to be the original people of the district of Cooch Behar with associations of culture and history, tradition and heritage, and also semantic relation with the etymology of the name of the district, the Koch were selected for study in this small village. But, curiously enough, an on-the-spot study of the village reveals none of the people living in Madhur Bhasa declaring himself a Koch, although he is the original inhabitant of the village. They claim themselves to be Kshatriya converts from the Rajbanshis. Interestingly however, the Rajbanshis claim themselves as members of the Scheduled Castes and return themselves as Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. They point out that the sacred thread, they wear now, differentiates them from the Rajbanshis not wearing any sacred thread. Whatever the difference, the present village has been studied with the purpose to know the life of the Rajbanshis.

LOCATION

Madhur Bhasa is situated at a distance of about 31 miles or 49 kilometres from the district headquarters at Cooch Behar on its north-east corner in the Jalpaiguri Division. The Subdivisional headquarters

THE VILLAGE

at Tufanganj is about 16 miles or 25 kilometres away from Madhur Bhasa. The village, within the jurisdiction of Tufanganj National Extension Service Block, is bounded on the northern and western side by the river Raidak. The *Mouza* Singimari (J. L. No. 1193) within the same Police Station, is situated to the east and the south of this village. The nearest Post Office with facilities of remittance and receipt of money orders, apart from those of normal despatch and receipt of letters, is situated at Rampur. Telegrams are transmitted through the Telegraph Office at Tufanganj. The main market is at Rampur, the bi-weekly *Hat* sitting every Tuesday and Saturday. The villagers purchase the necessary goods at this *Hat* where they also take the surplus produce of the village for sale. The nearest bus-route *via* Jaldhoa Ghat to Kumargram runs through Rampur. The nearest Railway Station at Jorai is situated about four miles or six kilometres away from this village.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS

The village is situated on a plain, but the village road is raised six feet high from the ground-level. The soil of the village, otherwise sandy towards the west and the north, is of sticky loam in other parts. The river Raidak flowing from the north-east takes a bend towards the north-west point of the village and then flows due south on its western side. There is a reserved forest on the western bank of the river Raidak, a perennial river gaining in volume only during the rainy season. The flood of the river recurs annually causes sorrow to the people. The river worries the people not only by its annual floods but also by unpredictable change in its course. It has been the experience of the people that the river erodes the embankments quite unlike other

ivers in the plains. The riverine course has capriciously changed in a dangerous way to overflow the residential areas on its banks. The bed of the river, reported to be silted in the western parts is raised by about 20 feet, causing a canal to branch out from the main stream.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The trees and the plants, the animals and the birds of the place are of a very common variety. Banana, mango and jack-fruit trees grow almost in every homestead. The villagers are proud of an old mango tree, reported to have been bearing fruits in the village for about eighty years or so. This grand old tree is situated by the side of the main village road. Clumps of bamboos here and there give an onlooker of the impression of a thick bush from a distance. Shrubs of prickly plants grow in abundance. Fallow waste-land, once covered with the thorny plants, has been reclaimed by the village people for cultivation in some areas; but in some other areas again, the plants have struck deeper roots in the soil and can hardly be uprooted. All attempts of the villagers to restore the land for cultivation have been foiled by the plants. Areca nut trees provide an important economic resource to the people in the village apart from shading the huts from storms.

A type of grass, locally known as *Chhan*, probably because they provide the roofing material for the huts, grows profusely on the virgin soil over a large tract of the village. Tall grasses of the average height of a man, cover the fields and provide fodder for the roaming cattle. The villagers have not been able to stop the luxuriant growth of this wild grass. The trees, the plants and the local grass, making the village shaded adequately, are apt to be mistaken from a distance for forests. There are three private

MADHUR BHASA

jungles in three different parts of the village. The jungles remain in private ownership, as they were not acquired by the Government of West Bengal under the provision of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act.

Domestic animals like cows and buffaloes apart, jackals and pariah dogs are the free animals of the village. The birds of the households include only poultry and one or two ducks. Other birds of very common species include crows, cuckoos, doves, green parrots, *Doels* etc. Of venomous and non-poisonous snakes found in the village, one variety deserves special mention because of peculiar features. Locally known as *Laodaga*, the snake reclines on the creepers of pumpkins but does rarely touch the ground.

AREA AND NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS

The *Mouza* Madhur Bhasa has an area of 561.27 acres, according to the Settlement Officer, Cooch Behar. But according to 1951 Census and 1961 Census, the area of the village is 0.876 sq. miles. The total

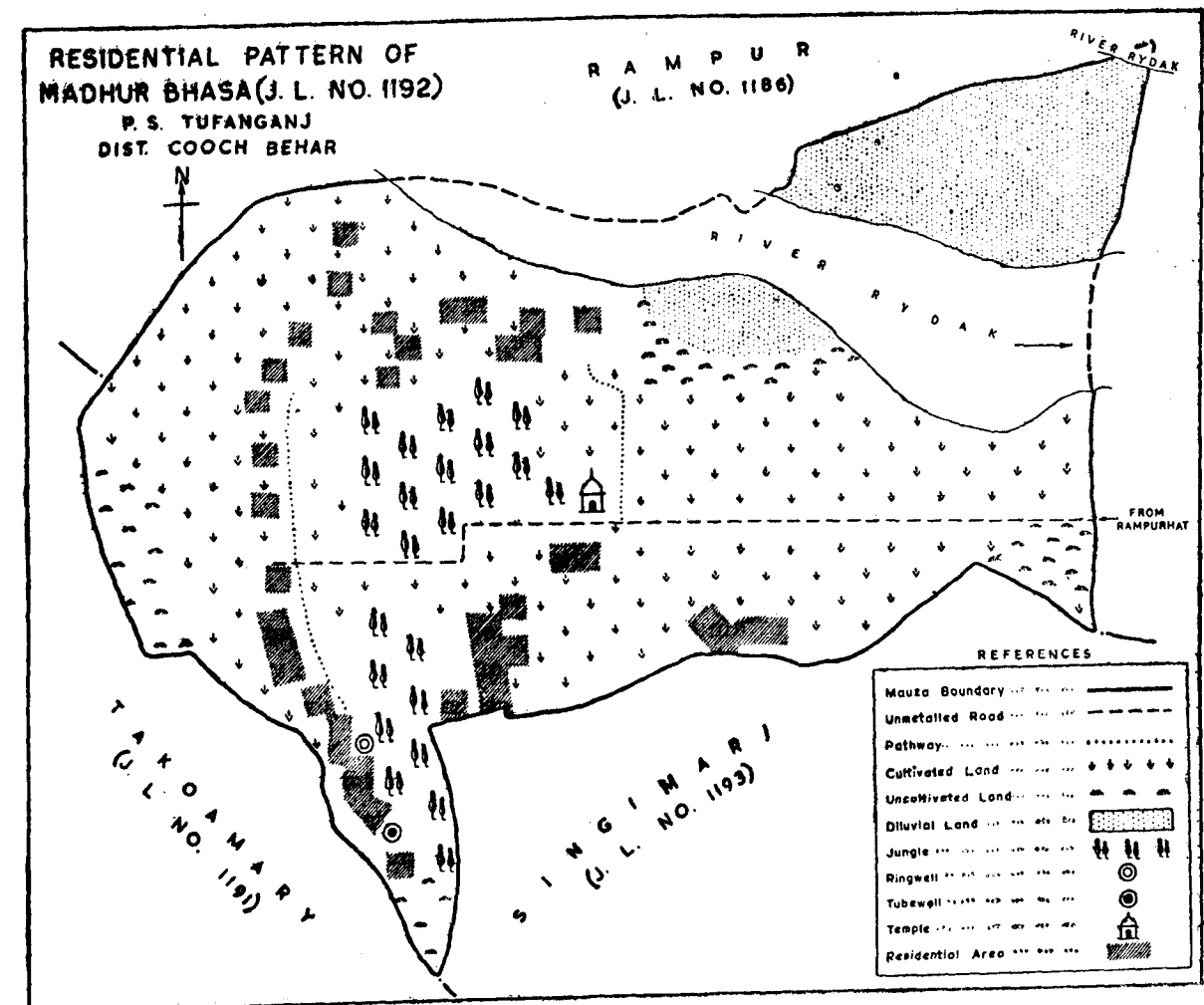
number of households according to Census 1961, is 113 with a total population of 280 persons. In 1951 Census the total number of occupied houses, meaning thereby the households, was 32 with a population of 153. The investigation during the survey finds the village having a total population of 238 in 40 households, comprising 31 Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, eight Namasudras and one Tantubaya.

RESIDENTIAL PATTERN

The lay-out of the houses in the *Mouza* does not follow a definite plan. The houses are dispersed here and there in a shapeless pattern. Two or three houses, grouped together, form a cluster, if a cluster really means so. Situated in low lands by the side of the agricultural fields, the houses are not directly accessible from the village road, from which one has to walk a distance of a few yards or so across the agricultural fields to reach a house. The accumulated water during the rains affect the life and durability of the houses for their situation in low lands.



THE VILLAGE



Entering the village from the east along the main village road, one comes across a congregation of four Rajbanshi Kshatriya households in an agricultural field situated in the southern portion of the *Mouza*. Walking along the same road one finds three other households of the same community on the bank of the river Raidak. Between these houses and the main village road, there remains an expanse of the agricultural field in the northern part. A village pathway, taking off from the main road and coursing through the agricultural fields, leads to the hutments on the bank of the river. Two isolated houses belonging to the Rajbanshi Ksha-

triyas, situated in the same area, stand at some distance from three other households there. A cluster of 16 households including 14 Rajbanshi Kshatriya and two Namasudra families is situated in the west, opposite to the jungle on the side of the main village road. The Namasudra households are housed in the middle of the cluster. Travelling along the same road to the west, one comes across three Namasudra households on the bank of the river Raidak. At the extreme end of the agricultural fields, intervening the river and the road, lies the whole of the western part of the village, inhabited by eight Rajbanshi Kshatriya, one Tantubaya and three Namasudra fami-

MADHUR BHASA

lies. The houses of these 12 families, dispersed in the agricultural field are situated in the eastern bank of the river Raidak flowing in the southern direction.

The residential layout of the village has, therefore, not been patterned out on any ethnic or occupational considerations. Availability of land for residential purpose and proximity to the plots of agricultural lands in respective ownership have been the main considerations acting as the motivating force on the households in the selection of sites for their residence.

TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Only one main *Kutch* (Unmetalled) road has connected the village with Rampur. It was constructed four years back on a Test Relief Scheme of the Government of West Bengal under the supervision of the local *Anchal Panchayat* just after its election. Another village pathway has taken off towards the river Raidak in the north. The second village road in the extreme west of the village, running north-south and crossing the main road, runs almost parallel to the river Raidak. None of the three village roads helps the households have direct access to their houses, the inmates of which have, therefore, to negotiate the village fields throughout the year and to wade through knee-deep water and slush in the rainy season. The roads are passable for bullock-carts only. The villagers walk mostly in an errand, when going outside, but depend on bullock-carts or buffalo-carts as the only dependable means of transport to carry agricultural produce to the *Hats* or markets and to bring the purchases from outside. These slow-moving time-old conveyance, otherwise incompatible with the faster means of modern transport like jeeps, motor-cars and buses that ply frequently at a distance of about four kilo-

metres have somehow enabled the villagers to maintain their link with the modern world outside, lumbering out of the village pen on the squeaking cartwheels only on rare occasions and urgent personal missions. Jeeps can ply along the village roads only in dry season and the sight of a jeep or any such transport, not commonly seen, cause much flutter and joy among the village-people, especially the children.

The facilities of transport from the village to the metalled road and the bus-route being very poor and meagre, the villagers lead an insular life, isolated from the main currents of the socio-economic life in the State in general and in the urban areas, near or far, in particular. Neither stoic nor immobile, the villagers do not find it necessary to move outside without any purpose. To take a patient to a doctor for consultation, to make necessary and vital purchases of essential articles, not available in the village, or to take some loan, agricultural or non-agricultural, from the Government, the villagers care to cross the bounds of the village. Any contact generally with the people beyond the horizon of the village or outside the rural frontiers of the neighbourhood being much too limited and infrequent, the people build a world of their own in their village to live exclusively among themselves. The socio-economic and cultural implications following from the absence of quicker and better transport are indeed very wide in their impact on the life of the people or on their pride and prejudice, sentiments and sense of values. Even living within the narrow confines of the village, the villagers express their desire for better roads, their felt need for better means of transport to enable them to come closer to outsiders for cooperation, understanding, harmony and unity at times of need not excluded.

Highway open to the country swain

Approach to the village Madhur Bhasa along the *Kutch* dusty cartway leading from Rampur



The little old-world village

A cluster of huts in the heart of Madhur Bhasa gives the bird's eye-view of a portion of the village, if not of its heart





When these woods were hungry

Dark and deep woods, impenetrable a few decades ago, now decay and fall, as the village has grown in a portion cleared of the forest—yet the jungles provide fuel and wood for the villagers and a pastime during hunting in its heart

Icy current and compulsive course down the torrent of fate

The river Raidak quietly gliding at its own sweet will in winter and summer rolls into a dark rumbling stream in spate during the monsoons when the village bathes in its fiery floods



The creak of a lumbering cart

An important transport drawn by the buffaloes, the two-wheeled cart symbolising traditionalism and dynamism of the slow-moving life of Madhur Bhasa, braves the hazards of the country-road and the hardship of the journey, remaining as the only faithful means of quick transport, readily available in all seasons

The benevolent dictator

Who would ever dream of the same river Raidak, now a multipotent benefactor to provide water for drinking, washing, cleaning, bathing and swimming, wreaking monstrous anger of the floods in the rains



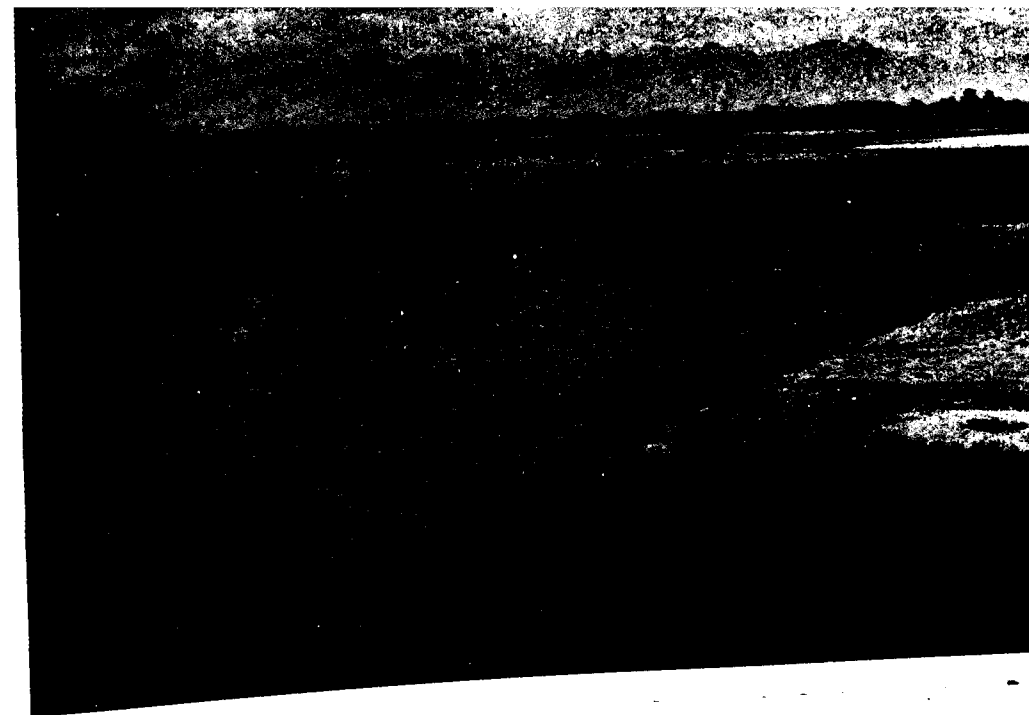


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Well of living waters

Growing old for the toil of dropping buckets into a *Pucca* well and drawing drinking water up



Over the lea

Stray cattle grazing on the fallow wasteland which serves as the pasturage

THE VILLAGE

Better communication, a vital need of the people and the village, is felt very badly by all at the moment to enable them to crash at once the walls of separation round the village and to bring it readily in communion with all, for which so long they have only yearned. Only one household, out of forty, being the owner of a bicycle, the owner, considered fortunate for the two-wheeled transport and held in high esteem for that matter, becomes somewhat elated and proud, when he pedals the cycle in the dusty village road. Attention of the whole village is riveted to the lonely cyclist atop the seat of his conveyance, when in motion. None of the adults and the children misses the opportunity to cast a snappy glance at the passing sight.

PLACES AND INSTITUTIONS OF IMPORTANCE

There is neither any school nor any youth-club in the village proper. The nearest Primary School is situated at Singimari. A small thatched temple for the worship of the deity *Tosa Kubir* is located under the oldest mango tree of the village. Another thatched temple in the village, is dedicated to *Sur Kubir*, the brother of *Tosa Kubir*. Both the temples are privately owned by two Rajbanshi Kshatriya families of the village. No vestige of any other socio-cultural institution is found in the village. The administrative offices of the Government of West Bengal are all situated in Tufanganj. To reach the nearest Post Office one has to walk the distance of four kilometres to Rampur. The nearest Hospital in Tufanganj is situated at a distance of 16 miles or 25 kilometres. The village is, therefore, devoid of any institution which enables the people to keep in touch with the nerve-centres of administration. Paucity of transport, lack of communication and absence of any institution of importance or worthy of mention have kept the

people of the village in seclusion from the outside world.

The Office of the Block Development Officer under National Extension Service of the Community Development Project of the Government of West Bengal is the only institution with which the people of Madhur Bhasa have a faint rapport. A mobile medical dispensary in charge of a pharmacist has been provided by the Health Directorate of the Government of West Bengal to serve the village.

WATER-SUPPLY

The villagers mostly depend on the river Raidak providing the main source of water. A ringwell was constructed three years back by the villagers on voluntary cooperation. The villagers had offered voluntary labour for digging the well and subscribed the money for the purchase of the rings. A tubewell was sunk in 1961 by the Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal. Besides, there are four wells and a privately owned tubewell. Two of these wells, being *Kutchra*, the turgid water from these two wells are not fit for drinking. Drinking water is provided by the ringwell and the two tubewells. Water from the *Kutchra* ringwells is used for washing, bathing and sundry domestic purposes. Clothes are washed in the water drawn from the *Pucca* well and also from the tubewell. The households living on the banks of the river use the water of the river for most of the purposes. Hence, the ringwells are less frequently used by them.

DRAINAGE

No drains are there in the village for the smooth outflow of surface water of the soil. Rainwater generally accumulates in the low-lying areas and the agricultural fields.

Because of the sandy nature of the soil in some parts of the village, the areas there do not become water-logged with the overflow of the river. But, the village itself becomes the repository of water from all around, even after recession of flood. Some households have improvised drains in their houses for the outflow of waste water.

CREMATORIUM

There is no specific site in the village for purposes of cremation. The banks of the river Raidak is used as the crematorium for disposing of dead bodies of adult persons and as the burial ground for dead bodies of children below five years of age. Carcasses are generally taken to the forests outside the limits of the village for burial there.

HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE

A village inhabited predominantly by a community of unlettered people furnishes very little material for its history, which is indeed little more than the register of the follies and misfortunes of unknown individuals in little known homes of the toiling peasantry. A monument in ruins, an old coin of undeciphered age, any language, or even a household article of yore could have thrown some light on the locale of the village in a historical perspective or even could have been eloquent to a limited extent on the bygone days of the people. But, a chronicler finds after a vain search nothing and in the end has to dip his pen in the ink of ignorance of the unconcerned mass to whom history is but a dust-heap. Consequently, the trying search for any source of information, however crude, brings one to the threshold of the house of a superannuated man with a wrinkled face, spelling out the passage of many storms and stresses, and engrossed in gossips and tales spun long for making the deepest impression on the listener, avaricious for

historial material. History or not, the folktales narrated by the Rajbanshis, claimants for the status of the earliest settlers in the village, do not at all take away the worth due for them. The village-elders grope for, as if trying to revive their failing memory, the only repertory of the great history of their land. And what has been told is retold here, no matter whether one calls it history or not and whether at its worst one finds in it all blank and at best one distils that much of history from what is found in all men's lives.

Long, long ago, about two hundred years back, before the century of the common man began, there grew in the village only forests, ancient as the hills, enfolding sunny spots of greenery where all would lose their way. Sunlight could not pierce through the unfathomable darkness of the dense forests there, haunted only by ferocious animals and questing beasts so fierce as knew no pity. There also lived some people in the woods to feed on the forest produce, hunting wild after the wildest beasts, seeking the food they ate and pleased with what they could get. To the villagers those were the halcyon days of the village of hunters and food-gatherers when the Rajbanshis had made the village their abode under the sway of His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. The Independence of India in 1947, viewed also as a landmark in the history of the village because of the immigration of the displaced persons from East Pakistan in the wake of the Partition of Bengal, released the people from the enthrallment of the dark forests, their history from the prison-house of the prehistoric era of food-gathering people with wandering habits of unsettledness and their knowledge from the fetters of total ignorance of the world around. The Maharaja of Cooch Behar had sold about 1,000 *Bighas* (333

THE VILLAGE

acres) of land to the people of the villages in the region around. The land, mostly abounding with forests in the western part, was acquired and sold away to some fresh immigrants from the neighbouring *Mouzas*. It also provided shelter to the displaced persons from East Pakistan. The process of metamorphosis of the forests into unfertile agricultural land went into operation over the rest of the place since then.

HISTORY OF RESIDENTIAL SETTLEMENT

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas claim to have founded the village about two centuries ago. But, very few of them are in a position to explain clearly why their forefathers had immigrated here or why they had selected this particular village for settlement. It is believed generally that the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas had lost their houses and assets in Jaldhoa Ghat, having been affected by the flood of the river Raidak in an unknown past. The flood-victims then chose the present village and settled here. But the households, ancestors of which had first settled here, remain unidentified. The flood of the river Raidak being an annual occurrence, all attempts to spot the exact year of immi-

gration of the earliest settlers have been futile. The assertion of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas that they are the oldest residents of the village has to be conceded to in the absence of any material to the contrary.

The households state in terms of generations the duration of their residence in the village. But, a generation for a household is as much variable as the expectancy of life of its individual members. Presuming a generation to be of the length, on an average, of 25 years, the accuracy of the figure of generation returned by a household depends on the age of the interviewee or respondent head computed into generations. The calculations are worked out as follows :

No. of generation (including that of the present) as stated by the head of the households — 1 + $\frac{\text{Age of the head of the household}}{25}$

Applying the above method, the table prepared on the residential settlement history of the households in terms of generations is given below.

TABLE 1
GENERATIONS OF RESIDENTIAL SETTLEMENT

Community	No. of households	No. of households staying in						
		Present generation	1·1—2·0 generations	2·1—3·0 generations	3·1—4·0 generations	4·1—5·0 generations	5·1—6·0 generations	6·1—7·0 generations
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	11	..	1	4	6	5	4
Namasudra	8	8	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	40	20	..	1	4	6	5	4

The village has received an equal number of households, immigrant in the present generation, as what had stayed in the village immediately before the influx. Just fifty per cent of the total number of house-

holds of the village have now been constituted by immigrants in the present generation. Of the immigrants in the present generation, the Namasudras and the Tantubayas comprise 45·0 per cent. The

MADHUR BHASA

village was the home of the Rajbanshis only a generation before, when no other community resided here. Of the 11 Rajbanshi immigrants in the present generation, only one household came from a village called Barabisa (J. L. No. 185) in the police station Kumargram in the district of Jalpaiguri. Half a score of other households migrated from different villages in the same police station of Tufanganj in the district of Cooch Behar. Half of them came from Jaldhoa Ghat, four from Singimari and one from Takuamari. The Namasudra households are all displaced persons from the districts of either Mymensingh or Sylhet in East Pakistan. Five Namasudra families, prior to migration from their native places, were residents in the district of Sylhet in East Pakistan. Of the rest, one lived in a place, known as Bhatti, and two others lived in Netrakona. Both the places are in the district of Mymensingh in East Pakistan. The only Tantubaya household immigrated from Kakrajori in the district of Goalpara in Assam.

The table indisputably proves the Raj-

banshis to be the earliest settlers in this village, if not the sons of the village-soil. Their immigration had started six to seven generations ago and continued till the present with an interregnum only in the first and second generation. The tempo of immigration was at its highest between the fourth and the sixth generation. It would have been interesting to see if the 20 Rajbanshi households, staying here for more than one generation, were also residents in the same police station or in some other place outside the police station of Tufanganj but within the district of Cooch Behar. Excepting one solitary household which had settled here in the second or the third generation from a place called Khagrabari in the police station and district of Cooch Behar, others could not furnish any useful information about their ancestral home or native place.

If from the previous table one gets an idea about the number of generations for which different households have been staying in the village, one may like to analyse another table about the number of years of their residence given below.

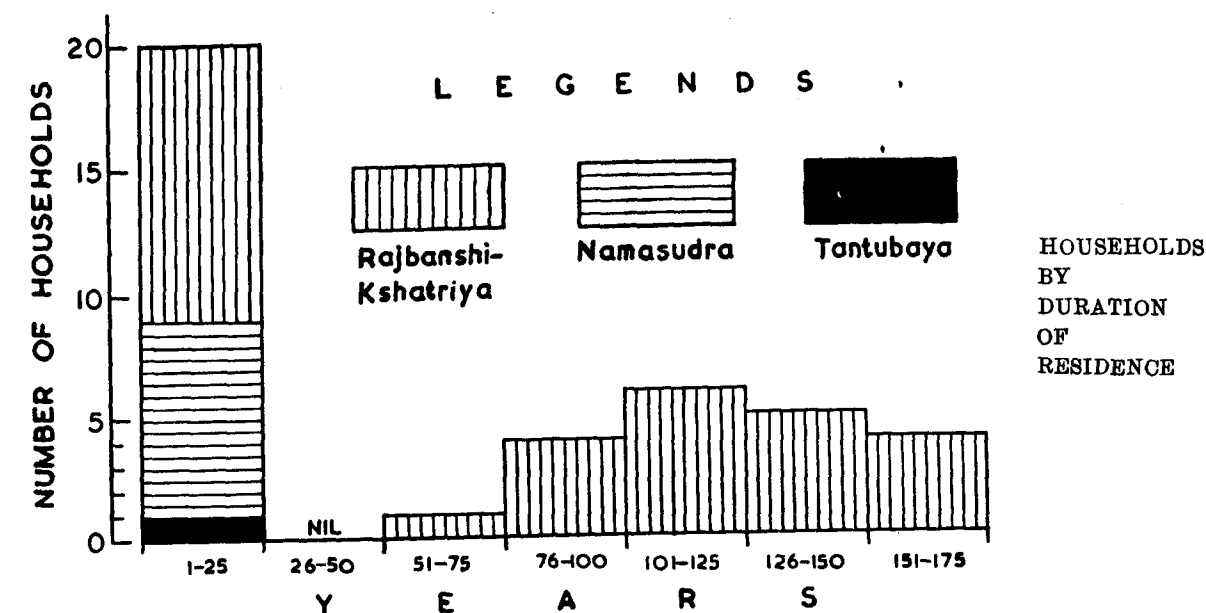
TABLE 2
DURATION OF RESIDENCE (YEAR)

Community	No. of households	Number of households resident for						
		1-25 years	26-50 years	51-75 years	76-100 years	101-125 years	126-150 years	151-175 years
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	11	..	1	4	6	5	4
Namasudra	8	8	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	40	20	..	1	4	6	5	4

When generation fails to convey any impression about the age of residential settlement, the table above helps promptly establish the seniority of the households in terms of years. At least one family in

the village has been associated with the village for at least two centuries. In other words, one may presume, perhaps reasonably, that the village has seen the passage of at least two hundred years. Again, 15

THE VILLAGE



households have stayed in the village for more than one hundred years and all of them are Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. Only five households appear to have come here between 51 and 100 years. Of the rest of the households comprising 11 Rajbanshis, all are recent arrivals during the last 25 years at different points of time.

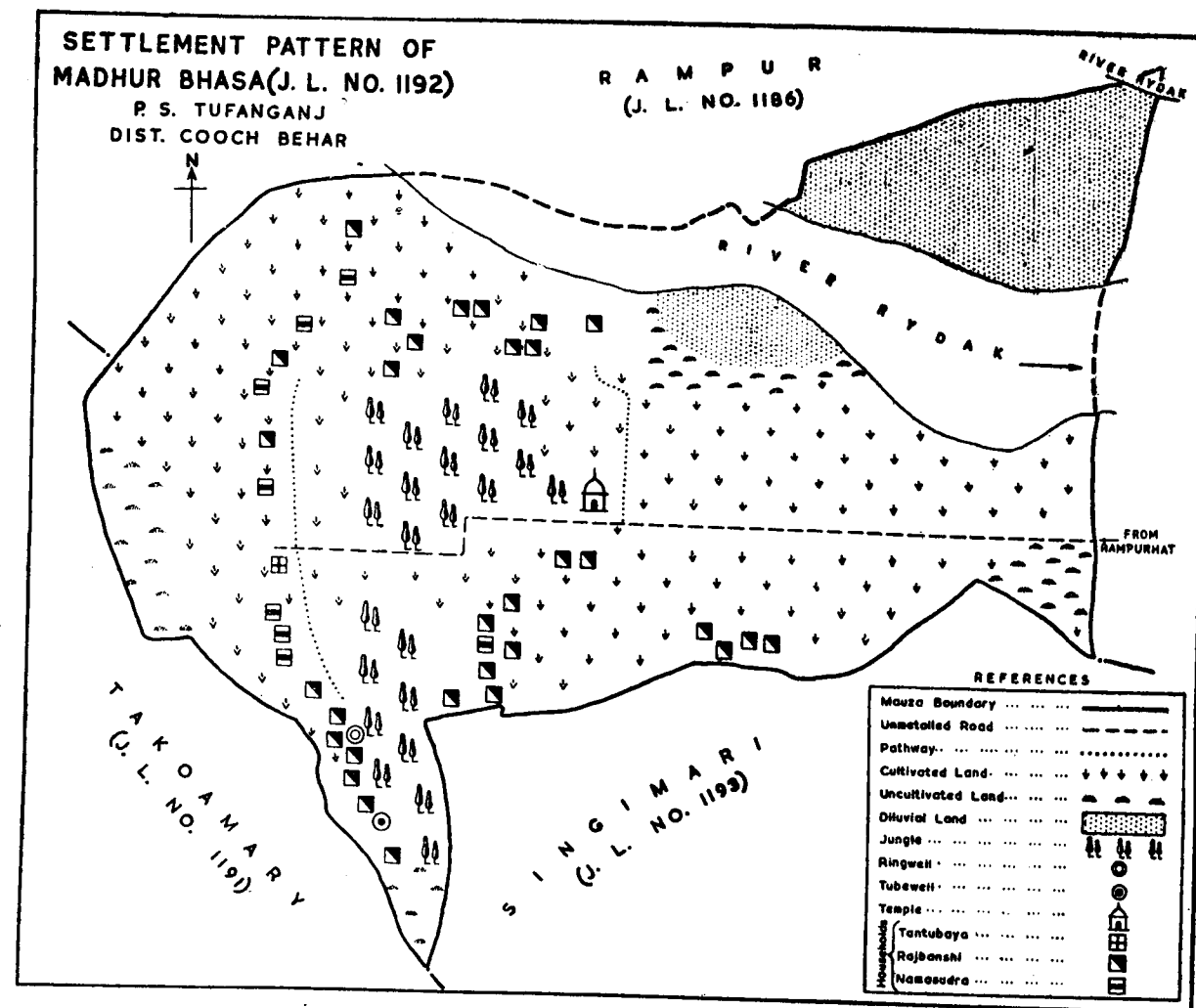
It would be quite interesting to analyse the factors motivating the households to have snapped old ties with their ancestral homes and to carve out a new career in a new place and surrounding. On this point the information is not very elaborate to cover all the households. The households, immigrants in course of the last 25 years, could brush up their memory to give an account of the reason which had prompted them to sally forth from their old homes. But, the older settlers failed to pick up the lost threads and sincerely pleaded their ignorance of the motives of their forefathers in anchoring themselves in this village.

One Rajbanshi had sold out his thatched house and some land that he possessed in

Kumargram police station in the district of Jalpaiguri and had come to the village to inherit all the landed property, his wife succeeded to on her father's demise. He has since been living in the homestead of his deceased father-in-law. Seven Rajbanshi households had preferred to own some agricultural land and to stay here. One Rajbanshi household which had come to this village to work as a share-cropper was evicted from the land of its head at Jaldhoa Ghat on account of non-payment of rent. Another Rajbanshi inherited the property of his deceased sister without any claimant on her husband's side in this village and decided to stay here with his family. In Singimari the river Raidak had washed the house of a Rajbanshi who had found shelter here on account of the generosity of his kinsmen.

The Partition of Bengal on the eve of the Independence of India in 1947 is a historic event in the country's annals and perhaps a memorable one in many peoples' life. The historic event brought in its wake a train of families uprooted from

MADHUR BHASA



THE VILLAGE

settled in those villages. It is quite pertinent to observe that there is a fairly large concentration of displaced persons in and around this village.

The Tantubaya household from Assam immigrated to this village in 1963. Prior to arrival here, he had stayed in his father-in-law's house at Rampur from where he could negotiate the purchase of some land in this village.

LEGEND

The village is recorded in the Census 1951 and 1961 as Madhur Bhasa. But, the elderly people assert that it was in the past known as *Madhu Basa*, *Madhu* meaning honey and *Basa* connoting home. The village might have meant either a home as sweet as honey or the home of honey, that is a beehive or a honeycomb.

The second conjecture gets corroborative support from the statement of the villagers. The place is stated to have been wooded with fruit trees which bore sweet and luscious fruits. Beehives were found on almost every tree and the people used to gather large quantity of honey from the beehives. The earliest settlers might have named the village *Madhu Basa* for its beehives and the name which befitted the village is now spelt and pronounced as Madhur Bhasa. One of the villagers points out that the Rajbanshis pronounce *Ba* as *Bha* and thus explains the phonetic change of *Basa* into *Bhasa*. The change is remarkable no doubt to a linguist, but as the explanation is not scientific to hold ground against questions as to why and when the change took place, the scientific enquirer has to stop at what little is available.

their homes many of which had no place under the sky to live and grow. This village did not insulate itself against the influx of the eight Namasudra families which found a haven here, having wandered in many places before. As stated earlier, five Namasudra families which had come from Sylhet district (four households in 1947 and one in 1948) to find only a temporary shelter at Jorai Railway Station on the North East Frontier Railway where a Refugee Camp was temporarily organised as a transit camp. One of the households which had come to Madhur Bhasa in search of land could manage to purchase a plot for a hutment. All others followed

him in his footsteps and settled here in like manner.

Of the three Namasudra families from the district of Mymensingh, one had come here in 1948 and two others in 1951. The former had first arrived at Jorai where he came to learn that land was available here. Two other households which had come to Jorai likewise started for this village.

Jorai appears, on a resume, to have served as the transit camp from where the displaced persons, on receipt of preliminary information about the villages capable of offering them some shelter, dispersed and

II

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

Ethnic account	
<i>Rajbanshi Kshatriya</i>	
<i>Namasudra</i>	
<i>Tantubaya</i>	
Housetype	
<i>Bedroom</i>	
<i>Kitchen</i>	
<i>Cowshed</i>	
<i>Construction</i>	
<i>Building materials</i>	
<i>Functional use of rooms</i>	
<i>New construction</i>	
Ceremonies	
Dress	
Ornaments	
Hair-dressing	
Footwear	
Household goods and furniture	
Consumer goods	
Use of soap	
Food and drink	
Food for the infants	
Utensils	
Fuel	
Life-cycle	
<i>Birth</i>	
<i>Marriage</i>	
<i>Death</i>	

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

ETHNIC ACCOUNT

The village Madhur Bhasa is inhabited by three communities of which the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas constitute the majority on the strength of the number of the households. The position is further scrutinised in the table below.

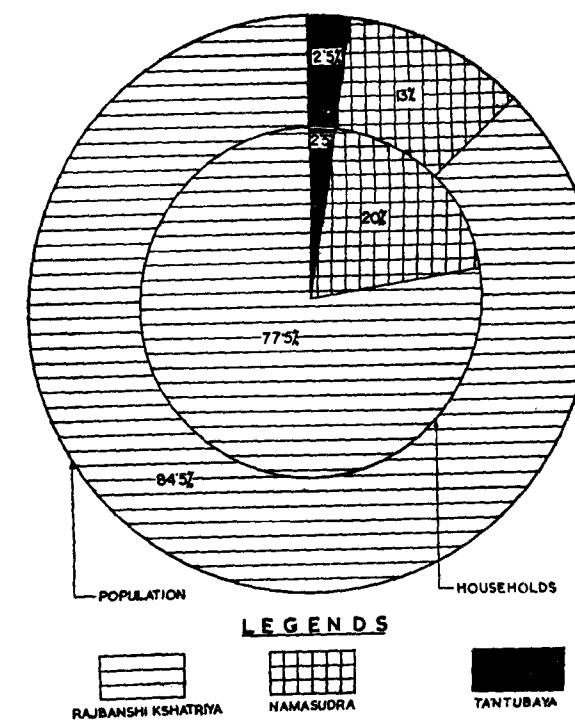
TABLE 3
HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION

Community	No. of house holds	Percen- tage	No. of persons	Percen- tage
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	77.5	201	84.5
Namasudra	8	20.0	31	13.0
Tantubaya	1	2.5	6	2.5
Total	40	100.0	238	100.0

The numerical preponderance of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas is thus established by the clear numerical majority of the households as well as their population. The Namasudras come next on numerical consideration of both the households and the population. The Rajbanshis and the Namasudras according to the President's Order on the List of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (as modified in 1956) are members of the Scheduled Castes throughout the State of West Bengal except in the district of Purulia and in the territories transferred

from the Purnea district of Bihar. The same Order does not include the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas in the list of Scheduled Castes. But, as the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas in Madhur Bhasa also return themselves as Rajbanshis for treatment as members of the Scheduled Castes by the local administrative authorities like the Block Development Officer to bring them within the scope of

HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION



the welfare schemes of the Scheduled Castes' and Tribes' Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village of enquiry are equated with the Rajbanshis and treated as members of the Scheduled Castes. The Namasudras and the Rajbanshis together comprising 39 households (97.5 per cent) account for 232 persons. Again 97.5 per cent of the total population of the village are members of the Scheduled Castes.

Rajbanshi Kshatriya

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas have no clear knowledge about the origin of their caste. Some of them, however, believe that they have descended from the Kshatriyas who came to this area in the mythological era to escape the wrath of *Parasurāma*, the saint who is said to have vowed to kill all the Kshatriyas of the world. Risley¹ describes the Rajbanshis as "a large Dravidian tribe of North-Eastern Bengal and Eastern Bengal". According to him, they were originally Koch but later converted into Kshatriyas and the great majority of the Koch inhabitants of Northern Bengal invariably describe themselves as Rajbanshis or *Bhanga Kshatriyas*, a designation which enables them to pose as an outlying branch of the Kshatriyas who fled to these remote districts in order to escape from the wrath of *Parasurāma*.

It may be noted that the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village do not admit to have ever been Koches. They emphatically deny their identity with the Koch and all of them at present describe themselves to be Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. In the Census of 1961 and also at the time of field investigation, they returned themselves

as Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. But in 1951 Census they had described themselves as Rajbanshis. It may be noted that the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of Madhur Bhasa admit that they were Rajbanshis in the past but some twenty years back they were converted to Rajbanshi Kshatriyas under a reform movement about which discussion will be made later. Since their conversion, they have been using Brahmanical threads, not used by the non-Kshatriya Rajbanshis. There is no such non-Kshatriya Rajbanshi here in the village.

Oldham as quoted by Risley² describes the Rajbanshis as "the most conspicuously Dravidian race in Bengal. Their men are tall and robust....."

Roy³ observes, "the majority of the Rajbanshis studied are between bright tawny and clear brown in colour with straight hair and predominant cheek bones. The eyes are generally narrow and slightly oblique. They are between short and below medium in stature."

Namasudra

The Namasudras constitute the second major community of the village with eight households. All of them, displaced persons from East Pakistan have come from the districts of Sylhet and Mymensingh in the present generation. Like the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas they have also been treated as members of the Scheduled Caste throughout West Bengal except in the district of Purulia and in the territories transferred from the Purnea district of Bihar.

Risley opines that *Namasudra* is a synonym for the Chandals, whom he describes

² *Ibid.*, p. 491

³ A Study on the Physical Characters of the Rajbanshis, by G. S. Roy, in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letter, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1947

as "a non-Aryan caste of Eastern Bengal, engaged for the most part in boating and cultivation." According to him, "the Chandals of Bengal invariably call themselves Namasudras and with characteristic jealousy the higher divisions of the caste apply the name Chandal to the lower who in their turn pass it on to the Dom".

Mitra⁴ points out that the Chandals are depicted in Manu as the "lowest of the mankind", sprung from the illicit relation between a Sudra man and a Brahman woman and as outcastes and helots of the society. But he thinks that the Bengali Namasudras "are for the most part peaceful, hardworking, cheerful cultivators. Some are shop-keepers, traders, carpenters and considerable number now follow the various so called learned professions". Datta in his treatise incorporated in the Census Report of Bengal, 1931, in the Appendix, remarks that the Namasudras "like the Kaivartas, the Pods and the Bagdis are the descendants of the natives of Bengal who are gradually aryanised but whose tribal organisation could not be broken up".

According to Wise, quoted by Risley⁵, "Chandals are generally of very dark complexion, nearer black than brown, of short muscular figures and deep, expanded chests. Few are handsome, but their dark sparkling eyes and merry laugh make ample amends for their general plain features. In the 24-Parganas many members of the caste are said to be of a noticeably fair complexion.....Many individuals among them are tall and muscular....."

It may be noted that all the Namasudras of Madhur Bhasa return themselves as Namasudras. No subdivision has been

⁴ Tribes and Castes of West Bengal, 1951, by A. Mitra, I. C. S., p. 75

⁵ Tribes and Castes of Bengal, by H. H. Risley, 1891, Vol. II, Appendix I, p. 34

found among them. They all belong to the same *Gotra Kāśyapa* and matrimonial relations within the same *Gotra* (*Sagotra* marriage) are permitted in their society. All the Namasudras belong to the same religious sect *Vaiṣṇava*. They claim agriculture to be their traditional occupation.

Tantubaya

The Tantubaya of the village describes himself as *Tanti* and does not know to which sub-caste he really belongs. With an exogamous *Gotra Śiva*, the Tantubaya belongs to the sect *Vaiṣṇava*. The head of the single Tantubaya household claims that weaving is his hereditary occupation which he had followed upto 1952, when he became physically invalid. But his son, the only earner of the household, is engaged here as a share-cropper.

According to Risley⁶, Tantubaya, the weaver caste of Bengal and Bihar, is "probably a functional group developed under the pressure of the natural demand for woven cloth. A common tradition represents them as descended from Siva Das or Gham Das who was born from the sweat (*Ghām*) that fell from Siva while he was dancing, and his wife Kusbati, who was created by Siva from a blade of *Kuśa* grass. Siva Das had four sons—Balaram, Uddhab, Purandar and Madhukar, who were the ancestors of the four sub-castes bearing those names. Another story recounted in the Jati Kaumudi makes the caste the offspring of a Manibandha father and a Manikar mother; while a third supposes that the Tantis, in common with all the artisan castes, were begotten on a Sudra woman by the celestial artificer *Viśvakarmā*."

⁶ Tribes and Castes of Bengal, by H. H. Risley, 1891, Vol. II, p. 295

Banerjee⁷ remarks, "Tanti (Bengal) or Tantwa (Bihar) is the generic term for all weavers, but the Tantis in Bengal themselves form a separate caste, being one of the nine pure castes or Nabasakhas of Ballal Sen, whose social position is only next to the Kayasthas". Risley also places them in the group of clean Sudras in the Hindu social hierarchy.

A number of endogamous divisions or sub-castes and exogamous sections or *Gotras* have been referred to by Risley among the Tantubayas of Bengal. But no such *Gotra* namely *Sivagotra* has been mentioned by him.⁸ According to Risley, they are Vaishnavas with few exceptions and are served by the Brahmans, "who minister to the spiritual wants of the Nava-sakha group". With regard to the occupation, Risley writes, "Although Tantis admit weaving to be their immemorial profession, many of them have of late years been driven by the influx of cheap machine-made goods to be take themselves to agriculture".

HOUSETYPE

The people of the village live in a wilderness of various trees and numerous plants. Most of the houses are shrouded by a wild growth of banana trees, abundant clumps of bamboo and the luxuriance of varied fruit trees. The people would like to build the huts amidst the rich foliage of trees with a view to protecting the thatched houses against violent storms blowing over the village almost every year. The hardship that follows from the seasonal storms is too great for the people to bear. The huts are dispersed and isolated. The people are fond of selecting sites for their

houses beside agricultural fields, lest they should not have to walk a considerable distance to visit their fields. Houses do not follow a definite pattern. Courtyards, whether big or small, are found almost in every house and they form a quadrangle around which separate structures are constructed on four sides. Single-roomed huts, even without a courtyard, enjoy sufficient open space in front. In the corner of a courtyard one finds a *Tulasi-vedi* (Altar with a basil plant). The huts have no surrounding boundary walls. One or two households have such walls made of wattled bamboo. Houses are mostly single-roomed structures. Multi-roomed huts are invariably built in separate structures. The rooms are put to different uses according to the needs of the households.

Bedroom

Bedrooms are built with care and to their construction more attention is paid and money spent than that on other rooms. Outsiders are not permitted to have an entry into the bedrooms, used by the members of the household. Important household goods are kept there and household deities, if any, are also worshipped. Windows being conspicuous by their absence, doors are the only openings to serve the purpose of ventilation. The rooms are stuffy, dark and dingy. The Rajbanshis are not very particular about keeping their rooms tidy and clean.

Kitchen

Kitchens receive greater attention than the bedrooms in respect of cleanliness. Women-folk smear the kitchen daily with a solution of water and cowdung with an avowed purpose to keep it as much neat as possible. Utensils and materials for cooking are kept there. Households,

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

having no separate room for cooking, get a portion of the verandah covered for use as kitchen.

Cowshed

Cowsheds are found in the open space in structure with four poles of bamboo supporting the roof of straw. This improvised structure somehow keeps the cattle under a shed, but the protection it offers against the rain and the sun is inadequate. Earthen mangers embedded in raised platforms of mud contain the fodder for the cattle. The earthen floor soaked with cowdung and the excretionary waste often makes the place filthy and stinking. For the absence of any sitting room, visitors and outsiders often have to stand the test of endurance, when an old rag or worn hessian gunny bag in the cowshed is offered as a cosy seat to the visitors with a genial smile by the householder. Cowsheds serve the dual purpose of receiving visitors by day and sheltering the cattle at night.

Construction

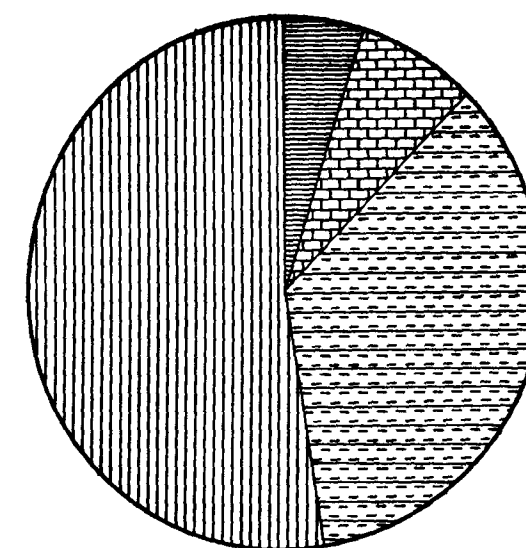
Plinths of bedrooms and sitting rooms, where there are any, are generally raised two feet above the ground level and made of mud. The poor people, however, cannot afford to construct any plinth for their huts and even when they desire to construct any for their house, they do so for their bedrooms only.

The labourers, employed in the construction of a hut are recruited from the adult male members of the household and from the hirelings available in the village and its neighbourhood. Womenfolk do not associate themselves with any activity related to house-building. The hired labour usually gets the daily wage of Rs.2.50 *paise* per head. The construction of huts does not demand any specialised or skilled labour.

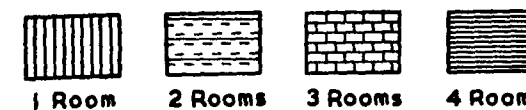
Day labourers are usually employed for the work. Though building materials are locally available, some materials like corrugated iron sheets have to be brought from outside. The average cost of construction of a thatched single-roomed hut with walls of mud amounts to Rs.200.00 *paise* inclusive of all charges. House-building or repair work is undertaken soon after the monsoon.

The diagram below gives an idea about the number of bedrooms being occupied by different households according to varying size.

HOUSEHOLDS AND BEDROOMS



LEGENDS



Very interesting features about housing condition in the village are revealed. That very few households enjoy sufficiency in number of rooms is apparent from the fact that only two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households have rooms, each in

⁷ Cotton Fabrics of Bengal (pp. 16-17), by N. N. Banerjee published by Govt. of Bengal in 1898 and reprinted in Tribes and Castes of West Bengal by A. Mitra, I. C. S., 1951 Census, p. 342

⁸ Tribes and Castes of Bengal, 1891, by H. H. Risley, Vol. II, Appendix I, p. 135

MADHUR BHASA

TABLE 4
ROOMS AND HOUSEHOLDS

Community	No. of house- holds	Total no. of members	Total no. of rooms	With one room		With two rooms		With three rooms		With four rooms	
				No. of house- holds	No. of members	No. of house- holds	No. of members	No. of house- holds	No. of members	No. of house- holds	No. of members
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	201	56	13	55	13	91	3	27	2	28
Namasudra	8	31	9	7	23	1	8	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	6	1	1	6	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	40	238	66	21	84	14	99	3	27	2	28

the occupation of one person. There are again two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households in whose possession a room is found to be occupied by more than one person but less than two on an average. There are again three households with a room being occupied by more than two persons but less than three on an average. Two Namasudra households also have on an average one room being occupied by more than two but less than three persons. Excepting these, all other households have ultimately to remain contented with rooms which shelter more than three persons. A mention must be made of the households of the Tantubaya community with a room accommodating six persons. Without any further analysis one may say that the households are not self-sufficient in the

TABLE 5

ROOMS AND CONJUGAL LIFE

Community	No. of house- holds	No. of bed rooms	No. of married couples	No. of adult males	No. of adult females
				without married couples	without married couples
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	56	41	21	8
Namasudra	8	9	7	6	2
Tantubaya	1	1	1	1	..
Total	40	66	49	28	10

number of rooms. This does not necessarily mean, congestion in space.

The analysis about the bedrooms or for that matter living rooms would be revealing, if the number of rooms, the number of married couples and adult males and females excluding the married pairs are taken into account. One may have a look at the Table 5.

From the Table 5 one may see that if one bedroom is occupied by each married couple, 28 adult males and 10 adult females will have to live together in 17 rooms. The question of seclusion has to be ignored by these households.

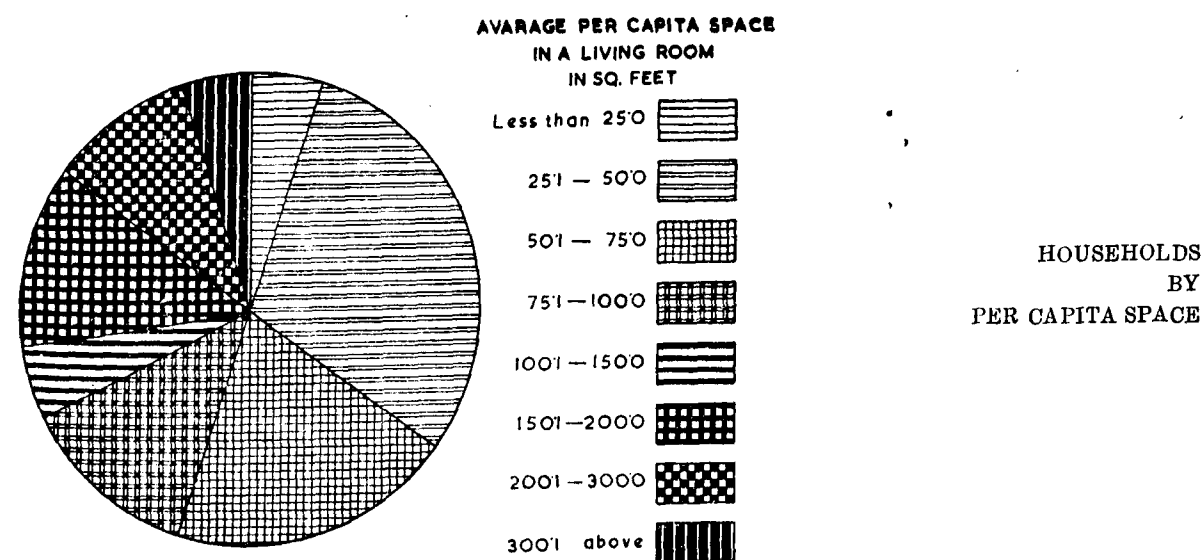
A table relating to the households according to the average *per capita* space in a living room is given below.

TABLE 6

SPACE-UTILISATION IN A LIVING ROOM

Average <i>per capita</i> space	No. of households	Percentage
0-25.0	2	5.0
25.1-50.0	12	30.0
50.1-75.0	8	20.0
75.1-100.0	5	12.5
100.1-150.0	2	5.0
150.1-200.0	5	12.5
200.1-300.0	4	10.0
300.1+	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE



There is no household with living space less than 15 square feet in the share of each member. Again, two households have apportioned to each member a space of more than 300 square feet. One may look askance at the paradox that even though the households have not enough number of rooms for the members thereof to live in, majority have enough living space in the rooms providing their shelter. Indigence provides the only clue to the seemingly puzzling question as to the absence of separate structures for the convenient living of the groups, for instance a couple and the parents of the husband, live together under the same roof in the same room. Again, it would be a fallacious reasoning that amplitude in space provides scope for a healthy living and a hygienic life. Rooms, ordinarily shared by more than three and providing varying degrees of space, do not let in fresh air and sufficient light. In the general consensus of opinion of the villagers, rooms shelter them for the night, protect them against the cold in winter, the oppressive blaze of the summer and the rain in the monsoon. The working members being outside on their

daily round to earn their livelihood either in the agricultural fields or in other places and the non-working members staying at home to spend the day on the verandah or in the courtyard doing some titbits according to their ability and strength, rooms are not apparently much required for use in daytime by the members of the households. It is, however, necessary to point out how unsophisticated the ways of living of the households are and unaffected their ways of thinking. A young Rajbanshi Kshatriya couple lives in the same room with the young unmarried brother of the husband without any demur. An aged Rajbanshi Kshatriya woman, in another case, is found with two of her adult unmarried sons to coshare the same bedroom, where her eldest son and his wife pass the night. Quite contrary to an urban sense of decency, this go of life does not transgress the normal standards and norms of decency, as conceived and laid down by the Rajbanshi villagers. Another Rajbanshi woman sleeps in the room of her married son and daughter-in-law without the slightest hesitation.

MADHUR BHASA

While in one Namasudra household the head and his wife are not embarrassed to live together in a single room with the head's young unmarried brother, in another household of the same community the mother shares the room with her son and his wife. There are instances to show that parents live with the grown-up children in the same room. True, this lack of privacy is apt to shock an outsider, not acquainted with the ways of life of the people here, but the households blandly admit that want of rooms has forced the members to live together in the same room and that they have no second choice.

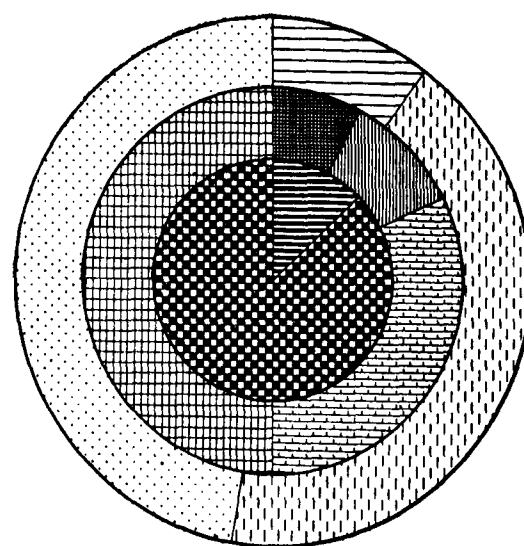
Building materials

So much so for the number of rooms and congestion therein. The materials for roofs, walls and doors of the houses in Madhur Bhasa, may be examined from the table below.

An analysis of the materials of the houses with reference to the walls, roofs and doors serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it enables one to form a rough idea about the state of economy of the village and the people, while on the other

it serves as a pointer to the living conditions of the people and to the constant process of their adaptation to the physical

HOUSEHOLDS AND HOUSING



LEGENDS

ROOF OF	WALL OF	DOOR OF
STRAW GRASS	BAMBOO	BAMBOO
PARTLY CORRUGATED IRON SHEET & PARTLY STRAW GRASS	JUTE STICK	JUTE STICK
	STRAW GRASS & BAMBOO	WOOD
	JUTE STICK & MUD	

TABLE 7

MATERIALS OF ROOF, WALL AND DOOR

Community	No. of households	No. of households living in houses with								
		Roofs of			Walls of			Doors of		
		Straw	Partly corrugated iron sheet and partly straw	Wattled bamboo	Jute stick	Straw, grass and wattled bamboo	Jute stick and mud	Wood	Bamboo	Jute stick
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	27	4	19	3	6	3	15	14	2
Namasudra	8	7	1	1	1	6	..	2	4	2
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	1	..
Total	40	35	5	20	4	13	3	17	19	4

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

environs of the place. One may wonder at the absence of any *Pucca* building in the village. In a village, predominantly inhabited by the members of the Scheduled Castes, it is beyond the means of the people to build a *Pucca* house, the cost of construction of which is fantastically prohibitive for the villagers, even if other difficulties, such as non-availability of raw materials, masons etc., are given a second priority for consideration. An overwhelming majority of the households (87.5 per cent) live in huts with roofs thatched with straw. Agriculture being the main or subsidiary occupation of many and paddy being the main crop raised, straw not only provides fodder for the cattle but also the main roofing materials for many huts.

Five households including four Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and one Namasudra which have struck a slight variation from the general run in covering roofs of some huts with corrugated iron sheets and in roofing some others with thatch obviously indicate relative affluence or at least better economic condition than that of others. The correction of this assumption depends on other tests, detailed later.

The preponderance of the households in using wattled bamboo as the building material for the wall is explained by the fact that bamboo is available in abundance here. Secondly, rainfall being rather high in the district generally, mud is not considered a very useful material for construction of the walls of the huts, as it is liable to be easily washed away, huts with such walls standing the risk of sudden collapse in incessant rains. But again, wattled bamboo is a costly material, the cost varying between Rs.1.25 *paise* to Rs.1.50 *paise* per piece and 20 households in the village do not have the sanction of their

purse to build the walls of their huts with this material. Roughly, 33.3 per cent of the households constituted by six Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, six Namasudras and one Tantubaya have opted to supplement wattled bamboo with straw, grass etc. They are economically not so well-off as the 20 households living in huts with walls made of wattled bamboo. But, there are still some members in the village who go down in the economic scale and rank lower than these 13 households, so poor as to remain contented with walls made of either jute sticks or jute sticks plastered with mud. It is anybody's conjecture what shelter against rain and sunshine the ramshackle of a hut offers with improvised walls of whatever material is available handy and in plenty. Even then, seven households constituted by one Namasudra and six Rajbanshi Kshatriyas make the best of what they get from the fields. That they are the poorest section of the village does not perhaps require any more emphatic pointer than the table itself.

After an analysis of the materials for the walls and roofs, there is little left for any further probe. The households being not very well-off, one may reasonably shy away the question of any valuables being in their possession. The households have a sense of pride in and attachment for the very little they have, and it is this proud sense of possession that have endowed their otherwise trifling articles with some value. These paltry goods are protected throughout against pilferage and loss. That is why, they set up doors in the open doorways of their houses. Apart from the consideration that the doors serve as the only openings to let in air and light, they also give a sense of security, if not protection.

MADHUR BHASA

Now, as to the material of the doors, while 15 Rajbanshi Kshatriya and two Namasudra households have wooden doors, the rest have some contrivances which look like doors only. Nineteen households including fourteen Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, four Namasudra and one Tantubaya have fittings of bamboo to serve the purpose of doors and four households, of which two each are Rajbanshis and Namasudras, console themselves with doors of jute sticks. It is interesting to observe that though these few households have nothing to lose, they desire to have some doors, no matter how poor the material of the door is in quality or how feeble it is in strength. The people who build the walls and doors with bamboo have either some clumps of bamboo in their homesteads or the means to purchase them. One may like to observe that grass and jute sticks, wildly growing here costing nothing to anybody, afford free and bounteous supply to the poorer households to enable them to have some structure to live in and grow.

Functional use of rooms

If a dissertation on the material of the house has provided a background of the economic condition of the people and met the questions about the housing condition, the Table 8 may throw some more light on the economy of the village and the people and adduce some further evidence about their ways of life and traits of their material culture.

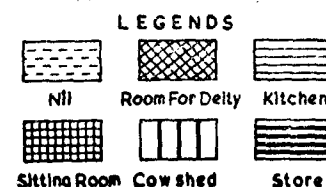
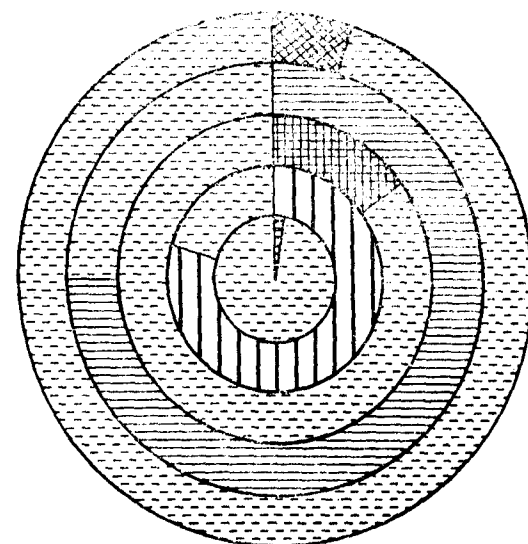
There are 10 households with no separate kitchens. To cook their food they have to apportion a corner of the verandah in front of bedrooms for use as a kitchen. It would be a gross error, however, to ascribe the failure of the households in erecting separate kitchens to the scarcity of sufficient land.

It is not lack of land but lack of fund that prevents them from enjoying a kitchen in a separate room. Of the eight households having no cowsheds, four have no cows or bullocks. Though the other four households have the bovine livestock, they are unable to have an improvised structure of a shed to keep the cows away from the open, allowing them nightly rest

TABLE 8
USE AND OCCUPATION OF ROOMS

Community	No. of households	No. of households with				
		No. of Rooms for deity	Kitchen	Sitting room	Cow-shed	Store-room
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	2	25	4	24	1
Namasudra	8	..	5	2	7	..
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	1	..
Total	40	2	30	6	32	1

HOUSEHOLDS AND ROOMS



PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

and shelter in the verandahs and at times even under the trees. Rooms for the deity or sitting rooms can only point to better economic condition. Thirteen households have no separate room for the deity but have their household deities placed and worshipped in their bedrooms. Visitors to the six households having sitting rooms have no problems. But thirtyfour households without those rooms manage to show their hospitality to the visitors by accommodating them either in the verandah or in the cowshed. Agricultural produce harvested by the people is not so bountiful, as would require a separate storeroom for storage. Excepting one household all other households store everything, whether food or household goods, in their bedrooms and sometime even in their kitchens.

All the houses are one-storeyed. Construction of houses generally is undertaken before the rainy season. But repair of the houses, damaged by the rain, is taken up after the monsoon. Bath rooms have not been found in any household, although the members take regular baths. There is no latrine or sanitary privy in the village. The people, whether male or female, use open fields or banks of the river for the purpose of evacuation.

All the households excepting three live in their own houses. Of the three

families which live in houses not owned by them, a Rajbanshi Kshatriya household has been living in the house of his sister for the last seven years or so. He had a house of his own but it was damaged in 1957 by the rains. Now the house is standing in ruins, almost levelled to the ground. Though he does not pay any rent for the free use of his sister's house, he incurs the expenses for sundry repairs. One Namasudra household is said to have never built any house in the village as he was permitted to live in the house of his father-in-law who was the author of the settlement of the household here. There is a solitary Tantubaya household which is living in the house of a Rajbanshi Kshatriya. The Tantubaya household had paid rupees twelve hundred as consideration money for the purchase of eight *Bighas* of agricultural land to the latter. But he was offered some fallow uncultivable land instead. Invalid as he was with no adult male to look after him, the Tantubaya was not in a position to enter into a litigation. He agreed to live free of rent in another house, constructed by the Rajbanshi Kshatriya in 1962. There was, of course, a mutual agreement between the two.

Only one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household owning two houses in the village is affluent.

TABLE 9
DISTRIBUTION OF HOMESTEADS

Community	No. of households	No. of households with homesteads						
		0-4 Cottahs	5-9 Cottahs	10-14 Cottahs	15-19 Cottahs	1-4 Bighas	5-9 Bighas	10 Bighas or more
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	..	1	11	1	14	3	1
Namasudra	8	..	4	3	..	1	..	..
Tantubaya	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Total	40	..	5	15	1	15	3	1

New construction

During the last 10 years 38 houses were constructed for the first time and two houses underwent repair work. The statement, however quizzical *prima facie*, does not imply that the village sprang up within the decade past, nor does it signify better economic condition of the people. To keep the huts standing is a problem of the village, swept by incessant rain and damaged by consequent floods every year. The havoc thus caused is too great to be mended by minor repairs. That is why, construction of new houses on the ruins of the old engages so much attention of the people every autumn.

CEREMONIES

No socio-religious ceremony is observed in connection with house-building. Before site is selected, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas observe a ritual, called *Chala-chaka* to ascertain if the site is auspicious for the house and the households. The ritual is performed by a class of priests, known as *Adhikari*, with the surname of Bairagi.

DRESS

Children upto the age of six or seven years romp about nature-clad. Poverty is not the only explanation for the children going without any dress. Sophistication which breeds an artificial sense of decency and decorum being absent among the people, one finds lack of parental care in covering their offsprings with any vestment. School-going students wear half pants (*Ijer*) and half shirts or vests.

Dresses ordinarily put on by the people in the village are extraordinarily simple. Most of the male members prefer loin cloth (*Nengti*) to any other apparel at the time of work in the fields in order to facilitate the easy movement of the limbs.

This simple garb covers the body all day long. *Dhotis* are, of course, not very uncommon to the people who wear them during leisure-hours. When they are on an outing to the *Hats*, they wear short *Dhotis* which reach only to the knee. The body mostly remains bare, unless, of course, cold weather prevents the man from moving about with an uncovered body. The villagers wear vests purchased from Rampur during the cold season. Shirts with half sleeves, though put on occasionally, are more a treasured possession than a daily wear for a male member. So are *Dhotis* used only during festive occasions. In winter *Khadi chadar* (Hand-loom wrapper) and rags help the adult males avoid cold.

Bukani is the local term of the dress mainly worn by the females in the village. It is a piece of cotton cloth draped round the body and tucked half above the bosom, so as to reach the knee, leaving the lower feet and shoulders bare. *Saris* are commonly worn by women, when going outside the village. But, blouses are donned as the festive attire of the females. Normally the village women keep their shoulders bare. But the Namasudra women, more conservative in their outlook than others about their dress, use blouses and *Saris*. Those who are hard put to afford blouses are attired wholly in the *Saris*. Girls below thirteen or fourteen years of age use pants and blouses. Hand-loom wrappers supply the additional apparel in winter.

Nengti and *Bukani* are the traditional dresses of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. The Namasudras use loin cloth during working hours. Clothes are generally purchased from Rampur and are mostly ready-to-wear. There is no tailor in the village and the services of the tailor at Rampur are very sparingly utilised.

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

ORNAMENTS

However crazy the village women are for the possession of ornaments, lack of funds on the part of their husbands smother their desire at heart. But it would be far from the truth to suggest or infer that the village women do not adorn themselves with ornaments. Ornaments, they have, are few, mostly made of silver, designed and manufactured by the jewellery shop at Rampur, for there is no goldsmith in the village. The designs of the ornaments, not known to the local people by any local name, are mostly the handiwork of the jewellers of Rampur. Neckchains and *Churis* (Bracelets) are very common, whereas nose-rings, ear-rings and finger-rings are very rare. *Nath* (Nose-ring) was used in the past, say a decade back, as a compulsory item for every married woman. she did not use ear-rings and finger-rings ever since. *Naths* are now treated as out-moded ornaments. The village women have kept abreast of the fashion and of the

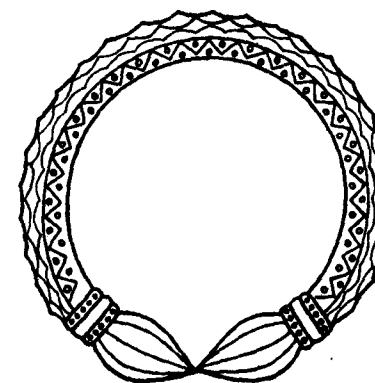
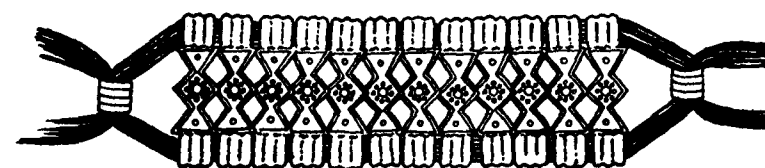
evolution of ornaments in and around the village among their sisters. The ornaments, mentioned above, are used mainly on festive occasions. Yet, pathognomy of the females reveals yearning of the hearts of the an-adorned belle of the village for cheap ornaments, as very few of them can afford the wholtime use of silver ornaments. Most of the time they go without any ornament whatsoever.

TABLE 10

ORNAMENTS AND THEIR MATERIALS

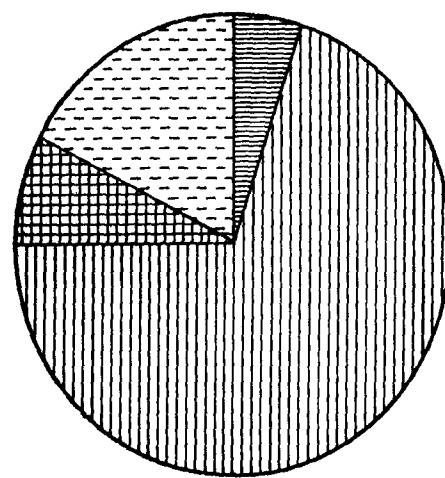
Community	No. of households	No. of households with ornaments of			No. of households with ornaments
		Gold	Silver	Gold and silver	
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	1	23	3	4
Namasudra	8	1	5	..	2
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	1
Total	40	2	28	3	7

BRACELET AND BANGLE

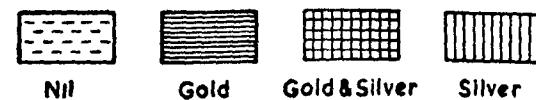


The table before is simple for analysis in so far as it points out that the villagers do not use any ornament of brass or bronze, glass or any synthetic chemical. In the opinion of the villagers, gold and silver have no substitute material, worthy of any value, as a constituent element for an ornament. Of the seven households without any ornaments, one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household has no womenfolk. But all the households admit that they were compelled to sell out gradually whatever silver ornament, they formerly had, having thus met the domestic expenses. They have been brought down to such a poor economic state that they cannot even purchase an ornament of base metal of trifling value for their womenfolk. The two households having only gold ornaments and three households having both silver and gold ornaments are to some extent well-off. Of the 28 households using silver ornaments, the Rajbanshi-Kshatriyas, in particular, regard silver as the traditional material for ornaments.

MATERIALS OF ORNAMENTS



LEGENDS



HAIR-DRESSING

Hair-dressing receives some attention of the female members of the village. Hair is plaited with coloured fillets. Some fastidious married women even tuck flowers in their hair-plaits. Plastic imitation flowers are also used. Hair is tied up in the back and some curled on both sides of the plaited hair. The use of coconut oil, clips, laces, combs and mirrors are the accessory materials required at the time of hair-dressing in the afternoon. Vermillion is used by the Namasudras and a section of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas who have learned in the last decade the use of this material signifying married status in course of their co-existence with the Namasudra sisters to use it at the parting of hair to indicate marriage of a girl.

FOOTWEAR

Shoes are conspicuous by their absence. The village people, whether rich or poor, high or low, walk bare-footed even during festivals and ceremonies, religious or social.

HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND FURNITURE

Furniture and other household fixtures, used by the different village households, are necessarily goods of utility. No articles of fashion or value are found in any household.

Though the two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households possessing bedsteads are financially more solvent than others, the possession of furniture does not always convey the real economic picture of a village or its people. The use of furniture is in some way associated with the reception of ideas from outside. The households which have no furniture live mostly in single rooms which hardly accommodate all the members of the family. Belonging to the poor section of the community, the

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

households are not able to purchase any furniture for their household use. The household with no mirror in its possession has no female member in the house and is constituted by the aged head and his insane son. As such, the utility of a mirror is not felt at all there. The members of the seven households which have no bedsteads or *Khatias* are left with no choice other than lying on the earthen floor. Even in those households which have bedsteads or *Khatias* all the members cannot use the same furniture at a time and some have to sleep on the ground as an obvious corollary. Mats or *Chatais* and even gunny bags spread on the mud floor serve the purpose of beds. Households with neither any chair nor a bench or a stool spread the *Chatais* on the floor for the guest and request him to take his seat there. Gunny bags also are considered good substitutes for *Chatais*. *Khatias*, known locally as *Taktas* or *Chowhis*, are made of wood by a carpenter at Rampur. The carpenter makes the furniture at his own house as per order of the customer, but sometimes he makes the furniture at the customer's house. Wooden planks are supplied by the customer himself. The daily wage of the carpenter varies from Rs. 2.50 *paise* to Rs. 3.00 *paise*.

CONSUMER GOODS

Consumer goods are very few and simple

in nature. The villagers like to have only those articles which meet their basic necessity. No household possesses a radio receiver set or gramophone. There are one or two households which can afford to purchase a radio-set or a gramophone but are reluctant to do so on the plea that the servicing charges of the same are too high.

Remarkably enough, none of the villagers possesses any kerosene stove, the use of which is not known to many. A petromax is regarded by the villagers as an article required only in the socio-religious ceremonies celebrated with great eclat. These lighting contrivances brighten up the village homes and cheer up the people only once in a blue moon. One brings these articles on loan from a rich and influential agriculturist in a neighbouring village free of charges. Occasionally the articles are brought from known friends or connections at Rampur. The person requisitioning the articles is to bear only the cost of the fuel.

Only one household possessing a bicycle is looked upon by the villagers as a very rich man. The bicycle is not only a means of fast transport in the eyes of the people but also an index of wealth. The proud cyclist is quite aware of the prestige-value of his two-wheeled chariot, and devotes much attention to the

TABLE 11
USE OF FURNITURE

Community	No. of households	No. of households possessing							
		Bedstead	Khatia	Chair	Table	Mirror	Bench	Stool	Jalchowki
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	2	23	4	4	30	6	7	7
Namasudra	8	..	7	1	1	8	1	1	1
Tantubaya	1	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..
Total	40	2	31	5	5	39	7	8	8

proper up-keep of his conveyance. Needless to mention, the bicycle is kept spick and span, however muddy or dusty the tracks may be.

Hurricane-lanterns dispel the darkness in the huts of all the households, which possess one or two lanterns in the minimum. *Kupis* (Crude kerosene *Dibas* or lamps) are also used to supplement the lighting arrangement. Nine households use torches. Other households cannot afford to purchase the dry battery cells for their prohibitive price and irregular supply. Hence, the villagers have refrained from purchasing any torch, though they are aware that one should carry a torch while moving outside after dusk. The table below will give an idea of the households with reference to the consumer goods in their possession.

Fortunately for the villagers, the village is not a breeding ground of mosquitoes. The villagers are not very much concerned as to feel the necessity for the use of mosquito-nets. There are two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households and a Namasudra family which use mosquito-nets, though not throughout the year. Only during the rainy season the mosquitoes appear as nocturnal hordes to kill one's sleep, but again a mosquito-net costs some money

which all the households are not in a position to spend. So they have learnt to adjust themselves to the drone and occasional bite of the mosquitoes during the night. Thank heavens, the mosquitoes are harmless, for there have been no reported cases of Malarial or Filarial fever.

USE OF SOAP

The village has no washerman. People are yet to know the utility of a laundry. Clothes are cleaned by the villagers themselves with washing soap, which is incidentally used by all the households of the village. Toilet soap, a luxury to many, is used only by nine households consisting of six Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, two Namasudras and one Tantubaya. Interestingly however, the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households did not know its use five or six years back. The displaced persons brought into the village the toilet soap, the use of which is being gradually learned by the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households. It is interesting that the male members of the user Rajbanshi Kshatriya households do not feel the necessity of its use like their fellow brethren of other communities. The women-folk monopolise toilet soap of cheap brand in its use. One should not, however, hastily conclude that toilet soap is in

TABLE 12

CONSUMER GOODS

Community	No. of households	No. of households possessing						
		Hurricane lantern	Petromax	Torch	Stove	Bicycle	Radio set	Gramophone
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	31	..	7	..	1	..	..
Namasudra	8	8	..	2	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	40	40	..	9	..	1	..	..

regular use. Its use is in reality confined to one or two times a week and to festive occasions. Old men and women do not generally use it.

FOOD AND DRINK

All the households are vegetarians in the sense that they are forced under circumstances to become so. There are some households whose members are voracious eaters and would not stop while eating until they reach the saturation point. Rice is the staple diet. The items of food for lunch and dinner are constituted by pulses, rice and curry. Green vegetables are the ingredients for the curry. Besides the food in lunch and dinner, *Chira* (Flattened rice) and *Muri* (Puffed rice) with curds and jaggery are taken once in the morning. There are other households which take these items twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. Fish, meat and egg, though desired by every household, do not regularly appear on the dishes served. The consumption of these items is prevented by lack of fund. Hence the nutrient value of the food consumed by an average household is anybody's guess. Except the households possessing the milch cattle, none in the village purchases milk, if he has no milch cow in the house. The villagers prefer consuming the milk product to selling it. Pulses and rice constitute the meals for the poorer people. The same food is served day in day out in these households. Only during festive occasions or in case of a visit by a guest a change is made for the palate. Visitors are served rice of better quality and one or two more items are added to the menu. Pulses of the *Maskalai* variety are taken usually. The quantity of green vegetables, grown in the village and neighbouring areas, does not meet the needs of the people.

So purchase of vegetables is made at the weekly *Hat* at Rampur. The households make bulk purchase of vegetables to meet their needs for a week. Vegetables are grown in their homestead land attached to the huts. Vegetables are not grown with any commercial motive by any household.

TABLE 13
NUMBER OF DAILY MEALS

Community	No. of households	No. of households taking			
		One meal a day	Two meals a day	Three meals a day	More than three meals a day
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	..	..	31	..
Namasudra	8	..	..	..	8
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	1
Total	40	..	..	31	9

The Rajbanshi Kshatriya households take three meals a day, while the Namasudra and the Tantubaya households take more than three meals. The villagers take their breakfast at 8 A.M., after some work in the field from early morning. Curds or milk, jaggery, flattened rice or puffed rice are the usual items for the breakfast. Sometimes fried rice is also taken alone. Lunch and dinner are all taken at 2 P.M. and 8 P.M. respectively. Households are used to boiled rice with milk or curd, but nobody has been found to take *Ghee* (Clarified butter) even regularly.

All the forty households of the village are rice-eaters and non-vegetarians. The customary non-vegetarian diet taken by the conservative Hindu widows and the taboo against meat, fish and egg is unknown to the villagers. The villagers cannot think of taking wheat as one

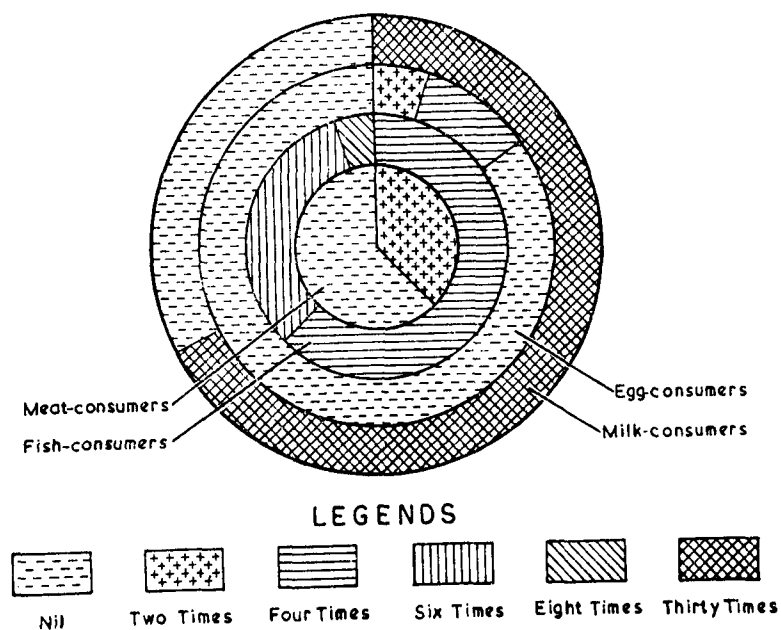
MADHUR BHASA

of the main items of their diet at other times, but the high price of rice has made them inclined to supplement rice in their staple diet with wheat.

Beef, pork and wine are prohibited food and drink to all the households. Remarkably enough, all the villagers profess to be teetotallers.

That 37.5 per cent of the households can afford to take meat only twice a month is indeed a puzzle, as there is no

dearth of goats in the village or in the neighbourhood. The limited purchasing power of the mass has restricted the intake of meat to very few households. About 62.5 per cent of the households consume fish four times a month. Fishing in the river Raidak by households of this village with small nets does not yield good catches, there being no fisherman by caste or occupation in the village. The amateurish fishing does not ensure regular supply of fish in the menu. Small fish is available in the rivers and in the low-lying areas during the rainy season. Fish is also



CONSUMPTION OF PROTEIN DIET

TABLE 14

CONSUMPTION OF PROTEIN DIET

Community	No. of households	No. of households taking in a month							
		Meat		Fish		Egg		Milk	
		Two times	Four times	Six times	Eight times	Two times	Four times	Thirty times	
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	10	20	10	1	1	..	22	
Namasudra	8	5	5	2	1	1	3	4	
Tantubaya	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	1	
Total	40	15	25	13	2	2	3	27	

Sunny spots of greenery in a green shade

Huts and homesteads under the shade of the areca palm trees



Leafy sentinels of green swell against the storm

Tall areca-nut, palm and other green trees in the homesteads protect the huts against seasonal storms and norwesters





So very humble

A poor Namasudra's hut with walls of split bamboo plastered with mud and with roof thatched with straw



And that has made all the difference

A hut with walls of wattled bamboo and roof of corrugated iron sheet



A man's house is his castle

Hut of a Rajbanshi Kshatriya with walls of wattled bamboo plastered with mud and roof of straw



Little nest in the gilded cage

Pigeons, reared at home and sheltered in improvised cylindrical dovecot of split bamboo, high up on the wall



Modest dress, neat but not gaudy

A Rajbanshi Kshatriya woman wearing *Bukani*, the traditional dress of the community



Not a pompous show, 'still deceived with ornament'

Foreign aid of ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit adorns a Rajbanshi Kshatriya woman

Simple 'maiden of bashful fifteen' and 'every lass a queen'

Unadorned beauty of a Rajbanshi Kshatriya village maiden



Rude breath of winter wind

A group of villagers by the fire in a wintry morning in the heel of the limping cold





An index of economy and status

Utensils in the kitchen of a Rajbanshi Kshatriya household of the middle income-group



Co-operation for forage in a farm

Animals are such agreeable friends that for the fodder from the *Dalui* (the haystack in the barn) no chaos is let loose

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

available in the *Hat* at Rampur, but fish-rearing is not in practice in the region. The supply of fish at the *Hat* at Rampur is mainly from Dhubri in Assam. But, the villagers are not in a position to buy whatever is available in the *Hat* at Rampur. It is peculiar that poultry-keeping is not practised by the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households or others. The sneakish attacks of marauding jackals and the annual recurrence of flood have made the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and others averse to rearing of fowl. The high price at which eggs are sold in the market is not a lure for the households either. This accounts for the low consumption of eggs in the village. Milk and curd are favourite items of diet to 22 Rajbanshi Kshatriya households, four Namasudra families and one Tantubaya household, because all the households have milch cows. But other households cannot take either milk or its products. The average price of milk being 0.62 paise per *seer*, none is able to purchase it for the grown-ups. The practice of taking sugar and tea is popular among all the households. Tea and sugar are taken by all persons at least twice daily, once in the morning and once more in the afternoon. Children below the age of 12 to 13 years are not permitted to take generally by the elders. The appearance of a guest in any household mounts up the consumption of tea more than two times a day.

FOOD FOR THE INFANTS

Infants of the village feed on mother's milk, cow's milk and barley. Sago too is served to some infants by some households. Eight Rajbanshi Kshatriya and two Namasudra households have infants below the age of one year. All the eight Rajbanshi Kshatriya households can afford to include milk in the diet of their infants. One Namasudra household, too poor to feed its

babies with cow's milk, feeds them with sago and barley with an aching heart.

TABLE 15
STAPLE FOOD FOR INFANTS*

Community	No. of households	No. of households feeding the infants with			
		Cow's milk	Barley and cow's milk	Barley, sago and cow's milk	Sago and barley
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	4	3	1	..
Namasudra	8	..	..	1	1
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	..
Total	40	4	3	2	1

*Infants below one year have been taken into consideration—Editor.

Sucking of mother's breasts is the habit of the grown-up children. It has been observed that children even upto the age of four or five years suck their mother's dry breasts and are lulled to sleep.

UTENSILS

Utensils are an index of economic status of a person in the village. Various utensils are used for preparation of food and storage of drinking water. The utensils are made mainly of bellmetal, brass, enamel, iron and tin, some also being earthen.

Almost all the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households use utensils of bellmetal, brass and iron, *Thala* (Flat dish) and *Bati* (Bowl) being made of bellmetal mainly. Earthen pitchers are used by the majority mostly, a few households using pitchers of brass. Among the Namasudras, four households use *Thalas* and *Batis* of bellmetal, the rest being users of utensils made largely of enamel and tin. They are mostly unable to purchase utensils of better metals and

MADHUR BHASA

quality. All the Namasudra households use earthen pitchers for the storage of drinking water.

Thala is used mainly for taking food and *Bati* for keeping curry and pulse soup. All the households use iron saucepans for cooking. Only one Rajbanshi Kshatriya

household has saucepans of both iron and brass, iron saucepan being used for daily cooking and brass saucepan being commissioned for use on ceremonial occasions.

Dekchi and *Handi*, used for the purpose of cooking rice, are generally

TABLE 16

CONSTITUENT MATERIALS OF THE UTENSILS

Community	No. of households	No. of households using utensils of						
		Bellmetal, brass, iron and earth	Bellmetal, brass, enamel and iron	Bellmetal, brass and iron	Bellmetal, enamel, tin, iron and earth	Enamel, tin, earth and iron	Bellmetal, brass, enamel, earth and iron	Bellmetal, brass, enamel, tin, iron and earth
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	3	1	5	1	..	20	1
Namasudra	8	..	..	..	2	4	2	..
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Total	40	3	1	5	4	4	22	1

TABLE 17

UTENSILS AND CONSTITUENT MATERIALS

Community	No. of households	No. of households using									
		<i>Thala</i> made of		<i>Bati</i> made of			<i>Hata</i> made of			<i>Khunti</i> made of	
		Bellmetal	Tin	Bellmetal	Tin	Enamel	Enamel	Brass	Tin	Enamel	Brass
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	31	..	30	..	1	5	24	..	3	23
Namasudra	8	4	4	2	5	1	6	1	1	1	1
Tantubaya	1	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	..
Total	40	36	4	33	5	2	11	25	2	4	24

Community	No. of households	No. of households using									
		Saucepan made of		Pitcher made of		<i>Dekchi</i> made of			<i>Handi</i> made of		
		Iron	Brass	Earth	Brass	Enamel	Brass	Earth	Enamel	Brass	Earth
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	1	27	4	17	8	6	16	11	3	3
Namasudra	8	..	8	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	40	1	36	4	17	8	6	16	11	3	3

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

enamelled. Some Rajbanshi Kshatriya households possess the same utensil of brass and a very few poor Namasudra households use earthen *Dekchis* and *Handis*. *Hatas* (Ladle) and *Khuntis* (Paddle) are used for the purpose of stirring food during its cooking. *Hatas* are very common in the households, whereas *Khuntis* are very rare. The Rajbanshi Kshatriya households use *Hatas* and *Khuntis* made of brass mainly. The Namasudra and the Tantubaya households use *Hatas* made of enamel and tin.

The earthen vessels are purchased from Rampur, where utensils of enamel, tin and iron are also available. But the vessels made of other materials are purchased from Tufanganj, as they are not available at Rampur.

It may be noted that as many problems are pressing the villagers at present in their daily life, they cannot think of buying bellmetal or brass utensils at a high price. They are equipped with cheap utensils made of either enamel or tin or earth. Even in the households having utensils of better quality they were purchased 15 years back or much earlier. Four Namasudra households brought the utensils like *Thala* and *Bati*, made of bellmetal, when they had left their native villages in East Pakistan for ever. But the other Namasudra households could not bring anything with them.

FUEL

Wood and dried cakes of cowdung mixed with saw-dust, chips of wood and dry leaves are used as fuel by the village women. Wood is available in the village from the forest. It is also purchased from Rampur. But it is not used throughout the year. In the rainy season wet wood is not the proper fuel for lighting ovens.

Cowdung cakes are then preferred. The households having cows or bullocks prepare the cakes at home from the cowdung available in plenty, even those without cattle collect cowdung-waste from the village-roads and the fields.

LIFE-CYCLE

Social beliefs and usages connected with birth, marriage and death play a significant part in moulding the life of the villagers. The impact of economic and social reforms have not produced volcanic effect on their rigid and orthodox outlook and have failed to galvanise them into a new go of life. They have remained more or less sardonic to a rather bold attitude of life and are quite content with their age-old system.

Birth

All the households generally diagnose pregnancy from cessation of menstruation for over two months and enlargement of abdomens at the same time. But these symptoms are discerned only by the old and the experienced women in the village. Usually no special care is taken to provide better food to the pregnant woman, as the villagers in general are too poor to afford any. The pregnant woman is not allowed to carry any heavy load and is strictly warned to avoid the sight of any dead body. She also goes to bed at night rather early and never spends the night alone. It is believed that sudden shock from fear only accentuates the chances of abortion and death of the pregnant woman. A pregnant woman does all the domestic work of the household till delivery. Among the Tantubaya and the Namasudra households, the husband of the pregnant wife is forbidden to attend a funeral. But this is not practised by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. No ceremony is performed by them after

MADHUR BHASA

conception. The Namasudra and the Tantubaya households, however, perform a ceremony, called *Sadh*, on the fifth or seventh month either in her parental home or in the house of the husband. Various items of delicious food are offered to the prospective mother on this day. Close relations are invited. The practice of offering new cloth to the pregnant woman is now falling gradually into disuse due to high price.

When the pregnant woman has the labour pain, the experienced women of her own community in the village are sent for, as there is no trained midwife in the village or its neighbouring areas. If any complication is observed in course of delivery, two untrained midwives, who were professionals in East Pakistan and are now rehabilitated in Jorai are, requested to come. Nobody knows the castes of these women. These quacks, as they may be called, do not have any standard rate of remuneration for their professional skill. They make the best bargain after they have sensed fully the capacity of their client's purse. But, in no case the rate is lower than Rs.20'00 *paise*.

The birth of the baby must take place in the house of its father, so goes the custom of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. Among the Namasudra and the Tantubaya households the expectant mother is supposed to visit her parent's house where the first issue is to be delivered. But this practice is hard to be followed now, as it is not very easy for the displaced persons to send their wives to their deserted homes in East Pakistan, just in order to comply with an old convention. Bedrooms are usually used for confinement. In case of one-roomed house a portion of the bedroom, partitioned with a piece of cloth or

a gunny bag, is occupied by the parturient. When there is more than one room in the house, one of the spare rooms is used as the lying-in-room.

After birth the umbilical cord is cut with two sharp-edged strips of bamboo and the waste is buried in the ground. The used linens are generally thrown in the bush or in the river. Sometimes they are also buried.

A case of difficult and protracted labour presents problems to the household without any effective remedy. The village being far away from an urban area, modern medical facilities hardly reach the people. In case of complications the affected household invokes divine mercy and promises an offering to the deity of the household. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas pray to *Tosa Kubir* to save the prospective mother. In case of a safe child-birth, the affected household punctiliously fulfils its vow by holding a worship to its deity suitably on a convenient occasion.

A practice known as *Jalpada* is observed by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas at the time of difficult child-birth. An aged Rajbanshi Kshatriya widow of the village knows the magic. A few more women of the same community of the village and outside, proficient in the use of charms, are also called in. But the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas refuse to give further biodata about them. The woman, called in, takes a pot of water to a secluded room where none is allowed to be present. She recites incantations over the pot and takes it to the labour-room. The pregnant woman is offered the pot and asked to drink the water. It is reported that on drinking the potion the patient feels easy and delivery becomes rather smooth. It is ascertained that all the households do not call in the same woman. Every woman,

PEOPLE AND THEIR MATERIAL CULTURE

knowing the magic, has fixed households as her clientele.

The mother is confined for a period of thirteen days, observed as the period of pollution alike by all the three communities in the village. During this period the mother and the baby are not touched by any one. On the thirteenth day the *Kāmāna* ceremony is observed to mark the end of the period of pollution, when the barber shaves the beard of the male members and cuts the nails of the male and female members of the household. The barbers from Rampur usually perform the job, charging rupees two as remuneration per household. After this ceremony the child and the mother, come out of their confinement and the mother resumes her normal household duties.

Annaprāsana (First rice ceremony) is observed by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas after nine months and nine days. But the Namasudras and the Tantubaya perform it on the seventh or the ninth month of the child's birth. The day on which the ceremony is observed must be auspicious and is finalised only in consultation with a Brahman. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas go to the Assamese Brahmans at Rampur whereas the households of other communities visit their Brahman priests at Singimari and Rampur. On the day finalised by the Brahman priest the household observes sacrificial rites before a sacrificial fire. Sweets then offered to the gods are given to the child. Friends and kin are entertained to a feast. No name-giving ceremony is observed by any community. Till the parents give any names to their children, they go without any formal identify.

A child then grows up and no other function is observed by any other community

than the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. The ceremony, known as *Cūdā Karni*, held when the child attains the age of four or five years, is observed by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas only. The function is held on any day convenient to the household but no Brahman is required to fix it up. This is exclusively a social performance in which the co-villagers of the same community, friends and relatives are invited to a feast. The assembled invitees beseech divine blessings for a long life of the child.

Babies suckle till they are three or four years old. Weaning is practised in stages till the babies are gradually fed on milk and barley. Rice is then added to the diet as a substitute. Feeding habits are regulated after one year. Children above the age of five years are trained to regulate the habit of micturition.

No community permits abortion under any circumstance and the villagers report that it is not practised in their village. About barrenness the popular belief goes that if God desires a woman to bear no child, none can make her fecund. A barren woman nevertheless prays to God for a child. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas make offerings to the *Manasā* (Goddess of snakes) and promise to worship her on the eve of the marriage of the child. They would procure some herbal roots free of cost from a Rajbanshi Kshatriya woman outside the village and bind it round the neck or arm of the barren woman.

A sudden mental shock or physical injury, according to the villagers, may cause still birth. Malnutrition is also considered to be one of the causes of still birth, which some households also ascribe to providential desire.

Marriage

Males between 21 to 24 years and females above 10 years but below 14 years of age are considered by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas as nature having attained marriageable age. Marriage is not linked up with the questions of income, profession or status among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. Age seems to be the only factor that counts for marriage. Once a boy or a girl attains marriageable age, the parents and the elders become seriously concerned about his or her marriage.

Marriages are mostly arranged by *Ghaṭakas* (Match-makers), both amateur as well as professional. Among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas the role of a go-between entitles the person concerned to this honorific title. Relatives or kinsfolk keep the ball rolling by opening negotiations between the two families as match-makers.

On an auspicious day fixed up by the Brahman priest of the household, the boy's father and some relatives together visit the girl in her house. If the girl is selected, the boy's father and guardians communicate their approval to the girl's father then and there. The girl is offered some token honorarium in cash by the boy's father, even when she is not approved. The boy's father is entertained at the girl's house with curd, flattened rice and cocoanut etc. In case the girl is approved, an auspicious date for a reciprocal visit by the girl's father to the boy's house is fixed up. If the match is approved by the girl's father after his visit to the boy's house on the appointed day, a date is provisionally finalised for marriage. The boy is also offered a token honorarium by the girl's father the same day, irrespective of whether the marriage is fixed up or not. The same day the parents of

both the bride and bridegroom finalise a day for the ceremony of *Nirikṣana* when the prospective bridegroom accompanied by the *Ghaṭaka* and one or two relatives visits the bride's house, where the prospective bride appears before them. The bridegroom or any of his authorised agents puts the mark of vermillion at the parting of hair on the bride's forehead.

The ceremony of *Nirikṣana* is sometimes skipped and that of *Mālācandana* is held in its place. *Mālācandana* ceremony takes place on an auspicious day in the house of the bride, where the bridegroom and his party arrive. Here the bride and the bridegroom exchange garlands in presence of others. It may be pointed out that the bridegroom opts for either of the two ceremonies and is not required to perform both. After the ceremony of either *Nirikṣana* or *Mālācandana*, the role of the match-maker comes to an end and the betrothal is registered. Needless to mention, the match-maker's mission comes to a successful finale now. If the match-maker is a nominee of the bridegroom, he is offered a piece of new *Dhoti* and rupees fifteen in cash by the bridegroom's father. If the *Ghaṭaka* represents the bride's side, he is offered by the bride's household a piece of new *Dhoti* and rupees twenty five in cash. The presents in cash and kind vary often and do not follow any standardised convention.

On the day of marriage the bridegroom starts for the bride's house in a bridal procession headed by the aged members of the bridegroom's household. The bridegroom generally travels in a bullock cart followed by others on foot. On arrival at the bride's house in the afternoon, the bridegroom and the members of his party are accorded welcome by a few married

women of the bride's household. Assamese Brahmans officiate at the marriage-ceremony at night in an open courtyard where a rectangular space is marked off by four banana saplings planted into the ground at four corners. The members of the bridegroom's party are entertained to a sumptuous feast before or after the marriage-ceremony according to the convenience of the bride's household. The bride and the bridegroom return to the bridegroom's house the day following the marriage.

Marriage within the same *Gotra* is permitted by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village who claim that all the Rajbanshis of West Bengal belong to *Kāśyapa Gotra*. Polygyny, though not tabooed, is not practised by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. Polandry, however, is forbidden. Widows are permitted to remarry, but not those who have any children. The rites in widow-remarriage are the same as those in any conventional marriage. Marriage by exchange and marriage by service are permissible practices prevalent among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. But no case has been reported to have taken place in recent past. That the marriage-payment by the bride or the bridegroom is unknown to the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas is a remarkable feature and the nuptial locks do not carry any unpleasant association of financial transactions and protracted negotiations.

The marriage among the Namasudras and Tantubayas are more or less the same as the Rajbanshis except on some points. In the fitness of things it is more appropriate and correct to state that marriages among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas are more or less the same as those of the Namasudras and the Tantubayas. The Rajbanshi Ksha-

triyas do hardly admit that the customs and practices connected with their marriage have deviated in either form or details from those in the past. The members of other communities claim to have influenced them. It would not be scientific, however, to enter into a tortuous argument if the Rajbanshis have been or not influenced by other communities, as relevant data to lend force to the argument in favour or against could not be offered by any community claiming or counteracting the claim of induction of some cultural traits into the ways of life of the other.

The Namasudra and the Tantubaya parents generally play a vital role in arranging marriage for their wards. Boys above 23 years and girls above 14 years attract the attention of their parents to influence the latter to think of the former's wedlock. Relatives are usually contacted and requested to look for suitable matches. Once the match-maker finds a match, initial proposals are communicated to the boy's guardians by the girl's or *vice versa* through the person deputed for the purpose. On an auspicious day the boy's father with his relatives comes to the girl's house to see the girl and have preliminary talks. The selection is not final, until the girl is met by some female members of the boy's household. If the seal of approval is given by the boy's female relatives, the selection becomes *Pucca*. On an appointed day, mutually agreed to, the female members and one or two male members of the bridegroom-elect's household come to the house of the bride-elect to observe the ceremony of *Āśirvāda* (Blessing). New clothes with or without some ornaments are offered to the bride-elect. An elderly woman represents the household of the bride-elect generally to settle the date of marriage. If the

members of the bride-elect's household choose to see the bridegroom, they do so generally before the ceremony of *Āśirvāda*.

In so far as the rites of marriage are concerned, they display no uniqueness of features except that a Bengali Brahman priest officiates in the marriage.

The Namasudras of the village belong to *Kāśyapa Gotra* and they practise *Sagotra* (within their own *Gotra*) marriage. Such a marriage, however, would imply that the community practises clan-endogamy in this village, though normally clan-exogamy is the general rule of the castes within the social structure abiding by the dictum of the Hindu Law-givers. But, such a marriage is forbidden to the Tantu-bayas. The Namasudras and the Tantu-bayas being very poor, they do not insist on the system of dowry or any marriage-payment and no marriage is reported to have been prejudiced by any wrangling over either dowry or marriage-price. Polygyny and polyandry are not practised, as both are forbidden by conventional social laws of the community and statutory enactments of the Government. Widow-remarriage is not practised generally. Other forms of marriage except that by exchange are not known.

Death

That a person must return to the dust some day or other and that it is the natural law laid down by Providence is generally believed by the villagers, irrespective of their caste. Deaths, caused by diseases or accidents, are regarded as predestined. Premature deaths are sometimes believed to be the handiwork of evil spirits and malignant supernatural powers and sometimes attributed to the displeasure of

even benevolent deities. In the past the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village used to nurse a superstition that a witch could bring about an end to the dramatic saga of human life any moment. The community does not hold any such belief now. A Brahman is generally called for, when a person is on the point of death. He discharges his duty by pouring some drops of water into the mouth of the dying man. The villagers believe that the dying man on quenching his last thirst with water from the hands of a Brahman will have a smooth journey to heaven.

After death the corpse is wrapped in a new cloth and carried on a bier to the crematorium. The body is placed on the funeral pyre with its head towards the north. The pyre is ignited by the eldest son or by any other relative, in the absence of any son. No other ceremony is observed in the crematorium.

The period of mourning, which is regarded also as the period of uncleanness, is observed for 13 days. The sons of the deceased shave their heads and hold the *Śrāddha* ceremony on the 13th day to pray for peace of the departed soul. Brahmans officiate in the ceremony which is attended by the local people. The assembled invitees are served good dishes. During the period of mourning the members of the household are forbidden non-vegetarian diet. They do not either shave or cut their nails. The period of uncleanness is observed only on the death of any member on the father's side.

Dead bodies of infants upto the age of five are usually buried by the river-side or under a tree.

III

ECONOMY

Land

Distribution and ownership of agricultural land

Manner of acquisition

Distribution and ownership in father's time

Price

Owner-cultivator

Owner-cultivator-cum-rentier

Owner-cultivator-cum-share-cropper

Landless share-cropper

Terms and conditions of share-cropping

Agriculture

Cultivation of paddy

Cultivation of jute

Cultivation of pulses

Cultivation of oilseeds

Cultivation of sugarcane

Technology practised

Utilisation of produce

Storage of produce

Marketing

Livestock

Feeding

Utilisation of milk and other product

Fishing

Occupational pattern

Primary and secondary occupation

Workers and non-workers

Unemployment

Occupational mobility

Income and expenditure

Monthly income-group

Gross income and sources

Expenditure

ECONOMY

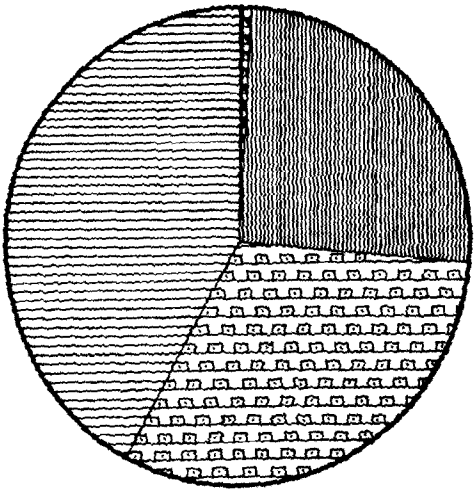
LAND

The pattern of land-utilisation in the village may be evident from the Table 18 the data being provided by the Junior Land Reforms Officer, Tufanganj, under the Government of West Bengal towards the end of 1964. The figures were obviously

the latest subsequent to 1961 Census.

As forests and uncultivable land account for a very large chunk of the landed area of the *Mauza*, the villagers have very little land left for cultivation. Uncultivable land includes 22·083 acres of homestead land.

LAND-UTILISATION



- Indebtedness
- Nature of loan
 - Rate of interest on loans in cash
 - Rate of interest for loans in kind
 - Terms of repayment
 - Utilisation of loan
 - Nature of security
 - Economic growth or impoverishment

MADHUR BHASA

TABLE 18
LAND-UTILISATION PATTERN

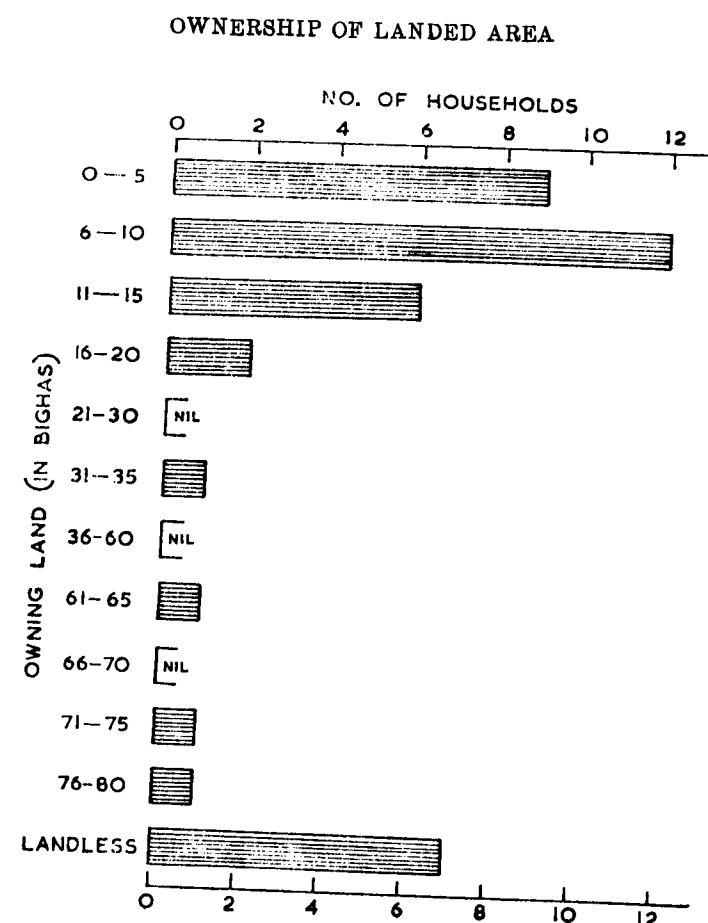
Nature of land-use	Area in acres	Percentage
Cultivable land	136.00	25.6
Uncultivable land including land in the riverside and homesteads	167.99	31.6
Forests	224.04	42.2
Village roads	2.05	0.4
Others	0.92	0.2
Total	531.00	100.00

Distribution and ownership of agricultural land

About 17.5 per cent of the households in general and 16.1 per cent of the Raj-

banshi Kshatriya households in particular are landless. The Table provided overleaf will elucidate the landownership-pattern further. Suffice it to say, one out of 26 landed Rajbanshi Kshatriya households owns agricultural land outside the village. The said household has 19 *Bighas* of agricultural land in the neighbouring village of Singimari in addition to 15 *Bighas* of agricultural land in the village of enquiry. The whole of the land, in and outside the village, is under household cultivation.

A little over 31.8 per cent of the land-owner households own agricultural land for cultivation to the extent of only 15 *Bighas*. About 81.4 per cent of the total area of agricultural land are owned by



ECONOMY

TABLE 19
OWNERSHIP AND DISTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND

Community	No. of households	No. of households owning land between											No. of landless households
		0-5 Bighas	6-10 Bighas	11-15 Bighas	16-20 Bighas	21-30 Bighas	31-35 Bighas	36-60 Bighas	61-65 Bighas	66-70 Bighas	71-75 Bighas	76-80 Bighas	
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	4	11	6	1	..	1	..	1	..	1	1	5
Namasudra	8	4	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	40	9	12	6	2	..	1	..	1	..	1	1	7

26 Rajbanshi Kshatriya households accounting for 78.8 per cent of the landed households of the village. If 83.8 per cent of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households are landowners, it has only been possible for the reason that they are also the sons of the soil. Six Rajbanshi Kshatriyas constituted by four villagers of Singimari, one villager of Rampur and another of Takuamari (all the three villages being at a distance of a kilometre or so) own 65 *Bighas* (15.1 per cent of the area under cultivation within the village) of agricultural land, share-cropped by five Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and one Tantubaya of this village.

Manner of acquisition

Of the 26 landed Rajbanshi Kshatriya households, as many as 19 families own their land by succession to and inheritance of their ancestral property or as recipients of matrimonial gifts by connubial relations.

Of the five landless Rajbanshi Kshatriya households, four families have turned landless not in the present generation. In fact, their ancestral property was lost in earlier generations and the hapless households have inherited no agricultural land from their fathers. Only one Raj-

banshi Kshatriya household, though landless now but not so at the time of his father's death, had succeeded to the patrimony of 40 *Bighas* of agricultural land. But with the vicissitudes of fortune the landed area shrank in size, as the owner sold out parcels of his land from time to time to defray various exigent expenses of his household. A part of the land also was eroded by the river Raidak.

Though six Namasudra households could purchase agricultural land in the village as an effective step towards their own economic rehabilitation after their immigration into the village as displaced persons from East Pakistan after the Partition of Bengal and the Independence of India in 1947 and thereafter could manage to have the means to eat respectably the bread of toil as landed cultivators, abjuring the undignified life on doles and charities, two other Namasudra families, also emigres from East Pakistan with the same sorrow and sighing as six other Namasudra compatriots, were too poor to purchase any agricultural land in the village.

Distribution and ownership in father's time

To understand the nature of the village-

MADHUR BHASA

economy it is as much important to know its resource-potential and resource-utilisation, as it is relevant to examine the dynamics of the productive forces. Even knowing the basic nature of the economy of the village and the impulse of the forces generated, whether by utilisation of the intrinsic resources or by the induction of extraneous factors, to gauge the impact of the economic forces on the village itself, to know if the traditional factors of resistance or retardation have negated the factors of change so as to render the village-economy static, one requires a time-perspective. Agriculture being the predominant occupation in the village, the ownership of land and its size have an import in tracing the evolution of the village-economy. Population-growth too has an important bearing on the economy of the household inasmuch as land in the possession of the household stands the chance of a reduction in size by fragmentation of holdings accentuated by succession issues and the break-up of the household. The

type and composition of the families are also linked up with the issue of land in their ownership, for economic exigencies often dictate the inevitable course of economic evolution even though they may run counter to some apparently strong individual or social issues. The trends of the economic growth of the village Madhur Bhasa may be deciphered from the Table 20 on the landed property owned by the fathers of the present heads of 40 households of the village.

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas with no patrimony in an attempt to explain the landlessness of their fathers state that in those times share-croppers, as they were not readily available in the region, had to be imported from outside. The imported households used to till the land as share-croppers without any right or title to the land tilled. As share-cropping would ensure quite a lucrative return without any strings attached, some of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas did neither have the occasion nor the necessity to purchase any land. The explanation is not, however, altogether unconvincing and illogical.

To lose one's parents is indeed a serious misfortune, but to lose one's parent's fortune is a still greater calamity and an insufferable ordeal. It is worthy of a probe to examine how many households with depleted land resource inherited from their fathers could keep it intact, if not add to it further to enlarge its size. The Table 21 gives a comparative picture of 23 households, which had land in the lifetime of the fathers of the respective heads.

Only six households could retain intact the landed property inherited from the father of each head and the entire land

ECONOMY

in the ownership of the fathers of the present heads has suffered no change. Two Namasudra households have turned landless on account of their migration from their native places after the Partition of Bengal as

displaced persons. Area of patrimonial land suffered reduction in size in varying degrees in the case of 14 households. Only one household could add to the size of the land owned by the father of its head. The

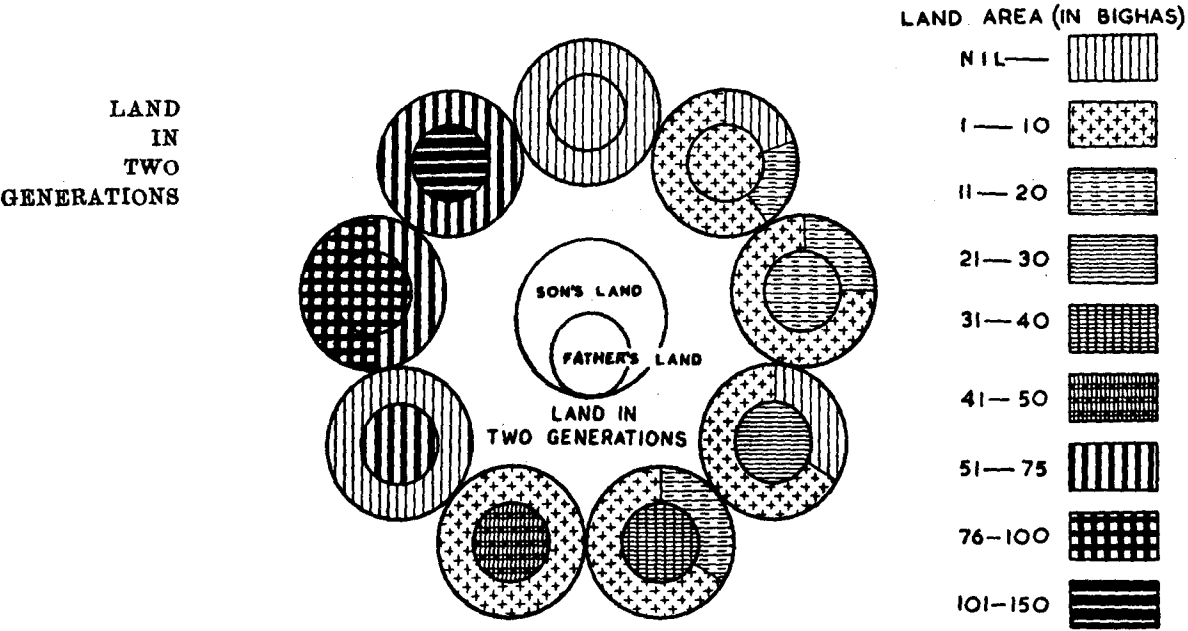
TABLE 21

SIZE OF LAND IN TWO GENERATIONS

Area owned by father (in Bighas)	No. of house- holds	No. of households owning in the present generation land of the size of							
		Rajbanshi Kshatriya						Namasudra	
		Nil	1-10 Bighas	11-20 Bighas	21-50 Bighas	51-75 Bighas	76-100 Bighas	Nil	1-10 Bighas
1-10	5	..	3	1	..	..	..	1	..
11-20	8	..	5	2	..	..	..	..	1
21-30	3	..	1	..	..	..	..	1	1
31-40	3	..	2	1	..	..	..	..	..
41-50	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
51-75	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
76-100	2	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..
101-150	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Total	23	..	12	4	..	2	1	2	2

TABLE 20
LAND OWNED BY FATHER

Area owned by father (in Bighas)	No. of house- holds	No. of Rajbanshi Kshatriya households	No. of Namasudra households	No. of Tantubaya households
Nil	12	9	2	1
1-10	5	4	1	..
11-20	8	7	1	..
21-30	3	1	2	..
31-40	3	3	..	..
41-50	1	1	..	..
51-75	..	..	..	..
76-100	2	2	..	..
101-150	1	1	..	..
Unspecified	5	3	2	..
Total	40	31	8	1



most interesting point is that whereas for five households landlessness remained a negative force in two generations, four households could inspite of no patrimony, because the fathers of the present heads had none, become landowners in the present generation. The reduction of the size of land in two generations has been caused largely by fragmentation of holding due to partition among the heirs and precipitated by the decline of individual fortunes. Diluvial encroachment of the river Raidak has caused erosion of land in the case of at least one household.

Price

Cultivable land lying between the village road and the river Raidak is considered inferior to the holdings situated elsewhere in the village. Though the productivity of the holdings is uniform throughout the village, the recurring annual flood damaging the crops of the land, considered inferior, lowers down the net yield from such land. The price, therefore, varies not because of differential productivity of the soil but on account of the risk of damage by flood which the holdings stand. Whereas cultivable land of the first category sells at Rs.200.00 *paise* per *Bigha* against Rs.400.00 *paise* per *Bigha* for the land of the second category, the average price of land here in this *Mouza* about a decade ago was

Rs.100.00 *paise* or so per *Bigha*. The road connecting this village with Rampur since its construction in 1956-57 has turned the scale of the land-price. Raised about four feet and a half high from the level of the agricultural fields, the road, functioning like a *Bundh* (Embankment), has prevented land to its south from being damaged by the flood. The price of land, because of the resultant benefit conferred on it by the road since its construction has, registered gradually an upward rise.

OWNER-CULTIVATOR

Of 40 households, heads of 35 families are engaged in agricultural pursuits. But, only 29 cultivating families out of them are landowners, the remaining agriculturist families comprising five Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and one Namasudra tilling the soil as landless share-croppers. Agriculture in this village is managed solely by the members of the cultivating households, agricultural labourers being employed by none at any stage. Of 29 landed cultivating households, 13 families do neither give any portion of the owned land to any other household for share-cropping nor receive from others any land on crop-share in addition to that owned and cultivated personally by them. The Table 22 shows the area of the land owned and cultivated by these exclusive owner-cultivators.

TABLE 22

LAND OWNED AND CULTIVATED BY THE OWNER-CULTIVATORS

Community	No. of households	No. of households cultivating the whole of the owned land of an area of					
		1-10 <i>Bighas</i>	11-20 <i>Bighas</i>	21-30 <i>Bighas</i>	31-40 <i>Bighas</i>	41-60 <i>Bighas</i>	61-70 <i>Bighas</i>
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	11	5	4	..	1	..	1
Namasudra	2	1	1	..	..	..	..
Total	13	6	5	..	1	..	1

ECONOMY

The maximal limiting size of the cultivated land owned by the majority (84.6 per cent) is 20 *Bighas*. Even though the produce of the land does not make the households contented obviously for its inadequacy, no land is cultivated by them on crop-share either to supplement the supply of the yield, obtained on cultivation of the entire area of the owned land. The failure to cultivate any land on crop-share has not its origin in their unwillingness to do so, but has issued from non-availability of any land for share-cropping. Formerly they used to cultivate some available land outside the *Mouza*, the owners of which had since decided to cultivate the land themselves. This has ushered in hard days for the owner-cultivators of the village.

OWNER-CULTIVATOR-CUM-RENTIER

Three Rajbanshi Kshatriya households owning agricultural land do not cultivate the land themselves to the optimum extent of its area. They have retained a portion of their land for personal cultivation and have distributed the rest to the share-croppers. One of them, an owner of 80 *Bighas* of agricultural land, has retained only 10 *Bighas* for personal cultivation. As the head of the household has to cultivate the land himself with help from none of his minor dependants, he has been induced

under the compulsion of circumstances to lease out 70 *Bighas* of land to share-croppers. The second household with 75 *Bighas* of land in its ownership cultivates only 30 *Bighas* itself, assigning 45 *Bighas* to be share-cropped by others. The household in question with only two working members to husband their energy and resources does not see any reason why it should retain the land, it cannot fruitfully utilise itself under personal cultivation. The third household has retained eight *Bighas* of land for cultivation under personal supervision and care, allowing six *Bighas* of the owned land to be share-cropped by others. The capabilities and resources at the disposal of this household has also been circumscribed by the absence of any other working member besides the head to help him in cultivating whole of the land, in his ownership. Shortage of manpower seems to be a serious handicap in all the three households. Agricultural labourer being not employed, as a matter of practice and tradition, by any household, the handicap has been hard to remove.

OWNER-CULTIVATOR-CUM-SHARE-CROPPERS

Cultivation of the land owned by an owner-cultivator and of other's land by a share-cropper has involved 13 households which, as it is need'less to mention, supple-

TABLE 23

OWNER-CULTIVATOR-CUM-SHARE-CROPPER

Size of land owned and cultivated in <i>Bighas</i>	No. of households	No. of Rajbanshi Kshatriya households share-cropping land of the size of			No. of Namasudra households share-cropping land of the size of	No. of Tantubaya households share-cropping land of the size of
		1-10 <i>Bighas</i>	11-20 <i>Bighas</i>	21-30 <i>Bighas</i>	1-10 <i>Bighas</i>	1-10 <i>Bighas</i>
1-10	12	7	..	2	2	1
11-20	1	1	..	..	..	..
Total	13	8	..	2	2	1

ment the income from the cultivation of the land in their ownership with that from the tillage of other's soil as crop-sharers. The households are primarily owner-cultivators, share-cropping being their supplementary means of livelihood. Again, these households, exclusive of six landless share-cropper households, have a superior status because of some vestige of land in their ownership.

Altogether 10 households, out of 13 owner-cultivator-cum-share-cropper families, own and cultivate 1-10 *Bighas* of land and cultivate land of the like area as share-croppers. Because of limited land available for share-cropping and also for the superfluity of landless cultivating households, rarely does a farmer find any opportunity to command large areas of land for cultivation on crop-share. Rentiers of large-sized land being not many, attempts are made by the landowners to satisfy as many share-croppers at a time as possible and derive the maximum pleasure from benevolence as also the prestige of an employer. This explains the point why a particular Rajbanshi Kshatriya household has allotted 45 *Bighas* of own land to five Rajbanshi Kshatriya share-croppers of the village, instead of allocating the entire land to a couple of share-croppers of its choice.

TABLE 24
LANDLESS SHARE-CROPPER

Community	No. of households	No. of households share-cropping land of the size of	
		1-10 <i>Bighas</i>	11-20 <i>Bighas</i>
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	5	3	2
Namasudra	1	..	1
Total	6	3	3

In fact, the owners of agricultural land are held in awe and esteem by the share-croppers and even though the *Zemindary* has been abolished, the share-croppers respect the *Jotedars* (Landowners), as if the former were the latter's humble *Prajas* (Tenants at will).

LANDLESS SHARE-CROPPER

The landless share-cropper households, constituted by six households comprising five Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and one Namasudra, cultivate others' land as share-croppers. The size of the land being share-cropped by them is shown in the Table 24.

The landless share-cropper households share-crop 1-10 *Bighas* and 11-20 *Bighas* in equal proportion. Being otherwise very poor, the landless households maintain their existence in the pitiable struggle to get some land for cultivation on crop-share to keep them alive. Born in the soil and wedded to it, they love to live on it, though the soil hardly returns them enough bounty.

The total area of the land share-cropped by 19 households comprising 13 owner-cultivator-cum-share-croppers and six landless share-croppers, measures 208.5 *Bighas*, of which 13 *Bighas* in two plots of land are situated in Singimari, where two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households owning the plots live. The land outside the *Mouza* is being cultivated by two Rajbanshi Kshatriya share-cropper households of the village. The land in the present village under share-cropping with an area of 195.5 *Bighas* is divided into 21 plots, the average size of the share-cropped holding measuring 9.3 *Bighas*.

Of the share-cropped land in the village,

ECONOMY

65 *Bighas* in nine plots are owned by Rajbanshi Kshatriya households, non-residents of the present village. The share-cropped land within this village, has an area of 130.5 *Bighas* of land owned by five households composed of four Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and one Namasudra. Of the owner households, three are cultivators and two are non-agriculturists. The share-cropped land of the village in the ownership of the non-resident households is divided into nine plots, being share-cropped by the landless households. Thus, 130.5 *Bighas* of land in 12 plots within the village and in the ownership of five households of the village are available for share-cropping. This presents quite an unenviable position of 19 share-cropper households, constituted by 13 landed owner-cultivator and six landless families, vying for 12 plots of land within the village. The problematic situation with acute congestion of share-croppers in the context of scarcely available land to ease the crisis is resolved partly by the owner households themselves who exclude the landless share-croppers from their purview on the ground that the latter cultivate land owned by others outside the village on crop-share. Still, one finds more share-croppers than the plots available. Curiously enough, a very large plot of land, in area covering 20

Bighas, has been allowed by its owner to be cultivated by two owner-cultivators willing to cultivate as share-croppers more land in addition to that of their own. The said plot has not, however, been fragmented for allotment to a couple of landed cultivating households of the village on crop-share basis. The two landed share-cropper households, though not related to each other by consanguineous or connubial ties till the land and raise the crops jointly. Non-availability of land on the one hand and the urge to grow some extra food for the hungry dependants at home have goaded the two share-cropper families to work hand in hand on the same plot on mutual agreement and co-operation. The share of the produce due on account of the two households are shared equally by them after defraying the expenses in equal proportions.

The five landowner families of the village, which allow their land to be cultivated on crop-share, are looked upon by all the share-cropping households own land of larger areas available for share-cropping. One of them owns 70 *Bighas* of land fragmented into four plots and another owns 45 *Bighas* of land in five plots. With only nine plots of land in hand, the two households keep the majority of the share-

TABLE 25
PERIOD OF SHARE-CROPPING

Community	No. of households	No. of households holding the same plot of land on crop-share since								
		1930	1940	1954	1957	1958	1959	1960	1963	1964
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	15	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	1
Namasudra	3	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	1
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Total	19	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	4	2

croppers in suspense and fear, lest the latter should be dispossessed of the plots, now being share-cropped by them. The relation between the landowner and the share-cropper has developed into that between a landlord and a tenant. When none of the 19 share-cropper households has been able to record his name as a share-cropper during the Revisional Settlement Operation in 1954, the psychological climate may be read to explain the absence of any springhead for action to promote their own interest against the unilateral attempt of the owners to evict them from the land, held under their plough on crop-share. It is indeed fantastic that the share-croppers have tilled particular plots of land more or less continuously for a number of years, on which the Table 25 will be more specific.

If the share-croppers have failed to record their names as such, it has been due on account of their ignorance of the procedure and formalities. Some households have even frankly admitted that they are not aware that a share-cropper can get his name registered as such in the Record of Rights. If this be the general level of awareness of the share-croppers about their rights and privileges, the stem of their ignorance is rooted in their timidity and is fostered by their apprehensive fear of the loss of the land, held on crop-share every year. Yet the psychosis of this new complex has not posed any threat, real or imaginary, to the otherwise cordial relation between the owner of the land and the share-cropper. One does neither come across a share-cropper who has ever been dispossessed of the privilege of share-cropping a particular plot of land except on grounds of personal difficulties for a very temporary period, for which the share-cropper desires exemption himself,

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SHARE-CROPPING

Adhiari, as share-cropping is locally known, is regarded always as a privilege but never as a right. A share-cropper is supposed to have his own draught bullocks and plough, with which he cultivates the land received for share-cropping. The owner usually supplies to the share-cropper seeds and manure in case of cultivation of jute, but does not help the share-cropper with the same, if other crops are raised. The decision as to which crop should be raised in the land rests with the owner. The yield is shared equally by the owner and the share-cropper. Of the 19 share-croppers, two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households have no draught bullocks. They take the draught bullocks on loan from others and sometimes from the landowner. Similarly, five share-cropper households, constituted by two Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, one Namasudra and one Tantubaya, each having one draught bullock, follow the practice of the two households enumerated earlier. The remaining twelve share-cropper households have, however, more than one draught bullock each. If the owner helps the share-cropper with his own draught bullocks, the share in the yield allotted to the share-cropper is not reduced for the help. This gesture of help from the owner is also another reason why the share-cropper owes a sense of profound gratitude to his landed proprietor. Land-revenue is paid by the owner. The share-cropper has to transport the yield to the owner's house. The terms and conditions of share-cropping are not influenced or prejudiced by considerations of caste.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture in the village depends entirely on the charity of the monsoons,

ECONOMY

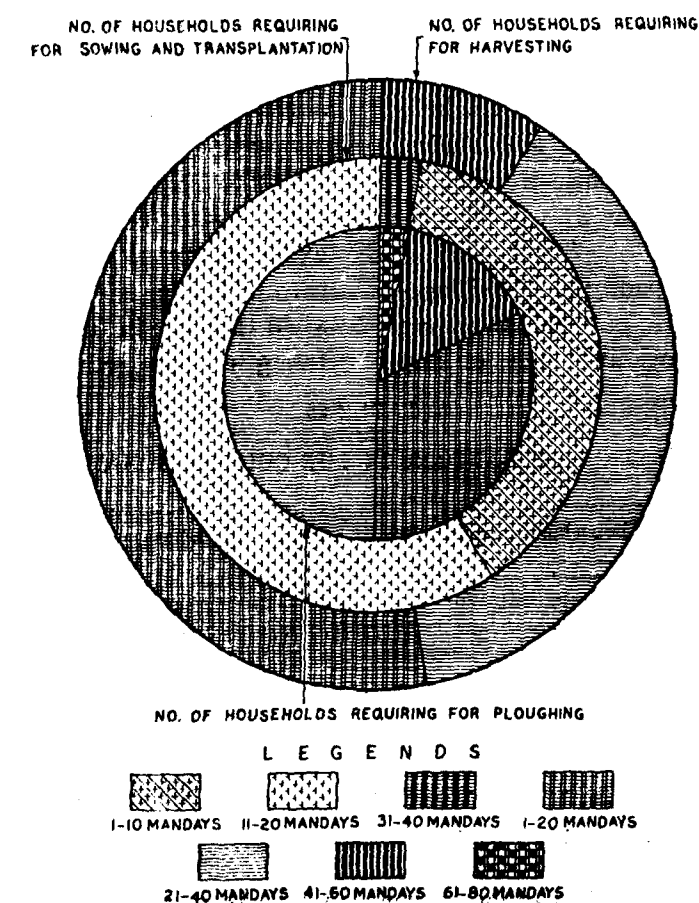
the amount of average rainfall being considered more than adequate for cultivation in the village generally. Rains do not concern the cultivators here so much as the incidence of annual flood of the river Raidak worries the peasants. The village has no land under irrigation, as there does not arise any need to irrigate the land with water from any extraneous source. The main crops grown in the village consist of paddy, jute, pulses, oil-seeds, tobacco and sugar-cane and thus cover crops of both the *Ravi* and the *Khariff* varieties.

Cultivation of paddy

All the 35 agriculturist households of the village grow paddy for the cultivation

of which implements like plough, harrow, sickle and spade are required. In the month of May after the evening showers of the norwesters for a couple of days a separate seed-bed is prepared by ploughing a small plot of land in the homestead or in the agricultural fields. Or it is dug with spade. Pebbles and stones are picked out of the soil of the seed-bed and clods of earth are pulverized into fine grains. Seeds of paddy are scattered there and allowed to germinate. The main plot of land for the cultivation of paddy is ploughed thrice towards the end of May. In early June with the onset of the monsoons after one or two showers the same plot is ploughed once more and then harrowed. The germinated seedlings grown in the

PADDY & MANPOWER



MADHUR BHASA

seed-bed are then transplanted in the main plot soon after. The seedlings are sowed in a row with a gap of one cubit in between the rows. Transplantation being over, nothing in particular remains for the cultivator to do in the fields. Weeding being not practised by the cultivators here, grass and weeds grow with the paddy simultaneously to attain the same height as paddy at the time of harvesting. The cultivators do not know how to weed the paddy-fields of undesirable shrubs and parasitical growth. They are aware neither of the fact that the growth and yield of paddy may be adversely affected by the weeds and wild grass.

Harvesting usually commences on the early part of January when paddy is ripe. Stalks of ripe paddy are reaped in the middle with sickles but are not mown at the lower end of the stalk to enable the farmers to thrash the paddy with the help of bullocks treading upon the stalks, brought home either in bullock carts or by the cultivators themselves.

The cultivation of paddy in the village follows the traditional pattern and does not bear evidence of any influence of any

modern methods of farming or improved means of cultivation. Paddy of the *Aman* variety has only been supplemented by that of the *Aus* variety very recently for a couple of years or so.

Female members do not participate at any stage of cultivation from tilling to harvesting. The women husk rice at home by hand-pounding.

The Table 26 will show the number of mandays required by 34 households in the cultivation of paddy in the different operations.

The total yield of paddy obtained in 1964-65 by the villagers amounts to 1952 *Maunds*, the average yield of paddy per *Bigha* being five *Maunds* on an average. The yield falls short of even the average productivity of land lying to the south-east of the river Raidak, where paddy per *Bigha* records the yield of about eight *Maunds*. The farmers do not, however, look upon the low yield with any flutter for the simple reason that they have no expense worthy of record on account of the cultivation of paddy. Hence, whatever yield they get in return is treated as the free gift of nature.

TABLE 26

UTILISATION OF MANDAYS IN THE CULTIVATION OF PADDY

Community	No. of households	No. of households requiring for ploughing				No. of households requiring for sowing and transplan-tation			No. of households requiring for harvesting		
		1-20 mandays	21-40 mandays	41-60 mandays	61-80 mandays	1-10 mandays	11-20 mandays	31-40 mandays	1-20 mandays	21-40 mandays	41-60 mandays
Rajbanshi	28	6	16	5	1	8	19	1	14	11	3
Kshatriya	5	4	1	..	..	4	1	..	3	2	..
Namasudra	1	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	..
Tantubaya	34	11	17	5	1	13	20	1	18	13	3

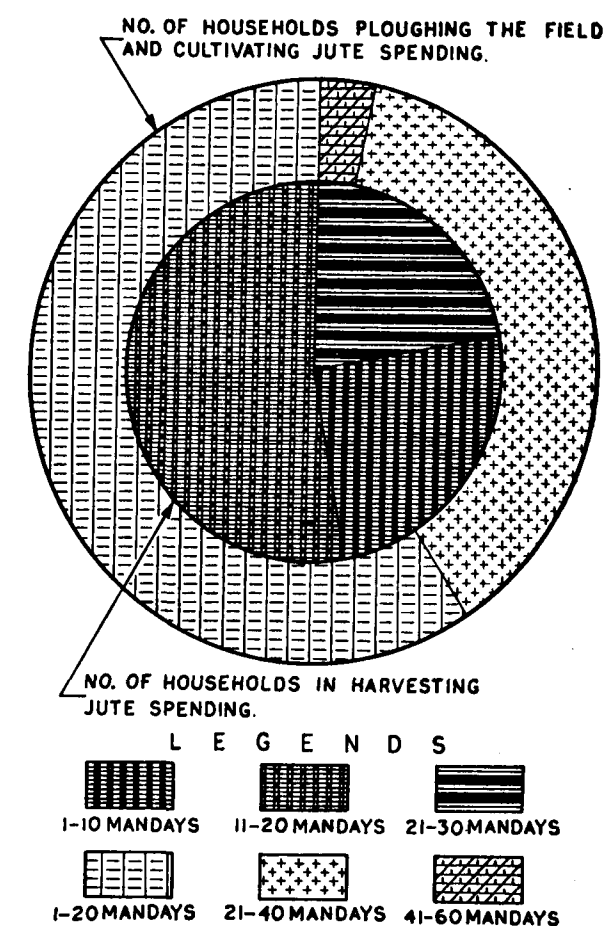
Note : One cultivating household did not grow paddy in the year 1964-65—Editor

Cultivation of jute

Jute appears to have drawn the attention of the farmers in very recent times. The cultivators have evinced their interest in the cultivation of jute in course of the last three or four years, though the crop has been cultivated in the neighbouring villages for a longer time. Yet, no cultivating household of this village raises the crop exclusively in the plot of land under his plough. Instead, a portion of the land is kept apart for the cultivation of the crop. In 1964-65, jute, grown by 32 households, returned the yield of 212 *Maunds*, though a substantial portion of this crop as well as paddy was damaged by the flood. If jute has earned an importance worthy of notice, its appeal to the cultivators of Madhur Bhasa has been heeded to not only because it is regarded as a cash-crop but also because it has fetched a higher price than paddy in a speculative market where hoarding neither stands the risk of outright seizure or procurement by the guardians of the law at a floor price nor forces its owner, under the pressure of the mass voicing an adverse opinion, to disgorge the hidden golden fibre, threatened with the libel as an enemy of the people to court the punitive measures of the law. The cultivation of the crop by the villagers in general is an economic feature apparently though, it is in reality the product of a socio-economic process and the manifestation of a sociological phenomenon. Displaced persons settled in the neighbourhood had, in fact, popularised the crop earlier among the cultivators of all the ethnic groups inclusive even of the Rajbanshis. The Namasudra immigrants had likewise initiated the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village in the art of production of the golden fibre. And at least in one very important aspect of the socio-economic

ECONOMY

polity of the village, the cooperation between two different ethnic groups with no culture or tradition in common has borne fruit. The process cannot exemplify more vividly how acculturation has induced a community to learn the technical know-how of an agricultural operation from another community specialised in the work. The transformation of the economic face of the indigenous community as a result of the mutual cooperation issuing from the syn-thetising organic process of assimilation should not be underscored on any account, as it happens to be a more startling fact with a more weighty datum than any other sociological feature. It is difficult to be convinced that the displaced persons of the village in the first few years of their neo-



teric habitation here were considered alien to the village with all the doors slammed against them and faced with a *ne plus ultra*. But, after the seemingly unbelievable *volta face* on the part of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, the corridors of social, cultural and economic intercourse have been thrown open with opportunities for both the communities to leaven the forces of change and influence, the result of which is not far to seek.

For the cultivation of jute, the field, after being ploughed three to four times in the first week of April, is tilled intensively once more after the application of cowdung (the only manure used) to the ploughed soil. Harrowing follows next. In the early part of May seeds are broadcast in the land, which, then ploughed still once more, is weeded of all wild and rank growth of superfluous shrubs and grass after the seeds of jute germinate. After the crop is harvested in September-October, jute sticks, left to dry up in the fields, are dipped in the river Raidak for about a fortnight, then thoroughly washed in its water and finally thrashed to process fibres out of them. Fibres are dried at home in the sun and air and sold at the *Hat* at Rampur. The Table

27 relates to the mandays spent on the cultivation of jute in the village by the households growing the crop.

In the cultivation of jute only the male members of the cultivating households participate in all the operations. The female members of the households growing the crop do not even help the farmers in washing the jute fibres. The seeds are purchased by the farmers from the Block Development Office or from the *Hat* at Rampur.

Cultivation of pulses

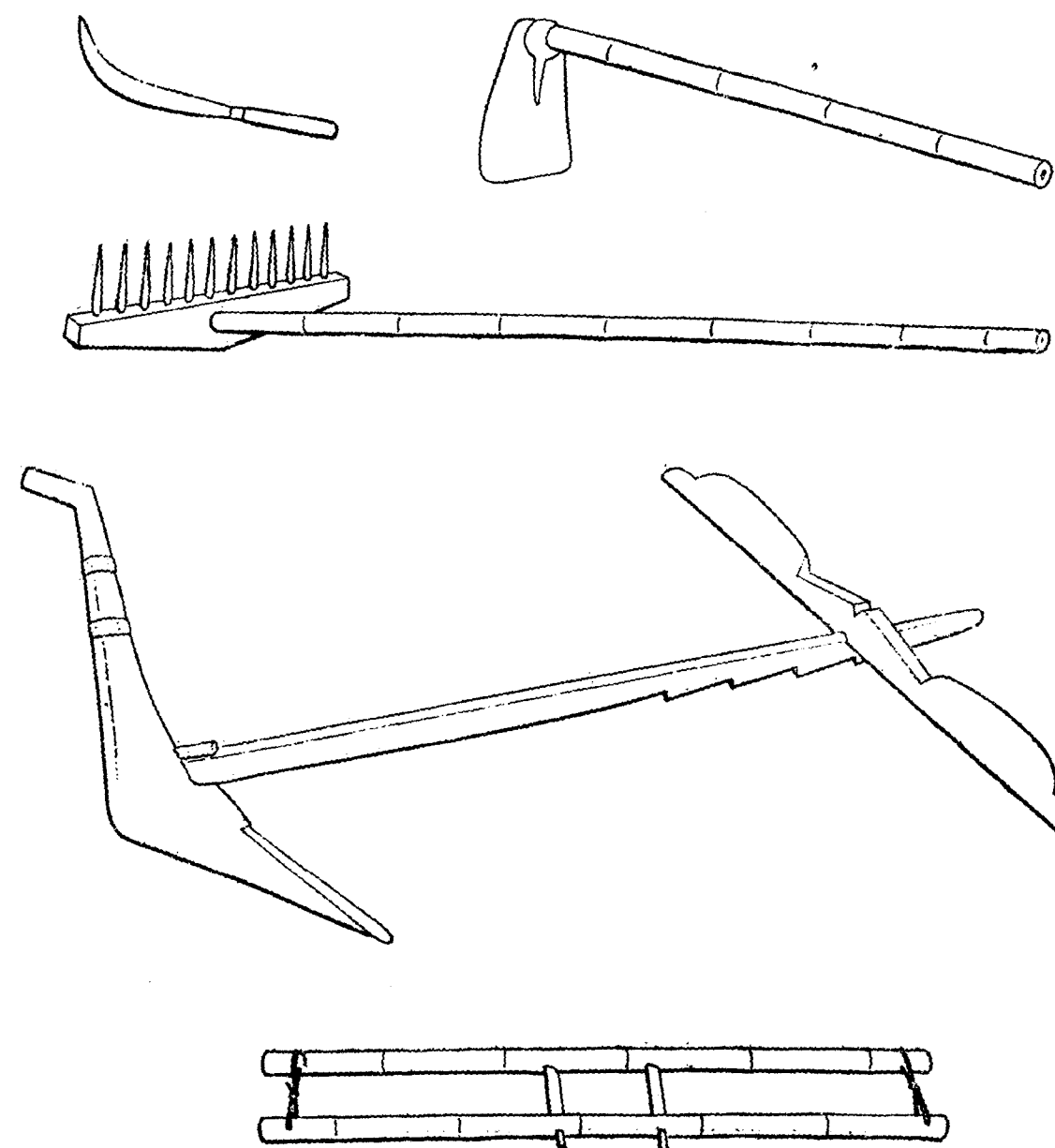
Pulse remains an old crop cultivated in this village for many years in the past. Only 19 households in 1964-65 raised it in a portion of their land after harvesting jute in September-October. Land in the first instance is ploughed four or five times and cleared of the stubs of jute plants still remaining there after harvesting. After cowdung is applied to the ploughed field, it is harrowed. Seeds of pulse of the desired variety are then sown or broadcast in the field, which is harrowed again. The crop is harvested in December-January. The yield in 1964-65 is reported to have ranged between 32 *Maunds* to 33 *Maunds* in all.

TABLE 27

MANDAYS SPENT ON THE CULTIVATION OF JUTE

Community	No. of households	No. of households ploughing the field and cultivating jute spending			No. of households in harvesting jute spending		
		1-20 mandays	21-40 mandays	41-60 mandays	1-10 mandays	11-20 mandays	21-30 mandays
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	26	16	9	1	4	16	6
Namasaudra	5	2	3	..	3	1	1
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	1	..	..
Total	32	19	12	1	8	17	7

AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS



1. Sickle
2. Spade
3. Hankskli
4. Plough
5. Harrow

Cultivation of oilseeds

Only 10 households were engaged in 1964-65 in the cultivation of the oilseeds of sesame and mustard which had returned the yields of one *Maund* eleven *Seers* and seven *Maunds* and a half respectively. Oilseeds are grown in the same manner as the pulses.

Cultivation of sugarcane

Only two households cultivated sugarcane here in 1964-65 to get the yield of two *Maunds*. The crop is not extensively cultivated, as it holds the land where it is grown for a full term of one year. No household with a limited area of cultivable land can afford to cultivate it at the cost of paddy, which provides the staple food of most of the households.

Technology practised

Khariff crops like jute and paddy largely provide the *point d'appui* of the cultivators and the *primum mobile* of agriculture in the village, *Rabi* crops being not grown by all. Methods of cultivation are classical and rooted in antiquity here, for neither the bullocks nor the plough have undergone any change. Nor it was ever felt necessary to undertake any change in either of the twin pillars of an olden agriculture. No substitute ever loomed in the rational horizon so as to call for the rejection of the time-old method as an imperative need. And the bullock still draws the wooden plough with an uncontested supremacy and efficiency as ever throughout. Use of manure being very rarely resorted to, it remains traditionally confined to cowdung and nothing else, used only on the occasion of the cultivation of jute and some *Rabi* crops. None of the households has ever used any chemical fertiliser, as none has

ever seen any of them or heard of their application and learnt their utility. Agricultural tools and implements too give a show of conservatism and a legacy of antiquity. Worn in look outwardly through use for ages and generations, the tools have all been inherited by the farmers from their fathers. They also acquire the knowledge of the use of the same from their senior paterfamilias. Suffice it to say, that no modern tool or implement has made any dent in the conservative outlook of the farmer because of its defaulting appearance in the agricultural scene. When even the first-hand experience or the sight of any new tool is absent, it tantamounts to a wild-goose chase to assay the people's awareness of any innovated tool or technique. All the cultivating households being in possession of the requisite agricultural implements, none has to borrow any from a covillager. Except for jute, improved seeds of no other crop have ever been tried by the households merely because of a wide gap in their knowledge that seeds of improved variety increase the yield. Improved methods of cultivation are yet to be made known to them, not to speak of their idea of the Japanese method. Though it is reported that crops are not damaged by pests, one cannot subscribe literally to this popular view. It may quite be possible that the point never merited their attention and stimulated their thoughts actively on the issue. Nevertheless, many of them do not yet know anything about the pesticides or about their use and efficacy. Every household depends on its working male member with the result that the size of the cultivated land is remotely regulated by the number of working members in the family. The river Raidak has been a source of recurring damage to the cultivators for its flood and

ECONOMY

on account of the resultant damage caused to the crop and the land, taming of the river with dams and *Bundhs* (Embankments) constructed by the Government of West Bengal appears to be the only positive thinking in modern lines by the agriculturists, who otherwise betray their contact with the world outside.

Utilisation of produce

Paddy and jute being two important crops grown by the majority, the Table 28 relates to the quantity of the crops grown and obtained by the households.

TABLE 28

PRODUCTION OF TWO MAIN CROPS

Quantity of paddy grown (in <i>Maunds</i>)	No. of households	Quantity of jute grown (in <i>Maunds</i>)	No. of households
1-10	5	0-2	9
11-20	6	3-4	8
21-30	9	5-6	5
31-40	8	7-8	5
41-50	2	9-10	1
51-60	3	11-12	2
61-90	..	13-14	1
91-100	1	15-16	..
101-190	..	17-18	1
191-200	1	19-28	..
201-290	..	29-30	1
291-300	1	..	..
Total	36	..	33

Though paddy is grown by 34 cultivating households, one non-cultivating household which allows its land to be share-cropped receives its share of paddy as a rentier. All but five households retain the entire yield for their household consumption. Of the five households which do not retain the whole stock of the

yield for their domestic consumption, one gets an yield ranging between 21-30 *Maunds*, two households get the crop to the extent of 31-40 *Maunds* and two other households obtain a supply to the tune of 51-60 *Maunds*. Three households with their yield of paddy not exceeding 30 *Maunds* sell an insignificant portion of the crop grown, the quantity sold by each amounting to three *Maunds*, five *Maunds* and 12 *Maunds* respectively. The household which has sold five *Maunds* of paddy disposes of only a part of the stock, because the quantity is found surplus after meeting the requirements of the household. Two other households with yield of paddy varying between 51-60 *Maunds* sell 20 *Maunds* and 30 *Maunds* respectively, even though the quantity is not surplus after meeting the needs of the households. The sale of paddy, as such, made from the household supply, has been required to meet the contingent domestic expenses of urgent nature.

Unlike paddy, jute is sold outright by all the producing households. Pulse, obtained by 19 households, is sold partly by six households, of which only one has sold the surplus stock of only 20 *Seers*. All the three households cultivating oilseeds have sold the entire yield obtained. The households have produced sugarcane for family consumption. Tobacco obtained by nine households has also been retained for domestic consumption.

The utilisation-pattern thus seems to be oriented to domestic consumption, for very few households appear to have cultivated any crop with an avowed commercial motive. If trading has not been the motivation, the reasons are obvious. The land available for cultivation being limited in

MADHUR BHASA

size and area and a part of the produce being open to the annual ravage of the floods, the villagers consume whatever they produce.

Storage of produce

No household has a granary. Agricultural produce is generally packed in gunny bags and stored in bedrooms or kitchens. Sacks of gunny are placed under the *Charpoys* or *Khatias* in the bedrooms.

Marketing

The main marketing centre for all agricultural produce is located at Rampur. As already discussed, households selling paddy or other produce except jute are in the minority. The villagers carry the produce to the wholesalers at Rampur in different seasons, when requirements of the family induce the need of liquid cash. With no season particularly preferred for the sale of paddy, the households are guided by their own requirements calling for the disposal of the produce for money in cash. Jute, however, is sold in November-December. Oilseeds are sold soon after harvesting. Pulses are sold in the bi-weekly *Hats* at Rampur by the primary producers themselves. There are different wholesalers for different com-

modities at Rampur. As the turnover of sale is very low, the question of bargaining does seldom arise. The cultivators, hard-pressed for money, generally conclude the transactions in a hurry and do hardly get fair returns. Paddy, for instance, has been sold even at Rs. 13'00 *paise* per *Maund* immediately after harvesting. And soon after, the price-rise records Rs.17'00 *paise* per *Maund* subsequently. The floor-price by the Government of West Bengal, then in the offing, has not been found yet implemented. Price of jute per *Maund* varies from Rs. 17'00 *paise* to Rs. 21'00 *paise*.

LIVESTOCK

Even though animal husbandry is not any household's primary occupation or sphere of work, cattle are valued by all as wealth. A villager deems it a prize possession to own a bullock or a cow. The village has 44 milch cattle owned by 24 households, 87 draught bullocks in the possession of 34 households, 71 cows not giving milk and young calves in the ownership of 28 households and 36 goats in 21 families. The distribution of the families and the ownership of the different species of the livestock may be evident from the Table 29.

Ducks and geese or fowls are not reared

TABLE 29
LIVESTOCK

Community	No. of households owning milch cows	Total no. milch cows	No. of households owning draught bullocks	Total no. of draught bullocks	No. of households owning cows not giving milk and young calves	Total no. of cows not giving milk and young calves	No. of households owning goats	Total no. goats
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	19	38	28	77	22	56	16	28
Namasudra	4	5	5	9	5	11	5	8
Tantubaya	1	1	1	1	1	4	..	..
Total	24	44	34	87	28	71	21	36

ECONOMY

TABLE 30

OWNERSHIP PATTERN OF LIVESTOCK

Community	No. of households owning																		
	Draught bullocks numbering							Cows numbering				Cows not giving milk and young calves numbering							Goats numbering
	One	Two	Four	Five	Seven	Eight	One	Two	Three	Four	One	Two	Three	Four	Seven	Nine	One	Two	Four
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	3	17	5	1	1	1	7	7	3	2	11	2	3	4	1	1	8	6	2
Namasudra	3	1	1	..	..	..	3	1	..	..	1	2	2	..	..	..	2	3	..
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	7	18	6	1	1	1	11	8	3	2	12	4	5	5	1	1	10	9	2

by any household. On account of the absence of any tank or pond in the village, duck-rearing is not popular. Poultry has not been reared for want of enough space in the compound and also in apprehension of depredations by jackals from the village jungles.

Table 30 will show the distribution of the households according to the range, number and variety of livestock in their possession.

Draught bullocks, indispensable for cultivation, are owned by 34 cultivating households, out of 35 cultivating families. The solitary cultivating household, now without any draught bullock, once had one, which was sold out to meet the deficit finance of the household. The household cultivates land on crop-share with the draught bullocks of his landowner. Each of the seven households owning a draught bullock ploughs the land under cultivation with one bullock on loan from others. Five of them who are sharecroppers take the other bullock from their landlords. Two other households get the other bullock of the pair on loan from their neighbours. The households taking the bullock on loan do not

make any payment to the owner either in kind or in cash. They usually provide fodder to the bullock, till it is returned to the owner.

Where households having bigger areas of agricultural land under personal cultivation as owner-cultivators or sharecroppers or as both should possess adequate number of draught bullocks, it is found that two households possessing seven and eight draught bullocks have land measuring 80 *Bighas* and 75 *Bighas* in area. But the household having five draught bullocks has agricultural land of 10 *Bighas* only. In fact, it has three draught bullocks and two buffaloes, and it is the only household with buffaloes which are primarily kept for drawing carts.

The system of engaging a cowboy to look after the cattle is not in practice in the present village. The cows and the bullocks are taken out in the morning by a male member of the household. The cattle are allowed to graze in the open uncultivable land lying fallow or in the riversides. Generally, young boys tend the grazing cattle and keep watch on them, so that they may not stray and trespass

into the agricultural fields. Sometimes cattle, tied with a rope to a wooden peg fixed into the ground, are allowed to graze within a certain area. Abundance of grass in the fields and riverbanks provide enough fodder for the cattle and make good the absence of a regular pasture in the village.

Feeding

Straw and rice both provide the main forage for the cattle. All the agricultural households obtain the stock of straw, after harvesting paddy and stack it up in round *Moras* (Haystacks) after thrashing. The female members mince the straw into small pieces and place them in wooden or earthen mangers in the cattlesheds. Where there is no manger, fodder is usually supplied to the cattle in buckets. The womenfolk in almost all the households are entrusted with the care of the cattle and also their feeding in the morning and in the evening. Though the cattle devour enough green grass in the fields, the food provided at home does not appear to be sufficient in either quantity or quality. Most of the cattle give a very poor show of their health. Emaciated, lanky and bony as they appear, the animals are said

TABLE 31

SALE OF MILK AND OWNERSHIP OF MILCH COWS

No. of milch cows per household	Households selling milk upto one Seer		Households selling milk upto two Seers		
	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Namasudra	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Namasudra	Tantubaya
1	1	..	..	1	1
2	2	1	2	..	..
3	1	..	..	..	..
4	2	..	..	..	..
Total	6	1	2	1	1

suffer from malnutrition and negligent management.

Utilisation of milk and other product

Of the 24 households rearing milch cows, only 11 households sell milk after retaining a portion for consumption at home. Seven households, constituted by one Namasudra and six Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, each sell one *Seer* of milk and each of the four households, consisting of two Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, one Namasudra and one Tantubaya, sells milk upto two *Seers*. The Table 31 relates to the sale of milk by the households and the ownership of the milch cows.

The households sell milk obviously to supplement their income. But at the same time it is true that the milk is sold because there is excess quantity left over for sale outside, after meeting the requirements of the households. The sale of milk has not developed into a flourishing dairying trade on account of the fact that supply of milk is neither steady nor assured throughout the year.

Milking is done by the female members in all the households owning milch cows, whether or not they sell milk. To milk a cow, usually an experienced member initiates a novice in the art. It is also primarily intended to get the cow acquainted with the new hand. Secondly, fingers have to be manipulated most carefully so as not to hurt the teats of the milch cow.

All the eleven households selling milk have their markets, rather their clientele, to be more candid, confined to the *Mouzas* of Rampur and Singimari. The seller households do not find in the village any buyer, who would purchase the surplus milk

intended for sale. The reasons are twofold. Whereas the households owning milch cows do not have any need to purchase any milk, three households, out of the remaining 27 families, consume milk but do not purchase it from their covillagers. The sale has, therefore, to be conducted outside the village among the patron buyers, who pay at the end of every month the dues to the respective suppliers. The milk is either distributed by the male members of the household to the clients or taken by the customers themselves on visit to the house of the supplier.

The market for the sale and purchase of cattle is situated at Rampur and in Barabhuisa (eight kilometres away) in Kumargram police station in the district of Jalpaiguri, where the cattle-market is held once in a week on the *Hat-day*.

The most common diseases among the cattle comprise an ulcer in the neck caused

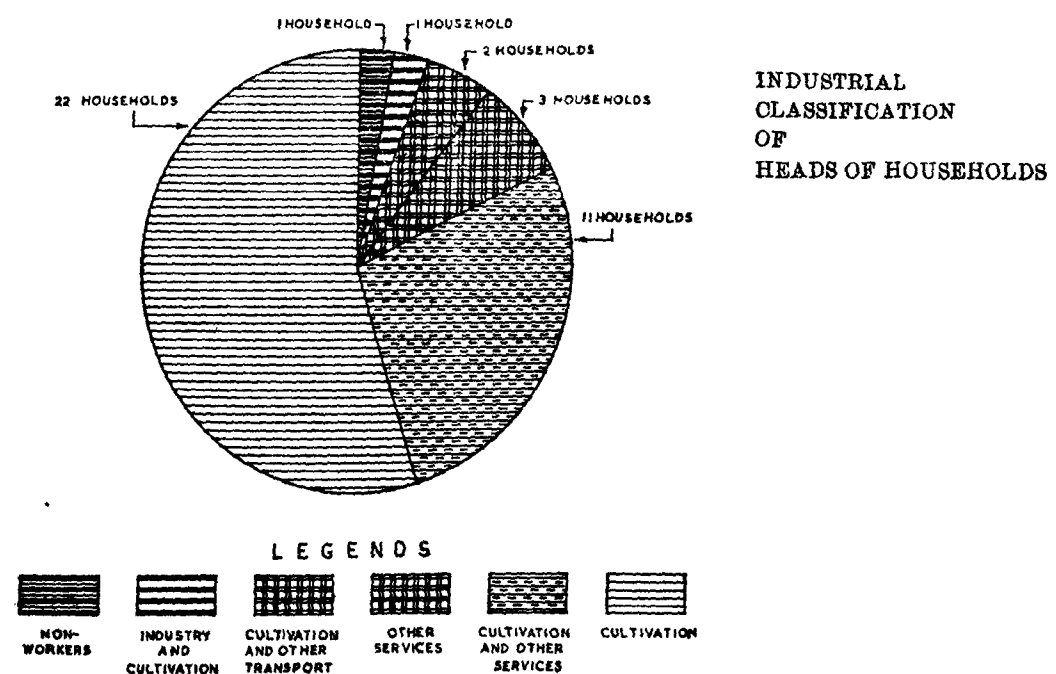
by the yoke, swelling of the teats and incessant salivation. Of these diseases, ulceration in the neck is the most painful disease. The villagers do not take the help of any qualified Veterinary Doctor posted in the Block Development Office at Tufanganj. They treat the diseases themselves with quack remedies, indigenous herbs and medicines.

FISHING

Tanks and ponds being absent in the village, pisciculture has not organised itself into an occupation. No household is connected with fishing as an occupation, either primarily or secondarily. The river Raidak abounds in fish of very small size and the catch is made by the households more as an amateurish feat than a professional trade. Fishing is done with nets mostly by the male members of the households.

OCCUPATIONAL PATTERN

In the absence of adequate data relating



MADHUR BHASA

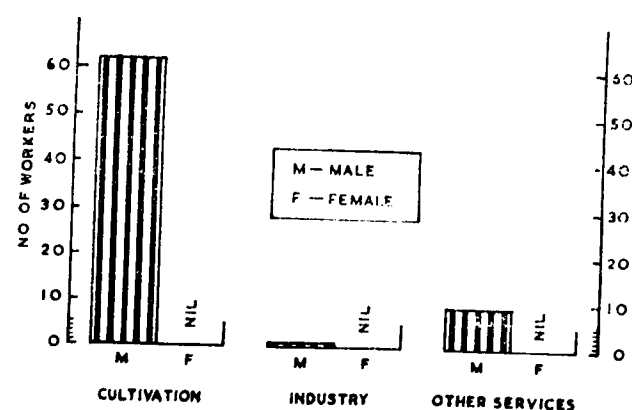
TABLE 32
INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF HEADS
OF HOUSEHOLDS

Community	No. of house- holds	Cultivation					Non- wor- ker
		Culti- vation and other ser- vices	Culti- vation and trans- port vices	Indus- try and culti- ser- vices	Other ser- vices		
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	20	8	2	..	..	1
Namasudra	8	2	2	..	1	3	..
Tantubaya	1	..	1	..	..	..	..
Total	40	22	11	2	1	3	1

TABLE 33
INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF WORKERS

Community	Cultivation		Industry		Other services		Total workers	
	Males	Fe- males	Males	Fe- males	Males	Fe- males	Males	Fe- males
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	54	..	..	..	4	..	58	..
Namasudra	7	..	1	..	5	..	13	..
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	..
Total	62	..	1	..	9	..	72	..

INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION OF WORKERS



to the occupations of the people for the Census decades antedating 1951, it is difficult to discern the nature of the occupations of the people of Madhur Bhasa, to read any change therein and also to understand the exact trend of the occupations to which the people might have been directed for several years past. Even in 1951 Census, the data relating to the livelihood classes of the people are not adequate for comparison with those of 1961 Census in the same village because of different concepts of economic classification of workers. Even if minute quantitative changes concerning the occupation of the people in the Census decade 1951-61 is difficult to be deciphered from the set of data for the two Census years, a broad qualitative comparability is not lost for that. In 1951 Census, out of 153 persons in the village Madhur Bhasa, 74 persons were cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependants, 56 persons were cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependants and nine persons were cultivating labourers and their dependants. Thus, roughly 90.8 per cent of the total population of the village might be classified as belonging to the agricultural livelihood class according to the data of 1951 Census available for the village. In 1961 Census, however, 86 persons (30.7 per cent), out of a population of 280, are workers, of which 76 persons (86.4 per cent) are cultivators and for that matter, dependent on agriculture. According to the survey, it is found that 227 persons (91.4 per cent), out of a population of 238, are dependent on agriculture directly or indirectly. Agricultural occupations, whether primary or secondary, account for 87.5 per cent of the total working force of 72 persons. Agriculture has thus spelt out the occupational pattern of the people and has in all probability sus-

ECONOMY

tained the village economy also for the last 20 years or so (1951-71), if not more.

Though 55.0 per cent of the households depend exclusively on agriculture, 90.0 per cent of the households have drawn some economic sustenance from agriculture, cultivation not being the main and only occupation of the heads.

That agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the villagers is also reflected in the Table 33. Of the 72 workers, as many as 62 persons are engaged primarily in agriculture. That the people in Madhur Bhasa have to eke out their existence with what they earn from agriculture is patent

from the same Table. There being no major village industry in Madhur Bhasa, the scope for employment in this sector is insignificant, nay nil.

The absence of the female worker in all the spheres of economic activity is remarkable indeed. The prejudice of the households against females working out of doors has been reported to be the negative factor for holding back women from an entry into the working force. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas have the pride that they never allow their women to work and earn. The tradition is hard to break. Lack of opportunities also explains the absence of female workers in any occupation. One will be surprised to learn

TABLE 34
WORKERS, ETHNIC GROUPS AND OCCUPATIONS

Community	No. of workers	No. of workers as							
		Cultivators		Carpenters		Day labourers		Darwans	
		Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	58	54	..	..	..	3	..	1	..
Namasudra	13	7	..	1	..	5	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	72	62	..	1	..	8	..	1	..

TABLE 35
WORKERS, AGE-GROUPS AND OCCUPATIONS

Age-groups	No. of workers									
	Total		Cultivators		Carpenters		Day labourers		Darwans	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0-14	2	..	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
15-34	38	..	32	..	..	..	5	..	1	..
35-59	26	..	24	..	1	..	1	..	..	..
60 and over	6	..	5	..	..	..	1	..	..	..
Total	72	..	62	..	1	..	8	..	1	..

MADHUR BHASA

that except in carpentry in which a solitary worker is engaged, there is no other manufacturing or repairing or processing industry in the village.

The absence of agricultural labour is another feature of the village-economy. The households themselves till land of their own and also land of other received on crop-share. One also notes the absence of any trade and commerce in the village and if so, it is because there is no trading activity in the village. There being neither a grocer's shop nor a tea-stall in the village, no household thrives strictly on any trading business. There are a few day-labourers though, they have no fixed income nor any definite sphere of work. Day-labour is actually an uncertain job, which normally does not attract the households. Only three households with no agricultural land of their own have to seek their earnings as day-labourers. The village and its surrounding do not offer any opportunity for the villagers to earn their livelihood from occupations other than agriculture. The land-locked country, far away from an urban area, has to remain content with the paltry resources of cultivable land at the disposal of the villagers and with the produce that the land offers

every year. It is significant that though there are village jungles and a reserved forest on the other bank of the river, none depends on forestry as a means of livelihood except for collecting the firewood for fuel.

Primary and secondary occupation

Of the 72 workers, only 19 persons (26.4 per cent) have any secondary occupation in addition to their primary occupations. The Table 36 will show the distribution of the 19 workers with a secondary occupation.

Altogether 18 persons, out of the 62 workers in cultivation, pursue a secondary occupation. Three Rajbanshi Kshatriyas engaged in transport belong to two households having their own carts. The two carts are used for the household needs mainly in agricultural season, but in other parts of the year the carts are put on hire. The carts are taken to the market at Rampur on the marketing day and used on hire for the carriage of goods to the neighbouring villages. Even on other days, persons requiring the cart for most urgent needs like hospitalisation of patients come to Madhur Bhasa to hire the carts. The freight varies with distance and load, but for the distance of three miles covered

TABLE 36

SECONDARY OCCUPATION

Primary occupation	Total workers with primary occupation	No. of workers with secondary occupation of									Total workers with secondary occupation
		Cultivation			Transport			Other services			
		Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Nama-sudra	Tantu-baya	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Nama-sudra	Tantu-baya	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Nama-sudra	Tantu-baya	
Cultivation	62	..	..	..	3	..	..	12	2	1	18
Industry	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Other services	9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	72	..	1	..	3	..	..	12	2	1	19

ECONOMY

from Rampur to Jorai usual freight is Rs.4.00

he cultivates in the agricultural season. But none of the nine persons, engaged in other services primarily, has any secondary occupation. Landless people are drawn to other services as day-labourers. But once in other services, they have little time to pursue another occupation in addition to their main pursuit.

WORKERS AND NON-WORKERS

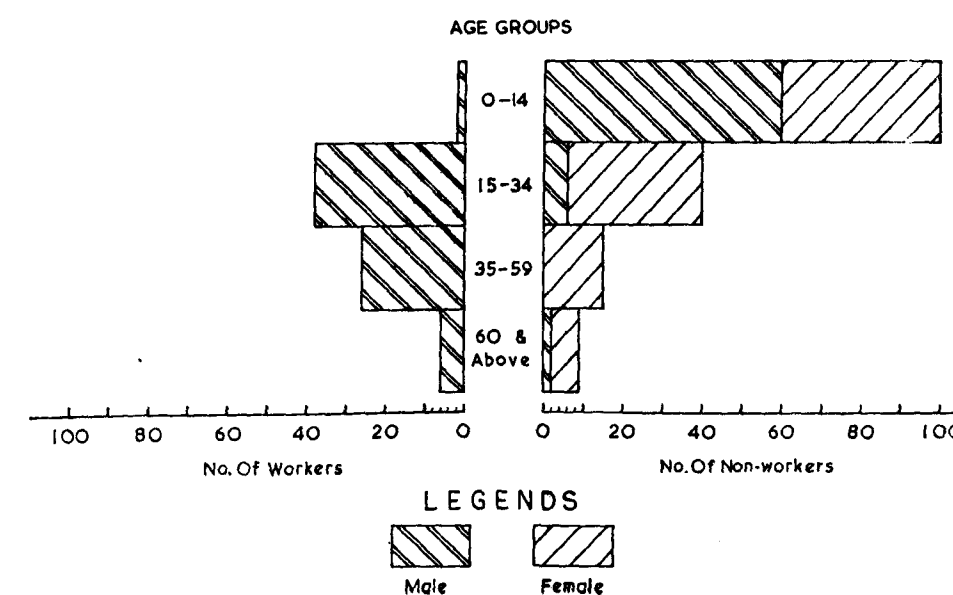
Table 37 relating to the distribution of workers and non-workers according to sex and broad age-group shows that

TABLE 37

WORKER AND NON-WORKERS

Age-group	Total population			Workers			Non-workers		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
0-14	102	62	40	2	2	..	100	60	40
15-34	78	44	34	38	38	..	40	6	34
35-59	41	26	15	26	26	..	15	..	15
60+	17	8	9	6	6	..	11	2	9
Total	238	140	98	72	72	..	166	68	98

WORKERS AND NON-WORKERS



only 30.3 per cent of the total population are workers and 69.7 per cent are non-workers. According to 1961 Census, the total workers of 86 persons constitute 33.7 per cent of the total population of 280. The participation-rate of the people does not seem to have recorded any change since 1961. If the stagnant economy is reflected in the static participation-rate of the people in a productive economic activity, the social outlook and attitude seem to be steeped in the same stereotypes of tradition and old values. As will be evident from the fact, no female member is a partisan in the working force of the village, as in 1961 Census. The participation-rate of the males in the working force is obviously very high on account of the absence of any female worker. Of the total male persons of 140, 51.4 per cent are workers, whereas in 1961 Census, 54.1 per cent of the 159 males were workers. The variation in the percentage of males constituting the working force

even after four years and the trend, if any, have been one of constancy in the sphere of work. The same feature is also observed in the rural areas of the Tufanganj Police Station where 31.1 per cent of the total population and 56.3 per cent of the total males are workers, the number of female workers compared to the total females being negligible (percentage being 3.2).

On an analysis of the working population age-group wise, it is found that the children in the age-group 0-14 constitute 2.0 per cent of the working force. The working child labour comprises 3.2 per cent of the male children of the village. Only 53.8 per cent of the potential labour force in the working age-group 15-59 are workers. Persons of the age of 60 years and above, though expected as retired workers, are not all so in the village, as 35.3 per cent of the old and the aged participate in the working force.

TABLE 38
NON-WORKERS

Age-group	Total non-workers		Full-time students or children attending school		Persons engaged only in household duties		Dependant infants and children not attending school and persons permanently disabled		Retired persons not employed again, rentiers, persons living on agricultural or non-agricultural rental or dividend or other persons of dependant means		Beggars, vagrants, independent women without indication of source of income and others of unspecified source of existence		Persons seeking employment for the first time	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
0-14	60	40	16	1	..	..	44	39	..	..	..	..	..	..
15-34	6	34	3	..	..	34	1	..	..	..	..	..	2	..
35-59	..	15	..	..	..	14	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
60+	2	9	..	..	..	9	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Total	68	98	19	1	..	57	46	39	..	1	1	..	2	..

Of the children in the age-group 0-14 comprising 60.2 per cent of the non-workers, school-going students and dependant infants explain 17.0 per cent and 83.0 per cent respectively. Persons in the working age-group constitute 33.1 per cent of the total non-workers. The females, being in the majority, account for 89.1 per cent of the non-workers in this age-group. Of the 49 female non-workers in the working age-group, all but one are engaged in domestic duties and are housewives for that matter. There is only one female non-worker who subsists on the produce of the owned land, received from her share-cropper. She is, therefore, a rentier. There is one disabled male in the (15-34) age-group, who incapacitated because of his deranged mind, depends on his father, a beggar.

Of the eleven persons aged 60 years and above, nine females are old housewives. Of the rest, one is a tubercular patient dependant on the income of his cultivator son and the other is a Rajbanshi Kshatriya beggar, whose son is insane. Even though he is landed, he does not cultivate the land because of old age. But he does not get it share-cropped either. He waits for better days to come when he wishes his son on recovery to follow the plough. His miseries have evoked the sympathy of his covillagers, who help him from time to time. He also begs in his errands through the neighbouring villages from morning till midday, collecting alms in kind mostly.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Of the six males in the (15-34) age-group, two Rajbanshi Kshatriyas seek employment for the first time. Both are within their teens. One of them, a literate with some educational standard,

has read upto Class V, but the other is illiterate. None of them has any previous experience in any work, not even in the agricultural fields. Both the persons belonging to households with some landed property will be drawn to the agricultural work of their households as fresh entrants, instead of swelling the rural labour-force of unskilled rank and file.

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY

In a village with the people depending exclusively on land for their livelihood, the occupation of the villagers is agriculture-oriented. The people have been following their occupations for generations and the present trend continuing, they will follow the same occupation for generations to come. The present day economy of the village has not been activated by any extraneous catalytic agent.

If the traditional occupation is construed as the occupation of the caste, it transpires that cultivation is the traditional occupation of the Rajbanshi-Kshatriyas and the Namasudras. Weaving is the traditional occupation of the Tantubayas. The Rajbanshi Kshatriya households have not given up their traditional occupation in so far as the heads are concerned. But the Namasudras could not strictly stick to their caste occupation. If half of the Namasudra households have deviated from their traditional occupation, they have been forced to do so. They have neither any land of their own in this village nor have they succeeded to receive any land as share-croppers. Three of these households depend on other services and one on household industry. The head of the solitary Tantubaya household with one member is a retired man and consequently a non-worker. So, the question of following a traditional occupation does not arise in this case.

MADHUR BHASA

If the question of occupational mobility is viewed from the point of father's occupation, it is found that none of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households has seceded from neither the occupation of his father nor the traditional occupation of the community. The Namasudra households have shown occupational mobility to the extent of 37.5 per cent, not by choice of a more lucrative occupation. Because of lack of any choice, they have been forced to accept whatever they have found handy and available to earn their livelihood in a land of their adoption in the wake of migration

after the Partition of Bengal. Though four Namasudra households do not follow the occupation of their community or for that matter, their traditional occupation, three of them have moved away from their fathers' occupations. The head of one household, which has not left his father's occupation, is a carpenter. The head of the Tantubaya household, now a non-worker, had followed his father's occupation, when he was an active worker.

The occupational mobility, therefore, among all the castes is found to be insigni-

TABLE 38

MOBILITY WITH REFERENCE TO TRADITIONAL OCCUPATION

Community	No. of heads of households with traditional occupation changed			No. of households	Present occupation of the heads of households	Traditional occupation	Reason
	Voluntarily	Forced by circumstances	For other reasons				
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	..	..	..	..	Agriculture	Agriculture	..
Namasudra	..	3	1	3	Other services	Do	Loss of land
				1	Household industry	Do	Following father's occupation
Tantubaya	..	..	..	..	Non-worker	Weaving	Invalid
Total	..	3	1	4	..	..	..

TABLE 39

OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY WITH REFERENCE TO THE OCCUPATION OF THE FATHER

Community	No. of heads of households not pursuing the occupations of their fathers			No. of households	Occupation of the head of household	Occupation of the father of the head of household	Reason for cessation
	Voluntarily	Forced by circumstances	For other reasons				
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	..	..	..	..	Agriculture	Agriculture	..
Namasudra	..	3	..	3	Other services	Do	Loss of land
Tantubaya	..	..	..	..	Non-worker	Weaving	Invalid
Total	..	3	..	3	..	Do	..

ECONOMY

ficant. It will perhaps be an improper and wrong step to distort the actual picture, if the conservative outlook of the people is ascribed to their immobility. Economically rather forced to be in their old ruts, the people cannot move away from where they now pursue their old occupations.

As the heads of 16 households have adult sons engaged in some occupation or the other, the test to record the aspiration of the parents about their children has not been applied to those households. Of the heads of 24 households with children yet to be engaged in any economic pursuit, 22 persons are agriculturists. Of them, 21 persons wish the children in the households to be agriculturists when their turn comes. These heads are really not actuated by the prospects of agriculture in as much as they are by their lack of choice. With little or practically no education being arranged for their children, the horizon of the agriculturists is confined to the fragmented holdings in their possession. The farmers cannot conceive their daily bread to come from any sphere other than the small plots of land at their disposal and under their plough. Born fatalists with strong convictions, the farmers cannot stretch their imagination any more beyond heredity. They believe rather cynically that the son of an agriculturist cannot hope to wield a pen; instead he should know how to hold the plough. Only one cultivator has struck an unusually discordant note and seems unconventional in outlook when he is found to cherish a fond hope and a pleasant dream in respect of his son, now a student in a Secondary School. His ambition is to get his school-going son, on completion of the latter's educational career, appointed to a post comparable to that of the Investigator, even though his winged

fancy could not, despite an unrestricted flight, have the faintest idea of the world from which the Investigator had come to him to enquire of his latent hopes and inarticulate desires. The impact of the outside world on the village people is no more and no less than a drop in the ocean. Of the families engaged in other services, head of one household with his insane son only wishes a speedy recovery of his son from his mental ailment and his early rehabilitation in normal life. The head of another household having had to bear the brunt of displacement from his native home in the wake of Partition, regrets his incapacity to think of the future career of his son. Shocks in life he has received many in course of his grim struggle against heavy odds and many a storm he has weathered. Now, he admits that his vision is so blurred and imaginative faculty so blunted that he desires to risk no more venture, even in planning a career for his son and in landing himself in abysmal grief and disappointment at the end of his life's journey. Instead, he prefers to be a pessimist in life's rough sea, where ship-wrecks are, in his thinking, normal events, but a safe voyage is a lotus-eater's dream. It is, perhaps, better to leave the matter where it is, instead of pricking the wounded heart further with an analytical thorn. If by flogging a dead horse one does not restore it to life in any way, of what use will it be in doing so?

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The village Madhur Bhasa is composed of households which draw sustenance mainly from the land and from the harvest that yields to the sickles. As pointed out earlier, the village is land-hungry in the sense that the people have not the optimum landed area required for their maintenance. Excluding the landless peasantry and a few

labourers, others cannot expand the landed area, as few have the means; they can depend on other means neither, for their means are very few.

In such a village with very limited opportunities and poor resources most of the households present a dismal picture of abject poverty and frustration, where hopes are very often blighted by the river Raidak's flood and fears loom large whenever the people hear the footsteps of outsiders at their doors. The Investigator has been viewed by many households as a representative sent by the Government to enquire into their economy, only to suggest proposals for fresh taxes to be levied on their houses and their cattle. The poorer households were most outspoken about their miseries and presented a bleak picture of their grim suffering. The households of some means, though numbered few, were mostly silent about their income. The households with no account of their budget could not directly help the present enquiry readily get their income and expenditure. Almost in every case, income and expenditure had to be computed. The data, therefore, might be prejudiced by individual bias that would usually infiltrate into such an effort. Yet, from the data on the income and expenditure of the households, computed from the figures collected in the field, an economic picture of the village emerges. Reacting to the point of income and its sources, several households ruefully curse their lot and remark in disappointment how little they get from so small a landed area at their disposal against so much of hard labour for its cultivation to feed so many mouths. Though looking to the Government for opportunities to augment their income, they fail to suggest any means which would achieve their ends. In their view, occasional help, even when coming

from the Government, often amounts to charity and does not materially help them earn either a sustained or an augmented income. In other words, the opportunities of employment being largely restricted, the prospects for any resuscitation of the economy of the people remain only a distant hope. The households have in a pathetic undertone delineated the dull and monotonous life, they lead everyday. And in discussing their expenditure pattern and household budget the point-blank remark of quite a number of households is that many a day they do not have even two square meals.

Monthly income-group

As one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household depends on begging, it has been excluded from the Tables 40 and 41, presented to show the distribution of the households by income.

TABLE 40

Occupation	No. of households	Households with monthly income of				
		Less than Rs.25/-	Rs.26/- to Rs.50/-	Rs.51/- to Rs.75/-	Rs.76/- to Rs.100/-	Rs.101/- and above
Cultivation	35	..	6	7	11	11
Industry	1	..	..	1	..	..
Other services	3	..	..	3	..	..
Total	39	..	6	11	11	11

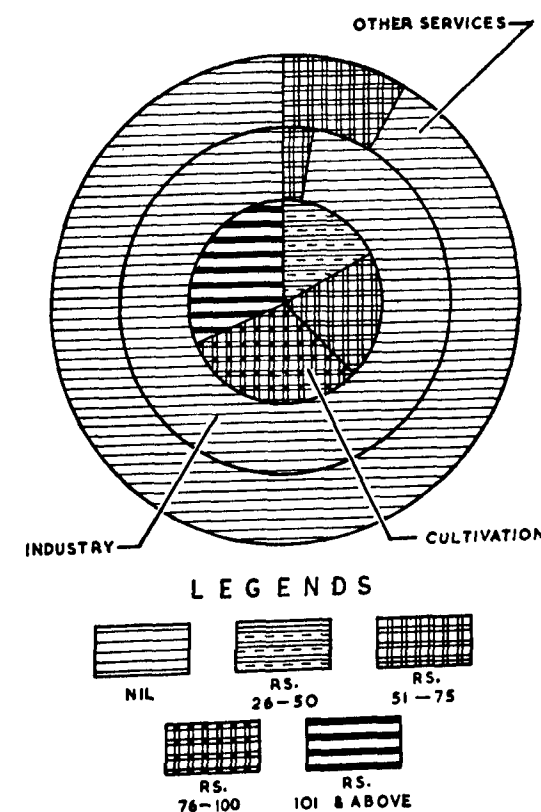
While about one third of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households earn more than Rs.100.00 *paise* per month, the Namasudras and the Tantubaya have not the same income. Only one Namasudra has a monthly earning of more than Rs.100.00

ECONOMY

TABLE 41

MONTHLY INCOME AND ETHNIC GROUP							
Community	No. of earning house- holds	Households with monthly income of (in rupees)					Remarks
		Less than 25	26-50	51-75	76-100	100+	
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	30	..	6	5	9	10	All in cultivation
Namasudra	8	..	..	6	1	1	4 households in cultivation, 1 in industry and 3 in other services
Tantubaya	1	..	..	..	1	..	1 in cultivation
Total	39	..	6	11	11	11	..

MONTHLY INCOME AND ETHNIC GROUP



paise. But others make both ends meet with less than Rs.100.00 *paise* a month. The households which have a monthly earning of more than Rs.100.00 *paise* cultivate land measuring 20 *Bighas* or more on an average. Agricultural labourers have no fixed income for all the days of the

month and that is why, they are poorer than the agriculturists. The three households in other services earn between Rs. 51.00 *paise* and Rs. 75.00 *paise* a month.

Gross income and sources

Of the total annual income of Rs. 48741.00 *paise* earned by the households, about 79.5 per cent have been earned by 37 households from cultivation. The break-up of the income and their percentage distribution are given in Table 42.

TABLE 42

GROSS ANNUAL INCOME AND SOURCES

Source	Amount in rupees	Percentage	No. of earning households	Percentage
Cultivation	38765.00	79.5	37	92.5
Livestock	975.00	2.0	10	25.0
Wages	5257.00	10.8	13	32.5
Industry	495.00	1.0	1	2.5
Forestry and kitchen produce	572.00	1.2	10	25.0
Trade	15.00	0.0	1	2.5
Transport	730.00	1.5	2	5.0
Service	380.00	0.8	1	2.5
Sale of assets	1542.00	3.2	10	25.0
Total	48741.00	100.0	..	..

MADHUR BHASA

While cultivation, wages, industry, transport and service are the sources from which the households have steady income, the earnings from other avenues are periodical and as such, cannot be viewed as really very dependable. Ten households which have an income from forestry have actually earned the same from the sale of bamboos. The clumps of bamboos have practically been cleared by all and there is very little likelihood of getting any return from the same source for years to come. Again, sale of assets, though shown in the Table under the receipt head, cannot afford the households real opportunities for a regular income. Similarly, the persons earning from the livestock are not really professional dairymen having a number of milch cattle in their possession. They are, in reality, households owning one or two milch cows and selling milk of very limited quantity to supplement their paltry earnings. Besides, this source of income is not very dependable, especially when the average number of milch cattle in one's possession does not exceed one or two.

Expenditure

If it is difficult to get a correct idea of the income of a household, more vexatious becomes the task to ascertain its expenditure on different heads. Most of the households having hand-to-mouth existence with limited income have professed their ignorance of the idea of budget. They are reported to be aware of their liabilities only.

Indebtedness

Even in a village like Madhur Bhasa where the households enjoy very little economic opportunities except from land, the number of households in debt is only 28, constituted by 21 Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and seven Namasudras and explaining 70.0

per cent of the households. But, it should not lead one to presume that 12 other households are too affluent to have any necessity to stretch out their hands to the creditors for loan. Instead, the households have been observed to be free from any debt at the time of enquiry. It should be borne in mind that not many of them are in a very solvent state.

TABLE 43

RANGE OF INDEBTEDNESS AND INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

Range of debt in Rs.	No. of Rajbanshi Kshatriya households		No. of Namasudra households			Total no. of indebted households
	Cultivation	Non-workers	Cultivation	Industry	Other services	
1-25	3	..	..	..	1	4
26-50	3	..	2	1	1	7
51-100	1	..	1	..	..	2
101-150	4	..	..	..	..	4
151-200	3	1	..	..	..	4
201-300	2	..	..	..	..	2
301-400	2	..	..	..	..	2
401-650	1	..	..	..	..	1
651-900	..	..	..	..	..	..
901-1150	1	..	..	..	..	1
1151-1750	..	..	..	..	..	..
1751-2350	..	..	1	..	..	1
Total	20	1	4	1	2	28

Indebtedness seems to be pronounced more among the Namasudras than among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. For out of 31 Rajbanshi Kshatriya households, only 67.7 per cent are indebted, whereas 87.5 per cent of the Namasudra families have taken loans. From the point of livelihood class, no feature is striking enough to merit scrutiny for the reason that cultivation is

ECONOMY

the occupation of the majority of the households. About 68.6 per cent of the cultivating households are in debt. One may take note of the fact that majority of the Namasudras have taken loan to the extent of hundred rupees (the number of households with such amount of debt being six), leaving aside the solitary Namasudra with the debt ranging between Rs.(1751-2350). But, among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas indebtedness is spread over all the ranges.

It is interesting to observe that 75.0 per cent of the indebted households are in debt to the extent of Rs.200.00 *paise* and 78.5 per cent of the indebted households are within the monthly income-group of Rs.100.00 *paise*. The households within the monthly income-group of Rs.100.00 *paise* have taken loan to the extent Rs 650.00 *paise*. The fact of one's getting loan to the extent of six hundred rupees and more, even though it belongs to the income-group of Rs.100.00 *paise* does not attest to one's credit-worthiness. The households have mostly taken petty loans from different sources to meet their requirements from time to time and that is why, the total amount of debt looks quite substantial compared to the amounts of income. Again, households in the monthly income-group of Rs.(1-100) appear to have incurred debts more than those who belong to the monthly income-group of Rs. 100.00 *paise* and more. Only 75.0 per cent of the households in the monthly income-group of Rs.(1-100) are indebted. But, 54.5 per cent of the indebted households have a monthly income of Rs.100.00 *paise* and more. Of the indebted households within the monthly income-group of Rs. (1-100), 13 households (61.9 per cent) have taken loans to meet the domestic expenses mainly.

The total loan taken by the 28 indebted households amounts to Rs.7162.00 *paise*, of which Rs.1,215.00 *paise* (17.0 per cent) have been taken from the Government by five households. Again, the amount of loan advanced by private sources runs to the tune of Rs.5947.00 *paise* (83.0 per cent). Of the loan advanced by the non-Government sources, Rs.500.00 *paise* (84 per cent) have been given by two Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village to a couple of households, (one Rajbanshi Kshatriya and one Namasudra). The villagers are then bound in bondage of debt to financiers outside the village who hold the share of 76.1 per cent of the total loan and 91.6 per cent of the private loan accepted by the indebted households. In the logic of things only two persons in the village have the means to come to the help of their covillagers in time of the latter's need. But, even of the two Rajbanshi Kshatriya creditors of the village, one is himself indebted to a private financier outside Madhur Bhasa. The paradox of how a debtor could also act as a creditor is explained by the fact that though the creditor has advanced the loan to his covillager about three years back, he had to reverse his role of a creditor and play that of a debtor in taking loan of a larger amount from an outside source to meet his own need, after he had failed to get back the amount from his debtor. It will perhaps not be irrelevant to treat this Rajbanshi Kshatriya as a resourceful creditor with the backing of good financial resource at his disposal, so that one may turn to him for debt at any time of the year. The other Rajbanshi Kshatriya, though free from any debt at the time of investigation, is by no means in a position to help any distressed villager in crisis. True, he has advanced some loan to a household, but his capacity to lend is limited to petty

MADHUR BHASA

MONTHLY INCOME AND INDEBTEDNESS

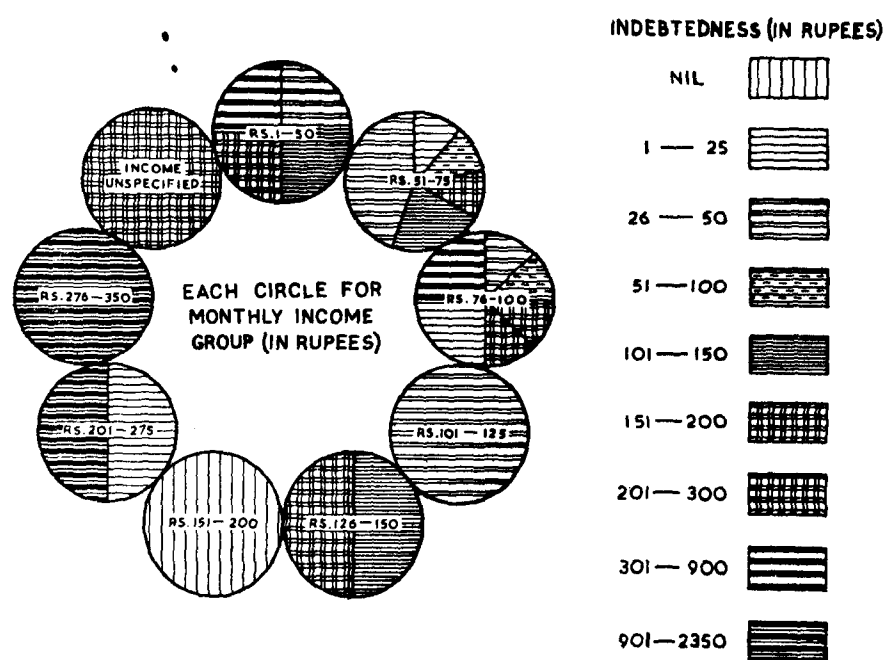


TABLE 44

INDEBTEDNESS AND INCOME-GROUPS

Range of monthly income in Rs.	No. of households by range of indebtedness in rupees												Total no. of indebted households
	1 to 25	26 to 50	51 to 100	101 to 150	151 to 200	201 to 300	301 to 400	401 to 650	651 to 900	901 to 1150	1151 to 1751	1751 to 2350	
1-25	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
26-50	..	1	..	1	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	4
51-75	1	4	1	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	9
76-100	2	1	1	..	1	1	1	1	..	..	..	..	8
101-125	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
126-150	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
151-200	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
201-275	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	2
276-350	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	1
Income unspecified	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	4	7	2	4	4	2	2	1	..	1	..	1	28

ECONOMY

TABLE 45

NON-RESIDENT CREDITORS FOR BIG LOAN (Rs.100.00 *paise* or more)

Place of residence of the creditor	Distance from the village in miles	No. of creditors belonging to the community of					Total no. of creditors
		Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Namasudra	Sunri	Behari	Marwari	
Bhandijalash	9	2	..	..	..	..	2
Baxihat	9	..	..	..	..	1	1
Kumargram	6	1	..	..	..	..	1
Takoamari	2	1	..	..	..	..	1
Rampur	1½	..	3	1	1	..	5
Singimari	½	4	2	1	..	..	7
Total	..	8	5	2	1	1	17

TABLE 46

NON-RESIDENT CREDITORS FOR SMALL LOAN (Rs.100.00 *paise* or less)

Place of residence of the creditor	Distance from the village in miles	No. of creditors belonging to the community of				Total no. of creditors
		Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Namasudra	Marwari	Unknown	
Jaldhowa	5	..	1	..	..	1
Jorai	5	..	..	..	1	1
Mahishkhuchi	3	1	..	..	..	1
Valua	3	..	1	..	..	1
Rampur	1½	..	..	1	1	2
Singimari	½	..	7	..	..	7
Total	..	1	9	1	2	13

amounts. On a resume, it appears that the villagers have no tycoon financier, from whom small or large amounts may be taken as loan.

There are altogether 30 persons outside the village, to whom 26 households of Madhur Bhasa are indebted for the amount of Rs.5,447.00 *paise*. Of the 30 creditors living outside, seventeen persons have advanced loan in individual lots, each amounting to Rs.100.00 *paise* and the total loan amounting to Rs. 5,098.00 *paise* (85.7 per cent of the total loan taken from

outsiders). The rest of the thirteen creditors have advanced petty loans amounting to Rs.349.00 *paise*. Tables 45 and 46 will show the residence and ethnic groups of the creditors.

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas constitute about 47.1 per cent of the non-resident creditors, each of whom has advanced more than Rs.100.00 *paise* for any individual item of loan. Again, of the non-resident creditors with loans of less than Rs. 100.00 *paise* advanced to a debtor of Madhur Bhasa, the Namasudras account for 69.2 per cent.

MADHUR BHASA

The villagers have to undertake half a mile to nine miles of journey by road on foot to a creditor for amounts, petty or large. But, it is not known if the creditors, big or small, are so rich and solvent as to meet the occasional needs of these villagers by way of granting loans. Five Namasudra households of Madhur Bhasa are indebted to five creditors of the same community staying in Singimari. The creditor households do not appear to have been approached by any other debtor. They have not advanced any loan to any other person of Madhur Bhasa. Of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya debtor households, five have taken loans of more than Rs.100.00 *paise* for every single item exclusively from four Rajbanshi Kshatriya creditors (three staying in Singimari and

one in Kumargram) and three Rajbanshi Kshatriya families of Madhur Bhasa have taken petty loans from two families of the same community at Singimari and from none else. Six Rajbanshi Kshatriya creditors have not advanced any loan to any other household of Madhur Bhasa belonging to any other caste.

Nature of loan

Though the general practice of the indebted households is to take loan in cash, there are some households which are indebted in kind also. Altogether 11 households (eight Rajbanshi Kshatriya and three Namasudra) have taken loan of paddy to the extent of 36 *Maunds* 20 *Seers* for domestic consumption. The Table 47 shows the range of indebtedness in kind.

TABLE 47
DEBT IN KIND

No. of households in debt	No. of households which borrowed paddy weighing (in Maunds)						
	Less than one	1-1-2-0	2-1-3-0	3-1-4-0	4-1-5-0	5-1-6-0	6-1-7-0
11	3	1	2	1	3	..	1

The debtors who have taken some loan in kind consist of nine households already in debt in cash and two families free from any debt in cash. Nine households indebted in both cash and kind comprise seven loanees in the monthly income-group of Rs.(50-100) and two households with their total monthly income ranging between Rs.100.00 *paise* and Rs.150.00 *paise*. Two of these households free from any debt in cash are constituted by one family with the monthly income of less than Rs.50.00 *paise* and another with the monthly income above Rs.50.00 *paise* but below Rs.100.00 *paise*. Out of 11 persons who have received loans in paddy, four

persons are creditors who also advance loans in cash.

Excepting one Rajbanshi Kshatriya and four Namasudra creditors in the village, nine others consisting of five Namasudras, three Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and one Sunri are residents of the neighbouring villages, Singimari, Rampur and Barabhuisa, all within a radius of six miles.

Rate of interest on loans in cash

Except for loans from the Government, the interest remains unfixed mostly. Loans from the Government carry a rate of interest

ECONOMY

of 6½ per cent per *annum*. But, the rate varies disproportionately in case of loans taken from private sources. In this regard no consideration of caste or religion, place of residence or neighbourliness plays any part in determining the rate of interest.

For loans in cash there have been 43 transactions excluding those concerning the Government and also the loans in kind. In five transactions, out of 43, no interest has been levied. In 14 transactions of loan in cash, out of the rest of 38 cases, interest has been charged to the maximum of 50.0 per cent per *annum*. Rate of interest rises to 60.0 per cent per *annum* in another case. In eleven transactions of loan on mortgage of land, interest has been waived, because the produce of the land has been appropriated wholly by the mortgagee. In none

of the cases of the usufructuary mortgage the mortgagor is allowed to cultivate the mortgaged land on crop-share and as such, he does not, have any say in the nature of crop raised. It is somewhat difficult to calculate the interest on such loans. Still, an attempt has been made to get an idea of the interest by assuming that any paddy is raised from the land and that the average yield of paddy is the same as in other plots of land in the village. Before Table 48 is presented to show the rate of interest in 11 transactions, it should be pointed out that the land is mortgaged with the creditors outside, that average yield of paddy in the village is stated to be four *Maunds* per *Bigha* and the lowest average price of paddy per *Maund* is stated to be Rs.25.00 *paise*.

TABLE 48

INTEREST ON MORTGAGE

Area of mortgaged land (in Bigha)	Place of residence of the mortgagee	Distance from the village in miles	Community of the mortgagee	Community of the mortgagor	Total yield of paddy from the mortgaged land in Maunds	Value of the paddy in rupees	Amount of loan in rupees	Rate of interest per annum
1	Valua	3	Namasudra	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	4	100.00	50.00	200.0
1	Singimari	½	Ditto	Ditto	4	100.00	100.00	100.0
1½	Rampur	1½	Marwari	Ditto	6	150.00	50.00	300.0
1½	Ditto	1½	Sunri	Ditto	6	150.00	100.00	150.0
2	Ditto	1½	Namasudra	Ditto	8	200.00	100.00	200.0
2	Singimari	½	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Ditto	8	200.00	140.00	500.0
2	Ditto	½	Sunri	Ditto	8	200.00	150.00	133.3
2	Ditto	½	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Ditto	8	200.00	200.00	100.0
3	Rampur	1½	Sunri	Ditto	12	300.00	130.00	230.8
6	Takoamari	2	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Ditto	24	600.00	250.00	240.0
8	Bhandijalash	9	Ditto	Ditto	32	800.00	1,200.00	66.7
Total	30				120	3,000.00	2,470.00	121.3

It is really disquieting to find the rate of interest soaring as high 500.0 per cent per *annum* and in no case coming below 66.7 per cent. But, unbelievable though apparently, facts must be faced. And the inevitable happens with the result that landholdings already small on account of fragmentation in the wake of partition of families get further shrunk in size due to mortgage, the impact of which on the economy should better be appreciated than described. The yield per *Bigha* being very low, as already discussed, the crop raised from the small holding in the possession of the indebted households is not sufficient to enable them to pull on smoothly round the year. The slender resource of the land is further minimised by the system of mortgage. It is no wonder, therefore, that debts mount up, as debt begets debt, and the household is in double debt, one to cancel the old loan and another to make both ends meet.

But, this being not all, there remains some more cases of transactions of loan with unique features of their own conveyed best in the Table 49 on six transactions, in which the interest and the principal are to be paid off in stipulated amount of a specific crop. Failure to pay off the debt in time enhances the amount by multiplying the quantity of crop (to be paid off) by the number of defaulting years when repayment is made. The interest here is compounded in a complex way, amounting to usury without the least doubt.

In five, out of the remaining six cases, interest is fixed by the creditors at five *Maunds* of paddy per *annum* for every hundred rupees of loan. Even assuming that paddy sells at Rs.25.00 *paise* per

Maund, the interest per *annum* comes to 12.0 per cent, if not more.

The remaining case is unique in itself in as much as it is the singular case of bonded labour. A Rajbanshi Kshatriya villager is indebted to a Rajbanshi creditor living outside Madhur Bhasa for an amount of Rs.300.00 *paise*. The terms of the debt require the debtor to pledge to the creditor the former's sixteen years old son as a full-time domestic servant for a period of two years without any remuneration in cash except two full meals and two tiffins a day. The creditor also promises two napkins and vests to the debtor's son during the *Pujas*. It is but another form of slavery qualified, but not gilded. The irony of the episode is that the servitude that has hugged her chain round the teenager youth owes her origin to the elder brother's wedlock to defray the cost of which his father has incurred the debt. Unaware of the provisions of the law, he has had to pledge his young son to the creditor in an illegal forward contract. It is neither easy nor possible to work out the rate of interest on the loans of this category, where the human body is mortgaged as the security.

Rate of interest on loans in kind

All the eleven households have incurred debts in kind in 13 transactions of loans in paddy. In three cases the loans have been free of interest, because of the relation of amity and understanding with the creditors who also belong to the debtors' kinsmen.

In 10 transactions of loan in kind interest is also paid in kind at the rate of 50.0 per cent per *annum* in one case, but at 100.0 per cent per *annum* in the remaining nine cases.

ECONOMY

TABLE 49

COMPOUND INTEREST ON LOANS IN KIND

Sl. no.	Community of the debtor	Community of the creditor	Amount of loan in rupees	Nature of crops for repayment	Quantity of crop required to be made over in <i>Maunds</i>	The lowest market price of the crop to be made over in rupees	Minimum rate of interest per <i>annum</i> in case the debt is cleared after one year
1	Namasudra	Namasudra	12.00	Paddy	2	50.00	316.6
2	Ditto	Ditto	14.00	Ditto	2	50.00	257.1
3	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Ditto	50.00	Ditto	4	100.00	100.0
4	Ditto	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	8.00	Jute	$\frac{1}{2}$	12.50	56.3
5	Ditto	Ditto	8.00	Ditto	$\frac{1}{2}$	12.50	56.3
6	Ditto	Ditto	30.00	Ditto	2	50.00	66.7

As it appears, interest on loans, whether in cash or in kind, in the majority of cases is charged at the rate of more than 50.0 per cent per *annum*. Needless to mention, such a high rate of interest corrodes the economic vitality of the agricultural households, which are not exempted from interest even on amounts of petty loans. The rate of interest is mostly fixed arbitrarily and without any consideration of caste or creed, place of residence or affinal relationship. There is no instance of any bias or communal feeling to have influenced a creditor to lower the rate of interest and be the author of little deeds of kindness and love for the helpless debtors. In spite of the dreary intercourse of daily life where the creditors have shut the gates of mercy on the debtors, where there is no solitary event of mercy having blessed anyone that has given nor anyone that has taken, the hapless debtors under the stress of need of a hard life become victims to the exploitation of the iniquitous rural creditors, who know well that necessity's sharp pinch will not afford the debtors to know the rules of bargaining. But

the same necessity will serve as the tyrant's plea to enhance the natural interest of money in flagrant violation of the true business precepts. If the debtors are nailed to the advantage of the creditors, one has to read the situation in the facts and call it a hard reality. In the village Madhur Bhasa loan not only loses both itself and a friend, but also a son sometimes under pressing needs. And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry of the farmers, their households and also of the village.

Terms of repayment

As regards loans from the Government, it has been observed that neither the interest nor the principal amount has been collected from the five debtors by the Government nor have the debtors made any attempt to repay the loan. The terms of repayment of loans from the Government vary with the nature of and the purpose for which the loans are taken.

Loans from private sources are usually advanced on the term that their repayment will be made on or before the completion of one year. The debtor households gene-

MADHUR BHASA

rally clear the arrear dues, soon after the crops are harvested, the arrears including the principal amount and the interest due on it at the stipulated rate. Usually, the households, once in debt, even after they are free of the old liability, have to borrow again.

For loans against mortgage of land, the hypothecation is not treated as cleared, till the principal and the interest are paid.

For loans to be repaid in kind the terms lay down that failure to repay the loan makes the debtor liable to the payment of double the stipulated quantity in the second year, treble the quantity in the third year and so on. Stipulated terms and conditions for loans in kind are laid down at the time the loan is granted. There is, however, no standard rate.

Utilisation of loan

The loan of Rs.1,115.00 *paise* from the Government was taken by five households in six transactions, two of which concern

one Namasudra household, a displaced person from East Pakistan, for the total amount of Rs.1,100.00 *paise* for two different purposes. In one case, the household has taken Rs.600.00 *paise* for the purpose of agriculture including the purchase of necessary livestock and in another its loan amounts to Rs 500.00 *paise* taken for the construction of a house. All the other four households belong to the Rajbanshi Kshatriya community and are joint recipients of Rs.115.00 *paise* sanctioned by the Government as group loan for the purpose of agricultural development. But none of the households will loan received from the Government on the ground of their needs oriented to agriculture, has utilised the amount, even not partly, in the purchase of seeds, manure or pesticide. Instead, they have diverted the loan to the household budget and spent the money to meet some immediate expenses on domestic needs of the household. Needless to mention, as the Government do not have any rule to rescue the households in need to tide over

TABLE 50
PURPOSE OF LOANS

Purpose of loans	No. of households in debt	Percentage of indebted households	Amount of loan Rs. <i>paise</i>		Percentage to total loan	Remarks
Domestic needs	14	45.2	2,076	00	34.9	The deficit budget of the households is financed to meet daily needs of food and other expenses.
Marriage ceremony	8	25.8	2,190	00	36.8	Socio-religious ceremonies on the occasion of marriage, death and worship of a deity explain 39.8 per cent of the total loan from private sources.
Shradha ceremony	1	3.2	150	00	2.7	
Worship of a deity	1		25	00	0.4	
Purchase of land	1	3.2	1,200	00	20.2	For agriculture only 22.4 per cent of the loan are obtained.
Development of land including reclamation	5	16.2	131	00	2.2	
Miscellaneous	1	3.2	175	00	2.8	
Total	31	100.0	5,947	00	100.0	

ECONOMY

their crises in meeting the needs of daily life, they practise this subterfuge of a devious method to obtain the loan.

The amount of Rs. 5,947.00 *paise*, taken as loan from private sources, has been utilised for different purposes, detailed in the Table 50.

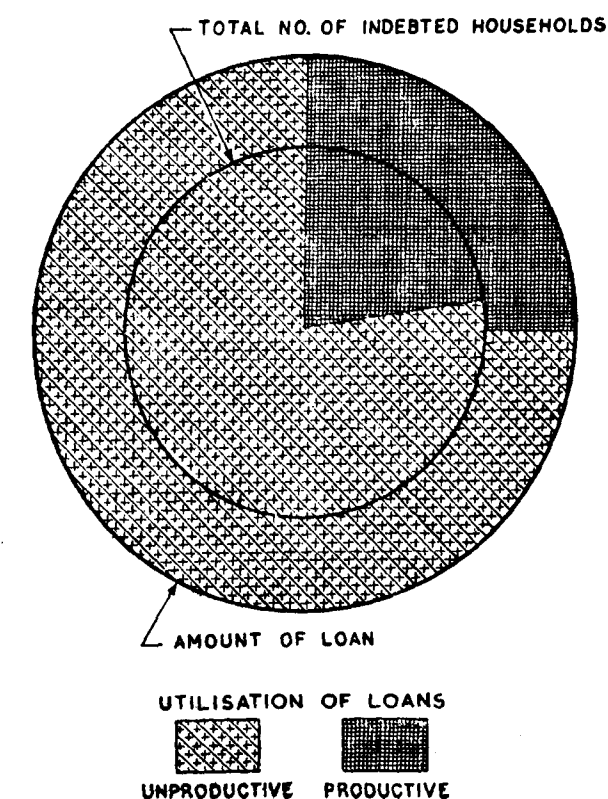
It appears that socio-religious functions alone have taken the lion's share of the loan. But, this is not the whole truth. If the transactions of loan in cash and kind are taken into account, it is found that in 35 cases (62.5 per cent), out of 56 transactions of loan, have been contracted on account of domestic expenses, which, however, from the monetary point of view accounts for 34.9 per cent of the total amount of loan secured from private sources. Though an amount of Rs. 2,365.00

paise has been borrowed in 10 transactions by 10 households to meet the needs on the occasion of socio-religious functions and to entertain the relatives and friends during these ceremonies, the incidence of these rituals on the finance of the households has been considerable.

The expenses of marriage have involved one Namasudra in a debt of Rs.100.00 *paise* to celebrate his own marriage and seven Rajbanshi Kshatriyas whose loans have varied from Rs.100.00 *paise* in the minimum to Rs.400.00 *paise* in the maximum. The loan for the purchase of land has been taken by one Namasudra household.

The question whether or not the loan has been useful cannot serve any purpose, unless one raises in its trail another

HOUSEHOLDS IN DEBT



MADHUR BHASA

question if the loans have served any productive purpose. Economically, credit has a recognised role in the development and utilisation of resources and the question, therefore, does not run counter to any social ethics. But, when credit is called upon to finance the cost of unproductive needs from the economic point, the social system subjects itself to censorial comments. A review of the Table 50 would show that the loans taken for purposes of agriculture and allied requirements to augment the resources or to utilise them have prospects of generating economic forces of sustenance. Viewed as such, the purchase of land and development of land have been good grounds for investment of money, even on credit, as the two factors pertain to one's occupation and livelihood. Thus, 22.4 per cent of the total amount of loan from private sources have been directed to productive purpose and the rest, whether for domestic needs or for social functions or religious ceremonies, has been thrown to the waste in as much as the money will not bring any return. Even with due regard and consideration for the needs of the indebted households, one cannot but conclude that poverty has been lent a helping hand by the weighty forces of tradition and usages of social sanctions for expensive ceremonies and rituals. When usury is at its worst and the villagers cannot relax themselves at ease from the clutches of the creditors, economically it amounts to a suicidal step to starvation and in the end to impoverishment by keeping the wolf from the door with the immediate help of so costly a loan, readily available. The vicious circle will not cease to enlarge its fold and poison the entrails of the hungry people, even though they may have on some ready loan a full pate for a hearty fill.

Nature of security

The loans excepting for lands mortgaged are not granted any security. For loans from the Government the debtors are required to furnish securities or sureties. Loans from private sources, mostly taken in small amounts, are obtained from different creditors to get the amount of one's requirement at a time. Some loans have been found to have been furnished without any security and in one case the loan amounts to Rs.800.00 *paise* taken by a Rajbanshi Kshatriya debtor from a creditor of his own community outside the village. Mutual trust has dispense with the question of security and the villagers at Madhur Bhasa do not have to furnish any security on the loans usually taken by them.

No transaction has been found to show that the loan is executed in any paper. All the loans taken without the evidence of any document have equal risks in the give and take policy. No case has been adduced to support that either of the parties has suffered under this convention. Even land is mortgaged verbally and the contract is honoured in the same spirit as that of any written document.

Though the parties dispense with documents, witnesses, however, are required to attest to the transactions. A covillager or an acquaintance of the debtor or the elected member of the statutory *Gram Panchayat* or *Anchal Panchayat* stands as a witness for the transaction.

Economic growth or impoverishment

Madhur Bhasa is essentially an agricultural village with not a very viable economy. The resource-pattern does not locate any reserve potential remaining unutilised and unexplored. Land in the owner-

ECONOMY

ship of the cultivators is not very large except in the possession of three households with more than 50 *Bighas* of land. The livestock has provided that much animal-power of draught bullock as much is required by the cultivating households. But no household exclusively depends on any economic activity related to the rearing of livestock or dairying or poultry-farming or anything of the kind. As a result, indebtedness ensues as the end-product from the people's struggle throughout the year for a morsel of food for all the members in their households to feed. In such a situation the over-all trend of economic forces is apt to arouse one's interest, though

on guesswork one may forecast the disintegration of the denuded village-economy with a very feeble life-force of its own and with little vitality for further growth and development of the economy of the people. Even then, the people live, work for a livelihood, spend their earnings on the necessities of life, multiply and die in poverty. And the life of the people has many splendours neither blotted out by wants nor erased by hunger. It is preposterous to probe into different shades of poverty of the people, for poverty knows no patch-work to camouflage its hideous look. But, all the households of the village stand on different levels of poverty. The

TABLE 51
SALE OF ASSETS

Community of the seller	Occupation of the seller	Average per capita monthly income of the seller household		Nature of the asset	Sale price of the asset		Person to whom asset sold	
		Rs.	paise		Rs.	paise	Place of residence	Occupation
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Agriculture	23	75	Two old cows	90	00	Rampur	Agriculture
Ditto	Ditto	18	35	One old cow	50	00	Ditto	Ditto
Ditto	Ditto	20	83	One old cow	90	00	Barabhuisahat	Ditto
Ditto	Ditto	15	00	Half a <i>Bigha</i> of land	100	00	Madhur Bhasa	Ditto
Ditto	Ditto	14	11	Two <i>Bighas</i> of land and one old cow	560 75	00	Rampur Singimari	Ditto Ditto
Ditto	Ditto	70	83	Half a <i>Bigha</i> of land	190	00	Singimari	Ditto
Ditto	Ditto	15	83	One milch cow	250	00	Rampur	Ditto
Ditto	Ditto	18	77	Two old cows	137	00	Baxihat and Barabhuisahat	Not available
Namasudra	Ditto	22	50	One old cow	50	00	Rampur	Agriculture
Ditto	Ditto	31	25	Two old cows	100	00	Ditto	Ditto
Total				10 old cows	592	00		
				One milch cow	250	00		
				Three <i>Bighas</i> of land	850	00		
Grand Total					1692	00		

MADHUR BHASA

Tables 51 and 52 on the purchase and sale of assets by a few households will enable one to assess the full impact of the two-way transactions on the economy of the village and its households.

But, one should also see the diagram on the use of furniture and scan how the majority continue to be the have-nots.

Altogether 12 households constituted by nine Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and three Namasudras have been involved in ten transactions concerning the sale of assets comprising livestock and land, of which five transactions relate to the purchase of assets confined to land and livestock.

The three Rajbanshi Kshatriya households at Serial Nos. 1, 2 and 3 in the two Tables have both been a seller of some

USE OF FURNITURE

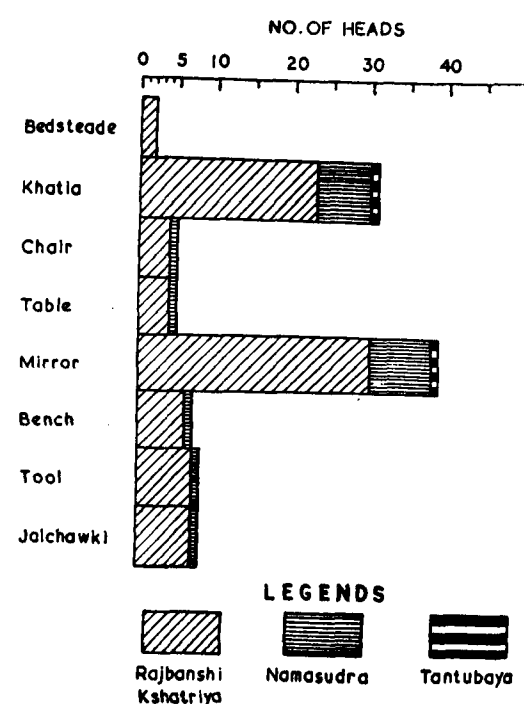


TABLE 52

PURCHASE OF ASSETS

Community of the purchaser	Occupation of the purchaser	Average per capita monthly income of the purchaser household		Nature of the asset	Purchase price of the asset		Person from whom asset purchased	
		Rs.	paise		Rs.	paise	Place of residence	Occupation
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Agriculture	23	75	One milch cow	200	00	Rampur	Agriculture
Ditto	Ditto	18	35	Three <i>Bighas</i> of land	500	00	Jaldhowa	Ditto
Ditto	Ditio	20	83	One heifer	50	00	Barabhuisahat	Not available
Ditto	Ditto	18	29	Half a <i>Bigha</i> of land	100	00	Madhur Bhasa	Agriculture
Namasudra	Ditto	27	52	One heifer	30	00	Rampur	Ditto
Total				One milch cow Two heifers Three and a half <i>Bighas</i> of land	200	00 80 600		
<i>Grand Total</i>					880	00		

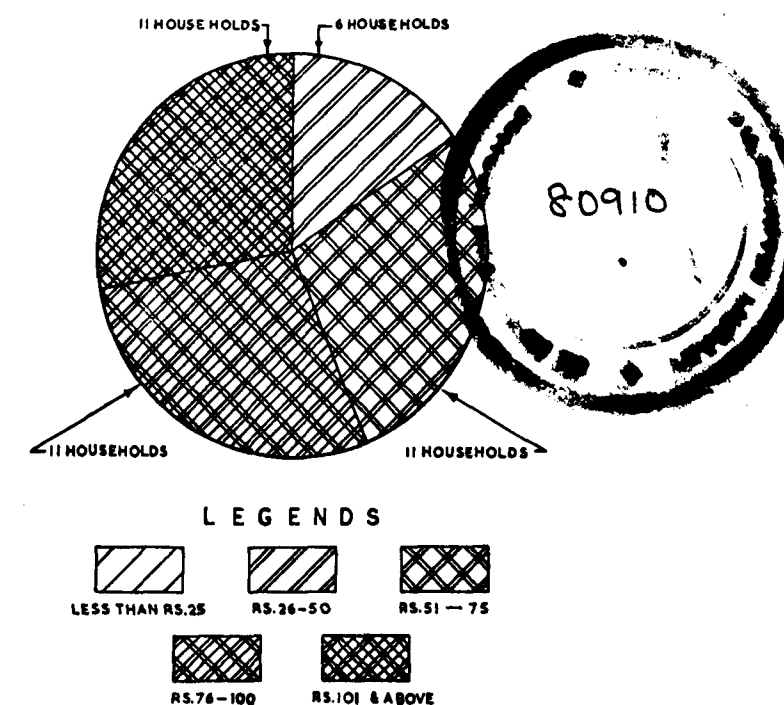
ECONOMY

asset and again a purchaser of some other. The real loss, in so far as they have sold out a part of their asset contained in the livestock of four old cows, now dry, has been insignificant. In fact, the turnover has yielded them Rs.230.00 *paise*. But, when their role as a purchaser is examined, they appear to be a real gainer in as much as they have materially contributed to the assets of the respective households and for that matter, to the resources of the village by adding one heifer, one milch cow, and also the ownership of three *Bighas* of land. The assets are worth Rs. 750.00 *paise* in their face value, but they promise ample future returns in milk and crops, if not in honey. The Rajbanshi Kshatriya seller of his assets comprising half a *Bigha* of land has suffered some loss of property no doubt, but the same property has been transferred to another Rajbanshi Kshatriya villager. Hence, the ownership has not passed out of the control of one of the residents of the village.

Seven households, which have only sold their assets but have not purchased any, are the real losers, as three *Bighas* of land and one milch cow have been sold to an outsider, in case the six old cows also sold by others are treated as liabilities. The average price of an old cow seems to be Rs.59.20 *paise* and that of land Rs. 283.83 *paise* per *Bigha*. All the households except three Rajbanshi Kshatriyas have been forced to part with the property sold for some exigency of the household. Seven households, among the sellers of assets, have spent in all an amount of Rs.2,376.00 *paise* as capital expenditure on the construction and repair of their houses, while one more household has spent Rs. 40.00 *paise* only as capital expenditure for land-development. One of them has, however, obtained a loan of Rs.2,300.00 *paise*

from the Government of West Bengal on grounds of purchase of agricultural land, seeds, and homesteads. He is found to have spent Rs. 1,700.00 *paise* as capital expenditure on the construction of a house. The net result of all the transactions, therefore, leads one to the conclusion that out of Rs.1,692.00 *paise* obtained from the sale of assets, Rs.750.00 *paise* have been expended on the purchase of some land and livestock with Rs.950.00 *paise* being spent as capital expenditure on the construction and repair of huts. Though an amount of Rs.2,626.00 *paise* has been spent by eight households on the construction and repair of huts as also on land-development, one household could obtain the bulk of the money on loan from the Government. Seven other households are really so much indigent that they do not have any money or savings even to undertake the annual repair of their huts as a matter of routine. Hence, they have been

HOUSEHOLDS AND INCOME GROUP



MADHUR BHASA

forced to sell a part of their moveable and immoveable property to ensure the security of the thatch, they live under.

On the purchase of assets, it is found that the two households, which have not sold at all any part of their property, are the actual gainers and both of them, a Rajbanshi Kshatriya and a Namasudra, have been involved in a capital expenditure of Rs.860.00 *paise*, of which Rs.500.00 *paise* have been spent on account of construction and repair of houses and Rs.360.00 *paise* to meet the expenses of land-development. The Namasudra household has been involved in a petty loan. The Rajbanshi Kshatriya household, free from any loan whatsoever, appears

to be the wealthiest person of the village.

As will be evident from the diagram on households according to income group the picture of the village economy does not improve even a little.

But, one or two wealthy persons do not make a village prosperous. The overall economic picture of the village, far from being satisfactory, is incapable of conveying an impression of contentment among the villagers. Materially, Madhur Bhasa has not prospered, even though one or two households might have added to their individual property and may have sufficient land and livestock to steal the edge from the painful struggle of life for thier existence.

Heavy steps of the
ploughman

Ploughing the field
for the cultivation
of paddy



Upon the brow of
labour the crown

The fields where the
farmer had ploughed
and scattered the
seeds is now inves-
ted with paddy



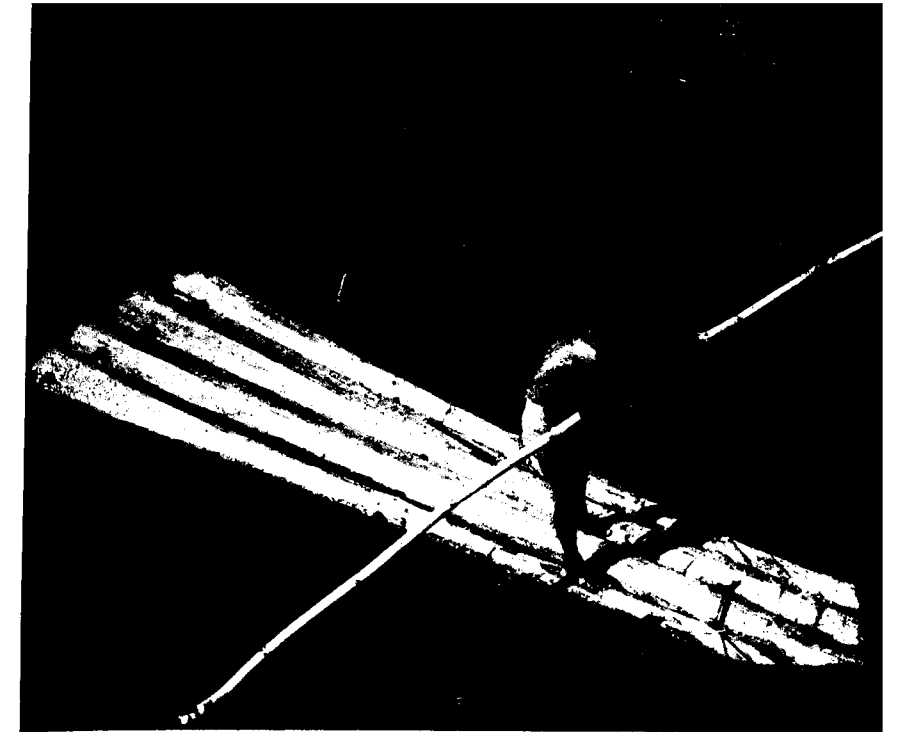


Home-task for women

A Rajbanshi Kshatriya housewife with the help of a young girl of the household husks paddy by the indigenous process of hand-pounding

Rowing one way and looking another

Not a waterman by profession or tradition, the village-boy enjoys the drift in the country-raft on the Raidak—amusement of a riverine hobby



Fish and fishing in river for pastime

Though not a fisherman by caste, occupation or trade, the Namasudra has gone with his net to fish in the Raidak the shrimps and little fishes to get the fry for the menu of the household

Ace of trumps not up their sleeves

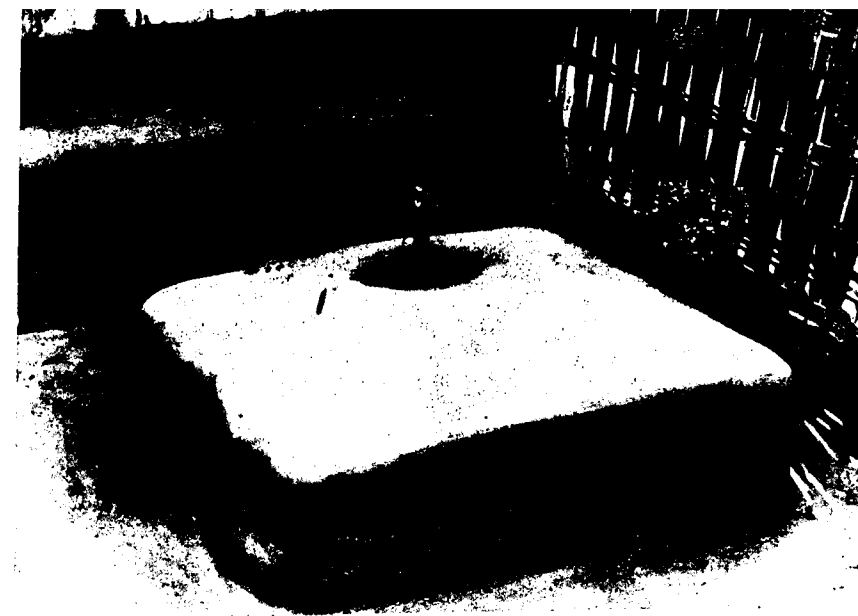
Some Namasudras play cards during leisure, the onlooker children do not the couple of Rajbanshi Kshatriyas are interested spectators learning to enjoy the pack of cards and their shuffle





Earthy haven of heavenly deities

The thatched mini-hut under the mango tree beside the village-road is held sacrosanct for being the temple of the twin presiding deities of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas



Plant of virtue

Altar of the sacred basil in the household of a Rajbanshi



Fear first in the world-made Gods

The images of *Tosa Kubir* and her brother *Sur Kubir* in the temple under the sacred mango tree



A divine illusion

Though akin in appearance to the Mother Goddess *Durga*, the image represents altogether a different deity—Goddess *Manasa* installed in the thatched hut



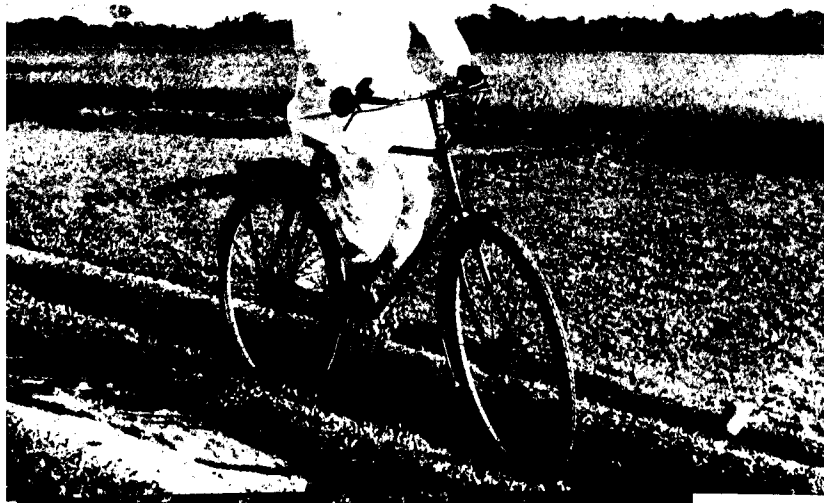
Future India

A group of village-
youngsters assembled
for no particular
purpose

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Demography
Type of family
Headship of a family
Age and sex-wise distribution of population
Literacy and education
Educational facilities
Educational expenses
Attitude towards education
Language
Place of birth
Emigration
Health and sanitation
Diseases and their treatment
Medical amenities
Family planning
Daily life
Leisure and recreation
Religion and gods
Ceremonies and festivals

Tulsi Puja
Manasa Puja
Banspuja or Madan Chaturdashi
Bura Thakur Puja
Puja of Tosa Kubir and Sur Kubir
Gabur Thakur Puja
Miscellany of gods and goddesses



Mobility and power

The only bicycle-owner of the
village is a well-to-do person
invested with status by the
people

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

DEMOGRAPHY

Madhur Bhasa is inhabited by 238 persons living in 40 households of three ethnic groups, an average household consisting of six persons roughly. The Table 53 will relate to the population of the households on the basis of ethnic groups, sex, sex-ratio and average size of the households.

The average size of a household of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas is 6.5, which is above the village-average size for the households of Madhur Bhasa. Below the village-average there come the Namasudra households which are composed of four members on an average. Only the solitary Tantubaya

household in its size seems to be at par with the village-average figure.

The variation in the decade 1951-61 in the size of a household is wide because of the possible error in tabulation of this column in the P.C.A. in 1961 Census. Otherwise, the average size of a household in 1951-65 appears to have been affected by accretion of 1.1 members per household on an average. From the households, as shown in the Table 54 according to their size, it may be examined as to how many vary from the mean average size of the households as a whole for the village. The mean average size of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya household is 6.5 and that of a Namasudra household is 4.0.

TABLE 53
DEMOGRAPHY OF THE VILLAGE

Community	No. of households	Males	Females	Persons	Average size of household	Sex-ratio
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	119	82	201	6.5	689
Namasudra	8	18	13	31	3.9	722
Tantubaya	1	3	3	6	6.0	1,000
Total in 1965	40	140	98	238	6.0	700
Total in 1961	113	159	121	280	2.5	761
Total in 1951	31	N.A.	N.A.	153	4.9	N.A.
N.A.—Not available						

Leadership-pattern
Formal and informal leadership
 Structure of social control and social organisation
Statutory socio-political organisation
 Community Development and welfare
 Attitudes and views to socio-economic changes
 Inter-community relation

TABLE 54
SIZE OF HOUSEHOLD

No. of members in a household	No. of households	Rajbanshi Kshatriya	Namasudra	Tantubaya
1	1	1	..	..
2	4	2	2	..
3	3	2	1	..
4	11	7	4	..
5	2	2	..	..
6	5	4	..	1
7	3	3	..	..
8	3	2	1	..
9	2	2	..	..
10	2	2	..	..
11	2	2	..	..
13	1	1	..	..
18	1	1	..	..
Total	40	31	8	1

From the Table 54 it appears that 19 households (47.6 per cent), out of 40 households of the village, are below the mean average size for the village as a whole. The Rajbanshi Kshatriya households with their members being less than 6.5 on an average, the mean average size of a Rajbanshi Kshatriya household, is accounted for by 45.2 per cent of the total Rajbanshi Kshatriya families. But, at the same time, the Rajbanshi households are distributed evenly from the minimum of one to the maximum size of 18 members.

TYPE OF FAMILY

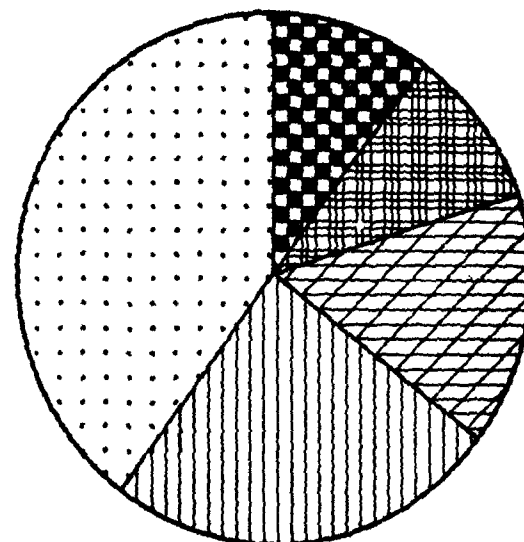
The Table 55 showing the distribution of the households according to the types is provided for the purpose of classification. A *Simple* family is composed of the husband, wife and their unmarried children, an *Inter-*

mediate family consists of a married couple, unmarried brothers and sisters, one of the parents and a *Joint* family has a married couple with married sons/daughters or with married brothers/sisters. The families which cannot be treated as any of the three types are classified as *Others*.

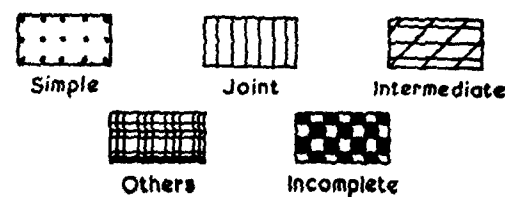
TABLE 55
CLASSIFICATION OF FAMILIES

Community	Total no. of households	In-complete	Simple	Inter-mediate	Joint	Others
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	3	11	4	10	3
Namasudra	8	1	4	2	..	1
Tantubaya	1	..	1	..	..	..
Total	40	4	16	6	10	4

FAMILY-TYPES



LEGENDS



SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Among the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, 35.5 per cent of the families are of the *Simple* type. *Simple* families appear to be the most prevalent type (40.00 per cent) in the village. Households consisting of persons without spouses have been treated as *In-complete* because of the demise of one of the spouses or for the state of celibacy one of the members.

Though according to the Census parlance a household is a group of persons who commonly live together and usually take their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigency of work would prevent any of them from doing so, sociologically it may or may not fit in with the concept of a family. In the dissertation to follow on the families the concept brings under its scope the pattern of kinship among the members of the family for a probe into the question as to whether the classification of a family depends on the connubial relationship or on its size. The classification of a family is more a morphological issue than a sociological question. A single person, whatever the marital status and sex, does not as such constitute a *Complete* family. An element of connubiality and presence of a members of the sex opposite to that of the person of the household are required to make it a *Complete* family, while the composition and the relationship of two or more members constituting the family with its head will determine its structural pattern and classification. Thus the classification hitherto adopted of the families into several types, like *Intermediate*, *Simple*, *Joint*, *Others* etc., at best indicates the particular morphological pattern of a family according to the connubial relation between the members but fails to indicate the broad trend of the socio-economic forces binding the members together. Structurally a *Joint* family may

not necessarily be united in spirit. Contrarily, two *Simple* families, even though living in separate houses and eating food from separate kitchens, may evince a joint approach to the solution of problems common to both. The Table 54 relating to the family by size has an importance of its own to explode the popular myth that a *Joint* family should necessarily be large in size and that a *Simple* family would in comparison be small in composition.

There are two *Simple* households with a nucleated structure with a married couple living in each, and again one *Simple* household has 11 members living in it. Obviously nine of its members excluding the head and his wife are joined to the married couple with filial ties. Again, one *Joint* family with only four members, on analysis, is found to consist of two married couples, one constituted by the head and his wife and another by the head's son and his spouse. Structurally, the largest household in the village, is *Joint* in its structure with 18 members being composed of four married couples. The crystallising force of unification has emanated from land itself, as the household has in its ownership 65 *Bighas* of landed area. In none of the 10 *Joint* families, married brothers are found to live together without the headship of the father and the guardianship of both the parents. Death of one of the parents does not necessarily dismember the family into splinter groups, for in three *Intermediate* families heads' widowed mothers and unmarried brothers live in the protectorate of the married couples constituted by the heads and their wives. Even in one family of the *Intermediate* type an unmarried brother lives with the head and his wife. Even if one of the parents loses a partner on account of the latter's demise, survivor does not

MADHUR BHASA

forfeit the affectionate care of his or her son, whether married or unmarried.

HEADSHIP OF A FAMILY

The most important character in a household is its head who plays the pivotal role not always by common consent only. The head of a family has a recognised status not only in the family itself but also in the society and in the eyes of all other villagers. The position of the head as such in the perspective of rural tradition in

Bengal is a decisive factor in managing the socio-economic relations of the family as also in negotiating the socio-cultural and economic intercourse with the society in and outside the village. In other words, the head of the household, the principal helmsman of the family, should catch the attention of the demographer. The Table 56 on the demographical characteristics of the heads of 40 households is given so that the socio-economic index of the headship of a family may be constructed.

TABLE 56

FAMILIES BY SIZE AND KINSHIP

Size of household	Total no. of households	Kinship relation of members with the head of the household	No. of families by types					Total no. of households
			In-complete	Simple	Inter-mediate	Joint	Others	
1	1	Widowed head	1	..	..	..	..	2
2	4	Head and wife	..	2	..	..	..	2
		Widower head and unmarried son	1	..	..	..	..	1
		Widower head and unmarried son and unmarried daughter	2	..	..	..	..	2
3	3	Head, wife and unmarried daughter	..	1	..	..	..	1
		Head, wife and widowed mother	..	..	1	..	..	1
		Head, wife and unmarried brother	..	..	1	..	..	1
4	11	Head, wife and two unmarried daughters	..	1	..	..	..	1
		Head, wife, unmarried daughter and one unmarried son	..	4	..	..	..	4
		Head, wife, widowed mother, unmarried brother	..	..	1	..	..	1
		Head, wife, son and son's wife	..	..	..	1	..	1
		Head, wife and two unmarried sons	..	1	..	..	..	1
		Widower head, widower father, head's one separated sister and one unmarried son	..	..	..	..	1	1
		Head, wife, one unmarried daughter and one unmarried brother	..	..	..	..	1	1

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

TABLE 56—contd.

FAMILIES BY SIZE AND KINSHIP

Size of household	Total no. of households	Kinship relation of members with the head of the household	No. of families by types					Total no. of households
			In-complete	Simple	Inter-mediate	Joint	Others	
5	2	Head, wife, two unmarried sons and one unmarried daughter	..	1	..	..	..	1
		Head, wife, two unmarried brothers and widowed mother	..	..	1	..	..	1
6	5	Head, wife and four unmarried sons	..	1	..	..	..	1
		Head, wife, three unmarried sons, and one unmarried daughter	..	3	..	..	..	3
		Head, wife, one married son and his wife and two unmarried sons	..	..	..	1	..	1
7	3	Head, wife, four unmarried sons and one unmarried daughter	..	1	..	..	..	1
		Head, wife, one unmarried son, one married daughter and her husband, daughter's two unmarried daughters	..	..	..	1	..	1
		Head, wife, one unmarried son, three unmarried daughters and widowed mother	..	..	1	..	..	1
8	3	Head, wife, two unmarried sons, one married son, his wife and two unmarried daughters	..	..	..	1	..	1
		Head, wife, three unmarried sons, one married son, his wife and head's unmarried daughter	..	..	..	1	..	1
		Head, wife, two unmarried sons, widowed mother and three domestic servants	..	..	..	..	1	1
9	2	Head, wife, one unmarried son, two unmarried daughters, one married daughter, her husband, and her unmarried son and unmarried daughter	..	..	..	1	..	1
		Head, wife, three unmarried sons, two unmarried daughters, one married son and his wife	..	..	..	1	..	1
10	2	Head, wife, four unmarried sons, two unmarried daughters, one married son and his wife	..	..	..	1	..	1

MADHUR BHASA

TABLE 56—concl'd.

FAMILIES BY SIZE AND KINSHIP

Size of household	Total no. of households	Kinship relation of members with the head of the household	No. of families by types					Total no. of households
			In-complete	Simple	Inter-mediate	Joint	Others	
		Head, wife, three unmarried sons, three unmarried daughters, widowed mother and deceased brother's unmarried son	..	..	1	..	..	1
11	2	Head, wife, three unmarried sons, widowed mother and deceased sister's husband and his one unmarried daughter and three unmarried sons	..	..	..	..	1	1
		Head, wife, eight unmarried sons and one unmarried daughter	..	1	..	..	..	1
13	1	Head, wife, two married and four unmarried sons and their son's wives, one unmarried son and two unmarried daughters	..	..	..	1	..	1
18	1	Head, wife, three married and one unmarried sons, and their wives, and son's four unmarried daughters and head's wife's unmarried brother	..	..	..	1	..	1
Total			4	16	6	10	4	40

That the authority exercised by the head of the household in Madhur Bhasa has still the influence of patriarchy and for that matter, the dominance of the males, is supported by facts too. Only the head of one household is a female and that too a single widow living alone by herself. In all, 36 households consist of husband-wife families with or without children/or other relations. Only three households are headed by widowers. Though the old constituted by persons of 60 years of age and above area handful few (seven out of 40), 24 persons below the middle age of 45 years appear to be holding the reins in their respective households as their heads. This should not, however, be construed as the triumph of the youth over the aged.

or as the revolt of the earners against the non-earner seniors. In 14 households, as it appears, neither any worker nor any non-worker senior to the head of the household nor any worker junior to the head of the household has been found. These households are mostly headed by the seniormost earning worker excepting one where the widow is the rentier of the land allowed by her to be cultivated by others on crop-share. Of the other 26 households, two households have workers senior to the head in age and relationship but not related to the head of the household by direct ties of family bonds. These two cases are exceptions where the deceased sister's husband is found to be matrilocal in residence. In nine households the senior non-workers

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

TABLE 57

INDEX OF HEADSHIP

Head of the household		Workers in the household senior to the head			Non-workers in the household senior to the head			Workers in the household senior to the head		
Age	Marital status	No.	Age	Relationship to the head	No.	Age	Relationship to the head	No.	Age	Relationship to the head
25	Married	..	..	..	1	60	Mother	..	..	..
25	Ditto	..	..	..	1	62	Ditto	2	19	Brother
28	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	20	Ditto
29	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
30	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	25	Brother
30	Ditto	1	45	Deceased sister's husband	1	60	Mother	1	18	Deceased sister's son
30	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
32	Ditto	1	50	Deceased sister's husband	1	70	Mother	2	22	Domestic servant
32	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	29	Ditto
33	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	25	Brother
+35	Widow	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
35	Married	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
35	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
35	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
40	Ditto	..	..	..	1	67	Wife's mother	..	..	..
40	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	26	Daughter's husband
40	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
40	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
42	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
45	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	16	Son
45	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	16	Son
45	Ditto	..	..	..	1	67	Mother	18	18	Deceased brother's son
45	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
45	Widower	..	..	..	1	70	Mother	..	..	..
47	Married	..	..	..	1	69	Father	1	20	Sen
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	30	Daughter's husband
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	3	22	Son
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	20	20	Ditto
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	18	18	Ditto
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	25	Ditto
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
50	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	28	Son
55	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	26	Ditto
55	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	24	Ditto
55	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	16	16	Ditto
**60	Widower	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	25	Ditto
60	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	22	Ditto
*60	Married	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	16	Ditto
60	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	28	Ditto
62	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	27	27	Ditto
64	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	25	Ditto
72	Ditto	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	26	Ditto
								18	18	Ditto
								4	40	Ditto
								35	35	Ditto
								26	26	Ditto
								18	18	Wife's brother

+Widowed female rentier of land.

**Widower male beggar.

*Invalid male.

consist mostly of widowed mothers. This shows that the males have an effective say in and dynamic control on the management of the household. The existence of workers junior to the heads in 17 households attest to the fact that seniority has not yet lost its ground in enabling the heads to have within their grip both the purse-strings as well as the whips of discipline. Obviously, cash-nexus and the weight of tradition have been contributory factors to the maintenance of *status quo*.

AGE AND SEX-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

Population of the village may be divided into three groups, the infants and the children, the adults and the old. The Table 58 is specific.

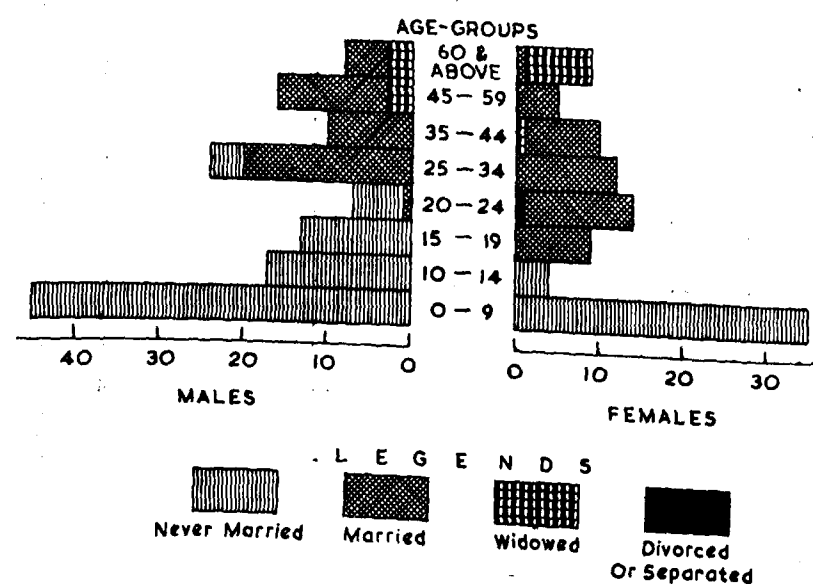
The village is inhabited predominantly by the dependant population consisting of the children and the infants as also the old, the latter in a group comprising 51.0 per cent of the total population of the village. Dependency ratio comes to 90.0 per cent

TABLE 58

VILLAGE POPULATION

Age group	Males	Females	Total
0-4	19	21	40
5-9	26	14	40
10-14	17	4	21
Total of children and infants	62	39	101
15-19	13	9	22
20-24	7	14	21
25-29	17	7	24
30-34	7	5	12
35-39	4	6	10
40-44	6	4	10
45-49	7	3	10
50-54	6	2	8
55-59	3	..	3
Total of adults	70	50	120
60 and above	8	9	17
Total of old	8	9	17
Grand total	140	98	238

DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERN



SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

if the load of the children and the old on the adult population is taken into account. Otherwise, the ratio is changed to 240.0

when the load of the children, the adult females and the old on the adult males is considered.

TABLE 59

AGE AND MARITAL STATUS

Age group	Never married		Married		Widowed		Divorced or separated		Total	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
0-4	19	21	..	..	..	..	..	..	19	21
5-9	26	14	..	..	..	..	..	..	26	14
10-14	17	4	..	..	..	..	..	..	17	4
Total	62	39	..	..	..	..	..	..	62	39
15-19	13	..	..	9	..	..	..	..	13	9
20-24	6	..	1	13	..	..	..	1	7	14
25-29	4	..	13	7	..	..	..	..	17	7
30-34	..	..	7	5	..	..	..	..	7	5
35-39	..	..	4	5	..	1	..	..	4	6
40-44	..	..	6	4	..	..	..	..	6	4
45-49	..	..	5	3	2	..	..	..	7	3
50-54	..	..	5	2	1	..	..	..	6	2
55-59	..	..	3	..	..	..	..	..	3	..
Total	28	..	44	49	3	1	..	1	70	50
60 and above	..	..	5	1	3	8	..	..	8	9
Total	..	..	5	1	3	8	..	..	8	9
Grand total	85	39	49	49	6	9	..	1	140	98

If none of the children is married, one should not presume that child-marriage is not in practice. In fact, among the Rajbanshi Kshatriya females, the marriageable age happens to have been well within 14 years of age 10 years ago. But, among the Rajbanshi Kshatriya males the marriageable age seems to be around 22 years.

The Table 60 will be specific about the average age at marriage of the Rajbanshi males and females. The average age at marriage of the males and the females

among the Namasudras and the Tantubaya appears to be 24 years and 13 years respectively.

Of the 50 adult females, 96.0 per cent are married, 2.0 per cent are widows and 2.0 per cent are divorced and separated. None of the females is unmarried beyond the age limit of 14 years.

In the adult age-group only three widowers are found within the age limit of 45-54 and a single widow in the age group of 35-39. The solitary divorced and

AGE AT MARRIAGE

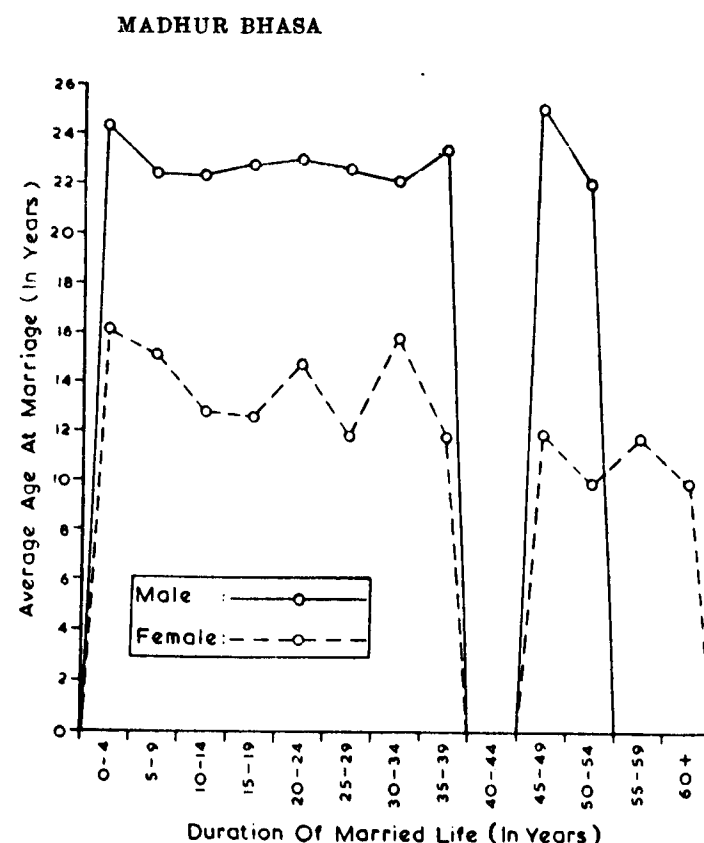


TABLE 60
AGE AT MARRIAGE OF THE
RAJBANSHI KSHATRIYA

Duration of married life (in years)	Average age at marriage	
	Males	Females
0-4	24.3	16.1
5-9	22.4	15.1
10-14	22.3	12.8
15-19	22.7	12.6
20-24	22.9	14.8
25-29	22.5	11.9
30-34	22.0	15.8
35-39	23.3	11.9
40-44	..	..
45-49	25.0	12.0
50-54	22.0	10.0
55-59	..	11.9
60+	..	10.0

separated female is in the age-group of 20-24.

Of the 11 males in the age-group of 55-60 and above, eight are married and the rest are widowers. Of the nine females within the same age-group only one is married and the rest are widows.

There is a single case of separation in the village. One Rajbanshi Kshatriya female, aged 20 years and separated from her husband, lives with her parents in the village, for reasons not disclosed.

LITERACY AND EDUCATION

The village Madhur Bhasa does not appear to have been blessed by any of the *Muses*, for the people remain steeped in ignorance and illiteracy. Acquaintance

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

with the three Rupees as the basis of elementary education, seems to have been the privilege of only 19.6 per cent of the total population in the village according to 1961 Census. The position is not at all satisfactory, for there does not appear to have been any progress in the spread of education during the decade 1951-61. According to 1961 Census, only 12.9 per cent of the total population of the village are literate. If examined further, the data tell a disappointing tale, as only 22.6 per cent of the females are literate. The position since 1961 Census till the present survey appears to have improved a little. According to the present investigation, 17.2 per cent of the total population, 27.9 per cent of the males and 2.0 per cent of the females are literate.

It is found that the pace of advancement of learning is more rapid in the present generation and among the children than among the adults and the old, as 15.0 per cent of the adult population, 24.3 per

cent of the adult males, 11.8 per cent of of the old persons and 26.5 per cent of the old males are literate. As against the perspective, given above, 34.4 per cent of the children excluding the infants of the agegroup (0-4), 46.5 per cent of the male children and 5.6 per cent of the female children are literate. This shows that the position of literacy and educational progress is dynamic more among the children now attending schools than among the adults and the old among whom illiteracy is too static to be removed by any efforts of the torch-bearer of enlightenment and education.

With regard to the standards of education in different agegroups, the Table 61 reveals that the percentage of literates within the agegroups 5-14 and 15 years and above comes to 28.0 per cent and 15.3 per cent respectively.

The percentage of literates in the age groups 0-14 has gone up more than that in the

EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

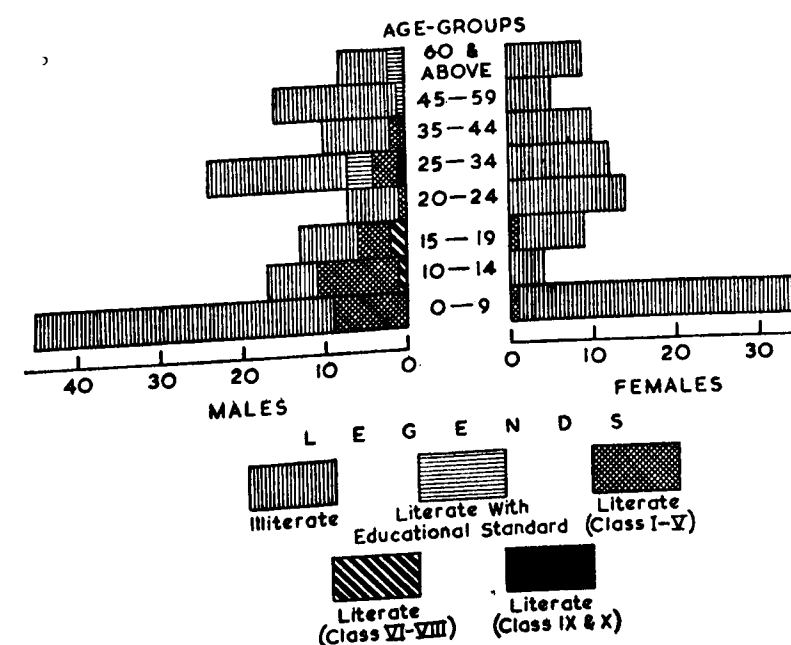


TABLE 61

LITERATES AND THE EDUCATED

Age group	Total no. of persons		Total no. of literates		Literates with educational standard upto																				
	M	F	M	F	Class I		Class II		Class III		Class IV		Class V		Class VI		Class VII		Class VIII		Class IX		Class X		
					M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
0-4	19	21	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
5-9	26	14	9	1	..	..	4	1	3	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
10-14	17	4	11	..	..	..	1	..	3	..	..	2	..	4	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Total	62	39	20	1	..	..	5	1	6	..	1	..	3	..	4	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	
15-19	13	9	6	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	2	1	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	
20-24	7	14	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
25-29	17	7	5	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	
30-34	7	5	2	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
35-39	4	6	1	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
40-44	6	4	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
45-49	7	3	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
50-54	6	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
55-59	3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Total	70	50	17	1	4	..	1	..	..	..	..	5	..	4	1	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	1	..	
60 and above	8	9	2	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Total	8	9	2	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	
Grand Total	140	98	39	2	6	..	6	1	6	..	1	..	8	..	8	1	..	2	..	1	..	..	1	..	

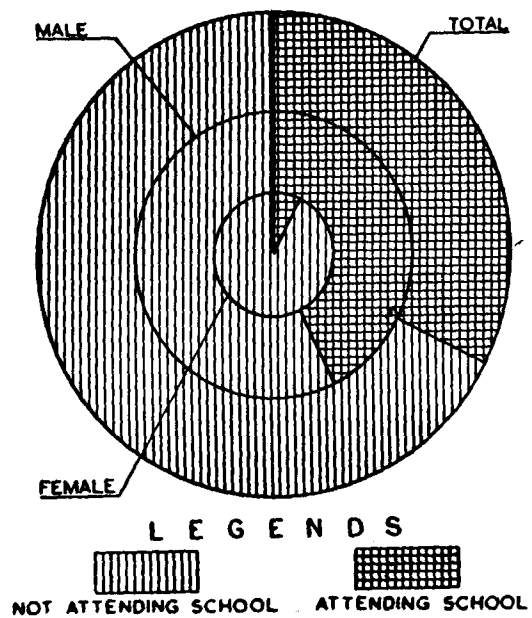
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

agegroup of 15 years and above on account of more children of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya families attending schools than before. None of the 39 literate males and two literate females is a Matriculate. Of the 39 males, 51.4 per cent are literates without any educational standard and 53.9 per cent are educated upto the Primary standard only.

The age for admission to a school is prescribed at six years. For the purpose of analysis the persons within the age group 6-16 have been treated as children of the school-going age. Beyond this age group, only one person, aged 19 years, is a student who has not been included in the Table 61. Housewives within this age group have also not been included. None of the children of school-going age of the Namasudra and the Tantubaya families attend any school, because they are too poor to bear the educational expenses of their children.

Of the 20 male children of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas within the school-going age and not attending a school, four children have read in a school but not upto the Primary Standard, one has read upto Class V and fifteen children are illiterate. Of the five literate male children, one is

SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN



now engaged in work and four others have given up their studies on account of poverty.

Except the head of the Tantubaya family, heads of other families are not in favour of sending the girls to a Primary School even. That is why, all the girls in the village are illiterate, although there are two Primary Schools in the neighbouring Mouza Singimari. The girls help

TABLE 62

SCHOOL-GOING CHILDREN

Community	Total no. of children in the school-going age (6-16 years)			No. of children attending schools			Percentage of children of school-going age attending school		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	50	38	12	19	18	1	30.8	47.3	8.3
Namasudra	3	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	3	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	56	42	14	19	18	1	33.9	42.9	6.6

MADHUR BHASA

the adult women in domestic work till the former's marriage. Only one Rajbanshi Kshatriya girl of seven years of age has been admitted to the school, as the male members of the particular household are literate. A couple of other females, who are the only literate women of the village, belong to this household. One of them, a housewife, has read upto Class V before her marriage. After her marriage she gave up her studies.

The villagers in general are yet to know the value and utility of education. Besides, there is no philanthrope to encourage them to send their children to the school. The parents do not take any care in regard to the education of their children and remain callous. A teacher of the Singimari Primary School casually remarks that most of the students from the village, already enrolled in the school, are found absent from the classes most of the time with the tacit support of their parents.

EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

There is no School, Primary or Secondary, in the village proper. The children of the village are sent to Singimari Free Primary School and Singimari Senior Basic School, situated at Singimari proper. Singimari Free Primary School was established about 25 years ago by the villagers of Singimari, Rampur and Madhur Bhasa. In 1947 the Maharaja of Cooch Behar took over the management of the School and administered it till the State of Cooch Behar was merged with the State of West Bengal in 1950, since when it has been financed by the Education Department of the Government of West Bengal. The school is situated at a distance of one kilometre from the village Madhur Bhasa. There are altogether three teachers in the Primary School, the Head Master of which

is a Rajbanshi Kshatriya educated upto Middle English Standard with orientation in Guru Training School. The Assistant Head Master is also a Matriculate Rajbanshi Kshatriya. The other teacher, a Matriculate and a displaced person from East Pakistan, is a Sunri by caste. All the three teachers are residents of the village Singimari. The School is attended by students from Madhur Bhasa, Rampur, Singimari and northern part of the village Jaldhoa.

The Senior Basic School, situated at Singimari at a distance of two kilometres from the village Madhur Bhasa, is another educational institution with educational facilities upto Class VIII. Established in 1929 by the Maharaja of Cooch Behar, it worked as a Middle English School upto 1961 and upgraded to Senior Basic Standard with effect from 1962. The School was under the management of the Maharaja till the year 1950, after which the School was taken over by the Government of West Bengal. The school has on its roll students from a very large area covering Singimari, Madhur Bhasa, Rampur, Jaldhoa, Bhaksabari, Maothoa, Jorai, Falimari, Mayapara and Garbhanga. Of the nine teachers in the employment of the School, only four are Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and the remaining five are displaced persons consisting of three Graduate teachers including the Head Master, the Assistant Head Master and another teacher. Two other teachers who are displaced persons are Matriculates. Of the four Rajbanshi Kshatriya teachers, one has passed the Intermediate Examination, two are Matriculates and one has read upto the Senior Basic Standard.

The nearest Higher Secondary School is situated at Kamakshyaguri in the

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

district of Jalpaiguri at a distance of 15 kilometres from the village, the road being negotiated through the field to cut short the actual distance of 32 kilometres by railway from Jorai Railway Station of the North East Frontier Railway. Lack of communication by road and absence of any fast means of transport make it difficult for a school-going student to commute the distance daily from Madhur Bhasa in attending the School at Kamakshyaguri. Only one Rajbanshi Kshatriya student of the village Madhur Bhasa attends the School, residing in his relative's house at Kamakshyaguri. Though the School has its own boarding arrangements for the boarder students, the expenses, however modest, are too high to be borne by any villager of Madhur Bhasa.

All the school-going students of the village come from 10 Rajbanshi Kshatriya households. Thirteen students consisting of one female and 12 males read in the Singimari Free Primary School. Of the remaining students, six boys read in the

Singimari Senior Basic School and one boy reads in the Kamakshyaguri Higher Secondary School. It has been reported that none of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya students gets any help from the Government as members of the Scheduled Caste, excepting the free tuition in the Primary classes. Though difficult to believe, the report goes that the guardians of the school-going students are not aware of the help and financial assistance being given by the Government of West Bengal to students belonging to any Scheduled Caste. Only one Rajbanshi Kshatriya student of Singimari Senior Basic School, is awarded free studentship by the School, but he does not enjoy any stipend from the Government.

EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

Even though education is free for all in the Primary Schools, the guardians are not, however, free from the liability of incidental expenditure incurred for the schooling of their wards in respect of

TABLE 63
EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

Head of account	Nature of education	Households involved in expense		Annual expenditure		Average annual expense			
		No. of students		Rs. Paise		Per household		Per student	
		No.	of students	Rs.	Paise	Rs.	Paise	Rs.	Paise
	Primary education	..	12	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tuition fee		3	4	50	00	16	66	12	50
Purchase of books and stationery		..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Private tuition fee		3	12	50	00	16	66	12	50
Total									
	Secondary education	5	7	192	00	38	40	27	43
Tuition fee		5	7	169	00	33	80	27	00
Purchase of books and stationery		5	7	828	00	165	60	118	29
Private tuition fee		5	7	828	00	165	60	118	29
Total		5	7	1,189	00	237	80	170	00

125

MADHUR BHASA

expenses on the purchase of books and stationery. Of the 10 households, which have sent their children to any School, seven have to purchase the books for their children, while three households have some how to collected the old books from others. Again, six households have had to spend some money on account of private coaching of the school-going wards and five households have had to pay the tuition fees of the Schools for their wards reading in Classes above the Primary Standard. Items of expenditure on account of different heads of accounts for the education of the school-going children are given in the Table 62.

As it appears, the average annual expenditure per student attending a Primary School stands at Rs. 12.50 *paise* and the same for a student of the Secondary School stands at Rs. 107.00 *paise*. The educational expenses, even though minimal for a Primary student, are not so for students attending the Secondary Classes. Expenses will reasonably go up in a household desiring his ward to be admitted in the Higher Secondary School at Kamakhyaguri, obviously on account of boarding expenses.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION

Only 25 per cent of the households are interested in the education of their children. If 17 households inclusive of 12 Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and five Namasudras do not come up for any discussion here, it is because of the absence of any children in the school-going age in the households concerned. Of the 13 households with one child or more in the school-going age not attending any school, nine are Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, three are Namasudras and one is a Tantubaya. Seven households which have not sent their male children to any school consist of four Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, two Namasudras and one Tantubaya. Two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households with children of the school-going age are not interested in the education of their wards, as because the children are helping hands to the respective heads in the cultivation of their own land. Seven households constituted by five Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, one Namasudra and one Tantubaya have entrusted the girls of the school-going age with sundry domestic duties at home out of a general apathy for education, however

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

preliminary, of women. Poverty has prevented the Tantubaya household from sending its girl to any school. It is futile, therefore, to seek any dominant socio-economic or psychological cause retarding the progress of education among the people. An educationist may out of philanthropy kindle the lamps of knowledge to dispel the ignorance of the people, but he cannot thereby enthuse a group of people, hungry for food, to be avidly looking for education and its spread among their children.

LANGUAGE

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of Madhur Bhasa do not claim to have any language of their own, other than Bengali, incidentally the mother tongue not only of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas but also of the Namasudras and the Tantubayas. Even then, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village speak in Northern dialect of Bengali with some accent peculiar to them making it difficult for an outsider to follow the conversation, when they speak among themselves. Though the grown-up male Rajbanshi Kshatriyas meticulously avoid the accent while speaking with an outsider in Bengali, the females and the children are hardly successful in avoiding the accent of their tongue in conversation whether among themselves or with outsiders.

PLACE OF BIRTH

Mere residence in a place does not confer on the residents a sense of belonging to the place. But, a person, born and brought up in a place, not only carries with him the sense of association with it but also nurtures in him a spirit of identification. From this point the data relating to the place of birth of the villagers are important to provide an analytical frame to assay the status-symbol of those born in the village in the background of others

whose birthplaces are located outside the village. In Chapter I a Table has been provided on the duration of residence of the households in the village Madhur Bhasa in terms of generations. It is commonplace that the more senior the household, the more dignified is its status in relation to other households. The discussion here will show how many people in the village have a sense of pride for Madhur Bhasa being their birthplace. The prestige of a person born in the village is no less, if not equal to or greater, than that enjoyed by any other member not born in the village, even though coming of the senior-most household. The place of birth as a pointer to the zones, from which the migrants have been drawn to the village, and the marital zone created by the marriage of the males also points to the social customs and traditional practices regarding the birth of a person, specially when confinement of the pregnant women is mostly restricted to either the house of the husband or the home of the parents.

Though 50.0 per cent of the households have come to the village Madhur Bhasa in the present generation, all the persons thereof are not outsiders. Out of 49 persons in 20 households which have immigrated to the village in the present generation, 68 persons in 11 households are not immigrants. All of them are the children of the soil in real sense of the term, as they have been born in the village after immigration of their respective households along with the heads and other members. It is remarkable that of the total population of 238 persons of the village, 145 persons born in the village proper comprise 26 persons in 11 households settled in the village in the present generation, but born after the migration of their respective parent households. Out of 93 persons born outside the

TABLE 64

REASONS FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL

Community	No. of children not going to school for									
	They cannot afford		They are already engaged in work		Parents are not in favour of sending their children to school		They are not interested in education		They are interested but have not yet been admitted in the school	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	10	..	4	..	..	11	2	..	4	..
Namasudra	2	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	1	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Total	13	1	5	..	..	12	2	..	4	..

MADHUR BHASA

village, 68 persons are immigrants in the present generation with their respective households. Thus, 25 villagers, even though not immigrants in the present generation, are outsiders for all purposes, their birth-place being located outside Madhur Bhasa. It is interesting, however, that the latter group of 25 persons hails from households, which have been settled in the village for more than one generation.

The Table 65 is provided below to give a rough outline of the places where mothers of the villagers born outside were confined.

The Table, apart from giving an outline of the place of birth of different villagers, also helps one form an impression about the immigration of a section of the people. Generally the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas do not send the pregnant woman customarily either to her parents' house or to the hospital or Health Centre for confinement. Instead, childbirth takes place in the house of the husband. Hence, the birthplace of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas would indicate the places from which they have migrated. In the case of married women the place of birth will also indicate the areas with the residents of which the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas

of the village have contracted marital relations. The Namasudras and the Tantubaya being displaced persons generally, the place of birth of the persons of the two communities will show generally the places wherefrom they have migrated. None of the Namasudras has been born in the State of West Bengal, as all of them, born in different district of East Pakistan, migrated to India after the Partition of Bengal. Of them, 11 persons hail from the district of Mymensingh and 11 persons from the district of Sylhet, both in East Pakistan.

The head of the Tantubaya household and his wife too were born outside India in the district of Mymensingh in East Pakistan. But, their four children were born in the district of Goalpara in Assam where the household had temporarily settled after migration from East Pakistan and before immigration to the present village.

The six Rajbanshi Kshatriyas born outside the district of Cooch Behar belong to one family, immigrant to the village from the district of Jalpaiguri. All the Rajbanshi Kshatriya males, born outside Madhur Bhasa, belong to the same police station of Tufanganj and are immigrants. Likewise, 12 Rajbanshi Kshatriya females

TABLE 65

PLACE OF BIRTH

Community	Number of persons born									
	Outside India		Outside the State of West Bengal		Outside the district		Outside the Mauza		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	..	..	..	..	4	2	18	41	22	43
Namasudra	13	9	..	..	..	..	..	..	13	9
Tantubaya	1	1	3	1	..	..	..	..	4	2
Total	14	10	3	1	4	2	18	41	39	54

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

born outside Madhur Bhasa have come here with their respective households. The rest of the 29 females, have however, immigrated to their husbands' houses as brides after marriage.

EMIGRATION

In course of ten years preceding the investigation, five Namasudras had left the village for good. Two of them had migrated to Singimari and one of them to Rampur. Both the neighbouring villages belong to police station same as the present village. Of the remaining two, one household had left for Nabadwip in the district of Nadia and the other to Calcutta. All the households were displaced persons from East Pakistan.

HEALTH AND SANITATION

In general, the huts of the villagers, having a neat look and tidy appearance, are so arranged that enough space in between huts is left to avoid congestion. There does not, however, appear much enthusiasm among the villagers to keep the village roads and the approach pathways to the respective huts clean, as the paths are mostly made by the footmarks of the pedestrian villagers across the agricultural fields through wild grass growing there. In dry seasons one walks at ease along the pathways to the huts. But, the villagers kick up dust with their bare foot and the cattle do the same with their hoofs. In the rainy days it is an annoying experience to negotiate the footpaths in ankledeep slush and mud.

The village dose not have any open surface drains or sewers either along the road or in the fields for proper drainage of water accumulated on account of the rains or of the waste water from the huts. The garbage and the refuse are strewn in the

agricultural fields adjacent to the huts of the villagers and haphazardly disposed.

The village people are not very much aware of public health and do not take adequate measures for the safety of personal hygiene and the security of public health of the village in using water for drinking and other domestic purposes. If so, it has been due as much to their ignorance as to their paltry means and poor education. The river Raidak, providing the major source of water, is obviously used by most of the people for drinking and also for other sundry domestic purposes like washing of the clothes, bathing, etc.

Latrines, whether of the dug-well or open-drain types, are absent in the village. Nature's open fields are made the most of by the village people, irrespective of community or creed, economic means or social status. Shrubs and jungles, however, provide them an excellent cover to screen them off from the public view, while easing themselves in the wide open meadows.

In keeping their domicile tidy, the villagers evince a keen interest, aroused by neither education nor economy. The womenfolk generally keep the huts clean everyday with a routine regularity, sweeping and cleaning the floor and swabbing them with a mixture of earth and cowdung in water. But, an inside view of the huts reminds one of the oft-repeated cliché that all that glistens is not gold. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas do not give any outsider an impression of a very hygienic living. Even though built on a very high plinth, the huts of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, specially when they are situated in a paddy field, are very damp in the

MADHUR BHASA

rainy season and dark in all weathers, fair or foul. Because of the absence of cross-ventilation and natural light, the living rooms are mostly unhealthy. Moreover, casual spitting in one corner of the living room seems to be very fairly practised by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas without any demur, though the courtyard is adjacent. Addiction of most of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas to betels and unripe areca-nuts causes excessive salivation in the mouth explaining their habit of frequent spitting. The educated Rajbanshi Kshatriya do not, however, spit inside the room. Cattle are kept in the cowsheds outside, within the courtyard of the house. The villagers in general and the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas in particular are fairly clean in respect of their personal health. They clean their teeth daily and take bath in the river. All the households use soap for washing their clothes and only seven households use toilet soap for use on their person. The Table 66 relating to the use of soap is given below.

TABLE 66			
HOUSEHOLDS USING SOAP			
Community	No. of households	No. of households using	
		Toilet soap	Washing soap
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	5	31
Namasudra	8	1	8
Tantubaya	1	1	1
Total	40	7	40

DISEASES AND THEIR TREATMENT

Considering the background of the not very satisfactory environmental sanitation and not-too-hygienic personal habits of the people, the poor intake of nutrients

in the food and the general deprivations of the people from sufficient light and air in the rooms, adequate nutritional food in the meals and general awareness of private and public health measures in their social life, it is a puzzle how the villagers of Madhur Bhasa enjoy a sound health, even though they do not all bear a robust physique. The common diseases here are neither varied nor virulent.

Epidemic diseases like Cholera, Smallpox (*Thakurani*) etc., and fevers like Malaria, *Kalajar* etc., are the major ailments known to the people. Even a decade ago, diseases, especially Malaria and Black Fever, used to break out in the village very commonly and the people, after prolonged suffering, mostly succumbed to death in the end. Thanks to the immigration of displaced persons from East Pakistan as also to the public health measures under the National Malaria Eradication Programme of the Government of West Bengal, the jungles have been cleared and diseases have been kept under check. People recollecting their nightmarish experiences of *Kalajar* and Malaria now jokingly remark that enlarged spleen was the reward of the fevers, if death was missed. Tuberculosis is not now very common either. Contagious diseases like Leprosy and Venereal infections are also not reported. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas opine that about 25 years ago in Madhur Bhasa there lived two lepers almost as outcastes. After their death, none is reported any more to suffer from the same disease. Table 67 is given to show the disease of the chronic infectious type, the villagers have been suffering from for different periods of time.

None of the patients takes any medi-

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

cine except in case of critical stage of the disease because of their financial incapacity to pay for the medicines purchased from the physicians of respective household's choice, the Health Centre at Tufanganj being too far to be visited. The patient of Pulmonary Tuberculosis treated at the District Hospital at Cooch Behar Sadar could not attend the hospital on dates fixed for consultation with the physician due to paucity of funds. The hospital normally supplying only the cheap medicines and costly varieties being refused mostly, the patient could hardly afford to purchase the medicines prescribed by the doctor in the same hospital. He is awaiting his day of salvation by death.

The villagers are not allergic to vaccination. Neither has smallpox ever broken out in the village in a virulent epidemic. A

quack compounder from Rampur visits the village for vaccination against smallpox and inoculation against cholera. But, the visits being made mostly without any prior intimation to the people, most of them misses the Vaccinator-cum-Inoculator during his errand. That is why, the people cannot get themselves vaccinated regularly. It must have been a miracle that cholera has not taken any toll of the people's lives in recent years, inspite of the majority of the households not getting themselves inoculated. Here, of course, the visit of the inoculator is not to blame for the people's lapses. The hypodermic needle and the fever accompanied by the ache consequent upon inoculation are dreaded by the villagers, adults and children alike. The Table 68 will relate to the extent of the preventive steps in vaccination and inoculation resorted to by the people of Madhur Bhasa.

TABLE 67
DISEASES AND PATIENTS

Nature of disease	No. of patients	Patients in the age-group					
		15-34		35-59		60 years and above	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Asthma	4	..	..	1	1	1	1
Beriberi	1	..	1	..	..	..	..
Colitis and Gastritis	4	..	..	1	..	2	1
Diarrhoea	1	..	..	1	..	..	..
Jaundice	1	..	1	..	..	..	..
Neuralgia	1	..	..	1	..	..	..
Insanity	2	1	1	..	..	..	..
Senility	1	..	..	..	..	1	..
Puerperal disease	4	..	2	..	1	..	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	1	..	..	..	..	1	..
Total	20	1	5	4	2	5	3

MADHUR BHASA

Ten maternity cases, reported in the village during 1963-64 and four cases in 1964-65 were all confined at home. The expectant mothers were attended by the elderly Rajbanshi Kshatriya women of the village. At least in one matter the village people are progressive in their outlook, in so far as there appears to be no restriction on any community from attending to a pregnant woman of a different community at the time of child-birth. In any case, the elderly women of the village, no matter to which ethnic group they belong, are not professionals. In difficult labour an untrained professional midwife from Singimari is called in to assist the elderly village women.

If one surmises readily that the households in Madhur Bhasa resort to modern methods of treatment, one is grossly mistaken in holding such a presumptive idea. The choice of the people, seemingly very wide, is confined to three types of diametrically opposite methods of treatment.

Homeopathic methods of treatment appear to be in the liking of most of the households (45.0 per cent). The Ayurvedas still attract 12.5 per cent of households, whereas the Allopaths have retained

42.5 per cent households as their clientele. Viewed population-wise, it seems that the largest group of the people (50.8 per cent) consult an Allopath in the treatment of any disease. The Homeopaths do not for that matter lose their influence on 38.7 per cent of the village people. The minority group (10.5 per cent) would take medicines as prescribed by the Ayurvedic school. None of the villagers consults a qualified medical practitioner of one of the three schools. The dependence of the village people on one of these three methods is more casual than rational, for only in the treatment of acute cases does the household consult the physician of the particular school of his choice. Again, it has been observed that the households depending on Homeopathic or the Ayurvedic methods of treatment have no aversion for the Allopathic school of medicine. It is a common practice when one method failing to cure a disease, another method would induce the household to resort to it.

But, old superstitions about diseases and death, a vague awareness of modern approach to combat a disease, traditionalism and rationalism in consulting a doctor may be discussed here. If the people even in the days of the Health

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Centre, vaccination and inoculation still suffer from an ambivalence, it is because of their attitude rooted to tradition. In the discussion here the Namasudras and Tantubayas do not figure. As they are the displaced persons from a different region, numerically not large enough to form a very cohesive group in an unknown social climate, they are yet to strike roots in the soil to initiate a tradition of their own. The *Hippocrates* of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas does not chance to be a qualified physician with a Graduation Degree in Medicine of the Allopathic, Homeopathic or the Ayurvedic school. It is vain to expect otherwise a different picture also. When the economy of the people is poor and education so meagre, when intercourse is confined to the rural areas around, hardly beyond the open country-market at Ranipur, when no means of transport and communication can take the villagers either physically or mentally to the urban areas and imbue them with modern scientific ideas, it is no wonder that the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas have till recently been interned in a world where the *Apadevatas* (Malevolent deities), especially the chagrined *Kubir Thakurs*, rule over diseases and pestilence. Diseases, according

to popular belief, are caused by the malefic deities, when offended, for reasons best known to them and mostly unknown to the people. In this difficult situation no other person than the *Aladdin-like-Kaviraj* steps in to cure the diseases with the application of his secret medicines, many rare indigenous roots and herbs after performing his magical rites like *Kathijap* to identify the particular *Kubir Thakur* reigning over a particular disease. The performance of the magical rite by the indigenous medicineman is a little elaborate. He snatches two stalks of straw from the thatch of the hut, the diseased person lives in, holds them in his (Medicineman's) palm, mutters *Mantras* (Incantations), scratches some geometrical lines on the ground with one of the straws, makes some unintelligible mental calculations and finally cries aloud, *Eureka*, to disclose the name of the *Kubir Thakur* responsible for the disease. Once the presiding deity has been identified, the *Kaviraj*, acclaimed for playing his role successfully, retires from the scene. The next phase of the treatment is started by another functionary, called the *Bhawriya*, a class of priest-cum-sorcerer of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, specialised in the treatment of

TABLE 68

VACCINATION AND INOCULATION

Community	No. of households	No. of households getting themselves vaccinated			No. of households getting themselves inoculated		
		Regularly	Irregularly	Not at all	Regularly	Irregularly	Not at all
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	10	15	6	3	2	26
Namasudra	8	2	6	..	..	..	8
Tantubaya	1	..	1	..	..	..	1
Total	40	12	22	6	3	2	35

TABLE 69
TREATMENT OF DISEASE

Community	No. of households	No. of persons	No. of households depending on treatment by					
			Allopathy		Ayurveda		Homeopathy	
			Number	No. of persons	Number	No. of persons	Number	No. of persons
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	31	201	15	107	5	25	11	69
Namasudra	8	31	1	8	..	..	7	23
Tantubaya	1	6	1	6	..	..	..	..
Total	40	238	17	121	5	25	18	92
								133

a disease, diagnosed after the identification of its ruler *Kubir Thakur*. Each *Bhawriya* is competent to deal with only one disease caused by a particular *Kubir Thakur*, as the *Bhawriyas* are considered as *Bahans* (Media) of the respective *Kubir Thakurs*. A *Bhawriya* is no doubt looked upon as a man of great potentiality and towering personality, wielding enormous powers, natural and supernatural, and a God-ordained person, believed to be appointed by his own *Kubir Thakur*, who as his Grand Preceptor, initiates him in his dream and gives him instructions about the magical performances, *Mantras* and also the recipe of the psychodelic drug. *Mitra too observes that *Bhawriyas* are "more of sooth-sayers than priests, and are generally consulted for warding off diseases or other calamities, and are called in to officiate at the invoking of gods for obtaining oracles in obstinate cases of disease. They retire to a hut and take to *Bhawar* or the shaking of the head amidst the sounding of *Dhak*, until some *Bakyadan* or oracle is had from the offending god, declaring the nature of the disease and suggesting remedies". The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas mainly call in a *Bhawriya* during the worship of the *Kubir Thakur*, so identified by the *Kaviraj* through *Kathijap* process and declared responsible for the disease. The worship is performed by the *Bhawriya* priest with a *Yajna* (Sacrificial fire), during which the *Bhawriya* sits quietly in transcendental meditation. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas representing the households with the diseased persons assemble at the place of *Bhawar* (Worship) with offerings of goats, pigeons and ducks brought for sacrifice. During the sacrifice of the

animal or the bird to the beating of the *Dhak* (Drum) at its crescendo, the *Bhawriya* wakes up from his trance with a start, his body quivering as if possessed by some unearthly spirit. The devotees are assured that the *Bhawriya* has at last been possessed by his presiding *Kubir Thakur*. The sacrifice of the animal over, the *Bhawriya* drinks deep the blood of the slaughtered animal at a long draught, starts frisking and dancing and often chants a language not understood by the assembled gentry. The devotees then one by one narrate to the *Bhawriya* the symptoms of disease of the respective patients. The *Bhawriya* then prescribes suitable remedies after proper diagnosis of the ailment. The prescriptions, suggested by him, mostly comprise a sample of the rice offered to the deity and also *Chalpura*, both to be taken by the diseased person. Occasionally also he refers the patient to a *Kaviraj* for some specific indigenous roots and medicinal herbs required for the treatment of a particular disease. Sacrifice of a goat to the *Kubir Thakur* responsible for the particular disease is universally advised by the *Bhawriya*. In case the chances of survival of an ailing patient are minimal, the *Bhawriya* often unhesitatingly declares the prospect to be very bleak and starts unravelling the wingy mysteries of divinity to accomplish the remorseless design of the *Kubir Thakur* to ring the knell of death of the patient. The *Vakyas* (Prophetic predictions) of the *Bhawriyas* are respected profoundly by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, as if identical with the oracular voice of the *Kubir Thakurs* through their *Bahans* in the persons of the *Bhawriyas*. Consultation fee of the *Bhawriya* is generally charged at Rs.2.00 *paise* per patient and also a share of the sacrificed animal from each patient.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

The role of the indigenous doctor or medicineman and the magician or charmer physician, represented by the *Kaviraj* and the *Bhawriya* respectively, has indeed been very significant in the treatment of a disease at Madhur Bhasa even a decade ago. For the last ten years the winds of change have not blown so high as to wean the villagers away from their old custom. The practice has been moribund in the village for want of a *Kaviraj* and a *Bhawriya*. But, the conviction of the people has hardly died. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas have the same passionate faith in the indigenous medical know-how as they had a decade ago. Even the young people do not disrespect the custom nor do they disavow it. The people are found even now to bow down in respect to their *Kubir Thakurs* and propitiate the malevolent deities and malignant spirits with a suitable offering of animal sacrifice to cure an ailing person. Some people attend a *Bhawar* in a distant village after the quack of any of the three medical systems fails to cure a patient.

MEDICAL AMENITIES

The village being denied the services and the professional advice of any medical practitioner living either in its heart or in its neighbourhood, the villagers are left to the care and mercy of the handful of charlatans around whose business is other people's money. A couple of Kayasthas, displaced persons from East Pakistan and now settled in Rampur, passes for physicians, though unqualified they are in reality. The local Health Centres being situated at Baro Salumari and Tufangunj and the hospital being located in the latter place where one also gets the services of the qualified medical practitioners, the villagers have to fee the pseudo doctor at Rampur for the nauseous

draught of the allopathic or homeopathic system prescribed to them. Allopathic treatment is normally resorted to by the well-off households generally and by the households without any means particularly in a period of crisis of the patient or in difficult diseases. Qualified medical practitioners, residing in Tufangunj and Cooch Behar, are ordinarily not within the reach of many villagers on account of the prohibitive consultation fees, not very high in the urban scale of economic yardstick, and also for the distance. Neither does it suit the convenience of any household to go to the two towns to consult the qualified physicians there or to call in any, nor is it feasible for a physician to rush always to the village, leaving aside his profession and patients for a day or more. A mobile medical unit of the Government of West Bengal under the supervision of a qualified pharmacist serves the villagers no better. The only activity of the unit worthy of mention is restricted to the preventive steps of public health, of which vaccination and inoculation are important. Provided with no free medical facilities of any medical institution and served by no professional advice of a qualified medical practitioner in the vicinity of the village, the villagers have, therefore, to resort to the indigenous methods of treatment by their magicians with the *nom-de-plume* of *Ayurvedic* apothecary or rely on the quacks at Rampur who charge Rs.2.00 *paise* for a visit to the patient's house.

FAMILY-PLANNING

There is no Family Planning Centre in the village Madhur Bhasa or its neighbourhood, the nearest Centre being situated in Tufangunj, attached to the Subdivisional Hospital there. So, the people profess their ignorance of the existence of the Centre there. It is no wonder that they

*District Census Handbook, 1951, Cooch Behar, Census of India, 1953 by A. Mitra, I.C.S. pp.xli.

MADHUR BHASA

are not aware its activities as response of no heads of the households is in the affirmative to point out that a couple can prevent conception of a child by deliberate means, if they so desire. In the face of such classical ignorance, which instead of being a bliss tantamounts to a sin, providing a powerful weapon to the critics of the poor publicity of the family-planning measures among the rural folk and helping none with any excuse, one is painfully shocked by the futility of proceeding further to probe into the depth of the people's awareness of the methods of family-planning. Even though the help'less people live unawares of the concept and methods of contraception, their blissful ignorance, however, cannot chill the zeal of either the enquiry or the author to test the attitude of the heads towards the size of their households. Heads of 36 households have been asked whether or not they desire any more child in their households. Heads of four households excluded from the purview of the question comprise a widow and three widowers. The desire of the heads of the interviewed households for more children and the indirect attitude of the heads towards fecundity of the

married females in the households is evident from the Table 70.

TABLE 70

DESIRE FOR CHILDREN

Community	No. of interviewed households	No. of heads of interviewed households	
		Wanting more child	Wanting no more child
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	28	10	18
Namasudra	7	7	..
Tantubaya	1	..	1
Total	36	17	19

Of the interviewed heads of households, 52.8 per cent do not desire to have any more child to sweeten the labour of their wives. Accounting them as bills of charges, the heads of those households to whom children make misfortunes more bitter and who firmly refuse to behold a bliss among the new-born consist of 64.3 per cent of the interviewee heads of Rajbanshi Kshatriya households. And if the

TABLE 71

HEADS BY CAUSE OF THE DESIRE FOR CHILDREN

Community	No. of heads of households wanting more children inspite of					No. of heads of households wanting no more children inspite of				
	Having more than three children	Having 1-3 children	Having no son	Having no daughter	Having no child	Having more than three children	Having 1-3 children	Having no son	Having no daughter	Having no child
Rajbanshi Kshatriya	1	2	1	2	4	13	2	..	3	..
Namasudra	2	2	1	2	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
Total	3	4	2	4	4	14	2	..	3	..

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

head of the Tantubaya household does not also welcome any more child, it is partly because he is sixty, too old to be the father of any more offspring, and partly because his wife has four children, 'two things for dying man quite bewildering.'

The Table 71 explains the attitude of the interviewed heads of households whether wanting more children or not, in the light of the number of issues, male or female or both, that they have.

The yearning of the heads of six childless households for a child is explicable. So does appear the desire of three heads of households with only daughters but no son to be quite logical in as much as the desire to beget a son is in keeping with the natural instinct of a man to procreate a male scion to continue the line of succession unobstructed and also for the conventional apprehension fostered by the Hindu *Sanskara* that a man without male progeny fails to get entry into Heaven. Heads of three households with only sons but no daughters want more children as they feel neither saddled with too many sons nor burdened with wives beyond the fertile age-group. Of them, the Namasudra, aged 32 years, has only two sons. Of the two Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, one with two sons is aged 42 years and another, a proud father of one son, is 28 years old. In none of these three cases the desire for more children is very unnatural or perverse. The number of children in each of these households does not call for the cautionary signal of the red triangle to limit the size of the family by prevention of the birth of a baby. The trio of these agriculturists needs more hands to help them hold the plough and drive the bullock in the mellow years of their old age. They do neither want to be forsaken to live a solitary life of

regret. When the head of the household with more than three children still desires more issues, it is because he is the father of three daughters and only one son. Aged 40 years, the agriculturist head, not contented with only one male issue, has 13 *Bighas* of own land under personal cultivation. The decision otherwise of the heads of 14 other households with more than three children appears to be prudent. Of them, one has nine issues, one has seven, three households each has six issues, two households five issues each and seven households each has four issues.

On a resume, it is observed that of the 19 households wanting no more issue, heads of seven households have only sons but no daughter. Of them again, one household has six living sons, three households have each four living sons, two households each three living sons and one household has only one living son. But the heads of the 12 other households have each a son and a daughter in the minimum. In this group one household with the largest number of children has in all nine issues, comprising eight sons and one daughter.

Of the heads of households wanting more issues, six have only sons but no daughter and if desire for only a daughter orients them to be disinclined to limitation of the size of the family, it speaks of only human weakness in the society they live in. It is interesting that the head of one household even with one son and four daughters is not a contented father. He wishes still more children to be born to him. The Table 72 will give a composite picture of the number of issues to the two sets of heads of households, one wanting more children and another wanting no more.

That age of the head of the household

TABLE 72

HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN

Households wanting no more issue				Households wanting more issue			
No. of households	With no. of issues already living in each household			No. of households	With no. of issues already living in each household		
	Total	Sons	Daughters		Total	Sons	Daughters
1	6	6	..	1	4	1	3
3	4	4	..	1	3	2	1
2	3	3	..	4	2	2	..
1	1	1	..	2	2	1	1
1	9	8	1	1	1	1	..
1	7	5	2	2	1	..	1
1	6	4	2	6	..	..	..
2	5	4	1	..	..	..	..
1	6	3	3	..	..	..	..
3	4	3	1	..	..	..	..
1	4	1	3	..	..	..	..
2	2	1	1	..	..	..	..
19	..	..	..	17	..	..	..

is no factor of influence in favour of or against the desire of the head of the household for an issue is amply evident from the Table 73.

TABLE 73

ATTITUDE TO FAMILY-SIZE ACCORDING TO AGE OF THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Age-group	No. of heads of households wanting no more child	No. of heads of households wanting more children
15-24	..	..
25-34	2	8
35-44	3	5
45-54	6	..
55-64	7	4
65-74	1	..
Total	19	17

Of the heads of a couple of households desiring no more child and belonging to the age-group of 25-34, one has only three sons and the other three sons and a daughter. Of the heads of households

wanting no more issue and themselves in the age-group 35-44, one has three sons along with a daughter, another three sons only and the third has one son and three daughters. The heads of six households belonging to the age-group of 45-54 and wanting no more issue are constituted by a couple of persons each with a son and a daughter, a person with three sons, a person with three sons and three daughters, a person with four sons and one daughter and lastly a father of eight sons and one daughter. Of the seven heads in the age-group of 55-64 and with desire for no more issue, one person even with one son does not want any more issue because his age is 62 years. The rest consist of one father of three sons and a daughter, one with four sons, one with four sons and a daughter, one father of four sons and two daughters, one person with five sons and two daughters and another father of six sons. The person in the age-group of 65-74, 72 years old and the father of four sons, obviously has neither the age nor the ability to be the father of more offsprings.

It thus appears that the youngest father in the age group of 25-34 have at least three issues each. Two persons, both aged 50 years and each with one son and one daughter, are contented fathers, wishing no more issues.

Of the heads of households wanting children and belonging to the age groups 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 respectively, three persons in the first age group, one person in the second and two persons in the third age group have no issue at all. As such, the desire for more issues, quite human understandable. One can also understand the motivation of two persons, each with a daughter, those of another with only one son, of another with one son and a daughter and of the third man with only two sons. If these three persons each being the father of at least one son wants more issues, it is because their occupation as agriculturists as also the size of the land under personal cultivation what their desire for more male issues. For instance, the person with two sons owns 19 *Bighas* of land under personal cultivation, the person with one son and one daughter owns 10 *Bighas* of land personally cultivated and one more person, being the father of one son and desiring more owns 29 *Bighas* of land cultivated by him. In the age group of 35-44 one person with one son and three daughters owns and cultivates 13 *Bighas* of land. Land does not, however, cause any motivation in three other persons in the same age group, one with two sons and a daughter, one with only two sons and the third with one son and a daughter. In the age group 45-54 one person has only two daughters and another has a son and a daughter. But of them, the first is landless the latter owning only four *Bighas* of land. In the same age group, however, two persons without any issue are owners of 16 *Bighas* and 9½ *Bighas* of land respectively.

It is commonplace that the desire for an issue does not emanate from one single factor. As such, the most important biological and psychological factor influencing the couple's attitude towards the size of the family is the puberty of the married woman but not marriage itself nor the age at marriage. The age of pubescence under tropical conditions has been accepted as 15 years. In a village where mere methods of contraception are unknown to the people, the only force that can shape one's attitude towards limit of the size of the family cannot be generated from outside by external stimulants, but, when such force is operative unseen, it owes its origin to the innate factors motivating the individuals and to their socio-economic and ethno-cultural ethos. The data about the number of living children, in the absence of information about the parity of births of individual female partners of the heads of households, have even though incomplete still some value in roughly showing their attitude towards family-limitation. The Table 74 will speak for itself.

A few observations may be drawn from the analysis of the Table 74. Duration of effective marriage of the spouse of the head of the household is a force to reckon with only for nine households with the duration of their effective marriage extending more than 25 years. The heads of households in question do neither have the desire nor the urge to enlarge the size of their households by the addition of more children to their existing stock. In all the cases, the number of issues or the particular sex of the issues does not count at all to predispose the heads to more offsprings than those at present. Rather all the households are averse to further increment to the size of the family

by more births. Whether or not the heads of the households in this group or their spouses have the required fecundity at their age is a medical question outside the scope of the present investigation. But in the present set-up of the social and cultural structure of the village and of the mental frame of the different households conditioned by the values and traditions of the

TABLE 74
ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAMILY SIZE

*Duration of effective marriage in years	No. of issues in each household			No. of households not wanting any more issue	No. of households wanting any more issue
	Total	Son	Daughter		
0-4	..	..	..	..	4
5-9	..	..	..	..	1
	1	1	..	..	1
	1	..	1	..	2
	2	1	1	..	1
	2	2	..	1	..
10-14	3	3	..	1	..
	4	3	1	..	1
	4	4	..	1	..
15-19	2	1	1	1	1
	2	2	..	..	1
	4	1	3	1	1
20-24	..	..	..	..	1
	2	1	1	..	1
	2	2	..	..	1
	5	4	1	1	..
	7	5	2	1	..
25-29	9	8	1	1	..
	2	1	1	1	..
	3	3	..	1	..
30-34	6	4	2	1	..
	1	1	..	1	..
	4	3	1	1	..
	4	4	1	1	..
35-39	5	4	1	1	..
	6	6	..	1	..
40-44	..	..	..	..	..
45-49	4	4	..	1	..

*The length of effective marriage has been calculated with reference to the females from the age of 15 years and above, whichever is later irrespective of the actual age at marriage if less than 15 years—Editor

communities any woman abhors the idea of bearing a child at an age when the eldest issue is an adult. Besides, the age of the married females is in no case below 40 years, at which age questions of pregnancy are treated as not only hazardous for the health of the mother but also for the prestige of the head of the household. It is also doubtful if at this age sexual activity coupled with fecundity of the woman matches the urge of the head, aged more than fifty years, to head towards an ignominious parenthood.

That childlessness is a potent force to stir up the desire of any married woman and also her consort, already craving filial affection, that an immediate birth of a baby is independent of the actual age of either of the couples and also of the duration of effective marriage of the married female is amply demonstrated by seven households without any issue and with married life stretching from 0-5 years to 20-24 years. Heads of nine households with duration of effective marriage upto 24 years or less do not consider two issues as too large a number to call for a limitation on the size of the family. But, the heads of eight households with more than two issues attitude of positive antipathy, irrespective of duration, strike an of effective marriage, against more offsprings than against three issues or the actual number of issues, when it is more than three. The swing is, therefore, quite obvious, even though the red triangle has not been posed to them with the symbolism of the geometric motif and colour explained in the rustic language of their tongue. To the innate message of the people asking them to desist from an unplanned growth of their family none can perhaps claim pretentiously any authorship. Yet, if one quite logically ascribes the attitude, in which the people are poised, to the handi-

work of chill penury, one is not far from the truth.

To round off the discussions heads of nine households comprising six fathers without any issues and three without any son are justified in their desire for a child. Eight households against limitation on the size of a family form the hard core of the village-community with their beliefs rooted to the rural traditional values of the socio-religious complex that a child being a divine gift, it is not only blasphemy but an apostasy also to think of the steps to avoid or prevent the birth of a baby, not to speak of a loud talk about contraception. To them the scourge of hunger and poverty is a choice preferable to the lash of divine curse and the punishment in inferno on the day of last judgment. Other households are not in the know of the modern contraceptive means propagated by the Family Planning Centres generally, because they have had no occasion to hear them. Even in such a situation where the means are not available to the villages for lack of communication and campaign by the concerned agencies, one finds a glimmer in the tunnel to hear them saying that withdrawal methods, failing the safest course of sexual abstinence, are the only means of birth-control within their scanty knowledge. And one is relieved at the end of an exacting endurance test of such an enquiry to declare that all is not lost and one can still hold some hope for the unlettered, suffering peasantry of an unknown village.

DAILY LIFE

In Madhur Bhasa, predominantly agricultural in economy, the farmers are early birds. As the bovine stock provides the agriculturists draught animal power, the cattle and land as well are looked after with care and affection. Released from the

confinement of the cattleshed, the animals are taken out and fed with fodder of straw first. Soon after, the herd of cattle is taken to the open and the animals are left free to graze in the fields. The draught bullocks, however, accompany the farmers to the farms for agricultural purposes in the season of ploughing. The first part of the morning chores thus preoccupy the agriculturist intending his cattle and then in attending to his fields. At about 8 A.M. the tiller turns back home for an austere breakfast and a short rest for half an hour or so. He resumes his duty again in the field and keeps himself busy with the work pertaining to different phases of agricultural operations to carry on which he has none but his own limbs to help him. At noon he comes home for bath and lunch which mark a temporary cessation in his work in the fields where he goes again if he has still some energy left. But, he does not forget to provide his bullocks and cattle with forage. A little early in the afternoon some may drop in the house of a chummy covillager for a short evening-chat or call upon the neighbour to bear him company in course of an ideal gossip. Then just to hobnobb fellow villagers join to enjoy the pause that comes in the day's occupations that is known as the 'Children's Hours' when the assembled farmers carve the sparkle and fun of the 'babblative art'. A few others, however, set out for Rampur to purchase the daily necessities or other provisions in short supply in the kitchen. Whatever be the short diversion of the people in the afternoon, everyone is back home soon after twilight, turns the cattle homeward on the return journey and stables the livestock in their sheltering sheds. Back in the hut, the householder bides time till dinner is ready. By 8 P.M. everyone finishes his quiet dinner and soon after falls asleep to keep good hours.

'Some respite to husbands the weather may send, but housewives' affairs have never an end'. Saddled with the weighty responsibility of housewifery and house-keeping, the housewife rises very early to keep her house. She first cleans the courtyard and the cowshed, from where she collects the cowdung to prepare dry cakes for use as fuel. She then goes to the river or the well to fetch water home to wash the utensils. She then retires to the kitchen to prepare the breakfast and waits for her husband to come home from the field. Breakfast over, she attends to a miscellany of domestic chores, such as boiling of paddy, cleaning of clothes, husking of paddy etc. At about 10 A.M. she goes to the river for a dip and brings water for use at home. At about 11 A.M. she goes to the kitchen, prepares the midday meals and waits till her husband returns. After lunch, she has a temporary lull in the tempo of her household work and seems to enjoy a little leisure of her own, she has deservedly earned, in long-winded chatters with the women of her age in the neighbouring houses. With the shadows of the evening lengthening on the homestead, the housewife retraces her steps back to the kitchen at about 6 P.M. to cook the modest meal for the night. After dinner at about 8 P.M. she draws the shutters of the kitchen, slams the door of her bedroom and welcomes the nightly sleep. The life of the housewife is attuned to a drab routine of everyday life, the only charm being provided by the children, the cares and caresses for whom do never tire the tireless mother.

LEISURE AND RECREATION

Recreation in a pronounced form is a sophisticated analgesic for the toiling peasants of Madhur Bhasa. Work follows in the wake of respite and repose and *vice versa*, the set pattern of life being

tuned to a dull monotony. One cannot mention any particular sport or game catching attention of the villagers and calling for their participation therein to escape from daily schedule. As agriculturists they do hardly find any rest in the peak hours of agricultural activity during the days of cultivation, when they are busy in their fields from morning till evening. After an arduous work for the whole day, the fatigued farmer finds neither the time nor the mood for any diversion or pastime. He badly requires a long spell of sleep. In lean seasons of agriculture a cultivator's only concern is to find some means of livelihood. Hence, the duties of the occupation take away much of the time and energy of the person who finds no apt moments to distract him from the ennui of life. Even during the little leisure at the disposal of the agriculturists, whether in the season of cultivation or not, the people collect dry leaves and twigs for fuel from the adjacent forest and tend the kitchen garden grown in the homestead. In the small hours of the afternoon the workers find some time for rest. They like to gossip endlessly among themselves. The young and the old together assemble in the living room of the hut or under a tree in the homestead to discuss trivial subjects of common interest. Sometimes the *tete-a-tete* centres round the discourses of topical interest related to the livestock, land and other concerns of the family. The elderly members chew betels or tobacco mixed with lime, when engaged in a conversation. Some even smoke the *Hookah* (Hubble-bubble) or the *Bidi* during evening chat, while the younger members sitting in a circle round the elderly members scan the faces of the latter to group the points.

Gossips and chats are held mostly at home, as the peasants seek home for rest

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

and home is best for rest. But, some members like to spend their time at the tea-stall at Rampur to have a little chance to talk a little wild over a cup of tea brewed from bad tea-dust in a manner defying all the rules of the preparation of good tea. Their immaculate style compares favourably with the evenings of Dr. Samuel Johnson. But, bad tea does hardly spoil the good taste of the babbling peasants in an evening get-together.

Cards have not gained an entry in the life of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas as an indoor game or as a pastime till the immigration of the Namasudras into the village. But, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas have now become interested in the game of cards and some, if not all, enjoy occasionally the game with a pack of soiled cards in the company of the Namasudras. Obviously, the young men of the village give a better account of their proficiency in this exotic game. The village boys play *Ha-du-du* in the open meadows of the village. Some of the youths occasionally visit Singimari to play football in the playground attached to the Singimari Primary School. Volley-ball is played in winter at Singimari by a few number of young boys.

'The test to some faint meaning make pretence. Some beams of wit on other souls may fall, strike through and make a lucid interval', but the women seldom deviate into a sensible recess after work by the side of the hearth. For they have little interval for diversion. Nevertheless, the women's parliament for a get-together has its sitting near the well and the tubewell and also at the bathing site in the river to discuss in full-throated voice the problems and personal privations and to beat the drums of their husbands little achievements and many a time to censor the

scandals of wayward neighbours in vitriolic tongue. The cackling noise and hilarious laughter can seldom beguile an outsider to miss even from a distance the locale of the meeting of the women opening the treasured secrets of their feminine hearts. The children, having nothing to do in particular, sport about and delight in simple things and innocent games. *Ha-du-du* and *Danguli* appear to be the most popular forms of their games. Clay-modelling is the favourite pastime of the youngsters, specially of the girls.

Despite the mundane and in consequential ways of life of the people of Madhur Bhasa, one or two activities, which otherwise could have been an economic pursuit of the people, have resulted to be a sort of an escapade, to which the villagers take recourse once in a blue moon. A mighty river, in which the village people splash about for bathing and swimming, offers also a means of serene enjoyment in its quiet flow during winter and summer. Being neither fishermen by caste and occupation nor good anglers by hobby, one or two members of almost every household are drawn to the river with the handy fishing net for a catch. A patient sitting for hours together may or may not bring in shrimps or small fish for the net, but the pleasure of a hobby, though individualistic in nature, is never missed. Needless to mention, a small catch often heightens the pleasure of the individual as also of his kinsmen in the family. But, none commercialises the quiet enjoyment by the river-side into a fishing trade.

One has to record painfully the passage of the pastime of a community into forgetfulness, unwritten and unseen. Hunting as such was never the traditional game of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village.

But even about 15 years ago, community hunting used to have been pursued by the members of the same community as a matter of recreation twice in a year—once in the month of *Magha* (January-February) and once more in the month of *Baisakha* (April-May). The party would consist of one adult from each household under one common leader, known as *Chandoal*, who is supposed to have been proficient in the knowledge of some incantations and magical rites to ensure more games to be ensured during hunting than would normally come in the way. Any day of the month, cited above, convenient to all the households was fixed by the *Chandoal* for an outing for a hunt. On the eve of the proposed outing every participant would individually worship *Bura Thakur* and *Dhula Kubir* in their own house for their own safety during the hunting operation in which the whole day used to have been spent. The *Chandoal* would start with the members of his party for a site in the adjacent forest already earmarked for the purpose with the prior permission from the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar, the then owner of the forests. The members of the party were equipped with *Keapur* (Spear) and bamboo clubs. Besides, the party would carry a long net of twined jute thread and some empty canisters to produce metallic sound to scare the animals of the forest out of their hideouts. On arrival at the selected site in the jungle some members of the party would stand in a row, each keeping a certain distance from another, and holding the net in their hands. Some other members of the party with spears, sticks and clubs would stand by closely. The remaining persons would enter into the jungle to drive the animals towards the net by beating the canisters in rapid beats. They would avoid animals like tiger and choose the area where only boars,

rabbits and deer were available. As soon as the animals were out, they were chased by the huntsmen to make them move towards the net which was skillfully released on the animals at the opportune moment. The entrapped games were slain by all other hunters with spears and sticks. Hunting over by the afternoon, the party would return home and divide the meat in equal shares among the participants. The *Chandoal*, however, would receive a bigger share, comprising the head and one hind leg of the hunted game.

As already mentioned, hunting never constituted a means of livelihood nor had any economic importance in the life of the people. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas from different villages in the neighbourhood also used to attend these community hunting the same day in the same place in separate parties as a means of community recreation. Due to the scarcity of animals in the neighbouring forests waning interest of the participant villagers and also the enactment and enforcement of stringent laws of the forest for the preservation of wild beasts, the passion for hunting once so deeply implanted in the community, has now degenerated into nostalgic memory, the rumination of which needs a dialect understood very little by those who do not hunt today.

None of the villagers owns any radio-receiver set nor is there any community radio-set in the village. As a result, the people do not have any opportunity to listen to news-broadcast nor do they get any means to relax listening to the musical programmes broadcast over the radio. The acquaintance of the people with the three R's and their poor economy kindle in them neither any interest to read newspaper nor the aptitude to subs-

cribe to one. Either of it is looked upon as a luxury.

Music, however, enables the people to escape from their humdrum life and the monotony of a toilsome livelihood. Occasionally, a stringed musical instrument, known as *Do-tara*, is played on to accompany one or two vocal musicians to dull the sting of poverty, to benumb the consciousness of the present or to loose sight of the diseases and sorrows, wants and deprivations, squalor and misery of the villages for only a petty existence.

RELIGION AND GODS

If religion stands for an active faith, the people of Madhur Bhasa, irrespective of their castes, are all Hindus belonging to the *Vaishnava* sect and are, for that matter, god-fearing. As for those wingy mysteries in divinity and airy subtleties in religion, which have 'unhinged the brains of better heads', they would never stretch the *pia mater* of the simple peasants of the village. Even though they do not know much about God, many are afraid of Him and hold Him as the Supreme Being. Despite the universal faith of all the households of three ethnic groups that there is a God or something very like Him, no matter if the conviction has been induced in every man by age, diseases and sorrows, the people have many gods of their idolatry and choice. And accordingly the practices and religious observances of the individuals vary.

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, numerically in the majority, worship a number of deities, outside the pale of the Hindu pantheon, neither mentioned by nor known to the displaced persons from East Pakistan settled in the village or to other Hindus of the neighbourhood. The deities peculiar

to the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of Madhur Bhasa and traditionally worshipped by them comprise *Bura Thakur*, *Gabur Thakur*, *Madan Kam*, *Tosa Kubir* and *Sur Kubir*. It is indeed difficult to classify the mob of these divinities on any intelligent principle into village godlings or as survivals in debased form of second rate deities or as heroes of other mythologies or even as tribal deities or local gods of autochthonous people. Neither have they been absorbed into Brahmanism nor are they now in the process of promotion or elevation to the orthodox pantheon. Members of the respectable divine cabinet, they are allotted respectable positions of honour and adoration by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village. The Hindu gods and goddesses such as *Tulsi*, *Durga*, *Manasa*, *Lakshmi* and so forth, are commonly worshipped by the Namasudras and revered by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas too. But nowhere in the village is to be found solemn temple for these gods and goddesses in any anointed *pucca* structure of brick and mortar. In the absence of any permanent temple, two mango trees in the village are held sacred by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas in the belief that the trees are the abode of some of the deities, viz., *Tosa Kubir* and *Sur Kubir*. As such, they form a convenient centre for the religious worship of the deities where they reside and accept offerings from their votaries. Other deities are worshipped by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas either at the *Thans* (Altars) adjacent to their houses or at the riverside or under the sacred mango tree in a rude hut of wattled bamboo roofed with a rude thatch. Sometimes temporary altars are constructed by some devotees near their huts for the worship of the deities. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas call in during the worship of their traditional deities their own priests known as *Adhikaris* from Assam who are

MADHUR BHASA

also Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. The Namasudras employ Bengalee Brahman priests who as immigrants from East Pakistan have settled in the neighbouring villages. Offerings of *Atap* (Sun-dried rice), plantains and sweetmeats apart, sacrifices of animals and birds like goats, pigeons and ducks are made by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas to propitiate their gods, while goat is decapitated for sacrifice by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas with either a *Dao* or a sharp sacrificial blade the heads of pigeons and ducks being torn off their bodies by hand. And the bleeding animal of god is considered the spotless sacrifice offered not by butchers but by sacrificers among the devotees. Since the *Vaishnavas* do not ordinarily eat meat and offer it neither to the gods, and the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas take recourse to the sacrifice of animals to please their gods even despite their affiliation to the *Vaishnava* sect. The anomalous position can be explained by the influence of the aboriginal rites of the animists on the cult of *Vaishnavite* Hinduism, now professed by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village.

Respected by the households of all the three communities, Goddess *Durga* is not worshipped in the village by any household or community. But, all the communities subscribe to the observance of the worship of *Durga*, organised on a *Sarbojanina* (Community) basis jointly by the villagers of Singimari for more than thirty years. The people of Madhur Bhasa participate in the worship but do not take any leading part in organising it. The *Sastric* rites and rituals are performed by the Assamese Brahman priests. The worship of *Durga* at Rampur draws the villagers of Madhur Bhasa not on account of its festive rites. The attraction of the festival is heightened by the fair held for four days on the occasion of the festival during which common

interest generally prevails. In the fair the articles of necessity like clothings and household utensils along with items of choice from the fanciful goods of all shapes, colours, materials and price are purchased, sweetmeats not excluded. The concourse is composed of traders from Rampur, a few sellers from Baxihat, Jorai, Barabhuisa and Toofanganj and a vast number of visitors from Madhur Bhasa and its neighbourhood.

To a large number of villagers of Madhur Bhasa, Jorai provides an irresistible attraction on the *Mahastami* (the second day of worship of the Goddess *Durga*) for a holy dip in the river and for attendance in the fair held for a day on the occasion of the ceremonial bath. Devotees from different parts of the districts of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri throng in the fair.

CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS

The most important feature of the religious life of the village Madhur Bhasa is that every person enjoys the freedom to worship the gods and goddesses in his own way according to his faith but does not become nondescript conformists to any decree of a Holy Order. Thus all the deities are not worshipped by all the households at one time according to any fixed prescribed law. Deities which vary according to communities are worshipped by all the households at one time according to fixed prescribed law. Deities which vary according to communities are worshipped individually by the households. It has, however, been observed that *Manasa* and *Tulsi* are worshipped universally by devotees from all the three communities. Yet, the religious observances and ritualistic aspects connected with the worship of these two deities have some points in common and some other points at variance,

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Tulsi Puja (Worship of Tulsi)

The *Tulsi* (Holy Basil), having close association with the worship of *Vishnu*, which deity is equated with and identified as *Bhagawan*¹ (God) by the villagers, represents the same deity. Wilson narrates the legend of the fascination of the god for the beauty of *Vrinda*, the wife of *Jalandhara* and application of the other gods to *Lakshmi*, *Gauri* and *Swadha* to redeem the Supreme Creator from enthrallment. Each of the three deities gave the gods the seeds of some plants for sowing at the place where *Vishnu* was enchanted. Those given by *Lakshmi* sprang up as the *Dhatri* (*Emblica myrobalan*), *Malati*, jasmine and the *Tulsi* in female form to attract the admiration of Lord *Vishnu* and rescue him from the wiles of *Vrinda*. The plant is revered as the symbolic representation of Lord *Vishnu*.

Twenty two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households have each in the respective courtyards a *Tulsi Than* (Altar of the Holy Basil) made of earth with a *Tulsi* plant at the centre. Everyday the female members of the household plaster the altar with a paste of earth, cowdung and water after bath in the morning and lit an earthen lamp before the plant in the evening. Besides, all the Rajbanshi households with *Tulsi* plants in this houses arrange its elaborate worship the plant once a month on any day and the ceremony is commonly known as *Sevapuja*. The head of the household fasts for the day until the worship is over. Offerings of curd, flattened rice, banana and *Batasa* (A preparation of sweetmeat from sugar or molasses) are made to *Tulsi* by the head of the household. No vicarial services of any professional priest are commissioned for the worship.

Tulsi is likewise worshipped as the re-

presentation or medium of *Narayana* or *Bhagawan* (God) by the Namasudras and the Tantubaya. Six Namasudra households as well as the solitary Tantubaya household have the plant in their courtyards. Some elderly members of the household offer water and flower to the plant daily after bath. An earthen lamp is also lit before the plant every evening.

Manasa Puja (Worship of Manasa)

It is not clear why *Manasa* 'the Goddess of Snakes' is so popular though poisonous snakes' are not very common and cases of death from snake-bites are rare. Yet, the Goddess *Manasa* is worshipped by the villagers. Also known as *Padma*, *Manasa* is given the status of an important deity by the Rajbanshi-Kshatriyas. *Padma*, according to ²Monier Williams, is a form of *Matri* which, originally derived from the simple primitive worship of the mother, has developed and degenerated into the abominations of the *Tantras*. Again, the snake being dreaded and revered on account of mysterious feats associated with it, its stealthy habits, the suddenness and deadliness of its attacks, the worship of snake or the Snake-goddess has three aspects. Snake is considered a fatal enemy, sometimes also a protector of home and treasure. And at times snake is regarded to have the attributes of wisdom. The serpent, as an emblem of life and symbol of eternity having association with powers of nature like the cloud and the rain has become associated with phallicism and sexual matters.

Very elaborate worship of the deity is arranged by 25 Rajbanshi Kshatriya households but not at any specific time by all of them. In the month of *Baisakh* (April-

1. Works by Prof. H. H. Wilson, Vol. III, London, 1862-71, p. 68.

2. Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford, 1872.

May) one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household worships the deity. One Rajbanshi Kshatriya household worships *Manasa* in the month of *Aswin* (September-October) and another Rajbanshi Kshatriya household once in the month of *Aswin* and once more in *Falgun* (February-March). The rest of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households which worship the deity do not, however, treat any particular month to be specially propitious. Except one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household, all others worship the deity represented by an earthen pot placed on an earthen altar. The exception is made by one household which has installed in his house an earthen image of the deity with four snakes in four hands and two snakes coiling round her ears. Images of the subsidiary deities, found to be in the company of *Manasa*, comprise *Saraswati* (Goddess of Learning) and *Ganesh* (God of Success) to the right and *Lakshmi* (Goddess of wealth) and *Kartika* (God of valour) to the left. The two attendant goddesses are accompanied by a couple of ducks at their feet. Besides, an image of a guardsman with a club on the left shoulder is another attendant to the deity of *Manasa* which has resemblance in look with the deity of *Durga* and appears as an adaptation of the latter deity in outward form. The worship of *Manasa* requires an elaborate ritual performed by priests from Assam with the offerings of sun-dried rice, bananas, milk etc. Goats and ducks are also sacrificed by some to keep the vows earlier made by them earlier to the deity. The individual households worship the deity in the belief that the deity insures their welfare and prosperity. In difficult times and in the event of any misfortune, in case of snake-bites the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas make vows to the deity and worship her after recovery. The blessing of the goddess are invoked by households at the time of

marriage, helping that happiness of the newly married couple owes itself to the benediction of deity in contentment.

The single Tantubaya and all the Nama-sudra households worship *Manasa* or the Goddess of Snakes in the month of *Sravana* (July-August). In the place of an image a new earthen pitcher represents the deity in the worship of which the household priest, a Brahman displaced person from East Pakistan, officiates. Instead of animal-sacrifice, offerings of fruits, milk, sun-dried rice and sweets are offered.

Banspuja or Madan Chaturdashi

Whether worship is transcendent wonder or not may be a matter of opinion. That one's religion is whatever he is most interested in and that one's religion designates one's attitude to a particular consciousness is evident from the festival of *Madan Chaturdashi* observed every year on the fourteenth day of the moon in the month of *Chaitra* (March-April). Only one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household worships *Madan Kama* (the God of Love), the 'regent of love rhymes' and the 'anointed sovereign of groans and sighs'. Known as *Banspuja*, worship of the deity is made by three Rajbanshi Kshatriya households in the month of *Baisakh* (April-May). A green bamboo pole is erected in the courtyard and a small red festoon or flag made from a piece of paper or cloth is tied to the top of the bamboo pole in front of which an earthen pot is placed on the ground. *Pujas* are made by the Brahman priest for the household, in compliance with all ritualistic practices, milk, fruits and sweets being offered to the deity. The objective of the ceremony, the nature of the deity and purpose behind its propitiation are not very clear either to the households worshipping the deity or to the non-believer families. Popular conception moti-

vating the devotees to observe the ceremony holds the *Puja* to ensure that members of all households organising the worship secure divine blessings of the mystic god.

Bura Thakur Puja (Worship of *Bura Thakur*).

With no form or image, *Bura Thakur* remains a god hidden in the secret of mysteries. It is indeed a challenging and hazardous task to treat the deity, so widely respected by all the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas, merely as a godling of nature or as a local deity or village-god. It is also futile to treat him as a spirit of water or even as water-god responsible for the flood of a river originating in the event of any provocation inciting his wrath. The deity is worshipped by almost the majority of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas on the bank of the river Raidak on individual initiative and expense to please and pacify the deity and to keep the river Raidak calm and in check. But, this need not give occasion for any conclusive remark passed to the effect that *Poseidon* presides over rivers and water only. If it were so, it would not have been worshipped earlier like the god of the forests or for that matter, like the presiding deity of animals to hold the wild beasts under rein, preventing attacks on the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas once living in the heart of jungles or in their fringes. Again, the reverential adoration of the god in the hope of an unbroken spell of prosperity and welfare of all households of the village should not be a weighty evidence to anoint the godling as a benefic deity. The association of fetishism is, however, noticeable. Even if so, a palpable process to elevate the godling of unidentified nature and unknown classification to the pantheistic complex of the Brahmanical Hinduism seems to be in operation, when *Bura Thakur* is often equated with Lord

Mahadeva or *Siva* by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village. But, there again the non-Brahmanic character of the god is revealed by the mere fact of the absence of any Brahman priest in simple rituals or practices. No priest is ever recruited or commissioned from any other ethnic group to officiate in the ceremonies during the worship of the deity. In fact, each household nominates a priest from among members of his household. With no time particularly marked for the worship, the deity has no fixed temple or site for any community-worship. Instead, only seven households have earthen altars in their houses, dedicated to the deity, but has no image or figurine installed there. The rest of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households worship the god on the riverside but not at any particular site there. According to the prevalent practice, the head of the household fasts to worship the god with offerings of curd, flattened rice, banana and sweetmeats.

PUJA OF TOSA KUBIR AND SUR KUBIR

Two godlings are held in awe and reverential fear under an assumption by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas that they rule over epidemics and traditionally serious diseases. Hence, the twin deities have been worshipped by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas for many years past to ward off diseases. *Tosa Kubir* and her elder brother *Sur Kubir* are intimately associated with each other so much so that the former does not part with the company of the latter. The central figure of the twins remains, however, *Tosa Kubir* who with her divine power and charm has the potentiality to protect the village from diseases and pestilence. But, the precise function of *Sur Kubir* remains unknown. To invoke the blessings of *Tosa Kubir* and *Sur Kubir*, the devotees are required to propitiate the godlings with

MADHUR BHASA

usual offerings and prevent them from being malefic. With no regular temple or shrine, the two deities of the village live under mango trees, one beside the main village-road and the other in the heart of the village-jungle. The trees, therefore, regarded as holy and sacred, become also objects of worship by the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas who are forbidden to lop off branches of the two trees. *Tosa Kubir* resides in the mango tree by the side of the village-road, *Sur Kubir* being sheltered in the other mango tree in the jungle.

Underneath the mango tree, which is incidentally considered also the fane of *Tosa Kubir*, a very small thatched structure has within it the earthen images of *Tosa Kubir* and *Sur Kubir* represented in anthropomorphic forms. Roofed with straw, thatched anew every year and built and repaired when broken or damaged, the structure wherein the deities are installed is left to the care of one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household. The image of each godling has the height of 36 inches. *Tosa Kubir* wears a crown on her head and rides on a tiger with her elder brother *Sur Kubir* standing on her left with a club in his right hand rested on the right shoulder and the right leg stepped forward.

The Rajbanshi Kshatriya care-taker is under an obligation to sacrifice a he-goat to *Tosa Kubir* once a year at any convenient time. The sacrifice is said to have been ordained by the godling *Tosa Kubir* long, long ago when the forefather of the present head had instituted the practice of the present offering. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of the village make a vow to *Tosa Kubir* in case of hardship or misfortune, epidemics and diseases to sacrifice an animal to the deity in the event of smooth passage over the crisis. The regular worship of

the deity, believed also to be the presiding deity of the village, is held by the traditional Assamese priest (*Gossain*). But no particular month is earmarked for such a community-worship.

Gabur Thakur Puja (Worship of Gabur Thakur)

To combat desperate diseases and to tackle serious epidemics, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas of Madhur Bhasa take recourse to more desperate remedies. As it appears, the appeasement of the godlings of *Sur Kubir* and *Tosa Kubir* is not considered a measure, enough potent to keep at bay or ward off their malefic powers. Hence, as a redoubtable defence the people elaborately worship another esoteric deity, named *Gabur Thakur*, the exact nature of whom cannot be comprehended because of his dim, undefined and shadowy personality invested with an arbitrary, irresponsible and dangerous weapon of displeasure wielded ruthlessly on the slightest provocation and wrath to cause panicky fear among the villagers.

The anthropomorphic deity is represented by an earthen image of a human being. The deity has no specific *Than* or altar in the village proper. Instead, its worship is held in the neighbouring village Singimari at its *Than* under a *Pakur* tree, where the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas from Madhur Bhasa assemble to sacrifice goats or pigeons. There is no time fixed for the worship to fulfil their early promise to the deity. The worship is held in the month of *Baisakh* by the traditional Assamese priest of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas.

Miscellany of gods and goddesses

Besides the gods and goddesses associated with diseases, epidemics and natural

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

calamities, a number of other deities, whether of the Hindu pantheon or of local tradition, are worshipped by a number of households out of reverence and fear and under the influence of the neighbourhood, where a large number of displaced persons from East Pakistan has been settled and rehabilitated.

Lakshmi, the traditional Goddess of Wealth of the Hindu hieratic order, presiding over the treasure trove of the families, is worshipped by 15 households, of which nine Rajbanshi Kshatriyas and two Namasudras hold the propitiation of the deity daily in their living rooms. There in a corner, a small brass or bellmetal pot containing water, grains of paddy and some blades of *Durva* grass represents the deity symbolically. The female members worship the deity daily after morning bath, hold a lighted lamp to the deity in the evening, mutter a prayer of their own in vernacular language and wish the welfare and prosperity of the household. Three other Rajbanshi Kshatriyas worship the deity annually in the month of *Kartika* (October-November) during the *Diwali* (Festival of lights) and one Namasudra holds an annual worship of the goddess in the month of *Sravana* (July-August). The worship of the deity is held every Thursday by one Rajbanshi Kshatriya household.

One Rajbanshi Kshatriya holds the worship of the God *Kartika* in the month of *Kartika*. *Mahamaya* or Mother Goddess approximating to *Sitala*, the Goddess of Smallpox, on the basis of the broad features of the prowess and domain of the two as outlined by one devotee, is worshipped by one Rajbanshi Kshatriya. But, two Rajbanshi Kshatriya households are votaries of *Bhagawati*, the identity of whom remains obscure on account of a vague

and mystic description of the deity by the devotees lacking in a clear concept of the divine entity held in esteem as *Bhagawati*.

One Namasudra household worships the Goddess *Kali* in the month of *Kartika*. Two households constituted by one Namasudra and one Tantubaya are haunted by the fear of the evil eyes of *Sani* (Saturn) and the malefic deity of *Satyanarayana*. The worship of the two dreadful deities by the two households illustrates the motivation of religion in feeble minds how it induces weak persons to propitiate the evil forces with offerings and prayers.

The religious complex of the people of Madhur Bhasa, fairly simple in structure and form, shorn of all airy subtleties of metaphysics and theology, appears to be the handiwork of two principal architects, superstition and fear of some divine and supreme powers enslaving the people in chains of eternal obedience to a plurality of gods and godlings. It is anybody's guess what a price is often paid by a group of fearful and dizzy people to watch and pray the wingy mysteries in divinities. If the passionate devotion of the god-fearing people, eternally struck by awe and penitence, sets self-preservation as its goal by kindling the fire of faith in their trembling hearts ever bright, minds of the people are robbed at the same time of the faculty of cogent reasoning. One has not to seek causes of the static state very far. Lack of communication and education, superstition, bred of age-old ignorance of the great strides in human civilisation and knowledge, absence of some essential but basic amenities of life, deprivation from the utilities of urban services and products, reluctance of the traditional Hindu society to recognise a group of detribalised people in the

MADHUR BHASA

pale of its culture and above all, the ecology of the region where the people are insulated against extraneous forces of change and influence cannot but favour the birth and growth of the present social and psychological climate. And the religious life of the people fits in well with their attitudes and values.

LEADERSHIP-PATTERN

A village insular in nature with people not enlightened by education or imbued with an urban or industrial sense of values, Madhur Bhasa, though anonymous to the world outside, has people who are not unknown to each other within the village. With a society, out and out rural, and an economy solely dependent on agriculture, the village has a community-life sustained by tradition and also an institutional heritage, with many facets of its existence revealed through pulsations of three communities living within and sometimes through the heart-throbs of its social organisation. As the village has only three ethnic groups, with the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas as a numerically majority group, capable of influencing the social life of the village, and the Namasudras with the Tantubaya as late immigrants, too recent incomers to shape or change the social structure of the majority community, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas are taken into account for the dissertation to follow.

If here agriculture drives the economic chariot, the nature and quality of leadership, structure of social control and prestige also guide the community-life of the village. The community-life is, however, subject to the nature of control on and effectiveness of leadership to the people by a set of select persons, qualified with some attributes which endear them to the

general public. Whether ethnocentric feelings get the better of the territorial integrity of the geographical area connoting the entity of the village depends solely on myriads of forces operating in the rural scene. In Madhur Bhasa ethnic diversity being negligible, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas alone determine the nature of community life.

The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas do not appear to have any regular institution like the Caste-Panchayat to act as the socio-cultural tribunal of the community itself. But, the absence of any traditional non-statutory body in guiding the life of the community does not make every member to be a free thinker and a free agent in matters of formulation of social norms and customs and a non-conformist transgressing the ethical values, social prescriptions and conventions. The socio-religious life is in a way entrusted to a leader for things temporal and spiritual. Known as a *Matabbar*, he acts with the assistance of a few village-elders of the community to which the *Matabbar* belongs. The *Matabbar* has no office of his own nor has he any recognition by the statute. From position of respect as a leader of the community, the *Matabbar* enjoys the confidence of the people for his age, varied experience, economic station and various other factors shaping public opinion.

Till very recently the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas had considered Sri Jarin Sarkar as their *Matabbar*. If so, it was because Sri Jarin Sarkar had held the unique position of respect as a mass-leader for some inherent impressive features of the household, of which Sri Sarkar was the head. The particular household, structurally a joint family, is the largest in the village, having eighteen members within its fold.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Sheer size of the household is indicative not only of manpower but also of the spirit of unity integrating all members into one household and also of the economic potentialities of the family to sustain the members under the present head, an old man of 72, continuing the traditional form of family-structure. With 65 *Bighas* of land in its ownership, the family also wields quite a significant economic power to impress upon covillagers as a resourceful household with a head, naturally endowed with the desirable qualities of leadership and propped up by socio-economic power, fortune and prestige. The total monthly income of the household too being the highest in the village, Sri Jarin Sarkar has been helped by a set of factors to take up the mantle of leadership over covillagers of his own community, from which no other household has yet come forward to vie for supremacy, status or control. Economic factors are of no mean significance and weight to have helped Sri Jarin Sarkar play the role of a *Matabbar* by his selection on unanimous choice of the people. The *Matabbar* in the absence of any caste-tribune used to settle all disputes, referred to it for arbitration. Move for a divorce formerly made to the Caste Panchayat, was later made to the *Matabbar* who was in an unenviable position neither contested nor questioned by the elected *Gram Panchayat*. The method of disposal of cases involving disputes in conjugal life usually followed the track of amicable settlement of the conflict between the husband and wife through negotiations. Instead of granting permission to the partners for separation and consequential divorce, the *Matabbar* generally advised and requested the couple to live together as willing partners. The efforts of the *Matabbar* usually bore fruit and his counsel for amicable settlement never went un-

heeded or dishonoured. In case of marriage of a widow, formal permission was generally sought from the *Matabbar* himself. The Rajbanshi Kshatriyas were even in other marriage ceremonies not allowed to hold the marriage-feast without the sanction of the *Matabbar* and other village-elders. The *Matabbar* and the village-elders would likewise be the kingpin in the religious life of the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas. Nobody ever broached an idea of organising a community-worship or festival or holding of performance of any *Namasankirtana* (Devotional songs) without the consent of the *Matabbar* and without the assistance of the village-elders. The *Matabbar* was also found striving to settle disputes on land between individuals and arbitrate in similar other conflicts, referred to him. The *Matabbar* with a few village-elders would hear both the parties and pass his verdict. Though individuals would normally abide by the decision of the *Matabbar* on land-disputes to avoid a prolonged litigation, yet in some cases the disputes were referred to the Civil Courts by the party aggrieved by the arbitration of the *Matabbar*, if its means permitted. Differences and quarrels between a Rajbanshi Kshatriya and a person of another community were normally settled by the *Matabbar*.

The *Matabbar*, by the nature of his functions, had become the *de facto* leader of the people and an institution by himself. The personage represented the traditional leadership of the community.

Formal and informal leadership

But, the formal leadership has shown signs of weakness and cracks, because of the challenge thrown to old age by youth. Though the traditional institution of

Matabbar in the formal leader has not collapsed fully, it has not been functioning as such in the person of the old man. Instead, Sri Jarin Sarkar has kept himself functioning in office only with the help of his young son Sri Dinesh Sarkar, aged 26 years with education upto Class X and privileged with means of a fast transport in his own bicycle, used for conveyance to the subdivisional and district headquarters. One should not import the popular phraseology of 'generation gap' to impute artificially the spirit of an estrangement of the father from the son to a comparison of qualities of leadership of the old man and his neoliterate son. But, the young son has all the advantages of age, education and status to become the cynosure of the people. It is rather confusing to explain how a person can represent the compound of formal and informal leadership. If the case of formal leadership through the institutionalised prototype is illustrated by the post of *Matabbar* held by Sri Jarin Sarkar, the old leader makes his presence and influence felt through his son acting as his aide and deputy. Thus the formal leadership of an institutional nature seems to be operating through the young informal leader Sri Dinesh Sarkar, who, in fact, combines in him the functions of two leaders, formal and informal. But, the *de facto* position of formal leadership in him should not lead one to the conclusion that the office of the *Matabbar* is hereditary or that the choice of his selection is made more through nomination by the *de jure* *Matabbar* than through a consensus of popular opinion. There should neither be any basis for assuming that dynasticism has appeared in some form or other to influence the choice of the *de facto* *Matabbar*. It is premature to suggest if the *Matabbar* will remain as an institution a

a decade after or if the selection will be confined to the member of the same family. But, one cannot deny altogether the influence of factors like material prosperity, some vestige of education and status, sufficiency in manpower of a big family, an aggregate income far above that of an average family and quite a vast landed area on the selection of a *Matabbar* by the people in Sri Dinesh Sarkar. Even though the people know that the *Matabbar* is decrepit and old and that he has to depend on his son for the exercise of his powers and influence, the leadership does not suffer at all. No new choice is made, nor substitution is thought of. Instead, the villagers submit to the authority of the old man and acquiesce in his judgement and decision.

The informal leadership is confined to Sri Dinesh Sarkar for some prerequisites of his character, personal qualities, status and privileged position which place him in a position enviably superior to that of any other person of his age in the village. And his position is not challenged by any contender for power. An elite among the villagers, he is the chosen spokesman of the people. His voice is heard not simply because it comes from a well-to-do youth. Sri Dinesh Sarkar has the tact and resourcefulness to win the friendship and affection of his covillagers. Even the Namasudra displaced persons listen to him and obey him. In hours of distress and crisis during flood and other natural calamities, Sri Dinesh Sarkar shows great capabilities in mitigating the sufferings of one and all. Now he functions both as a *Matabbar* and as an informal leader. In both cases he transcends the barriers of caste-prejudices to approach the people in the right spirit of a village-leader. He is the only communication-link between

the people and administration at different levels, Block and police station, subdivisional and district. He spearheads the problems of the village to the officials and activates the bureaucratic machinery to attend to the suffering villagers in lightning speed. But, he does not solely depend on the Government machinery to come to the aid of the affected villagers, expecting help to rush to his village in post-haste. Instead, he recruits volunteers from able-bodied villagers, organises relief on his own and distributes the paltry materials among the needy people at the shortest possible time. His dynamism has endeared himself to the villagers, whom he renders timely help, regardless of any distinction of any caste or status. In times of scarcity he draws upon his own resources to help his covillagers with paddy and other foodstuff. A widely travelled man in Assam in connection with the business of his father as a contractor, Sri Dinesh Sarkar is endowed with sterling personal qualities and equipped with financial resources of his family to enjoy a position in which he can afford to render assistance to the needy. At an hour when there is a credibility-gap and failure of communication in linking officials of the administrative hierarchy to the grass-roots of the village-polity, an effective liaison is maintained by Sri Dinesh Sarkar with the Junior Land Reforms Officer, Block Development Officer and officials at the district headquarters.

It is important that the formal and informal leaders both hail from the same family and have effective control and influence on the socio-economic life of the village-polity. The leadership here is not restricted to the petty confines of any caste's social structure. It has been observed that even Sri Naresh Das, the spokesman of the Namasudras, though not their informal

leader, is guided by Sri Jarin Sarkar, the Rajbanshi elder, who is consulted by the Namasudra leader for counsel. The advisory role of the Rajbanshi *Matabbar* in matters of his own caste or of others' and his superior status in the social ranking draw him oftener than once to heed everybody's woes and redress his grievances, wherever possible. This leads him to mind the business of village-people and their welfare despite the presence of the statutorily elected representative bodies of the *Panchayats*. He enjoys, therefore, the unique position of a village-elder and an unquestioned leader, the existence of which is not challenged by the authority of any other person or institution. His preeminence enjoins upon him the responsibility of a referee in the village-life. Even public officials during a visit to the village once drop in his house to speak to him and ascertain his recommendations about the welfare schemes on the village. His house does not only locate the site of the *Adda* (Get-together) of other elderly villagers but also fill it with the busy hum of men and officials, high or low, meeting the *Matabbar* for individual needs or corporate requirements. It is in the fitness of things that the people consider both the *Matabbar* and his young son as their spokesmen and pilot who brave the flood and distress every year to save the villagers and their homes. So, their house is swarmed with people and filled with hustle all the time.

STRUCTURE OF SOCIAL CONTROL AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

To understand the structure of social control, prestige and leadership, one has to follow up the structural change, if any, in the gerontocracy. Even in 1955, the Rajbanshi Kshatriyas were dominated by their

own traditional Caste *Panchayat*, a regional body-politic of gerontocracy constituted on the principles of privilege and economic power. Age, experience, heredity and wealth were the basic rules in determining the social position of elders who enjoyed the selective position. The Caste *Panchayat* had within its social jurisdiction Madhur Bhasa and five other villages of the neighbourhood, namely, Singimari, Rampur, Jorai, Jaldhoa and Khagribari, and were composed of three officials, chief of whom, known as *Panchayat*, was assisted by two others, known as *Sahakari Panchayat* (Assistant to the *Panchayat*). The three posts were neither elective nor hereditary but were selective in nature. The Rajbanshis of the constituent villages selected the trio, the power of whom coinciding with the religious and juridical authority had strong sway over the Rajbanshi villagers. Dealing with disputes over land and property, acting as arbitrators on social disputes, settling differences and easing tensions in individual lives with speedy decisions on separation or divorce, widow-remarriage, adultery and witchcraft, the *Panchayat* as an embodiment of the solidarity of the caste-organisation extending beyond the politico-administrative boundary of a village, used to have its session in the village of residence of the offending party. The village-elders of the constituent villages within the jurisdiction of the *Panchayat* were invited particularly on such occasions by the *Panchayat* to the particular village where it would hold its meeting. The assembled village-elders heard the complaint or the point of dispute as also the replies of the offending party to the charge and discuss the matter with the village-elders and the *Sahakari Panchayats* present at the meeting. Consultation over, the *Panchayat* used to arrive at a decision. The decisive ruling mostly used to impose

finer, as penalties in cash, on the offenders, failure or unwillingness of whom to accept the judgement led to excommunication of the rebel offender from the village-society. Excommunication as a punishment was a severe form of social censorship usually announced as the verdict of the *Panchayat* in the trial of witchcraft. But, the *Panchayat* as a social organisation of control gradually became ineffective as a corporate body-politic, representing the caste-organisation over a wider area. The institution of the statutorily constituted village-democracies in the *Panchayat* under West Bengal *Panchayat* Act, the immigration of displaced persons in the wake of the Partition of Bengal and their settlement and rehabilitation in the region, the diffusion of the primacy of the Rajbanshis as a single dominant community after the immigration of displaced persons of many communities, the disintegration of the solidarity of villages on account of lack of singleness of purpose and objective to bring about maximum welfare for the region instead of a village, the attitude of the passive leadership of village-elders of the constituent villages to treat individual villages as their restricted area of operation eschewing the broader approach on a regional basis to bring about the structural unity of the Rajbanshis for the sake of persistence of their old social values and so on and so forth were the factors responsible for the decline of the social organisation of the Rajbanshi *Panchayat*. But, some active leaders, formal and informal, as represented by Sri Jarin Sarkar, the *Matabbar*, and his son Sri Dinesh Sarkar, the informal representative, have not lost interest in the welfare of the village in general and the Rajbanshis in particular. They are not the least unconcerned about village affairs or the Rajbanshis. The village as also the Rajbanshis together

are no less concerned with them than the two leaders are.

Statutory socio-political organisation

The birth, growth and development of socio-political institutions of the rural people depend much on the politico-administrative structure of the area where the people live in. The district of Cooch Behar has a somewhat different historical development from that of other districts of West Bengal. Till the merger of the State of Cooch Behar in 1950 in the province of West Bengal as one of the latter's constituent districts, it constituted a feudatory state under the suzerainty of the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar. As such, the development of the village institutions in Cooch Behar has followed a pattern, deviant from that observed elsewhere in West Bengal. The birth of rural democratic institutions, though very old in India as mentioned in *Nitisara* of Shukracharya (vide Organisation for Developing Village India by M. S. Randhawa published in Developing Village India by M. S. Randhawa, I.C.S., Calcutta, 1951, pp. 18), the tradition was lost and its semblance was attempted to stem the tide of growing aspiration of the nationalist leaders through the institution of Union Boards under the Bengal Village Self-Govt. Act, 1919. Union Boards have played their limited roles in village democracy through participation by the representatives elected under limited suffrage. But, Union Boards in Cooch Behar as such were absent. There had been some persons who remained in charge of one or two village Unions. These persons were appointed by the State Administration of the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar and were designated as *Panchayat*. These *Panchayats* used to collect some taxes, usually known at that time as *Chowkidari* tax, deposited into a fund from

which the Village *Chowkidars* appointed by the State authorities were paid by the said "Collecting *Panchayat*". This *Panchayat* had full authority to report any crime and lawlessness within his jurisdiction to the local police through the *Chowkidars*. The *Chowkidars* are also known to have enjoyed some police power at that time and this had been the hierarchy in rural administration or the local self-govt. organisation in the State of Cooch Behar *Raj*.

But, this institution with no democratic base and with quasi-police and revenue functions can hardly be accepted as the viable unit of rural democracy which had stirred the minds of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. A developing country with a nationwide programme for socio-economic reconstruction necessitates the constitution of decentralised democratic institution in the form of *Panchayat* the elected members of which are supposed to know the rural people fully and to get into the skin of the people. With this idea the *Panchayati Raj* institution was founded in West Bengal. Whereas in other parts of West Bengal the people had a faint idea of what rural democratic institutions really looked like and how they functioned, the people of Cooch Behar district in general and the village of Madhur Bhasa in particular for the first time came to be acquainted with a democratic organisation within the village, statutorily sanctioned. Under the West Bengal *Panchayat* Act, 1957, the *Gram Sabha* is constituted by every adult member of the village of and above the age of 21 years. The lowest tier in the *Panchayati Raj* institution is constituted by the *Gram Panchayat* with members elected by the *Gram Sabha*. But, the minimum requirement of population for a village to enable the electorate to

MADHUR BHASA

qualify for the constitution of its own *Gram Panchayat* or the elected executive body of the *Gram Sabha* is stipulated at 750. But, when a village falls short of its minimum optimum population, a new *Gram*

Sabha is delimited by grouping two or more villages to constitute a viable unit. Madhur Bhasa with its population below the minimum statutory requirement for a *Gram Sabha* has, therefore, failed to have

TABLE 75
DEMOGRAPHY OF THE CONSTITUENTS OF
THE GRAM PANCHAYAT

Names of the constituent <i>Mauzas</i> of the <i>Gram Sabha</i>	Population	Literates including educated	Percentage of literacy	Population of the Scheduled Castes	Population of the Scheduled Tribes	Percentage of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to the total population
Madhur Bhasa	280	39	13.9	252	..	90.0
Khagribari	630	166	26.3	568	32	95.2
Singimari	1,410	162	11.5	1,096	24	79.4
Total	2,320	367	15.8	1,916	56	85.0

TABLE 76
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF SINGIMARI GRAM PANCHAYAT

Names of elected members	Age in years	Community	Educational (in class)	Occupation	Residence	Status in the <i>Gram Panchayat</i>
Sri Bhuban Chandra Pradhan	65	Rajbanshi	IV	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Krishna Kanta Sarkar	38	Rajbanshi	IX	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Bhabendra Nath Barua	42	Rajbanshi	VI	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Kshitish Chandra Sarkar	45	Rajbanshi	..	Medical practice	Singimari	Member
Sri Jaydeb Barman	35	Rajbanshi	VIII	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Denesh Chandra Barman	48	Rajbanshi	V	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Ratneswar Barman	60	Rajbanshi	IV	Cultivation	Khagribari	Member
Sri Nandaram Barman	52	Rajbanshi	IV	Cultivation	Khagribari	Member
Sri Upendra Barman	35	Rajbanshi	VII	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Naresh Chandra Das	32	Namasudra	VI	Cultivation	Madhur Bhasa	Member
Sri Shibendra Pradhan	33	Rajbanshi	X	Cultivation	Khagribari	Member
Sri Tarini Mohan Sarkar	60	Rajbanshi	IV	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Dhires Chandra Sarkar	32	Rajbanshi	X	Cultivation	Madhur Bhasa	<i>Adhyaksha</i>
Sri Gobinda Pradhan	65	Rajbanshi	VI	Cultivation	Singimari	Member
Sri Montoram Barman	75	Rajbanshi	IV	Cultivation	Singimari	Member

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

its own *Gram Panchayat*. Instead, a new *Gram Sabha* has been delimited with Madhur Bhasa, Khagribari and Singimari *Mauzas* grouped together for the purpose of the *Gram Panchayat*. All the three villages together constituting one *Gram Sabha* fall within the jurisdiction of Singimari *Gram Panchayat* with fifteen members elected by the *Gram Sabha*. Whereas *Mauzas* Madhur Bhasa and Khagribari together having a population of 810 (as per 1961 Census) could well have a separate *Gram Sabha* of their own and also a separate *Gram Panchayat*, the village Madhur Bhasa and Khagribari have been united with the *Mauza* Singimari (with a population of 1410 as per 1961 Census) for the purpose of the *Gram Sabha* and also the *Gram Panchayat*. Thus, Singimari *Gram Panchayat* constituted in 1960 within the jurisdiction of Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* comprises 15 members elected by the *Gram Sabha* of the three *Mauzas* together. Before an analysis is attempted on the demographic characteristics of members of Singimari *Gram Panchayat*, an idea may be formed about the population of the constituent *Mauzas* from Table 75.

The three villages even from the point of literacy have still a long way to trek. Khagribari happens to be the only glimmer in the tunnel for its better position from the point of literacy. The majority of the population of the area demarcated by the three villages belong to the Scheduled Castes. The demographic profile of the rural democrats elected from the three villages to Singimari *Gram Panchayat* is presented in Table 76.

An analysis of the demographic features of members of Singimari *Gram Panchayat* highlights the fact that all the elected representatives are members of the

Scheduled Castes, namely the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras. Of the two communities, the Rajbanshis are numerically in the majority, being sons of the soil. The Namasudra immigrants to the area from the eastern districts of undivided Bengal got themselves rehabilitated in the place of their new refuge, after displacement from their homes soon after Partition of India in 1947. That a Namasudra has been elected to the statutory body-politic from an area comprising three *Mauzas* with a population of 2,320 amply demonstrates the rehabilitation of the immigrant people in their second homeland so much so that they even nominate their selected representative candidate and after election get the latter accepted by other people. If 15 members of the *Gram Panchayat* belong to the Scheduled Castes, it is not because rural democracy functions on considerations of castes, but because the area covered by the *Gram Panchayat* is predominantly populated (85.0 per cent) by members of the Scheduled Castes. 'To be seventy years young is sometimes far more hopeful than to be forty years old.' Yet, age has not been defied by the democratic experiment in the rural scene. Whether or not wit is out when age is in has not been tested. But, in the reign of democracy the village-parliament represented by the *Gram Panchayat* has been favoured with a leader of even 75 years of age in particular and with elected public men of all ages. The age of the rural democrats is poised between two extreme ranges, namely 32 years and 75 years. Age has approved youth to lead those that are with the young and youth too has not disdainfully rejected the old people as 'outworn buried age.' On the whole, the elected members in the working age-group outnumber those past the age of retirement. Thus, ten members of the *Gram Panchayat* belong to the age-

MADHUR BHASA

group of 31-59, while the rest of the five members are aged 60 years and above. Another interesting feature should be discussed. Though only 15.6 per cent of the total population of three villages are literates with and without formal education, the elected are all literates with education of varying standards. The villagers, though mostly illiterate, have an unshakable confidence in the educated section of their village-society with the result that members of the minority section comprising the literates (15.6 per cent) have been chosen also to represent the majority. All the members are not only literate but have formal education of the primary standard. Two members have also attained it upto the middle standard and the rest are educated upto the secondary level. Six members in the age-group of 46 years and above have education upto the primary standard. As all the members but one are primarily engaged in cultivation, it is a matter of opinion if the elderly section of the members has still retained the functional efficiency of their literacy, especially when their occupation does not call for their acquaintance with the three R's as a precondition. But, there should remain no uncertainty about the fact that the younger section of the elected members are not only literates but even formally educated upto certain higher levels. Therefore, the key to the success of the representatives of the rural electorate to their mini-parliamentary forum is the former's literacy and limited education in contrast to the vast sea of illiterates in the area under the jurisdiction of the *Gram Panchayat*. Occupationally, all the members except one represent agriculturists, themselves being engaged in cultivation. The nomination of agriculturists by a group of cultivators to represent their interests in the democratic rural forum is very much logical. In the

social structure of today the motivation of the people, formed into different interest-groups, lies in the choice of the right members who are considered to qualify best to serve the maximum interests of that interest-group which comprises the maximum number. That a medical practitioner is also elected is possible because Singimari can afford to include one professional in their list of representatives. Besides, professional people from the medical line enjoy a privileged position of respect and authority in the village-society. Residentially, Singimari has ten members, the largest proportion of the total number of elected representatives from the three villages constituting the electoral college of the *Gram Sabha*. Khagribari has sent three representatives, resident in the village, and Madhur Bhasa has sent two of its residents as representatives to the *Gram Panchayat*. As the three villages do not retain their individual identities as such under their respective names in the *Gram Sabha*, statutorily constituted under Section 11(3) of the West Bengal *Panchayat Act, 1957* (as modified up to the 1st May, 1966), the allocation of seats is also not made to the individual villages. Instead, the statute determines the number of members to be elected by the *Gram Sabha* to the *Gram Panchayat* [Section 11(2) of the West Bengal *Panchayat Act, 1957* as modified up to the 1st May, 1966]. If, however, one examines the question from the point of population, one finds that the villages are proportionately represented in the *Gram Panchayat* on the basis of population, though the basis of allocation has not been fixed on the basis of juridical identities of the *Mauzas*.

Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* is the juridical elected body comprising members elected by the *Gram Panchayats* in its juris-

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

diction in accordance with Sections 25 and 26 of the West Bengal *Panchayat Act, 1957*. An outline of the demographic characteristics of members elected to it is given in Table 77.

Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* has jurisdiction over ten contiguous *Gram Sabhas*. Singimari, Madhur Bhasa and Khagribari constitute one of the constituent *Gram Sabhas*. The members are drawn from eight communities, of which four are Scheduled Castes. Seventeen members (54.8 per cent) belong to the Scheduled Castes. Individually, the Rajbanshi Kshatriya community has the largest number of members, followed in order of number by ethnic groups like Kayastha, the Namasthura, the Saha, the Malo, the Mahisya, the Rajak and the Muslim. Except the Muslim member, all others are Hindus. The majority of the members belong to the age-group (50-54). Though the broad working age-group of (31-59) has claims for 22 members, the majority of 17 members belong to the middle age-group (45-59). Old age has still some sway over the village-society, as nine elected members belong to the age-group of 60 years and above. If agriculture is pursued by 19 members as their occupation, it is because agriculture is the principal occupation of the majority of villagers of the ten villages within the jurisdiction of Rampur *Anchal Panchayat*. Trade and commerce is the principal occupation of eight elected representatives. Medical profession has also not missed the attention of the electorate. That is why, two medical practitioners are returned to the *Anchal Panchayat*. In the eyes of the *demos* no profession is lowly. Equality being the cardinal principle of the democratic experiment in the rural area, one fisherman and one tailor have been considered fit as representatives to the *Anchal*

Panchayat. Though the majority of the people are illiterate, all members of the *Anchal Panchayat* are literate with some formal education. Eight members have education upto the pre-primary standard, ten members upto primary standard, seven members have read upto the pre-secondary stage and six members have attained education upto secondary standard. Though the *Gram Sabha* of Singimari *Gram Panchayat* has returned five members to the *Anchal Panchayat*, Khagribari has no representative to it. Madhur Bhasa, however, has one member to the *Anchal Panchayat*. The *Pradhan* of Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* being Sri Tarini Mohan Sarkar, Singimari *Gram Panchayat* has an importance over others.

Whatever obligatory, discretionary, and other duties and powers of the *Gram Panchayat* and whatever functions of the *Anchal Panchayat* may be outlined by the West Bengal *Panchayat Act, 1957*, the efficiency of the decentralised democratic power-structure can be gauged by the impact of the two statutorily elected rural organisations on the general people living within their jurisdictions. Though all heads of households are aware of the constitution of the *Gram Panchayat* and the *Anchal Panchayat* on the principle of adult suffrage and of their inherent rights, statutorily sanctioned, to participate in the formulation, execution and supervision of the business of civic life and developmental activity as members of the *Gram Sabha*, they are not exactly informed of the date or period since which Singimari *Gram Panchayat* and Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* have started functioning. That the general awareness of the existence of the *Panchayati* institutions is but vague can be understood from the knowledge of the people about the duration of the existence of the two

TABLE 77
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RAMPUR ANCHAL PANCHAYAT

Names of the elected members	Age in years	Community	Education (in class)	Occupation	Residence	Status in the Anchal Panchayat	Villages under the Anchal Panchayat
Sri Tarini Mohan Sarkar	60	Rajbanshi	IV	Agriculture	Singimari	Pradhan	Madhur Bhasa
Sri Gobinda Pradhan	65	Rajbanshi	VI	Agriculture	Singimari	Member	Singimari
Sri Mantoram Barman	75	Rajbanshi	IV	Agriculture	Singimari	Member	Khagribari
Sri Dhiresh Chandra Sarkar	32	Rajbanshi	X	Agriculture	Madhur Bhasa	Member	Jaldhoa
Sri Bhuban Chandra Pradhan	66	Rajbanshi	IV	Agriculture	Singimari	Member	Dhorerkuthi
Sri Birendra Chandra Dey	53	Kayastha	VII	Agriculture	Naothoa	Member	Rampur
Sri Kailash Chandra Das	58	Namasudra	III	Fisherman	Rampur	Member	Naothoa
Sri Satish Chandra Sarkar	39	Namasudra	V	Agriculture	Rampur	Member	Garbhanga
Sri Surendra Nath Roy Barman	52	Malo	X	Medical Practitioner	Jorai	Member	Naziram Dewtikhata
Sri Sailendra Chandra Das	42	Mahisya	V	Merchant	Jorai	Member	Chhatbhalka
Sri Baishnab Charan Sarkar	55	Namasudra	III	Agriculture	Rampur	Member	
Sri Narendra Nath Sarkar	38	Namasudra	IX	Tailor	Rampur	Member	
Sri Jogesh Chandra Chanda	65	Kayastha	X	Agriculture	Garbhanga	Member	
Sri Jatindra Mohan Bhowmick	62	Kayastha	VI	Agriculture	Garbhanga	Member	
Sri Chittaranjan Das	48	Rajak	X	Doctor	Jorai	Member	
Sri Nripendra Pradhan	50	Rajbanshi	VI	Agriculture	Bijni/Assam	Member	
Sri Jatindra Das	48	Namasudra	III	Agriculture	Rampur	Member	
Sri Satish Chandra Saha Roy	49	Saha	IX	Merchant	Rampur	Member	
Sri Debendra Chandra Das	53	Namasudra	IV	Merchant	Jorai Station	Member	

MADHUR BHASA

TABLE 77—contd.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RAMPUR ANCHAL PANCHAYAT

Names of the elected members	Age in years	Community	Education (in class)	Occupation	Residence	Status in the Anchal Panchayat
Sri Aswini Kumar Ghosh	63	Kayastha	VII	Merchant	Jorai	Member
Sri Sunil Kumar Dutta	42	Kayastha	VII	Merchant	Jorai	Member
Sri Sailendra Chandra Kar	50	Kayastha	VII	Merchant	Jorai	Member
Sri Jaladhar Das	45	Namasudra	V	Agriculture	Naziram Dewtikhata	Member
Sri Petereng Barman	66	Rajbanshi	IV	Agriculture	Chhatbhalka	Member
Sri Jogendra Roy	55	Rajbanshi	V	Agriculture	Naziram Dewtikhata	Member
Sri Nepal Chandra Saha	50	Saha	VI	Merchant	Jaldhoa	Member
Sri Kunja Behari Dutta	71	Kayastha	VI	Agriculture	Jaldhoa	Member
Sri Subal Chandra Saha	48	Saha	VII	Merchant	Jaldhoa	Member
Sri Rehati Mohan Saha	53	Saha	VI	Agriculture	Jaldhoa	Member
Sri Debendra Bhusan Saha	52	Saha	VII	Agriculture	Jaldhoa	Member
Sri Jahiruddin Ahmed	43	Muslim	VIII	Agriculture	Jaldhoa	Member

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

institutions. Only ten heads of households correctly know the period of function of the two *Panchayati* institutions. About the nature of function of the two *Panchayati* institutions, the majority (95.0 per cent) are ignorant. Of the two heads of households, said to know the functions of the *Panchayats*, one Rajbanshi Kshatriya has emphasised that tax-collection is the main function of the *Panchayats* and one Namasudra has specified rural upliftment, road development, agricultural development and collection of taxes to be the main objectives to be attained by the *Panchayati* institutions. The two respondents with positive replies are members of Singimari *Gram Panchayat*, the Rajbanshi Kshatriya being in addition the member of Rampur *Anchal Panchayat*. All heads of households, except the two already mentioned, cannot name the numerically dominant community. The two members who have marked out the Rajbanshis to be the dominant community in the *Panchayats* are members of the Singimari *Gram Panchayat*. The response of all the heads of households to the question as to the activity of the *Panchayat* conferring some benefit on the village Madhur Bhasa has been that the village has not benefitted in any way from any activity of the *Panchayats*. It is remarkable, however, that even the representatives of the village to the *Gram Panchayat* and *Anchal Panchayat* concur with the majority's view, without suggesting that the *Panchayats* have adversely affected the village either. It needs no comment to further analyse how far the *Panchayats* have rooted themselves to the hearts of the people, when the general people of the village have categorically denied to have drawn any benefit from the *Panchayats*. The assertion of the rural mass assumes a definite note of credulity when the two members of the *Gram Panchayat* itself also

join the villagers of Madhur Bhasa in repudiating the possible claim of the *Panchayats* to any beneficial measure, improving the existing amenities of the village Madhur Bhasa in particular.

Lack of communication is explained by the fact that the *Pradhan* of Rampur *Anchal Panchayat* being a member of Singimari *Gram Panchayat* and a resident in Singimari, the village Madhur Bhasa has developed a feeling of being neglected. Partly because of residence in a separate village and partly also because of close liaison with different wings of administration of the Government of West Bengal at different levels, the *Pradhan* is looked upon by the villagers as an official of the Government rather than an elected representative of the people to the democratic organisation at the village level. The hiatus between the *Pradhan* and the villagers has also been bred of the onerous duty of the *Pradhan* to involve the *Anchal Panchayat* in various developmental activities, looking to the district officials, and Subdivisional Officer for finance. The bureaucracy too regards the *Pradhan* as the knowledgeable representative of the people at the village level readily available for consultation, prior to formulation of a specific administrative policy and at the time of execution of defined plans and programmes of the Government. This requires the officials frequently to meet the *Pradhan* and visit the *Anchal Panchayat*. Usually in matters pertaining to formulation and execution of development schemes, the exchange of visits and ideas between the officials and head of the people's representative organisation does not cause consternation among the villagers. But, when the enforcement of a specific executive measure against a section of the people comprising the hoarders and the profiteers calls for the advice from the

Pradhan, the predicament is really great. At the time of procurement of paddy by the Government on the principle of levy under which each family has to part with the surplus foodgrains grown by it, keeping for it the required stock as determined by the Government and to sell it to the Food Corporation of India at an agreed price (the lower ceiling on price being fixed by the Government), the Block Development Officer, Tufanganj, seeks assistance from the *Pradhan* to make a list of all households coming under the purview of the levy-order. The Block Development Officer again needs the *Pradhan* for consultation and advice as also for collection of economic intelligence for his *Anchal*. Once the list is prepared, the dehoarding operation is set afoot. Here, again, the *Pradhan* is not spared. Instead, he is invariably considered indispensable to guide the large retinue of officials of different ranks and departments varying from the Block Development Officer to the officials of Food Corporation of India. The posse headed by Officer-in-Charge of the local Police Station accompanied by turbaned *Chowkidars* and *Dafadars* in faded uniforms add a touch of authority and seriousness to the occasion. The village police force represented by the *Chowkidars* and *Dafadars* symbolically attests to the vestige of police-powers of the *Panchayat*. The pathetic *Pradhan* has to discharge the unpleasant yet obligatory duty of identification of the listed households, witnessing the operation of procurement of surplus foodgrains by the Government. However lofty the idealism behind the assistance rendered by the *Pradhan*, the villagers often brood and are, most of the time, encouraged by the affected parties to think that honest villagers are denied the lawful right to enjoy the surplus foodstock, no matter, which household or households own it. The carriage of the foodstuff beyond

the confines of the village to some other place often fills them with dismay and the *Pradhan* is held responsible for the whole act. The *Pradhan's* position becomes all the more unenviable when he cannot explain to the villagers why Madhur Bhasa has not benefitted despite the allocation of the annual development grant to the *Anchal Panchayat* by the Government of West Bengal for a number of years. In such a situation where words fail to quell the discontented villagers of Madhur Bhasa, the *Pradhan* finds it easier to execute a well-defined policy or enforce an executive measure of the Government than undertaking schemes of welfare through a cumbersome procedure dependent mostly, for the success of the schemes, on people's voluntary help and willing cooperation. The more the *Pradhan* becomes a loyal executive of the Government, more sharp becomes his estrangement from the villagers of Madhur Bhasa. The situation becomes further complicated by the absence of understanding and good relationship between the *Pradhan* and the representative from the constituency of Madhur Bhasa to Rampur *Anchal Panchayat*, the meetings of which body-politic are neither held regularly by the *Pradhan* nor regularly attended, when held, by the member of the *Anchal Panchayat* elected from Madhur Bhasa. The *Pradhan*, in spite of his good nature and gentle manner, has not endeared himself to the villagers of Madhur Bhasa, but the representative from the village to the *Anchal Panchayat* is liked by the people. If the relation between different elected members of the *Gram Panchayat* and the *Anchal Panchayat* degenerates into strained animosities and creates bad blood, the elected body-politic at the village or the *Anchal* levels can hardly be expected to deliver the promised goods to the people. Consequentially, Madhur Bhasa appears

MADHUR BHASA

to have received little attention and insufficient care. Instead, it has suffered ignobly from negligence and has fared no better than a village where there were no such democratic rural organisation of the *Panchayati* type with enough promise but little return.

It has already been mentioned that this village like several others in the district of Cooch Behar has had no experience of the working of any elected body of the village-self-government represented by any Union Board. The people, therefore, used for centuries to a living under the rule of authority of the suzerains of the Cooch Behar *Raj*, have the unique occasion and first opportunity to taste the fruits of democracy and liberty. But, if the experience leaves a bitter taste in their mouths after what they have seen of the *Gram Panchayat* and the *Anchal Panchayat*, they are likely to denounce the principle of *Panchayati Raj* as such, even for no fault of the institutions of the latter system under an ideal condition. There is hardly any excuse if ever they remark in sheer frustration and annoyance, 'Oh, life will be tolerable enough, even so, if we could only get rid of these infernal duns who come to us poor people's doors with their claim of the ideal life.' Fortunately, such an exasperating situation has not yet cropped.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

Madhur Bhasa came under the scope of the National Extension Service Scheme of the Community Development Project of the Government of West Bengal in 1956, when jurisdictionally it was included within the area of administration of the National Extension Service Block at Tufanganj under the Block Development Officer. Located in an extreme corner of Tufanganj subdivision beside a large forest, the

village Madhur Bhasa did not draw the attention of the officials concerned, having been in a state of neglect more or less. The villagers have not pointed their accusing finger at any official in course of a decade of the establishment of the Block Office because it has not sent any official to the village more than five or six times. The village remains a name more or less to the officials, far less frequently visited and seldom its people seen and heard.

When asked if the heads of households are at all aware of the existence of the Block Development Office at Tufanganj for a decade, the response pattern of the heads of 26 households (65.0 per cent) shows a positive approach. But all heads of households, though aware of the existence of the Block Development organisation, deny that the institution has benefitted them in any way. The *Gram Sevak* or the Village Level Worker, attached to the Block Development Office but posted in a remote village with several others as his area of operation, is one of the vital personnel for the extension service. Functioning as the eyes and ears of the Block organisation in the field to understand the problems of techno-economic or socio-cultural nature and to communicate the same to the concerned Extension Official in the Block Office and also to carry the solution to the afflicted rural people, the Village Level Worker is as much a part and parcel of the Block Development organisation as he is the social-service worker and organiser among the rural people to establish a rapport with them. He is to introduce all technological and socio-economic changes and carry the messages of all modern techniques and methods for rural uplift, betterment of economy, modernisation of agriculture and varied other objec-

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

tives to the grass-roots of the rural society and the peasantry. The multipurpose nature of duties of the *Gram Sevak* brings him to the doorstep of every villager, if he functions seriously, sincerely and conscientiously. His entity is all pervasive. When questioned to test the awareness of the people about the functions of the *Gram Sevak*, heads of all households report without any malice against anybody that neither they are apprised of the duties and functions of the *Gram Sevak* nor have they had any chance to know either the *Gram Sevak's* programme of action. The *Gram Sevak*, according to the unanimous opinion of all households, has rarely undertaken frequent visits to the village Madhur Bhasa.

From the nation-wide welfare activities Madhur Bhasa has also drawn some benefit. But, there has been a perceptible lag in the participation-process, because no welfare scheme is particularly drawn up only for Madhur Bhasa. Besides, if any work has been undertaken to execute a Test Relief Scheme to mitigate the distress of the unemployed villagers during the lean season of agriculture, famine relief measures are never considered as permanent welfare projects. Hence, the people dissociate routine schemes from the purview of developmental activity. That is why, the unmetalled road constructed under a Test Relief Scheme with the two-fold purpose of temporary protection of the villages Madhur Bhasa and Singimari from the river Raidak and construction of the main village-road in Madhur Bhasa has not left any impression on the village. The road as the main linkway has not caused any socio-economic change in the life of the village. Again as a protective embankment also, it has failed to save the village from recurring damage by the Raidak in spate

every year. Five ringwells have been sunk in Singimari, but no such well is found in Madhur Bhasa. The people, therefore, smart under discontent caused by supposed denial of a basic amenity, made available to a bigger village. One cannot altogether ignore as illogical the sentimental remark of the people that Singimari, because of its size and a *Pradhan*, attracts all the beneficial measures of the Government of West Bengal, denying a small village like Madhur Bhasa even a little share in the welfare schemes. The Mobile Medical Squad under the supervision of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Cooch Behar, Government of West Bengal, has been stationed at Rampur, to tackle public health problems like epidemics etc. But, its normal function, limited to periodic inoculation and vaccination of the people of several villages including Madhur Bhasa does not convince the people about any material achievement. Illiteracy of the majority fails to inculcate in them a sense of awareness of the efficacy of the public health measures in the prevention of diseases. Under the Social Education Programme of the National Extension Service Block at Tufanganj, a community radio-set presented to the villagers of Madhur Bhasa and Singimari has been installed at Singimari. But the *Pradhan* of the *Anchal Panchayat* keeps it in his house which also accommodates the offices of both Singimari *Gram Panchayat* and Rampur *Anchal Panchayat*. The radio-set, though meant for all the communities, is seldom available for the use of the villagers of Singimari and Madhur Bhasa. Only households in the neighbourhood of the *Pradhan's* house are privileged to listen to the programmes broadcast over the radio. This restricted welfare too has failed to touch the people of Madhur Bhasa.

MADHUR BHASA

ATTITUDES AND VIEWS TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES

Any change, social, economic or technological, in the structural pattern of society or in the style of life of an individual, whether living in a village or a town, presupposes some causative factors. The cause may be internal or endogenous. Alternately, the stimulus for the change may be external or exogenous. It needs no repetition that in a bid to bring about a betterment in the standard of living of the rural people and also to provide a political, legislative and ideological inspiration for inducing the traditional society of the village to adapt to modern system of thought processes, certain external stimuli have been necessary. The legislative and executive measures of the Governmental agencies of both the Central and the State administrations, to encourage the growth of an egalitarian society with equality of castes and creeds assured under constitutional directives, provide the ideological motivation. But, to know how far these executive and statutory measures have activated the psychological process of the people of Madhur Bhasa and shaped them to a more modern outlook transcending the inertia of an age-old thinking, a test of the views of the people of Madhur Bhasa has been necessary. The dissertation here will attest to the attitudes and views of the people towards different legislative and executive measures taken by the Government to encourage the growth of a new society, capable of coping with modern problems and hastening its passage from the old order to the new.

Though the Constitution of India in its Preamble and Directive Principles marks a 'breakthrough to modernity denoting a restructuring or reordering of

some of the basic dimensions of the Indian socio-cultural order', the collective identity of persons in the village-society is still determined by the structural pattern of the ritual-cosmic caste-hierarchy. The stigmas and disabilities attached to some castes or communities in a ritualistic social order often neutralise the constitutional guarantees of human equality and freedom. That is why, the statute-books have had to record fresh legislative measures, abolishing disabilities of all castes in general and the inhibition of untouchability in particular. To ascertain how far the legislations have eroded the traditional loyalties of the people of Madhur Bhasa to the cosmic ritual hierarchy and modernised their thinking, the heads of households have been asked if they know of the prohibition of untouchability under law. But, only the heads of three households have ventured positive answers. The respondents comprise two Namasudras and one Tantubaya. None of the Rajbanshi Kshatriya households is aware of the legislation prohibiting untouchability. As all the households except the Tantubaya, 'a clean Sudra', belong to the Scheduled Castes, the disability is not suffered by anybody. In fact, no household has been observed to suffer the social ill as such. The avoidance of touch has not come to the notice of the Investigator nor has it been reported that any person suffers from the disability of untouchability in the village. But, it is not very clear either if any household is subjected to any such disability elsewhere outside.

None of the households either is aware of the changes in the Hindu Adoption Act and Hindu Succession Act nor are they much interested in the changes, even though they do not have any idea about the Acts. The grip of traditional customs

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

and old conventions on the psyche of the villagers is so strong that the patronymic nature of succession and inheritance has continued to persist. Changes in the Hindu Succession Act have hardly made any dent on the rigid social custom of the people in matters of inheritance of property. On the death of a married male, the property left by the deceased is inherited by his sons who alone have the rights of succession to their father's property, according to the customary laws of the Rajbanshis, the Namasudras and the Tantubaya. All the households except one Rajbanshi point out that of all the relatives including male members and widows and daughters, married and unmarried, only the sons inherit the property on the death of a married male and that their share is equal. Daughters are not entitled to any share in the property of their deceased father. Only in case of absence of any male issue, daughters inherit their father's property on condition that they will not claim any share so long as their widowed mother is alive. The preferential attitude of all the households to daughters being the cosharers of their father's property along with their brothers has been tested. But, all but one disapprove the idea of daughters along with sons equally sharing their father's property. The solitary household, striking a different note, is single-membered, being headed by one widow in whose opinion daughters should also get equal share of their father's property. The majority opinion, however, discourages the idea of father's property being shared by daughters also. The consensus of opinion is that daughters, having already the scope of enjoying the property of their husbands during their lifetime, need not have the additional privilege of a claim to the partimonial property.

The discussion before very forcefully points out how a legislative process has failed to unbind the villagers from the fetters of their traditional norms and values, customs and conventions. They do not appear to look beyond the world of their own, even though the State machinery extends the help and support of the statute to provide some succour to the weak and the needy. When the villagers are still guided by their own customs, being oblivious of the fact that persistent traditions run counter to the statutes, the communication-gap is clearly evident. A statute by itself cannot guarantee social justice. But, if a person having the law in his favour and cogent reasons for being aggrieved fails to see where he is unlawfully deprived, the statutes fail to serve their purpose. But again, for this unique case of self-denial neither the State nor the statute is to blame. Instead, one may question wherefrom the people seek the immense strength to beatify their miseries and deprivations and to paralyse the faculty of conscious reasoning in the face of patent injustice and social ills, supposedly legitimated by the grand chariot of tradition and custom.

Even though villagers have pleaded their ignorance of the changes in the Hindu Marriage Act, an attitude test has been conducted to ascertain if the rules of endogamy, customarily sanctioned and permitted by the conventions of different castes, are abided by. None of the households has contravened the customary rules of endogamy of the respective communities. No force is stronger than the custom of the community. And the custom of connubiality on the rule of endogamy is before all law. Taboos on intermarriage reflect the continuity of the core values of the Hindu social system so much so that the rules of caste-endogamy

MADHUR BHASA

are strictly and persistently adhered to. No household has either the desire or the courage to transgress the rules, for it knows that intermarriage between its own community and another is not permissible. All the households of the three communities are so much inhibited by the rules of endogamy that none dares even to mention the name of another community, except one's own, of the same socio-economic status with which marriage can be contracted. The rigidity of the convention and tradition of caste-endogamy has strengthened the persistence of the trait of each community on solid foundations of integration within a closed circuit. Whatever changes may have been there in the statutes on marriages, no social change or even an attitudinal change has been observed in the mental outlook and postures of the three communities. Modernity in thought comprising rationality, equality etc. is yet to appear in the horizon of their mind. And the start of the process of metamorphosis to bring about the change in the arena of the village-society is still a distant vision.

Though marriage is said to be controlled by the rigid rules of endogamy, payment of dowry is alleged to be practised by none. No household has admitted to

have given any dowry on the occasion of marriage of neither the son nor the daughter. The unanimity of opinion, however unique, should not induce a social enquirer to accept the answers at face value. In a village, ridden with tenuous rules of castes and rigid social prescriptions of traditions, it is difficult to accept that dowry-system has never been in practice. That the element of expense in dowry, if disclosed, may also reveal the economic status of the respondent may have cautioned the interviewees to be more wary. But, the negative answer about non-payment of dowry by all the households becomes unacceptable in the face of more positive data on socio-religious expense. Though 11 Rajbanshi households are said to have incurred no expense on any socio-religious ceremony, the answer of 20 Rajbanshi, eight Namasudra and one Tantubaya households is in the affirmative. The total amount of annual expense on socio-religious observances by 20 Rajbanshi households in an individual capacity comes to Rs.673.00 paise and those of eight Namasudra and one Tantubaya households amount to Rs.151.00 paise and Rs. 20.00 paise. The total expense on this item for the village as a whole amounts to Rs.844.00 paise, the average expense of an individual household being

TABLE 78

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS EXPENSE

Community	No. of households	No. of households with expenses on socio-religious ceremonies	No. of households with annual expense (in Rs.) on socio-religious ceremonies							
			0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-100	100-151	151 and above
Rajbanshi	31	20	2	9	5	1	..	1	1	1
Kshatriya	8	8	4	3	..	..	1	..	..	..
Namasudra	1	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
Tantubaya	40	29	6	13	5	1	1	1	1	1
Total										

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

Rs.29.10 paise. The Table 78 will be a pointer in this direction.

Where the people's ignorance of the changes promised by reformistic legislative measures is so abysmal, one may reasonably be interested in the awareness of the villagers of the simplest geographical features around the village and of the location of their habitat with reference to some co-ordinates for identification and jurisdiction. All the households except the single-membered family of a widow know, however, the particulars of the specific *Anchal Panchayat*, police station and district in the jurisdiction of which Madhur Bhasa is situated and are also aware of the names of the principal river flowing through the district.

The village is insulated against all possible linkages and communication-media. The only link with the outside world is maintained through a go-between, represented by Sri Dhirish Sarkar, the first citizen among the literates with some formal education and incidentally also the only person with a fast means of transport. There being no radio-set in the village, the villagers have little scope for extra-village news and views. Very few villagers have the interest to visit the *Pradhan's* house to listen to the news-broadcasts over All India Radio through the community-set of the radio-receiver. Apart from the uncertainties about the radio being in order, the ethnocentric feelings of villagers also stand in their way of being regular listeners. And even that involves journey to another village. None reads a newspaper daily, for very few are literates with formal education. Newspapers are not, therefore, to be found in the village. The teastall-owner at Rampur, however, is a regular reader of newspaper and a dispenser of newspaper-based

social education to his interested clients. Very seldom does a villager from Madhur Bhasa take this trouble for a cup of tea, as a newspaper demands the expense for tea sometime, and also the physical strain of the journey to and from Rampur.

Newspapers do not excite any curiosity in Madhur Bhasa, for the villagers find least interest in the 'herald of a noisy world' with news about all nations of the humming cities. The humdrum life without any master passion has no love for news, for the life in a village where morning comes and so does night with a dull monotony has no diversion to steal away the ennui.

INTER-COMMUNITY RELATION

Madhur Bhasa is not a multi-ethnic village. In fact, it has been more or less a single-community village till the immigration of the Namasudras after the Partition of India. But, quite contrary to expectations, their immigration has not disturbed the balance or harmony in the village-life. Though not numerically as sizable as the Rajbanshis of the village, the Namasudra households are not altogether a negligible number. Eight households have been found to be truly rehabilitated, since they do not feel much difference between what they have left behind and what they have found here. When displacement had made everything uncertain and the Namasudras were looking for a place for their domicile, Madhur Bhasa offered them a habitat, congenial setting and sympathetic neighbours. The Rajbanshis welcomed them heartily and contributed all their mite to their rehabilitation to dispense with their sense of loss.

The Rajbanshis did not feel any sense of deprivation in accommodating the Namasudra households within the village. They

appreciated the pangs of the anguished Namasudras who had come to the village as destitutes craving human kindness and understanding. Once settled, the Namasudras began to strike roots in the village society and established rapport with their Rajbanshi neighbours. The Namasudras no longer consider themselves alien to the cultural clime. The Rajbanshis also in their turn do not look upon the Namasudras as undesirable occupants of their village lands. The Rajbanshis, as the native land-owners of the place, are virtually the employers of the Namasudras. Quite a number of Namasudras depends on the Rajbanshis for their livelihood, being receivers of land on cropshare basis. The Rajbanshis also provide some economic opportunities to the Namasudras by recruiting agricultural labourers from among the Namasudras, as and when required during cultivation. The economic traffic is not directed one way. It is not suggested that the Rajbanshis always play the role of employers and the Namasudras serve the Rajbanshis as servants. Contrarily, one or two Namasudras of the village Madhur Bhasa employ the poor Rajbanshis as labourers in the agricultural fields when the need for extra hands required during agricultural operations is felt. The inter-dependence of the two communities have cross-fertilised the culture of each other and borne fruits in economic and social fields. The Rajbanshis of the village and also of the region had cultivated only paddy prior to their contact with the Namasudras. Now, jute is added to the list of crops grown by the Rajbanshis. The Namasudras have acted as teachers communicating the technical know-how of the cultivation of jute to their Rajbanshi neighbours. Even in the matter of distribution of the seats of power in the statutory organisations like the *Gram Panchayat* and the *Anchal Panchayat*, the Rajbanshis,

though being privileged to enjoy a strong position of absolute majority in the statutory *Panchayats*, do not exploit the minority community of the Namasudras. In the *Gram Panchayat* one seat has been yielded to a Namasudra. In the *Anchal Panchayat* the Rajbanshis are not an insignificant number. Though no Namasudra has been elected to the *Anchal Panchayat* from this village, several other Namasudras of some villages around have gained representation in the *Anchal Panchayat* by election. The Rajbanshis of this village pull on amicably with other members of the *Anchal Panchayat* viz., the Brahmans, the Kayasthas, the Vaisya Sahas etc.

The Rajbanshis of Madhur Bhasa maintain perfect harmony with the Caste Hindus in the villages of the neighbourhood. They have socio-economic and religious relations with other communities in the neighbouring villages. The Rajbanshis are served by Brahman priests in the socio-religious ceremonies. The Brahmans have the title of Sharma. Other Caste Hindus are, however, served by Assamese Brahman priests. The barbers belonging to the Napit community and staying at Rampur, Singimari and, Jorai serve the Rajbanshis of the village as also other Caste Hindus of the region. The barbers are the displaced persons from the former East Pakistan and have immigrated to this part of the district of Cooch Behar in the wake of the Partition of India. The same barbers serve also the Namasudras of the village. For the services of hair-cutting and nail-paring, the Rajbanshis sometimes undertake journeys to their barbers. Sometimes the barbers also come to the village and enquire of households requiring their services. It may be mentioned that there is no fixed *Yajmani* or patron-client relationship between the barbers of the

neighbourhood and the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras of the village.

In Madhur Bhasa both the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras belong to the Scheduled Castes. As such, it is difficult to assess the extent of ceremonial purity observed by other communities in some prescriptive socio-religious ceremonies and also in matters of touch and commensality. It is claimed by the Rajbanshis of the village that their touch is not deliberately avoided by the Caste Hindus of the neighbouring villages. They claim that they are permitted to enter the temples of *Mahakala* at Jayanti and of *Kamakshya* at Gauhati in Assam. The Rajbanshis too claim that they suffer from no disability in the form of restrictions on their rights and privileges relating to their freedom of movement and entry into public places. They do not meet any objection to their right of entry into any teastall or sweetmeat shop, owned by a Caste Hindu. The Rajbanshis and the Caste Hindus sit together in the teastall at Rampur to take tea and sweetmeats. The touch of the Rajbanshis does not defile or desecrate the ceremonial purity of the Caste Hindus. They are not inhibited by any social decree to take water from the Rajbanshis. But, the Caste Hindus do not take cooked food, served or prepared by the Rajbanshis. The Brahman priests serving the Rajbanshis take uncooked food from their clients but do not ever take any food cooked and served by them. One or two educated and enlightened Caste Hindus in the neighbouring villages, however, do not hesitate to take cooked food from a Rajbanshi, when invited to a marriage-feast or a socio-religious ceremony. Some of the Rajbanshis are also invited by their Caste Hindu friends to their houses on ceremonial occasions to feasts. In commensal rela-

tions both the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras do not maintain any distance and distinction. Cooked food is taken freely by one community from another and *vice versa*.

On a resume, it appears that both the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras are exposed to no extreme form of social intolerance in their relations with the Caste Hindus of the villages outside. Within the village also the two communities appear to enjoy an apparent degree of freedom from any social prejudice in inter-community relations. If the Caste Hindus have not forced any social disability on the Rajbanshis, it is not because of an element of liberalism, a progressive outlook and tolerance in the former group. The Rajbanshis enjoy comparatively a more advantageous position of numerical supremacy over the Caste Hindu neighbours in the village outside Madhur Bhasa. As native sons of the soil, the Rajbanshis are numerically a predominant group in the region. The Caste Hindus, all immigrants in recent years, have not outnumbered the Rajbanshis. Besides, the immigrants, having had to depend in many respects on the Rajbanshis for their socio-economic rehabilitation in an unknown soil, could hardly have the courage to raise the bogey of casteism and to enforce the rigid divisions of the Hindu social order. They have also been mentally in a very bad shape to maintain a social distance, especially when the Partition of India had not only shattered their homes but also uprooted the moorings of many old social values from their mind. With life and honour at stake, the Caste Hindu immigrants could hardly repose their confidence in the social prescriptions like ceremonial purity and avoidance of touch etc. during a crisis in their life. Instead, their old values appeared as meaningless

MADHUR BHASA

and ineffective sentimental platitudes with no force of their own to protect them from the danger of eviction from homesteads, cultures and societies. Their flight into a new territory and their subsequest rehabilitation there gave birth to a spirit of tolerance, gratitude and catholicity, having effaced their past cultural associations. The Rajbanshis too, because of their numerical predominance, have never had to submit to the more orthodox decrees of the conservative Brahmanical group in the social order of Caste Hindu supremacy. The sense of elevation of status in their own society has not met with any confrontation with the degrading values of caste-hierarchy, because they have mentally construed an affinal relation with the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar. The Sanskritising reformistic movement, initiated by their preceptor Late Panchanan Burman to emancipate them from the rigid bonds of the Hindu society and their degraded status in the caste-hierarchy, was instrumental

in sweeping over the Rajbanshis as a force of great social upheaval. The Rajbanshis, mostly now converted Kshatriyas, do not consider themselves placed either outside the pale of the society of the Caste Hindus or at the lower stratum of the same social order as downtrodden outcastes, because of their claim to their admission into the four-*Varna* model of Hindu society as reformed Kshatriyas. And as such, the Rajbanshis do not at all have the depressed feeling of a so-called low caste, cursed with a number of negative social disabilities. Their relation with the Namiasudras is not embittered by the rules of differential treatment but is ennobled by the 'law of humanity, justice and equity—the law of nature'. They see no difference between men, whatever their caste-affiliations. They do not find the ineffaceable stamp of lowly origin on the countenance of any man of any community. Instead, they have sympathy for the downtrodden people and extend their benevolence to the humblest living creature.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

'If ever severity breedeth fear', the 'Arch fear in visible form' is represented by the Raidak, the river quietly gliding by the village Madhur Bhasa in fair weather but rolling in torrents during the monsoons with threats of damage to the land and terror to the life of man and livestock in Madhur Bhasa. Sprung up as a tiny village out of the heart of once-extant woods on the bank of the river Raidak, Madhur Bhasa with forty households nestled in their thatched huts appears to live under the shadow of death and destruction when dark rumbling clouds laden with rain forebode the hushed footsteps of an impending peril. The villagers are indigent mostly, falling back upon meagre returns of the resource of land which still survive the riverine fury of the monsoons. The life in this remotest corner of Cooch Behar district goes drab days in and days out, fear of nature's ravage haunting the humble village-folk every moment during rains and enfeebling their courage and smothering their hopes. The villagers, therefore, hang breathlessly on their fate.

When bounties of nature are so scant and fruits of human labour so hard to earn, when nature itself withdraws its own returns by wilful destruction of crops of the

land almost periodically, natural handicaps restrict the economic resources to the barest minimum level of subsistence and dim the people's vision of the future. With not too large a landed area, being restricted for the majority to the upper ceiling of 10 *Bighas*, 63·6 per cent of landowning households somehow collect their only staple food from the cultivation of paddy. In fact, 80·5 per cent of cultivators' households growing paddy obtain this main crop in varying quantities, the highest quantity for these households not exceeding 40 *Maunds*. Obviously, the meagre quantity of paddy is not enough for the select group of households comprising the majority to meet their requirements even at the subsistence level. The second cash crop of jute becomes a compulsory choice for 94·3 per cent of cultivating households to supplement their family budget to make both ends meet with much hardship. But, here too, the highest total yield does not surpass the limit of 30 *Maunds* of jute. The distribution pattern of resources does not in any case conjure up a very bright picture of the economy. One should remember that 17·5 per cent of households have no vestige of agricultural land in their ownership and 15·0 per cent of households are without any draught bullock. As a result, 11·1 per cent of the working force have

turned day-labourers, there being inadequate land available to provide employment in the agricultural sector to the surplus labour-force even as landless agricultural labourers. The economy of the region is not very sound either, so as to provide subsidiary occupational opportunities to the village working force. Only 26.4 per cent of the working force get subsidiary employment in some sector or other. In the perspective of the economic standard of a developed country, the dependency ratio of the village ought to have been 100 dependants for every 100 earning workers, assuming full employment of 119 persons constituting the potential labour-force, full retirement of 17 persons of the old age-group and compulsory education for 102 children of the school-going age-group. But, in between the ideal and reality comes the shadow of poverty and underdevelopment. The actual dependancy ratio, as evident from the data on the village, comes to 231 dependants for every 100 workers. About 71.8 per cent of the earning households have variable monthly incomes, the maximum limit not exceeding Rs.100.00 *paise*. As a result, the poverty is catching. Though 70.0 per cent of all households are debtors, the majority (75.0 per cent) of the indebted households do not have any monthly income in excess of Rs. 100.00 *paise*. The denudation of the economy is reflected in the fact that 25.0 per cent of the debtor families have met their expenses by the sale of assets and that 51.4 per cent of the children of school-going age-group are not sent to any school for economic reasons.

When poverty is so bitter and wants are so pressing in the village, it will be thoroughly ridiculous to expect any villager in Madhur Bhasa to be far-sighted, looking forward hopefully to his future. Sufferance chains him to the munificence

of one or two persons whom they revere and obey for the benevolence and magnificence of their soul humanised by universal distress. The untamed river Raidak, no doubt, regulates, nay, dominates the course of their life, for nobody knows what price the unpredictable water-course will demand every year of the fruits of their toil in their fields during the monsoons. Every year the rainy season fills them with apprehension, as the river, almost akin to a temperamental malefic deity, threatens to overbrim its banks and overtake the people with a frightening flood. Fencing against batteries of nature's assault and privileged with so few opportunities, the villagers live with their senses dulled by want and distress. Problems of unemployment and economic insufficiency do not cause any stir in their outwardly placid life. They know that they are plagued and scourged by what all other country people in their neighbourhood are cursed with. Their docility has been hammered on the anvil of their long experience of a woeful life and is bred of an inborn apathy and pessimism. God-fearing and fatal, they are wont to the penury of the poor. Their mind is cauterized by their long suffering and lacklustre life. So, they choose to remain quiet spectators of the drama of human tragedy and sorrow. They do seldom protest, for they live behind the veil of anonymity.

As if awakened from the dream of the past when everything is reported to have appeared best, the Rajbanshis recapitulate in a reverential trance how they once worshipped the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar as their God. To them the erstwhile *Maharaja* is still a living god. The Rajbanshis express a sentimental attachment for the institution of the kingly estate. In the exposition of their faith in kingship, they appear more royalist than even the king. Even though

CONCLUSION

time has trampled down kingdoms and statutes have abolished the privileges of all *Maharajas* and obliterated the residual signs of princes and potentates, the respect of the Rajbanshis for the vanishing species of the royal genus eloquently testifies how much obsessed they are with the image of the king and how fanatical royalists they are even after two decades of the merger of the kingdom of Cooch Behar with the State of West Bengal. Instinctively they subscribe to the theory of divine origin of kingship, for they believe that the *Maharaja* was not merely the supreme authority in matters temporal and spiritual, the overlord of his entire kingdom and subjects, but also the strong and mighty lord of their life. The *Maharaja* without a kingdom and a crown still remains the spiritual lord of their life, if not the temporal master of their land. The king at the height of his authority always reigned but never governed. In famine and flood the *Maharaja* is said to have yearned for the welfare of his subjects, reaching his assistance and help to the affected people. The king and his officials were always accessible. The king's officials were sympathetic and expeditious. The objective of the state machinery was not merely confined to the exploitation of the people by levying taxes, though revenue of the king's exchequer mainly accrued from land-taxes. The Rajbanshis compare the golden rule of the *Maharaja* in sharp contrast with the situation of the present. They complain that the 'function of the unimpassioned machinery is guided now by obsolete rules, unsympathetic gestures and soulless officials'. They complain of the incidence of high rate of taxation under different heads at present and opine that all the taxes so levied fall at last upon agriculture, their only source of livelihood. They also contrast the privileges enjoyed earlier with complete absence of any facility offered

now. Even seeds, they say, have now to be purchased in the open market against high price. They do not get as much prompt help and personal attention from the administration, as they used to receive in the days of the *Maharaja*. They feel completely lost now, because they cannot maintain regular liaison with the administrative machinery. The effective link can hardly be established for absence of communication, transport and also financial means. In times of distress, occasioned by either drought or flood, relief is delayed. The spell of the *Maharaja* on the Rajbanshis has not yet been neutralised by the democratic rights of participation in a welfare government of their choice which they secured for the first time after the merger of the State of Cooch Behar in the State of West Bengal. They recall in gratitude how in the benevolent regime of the *Maharaja* they received food and relief promptly in the contingency of any distress and natural disaster and even also assistance in terms of employment in deserving cases. The abolition of the *Zemindary* system does not appear to the Rajbanshis to be a beneficial measure.

The approach of the Rajbanshis to the subject of their economy and welfare is not based on a very sound rationale. Living as they were under the monarchical rule of the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar whom they regard as the living representative of God, they might have lived under a system of administration in which there was scope for personal attention and amelioration of their distress in critical times. But, however efficiently managed the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar's administration might have been, the economic prosperity of the general people was never achieved. The glorification of kingship cannot alter the fundamental rules of economics. The merger of Cooch Behar has obviously

brought the Rajbanshis and others to the same level as any other citizen of West Bengal and subjected them to the same rule of law without any special privilege or prerogative. The Rajbanshis have, no doubt, had to face for the first time an impersonal administrative machinery, free from the dictates of any single individual. Absence of opportunities of a democratic society never emboldened subjects of a king to look beyond him. Instead, they thought that the king should rule as he deemed fit, especially when he represented God. The opium of religion, when administered, made the people invest the king with divine powers. It undoubtedly represents a mediaeval system of outlook and thought. The merger of Cooch Behar truly symbolizes the dawn of modernism in the mind of the commonalty. The acclimatization of the people to the new order is yet to be complete.

The Namasudras, on the other hand, dismiss the issue saying, 'The *Maharaja* is a meaningless entity without any significance'. The attitude does not necessitate the aid of any commentary to make it more explicit. The Rajbanshis consider the entire area upto Cooch Behar as a world of theirs and so, keep themselves informed of all events concerning their society. Even though they have no precise idea of what an urban area connotes, the differences between a town and a village to the Rajbanshis are not of much consequence, if all the areas are located in Cooch Behar district. The Rajbanshi villager of Madhur Bhasa is motivated partly by an ethnocentric complex in his dealings with another Rajbanshi, whether from Madhur Bhasa, a different other village or from an urban area of the same district. Money speaks no sense to him in winning friends and influencing people among the Rajbanshi

community, education does not become a qualification for a Rajbanshi outsider to lead the villagers nor a disqualification to repel them and age does not appear to be a perpetual gift for a quick rapport when two Rajbanshis of two different climes and cultures meet. A Rajbanshi villager even at the base of the economic pyramid is not inhibited to accost and entertain another member of his own community from outside and of a higher economic stratum. They term this feeling as *Jatipriti* (জাতিপ্ৰীতি) or a love for one's own community. In the absence of any better technical term, the feeling may be coined as *Pan-Rajbanshism* which alone explains why an urbanite Rajbanshi, named *H. B.*, a town-bred person of Cooch Behar town comes often to D. S., a resident of the village.

Though the former, an Advocate practising in Cooch Behar law-courts, represents a sophisticated urban culture-group and in the economic scale of comparison stands on a far higher platform, being financially more sound, he does not at all hesitate to take tea and food and play at cards with D. S., a ruralite peasant, fairly affluent. The social intercourse is not motivated by the call of any business; neither does it stand on the basis of any kinship relation or the merit of any attractive traits of the personality of D. S. The affinal relation and the *Pan-Rajbanshism* are potent enough to canalise the intercourse in socio-cultural channels. The cultural integration of the Rajbanshis is based on two foundations, the sense of pride for the vague community relation with the *Maharaja* of Cooch Behar and their reformed status as neophyte Kshatriyas.

But the ethnocentricity of the Rajbanshis has not turned them into fanatics living

CONCLUSION

in a world of their own, slamming their doors against all outsiders beyond their ken. It has already been stated that the Namasudras are not treated as inferiors in social status or as foreigners alien to the place. Catholic in their views and compassionate in their outlook, the Rajbanshis have abjured the path of communal approach and avoided tension in the village with the immigrant Namasudras. Though both the Rajbanshis and the Namasudras belong to the Scheduled Castes, the former as members of an underprivileged community has no precise idea about the privileges and safeguards guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Needless to mention, they lag far behind in deriving the benefits assured to the Scheduled Castes under Constitutional Directives. The Namasudras, however, have a better grasp of the situation.

The villagers, irrespective of their communities, live out of the range of the politics of all political parties. A political party means little to them. Though they are aware of the existence of the Congress as the ruling party in power, they proceed this far and no further. They do not find any time to indulge in political discussions, far less an opportunity to participate in any *Adda* (Get-together), there being no tea-stall or grocer's shop to accommodate the concourse of lisping ruralities for a hot discussion on a social or political discourse. Whatever talks they have once in a blue

moon are confined to the tea-stall at Rampur, the distance of which does not enable the villagers to be very regular in their attendance at the tea-shop. The demand of the body is greater to them than the hunger of the soul.

Despite what has been discussed and analysed, one should not presume that the villagers are confined to the prison-house of their village, unable to look beyond its bounds unto the world outside. They are vaguely aware that the places all around them are in the vortex of a change for development and progress, but Madhur Bhasa has not felt the impact of any socio-economic measures or any welfare schemes. Even without subscribing to the spirit of cynicism, a sophisticated form of 'intellectual dandyism' as it were, they ignorantly live in their unbelief that they are the 'masters of their fates'. Though born with nothing 'within the prospect of belief' they have an abiding hope and a ripened faith that the present socio-economic survey is a harbinger of some welcome change for the good of the people. Their crying need is for a *Bundh*, for the supreme goal of which all the villagers can stand up neck to neck to fight and strive. An embankment can only save them from the perilous foam of a flooded river. If ever an embankment were constructed because of the efforts of an enlightened administrator, the people of Madhur Bhasa would have blessed him unawares.

LIST OF AGENTS FOR THE SALE OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PUBLICATIONS

(as on 31st March 1970)

AGRA

- 1 National Book House,
Jeoni Mandi (Reg.)
- 2 Wadhawa & Co., 45, Civil
Lines (Reg.)
- 3 Banwari Lal Jain, Publishers
Moti Katra (Rest.)
- 4 Asa Ram Baldey Dass & Sons,
Bagh Muzaffarpur (Rest.)

AHMADNAGAR

- 1 V. T. Jorakar, Prop. Rama General
Stores, Navi Path (Rest.)

AHMEDABAD

- 1 Balgovind Booksellers,
Gandhi Road (Reg.)
- 2 Chandra Kant Chimanlal Vora,
Gandhi Road (Reg.)
- 3 New Order Book Co., Gandhi Road,
Ellis Bridge (Reg.)
- 4 Sastu Kitab Ghar, Near Relief
Talkies, Patthar Kuva, Relief
Road (Reg.)
- 5 Gujarat Law House, Near Municipal
Swimming Bath (Rest.)
- 6 Mahajan Bros. Opp. Khadia Police
Gate (Rest.)
- 7 Himanshu Book Co., 10, Mission
Market, Near Gujarat College (Rest.)

AJMER

- 1 Book Land, 663, Madar Gate (Reg.)
- 2 Rajputana Book House, Station
Road (Reg.)

ALIGARH

- 1 Friend's Book House, Muslim
University Market (Reg.)
- 2 New Kitab Ghar, Mill Market (Rest.)

ALLAHABAD

- 1 Kitabistan, 17-A, Kamala Nahru
Road (Reg.)
- 2 Law Book Co., Sardar Patel Marg,
P. Box 4 (Reg.)
- 3 Ram Narain Lal Beni Modho,
2A, Katra Road (Reg.)
- 4 Universal Book Co.,
20, M. G. Road (Reg.)
- 5 The University Book Agency (of
Lahore) Elgin Road (Reg.)
- 6 Bharat Law House, 15, Mahatma
Gandhi Marg (Rest.)
- 7 Chandralok Prakashan,
73, Danbhenga Colony (Rest.)
- 8 Ram Narian Lal Beni Prashad,
2-A, Katra Road (Rest.)

AMBALA CANTT.

- 1 English Book Depot, Ambala
Cantt. (Reg.)

AMBALA CITY

- 1 Seth Law House, 8719, Rly. Road,
Ambala City (Reg.)

AMRITSAR

- 1 Amar Nath & Sons, Near P. O.
Majith Mandi (Reg.)
- 2 The Law Book Agency, G. T.
Road, Putligarh (Reg.)
- 3 The Booksellers Retreat,
Hall Bazar (Reg.)

ANAND

- 1 Vijaya Stores, Station Road (Rest.)

BANGALORE

- 1 The Bangalore Press, Lake View, Mysore Road, Hanuman Nagar P. O. B. 507 (Reg.)
- 2 International Book House P. Ltd., 4-F, M. G. Road (Reg.)
- 3 Makkala Pustaka Press Balamandira, Gandhinagar (Reg.)
- 4 S. S. Book Emporium, 118, Mount Joy Road (Reg.)
- 5 The Standard Book Depot, Avenue Road (Reg.)
- 6 Vichara Sahitya P. Ltd., Balepet (Reg.)
- 7 Alma Stores, 5th Cross Malleswaram (Rest.)
- 8 Maruthi Book Depot, Avenue Road (Rest.)

BAREILLY

- 1 Agarwal Bros., Bara Bazar (Reg.)

BARODA

- 1 New Medical Book House, 540, Madan Zampa Road (Rest.)
- 2 Shri Chandrakant Mohan Lal Shah, Gaini Shankar Building, Diwanji's Wada Dandia Bazar (Rest.)

BELGHARIA

- 1 Granthlok, Antiquarian Booksellers & Publishers, 5/1, Ambica Mukherji Road, Twenty four Parganas, W. B. (Rest.)

BHAGALPUR

- 1 Paper Stationery Stores, D. N. Singh Road (Reg.)

BHOPAL

- 1 Lyall Book Depot, Mohd. Din Building, Sultan Road (Reg.)
- 2 Bhopal Sahitya Sadan, Publishers, Booksellers & Stationers, 37, Lalwani Press Road (Rest.)

BHUBANESWAR

- 1 Prabhat K. Mahapatra, Bhubaneswar Marg (Reg.)

BHAVANAGAR

- 1 Shah Parsotam Dass Gigabhai, M. G. Road (Rest.)

BOLPUR

- 1 Bolpur Pustakalaya, Rabindra Sarani, P.O. Bolpur, Birbhum (W.B.) (Rest.)

BIJAPUR

- 1 Shri D. V. Deshpande, Recognised Law Booksellers, Prop. Vinod Book Depot, Near Shiralshetti Chowk (Rest.)

BIKANER

- 1 Bhandani Bros., Goa Gate (Reg.)

BOMBAY

- 1 Charles Lambert and Co., 101, M. G. Road (Reg.)
- 2 Current Book House, Maruti Lane, Raghunath Dadaji Street (Reg.)
- 3 Current Technical Literature Co. P. Ltd., India House, 1st Floor (Reg.)
- 4 C. Jannadas & Co., Booksellers, 146-C, Princess St. (Reg.)
- 5 Indo Nath & Co., 8-9, 1st Floor, 257, Frase Road (Reg.)
- 6 International Book House Ltd., 9, Ash Lane, M. G. Road (Reg.)
- 7 The Kothari Book Depot, King Edward Road (Reg.)
- 8 Lakkani Book Depot, Girgaum (Reg.)
- 9 Minerva Book Shop, Shop No. 10, Kailash Darsha, 3rd Floor, Nava Chowk (Reg.)
- 10 N. M. Tripathi P. Ltd., Princess Street (Reg.)
- 11 New Book Co., 188-190, Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji Road (Reg.)

BOMBAY

- 12 P. P. H. Book Stall, 190/B, Khetwadi Main Road (Reg.)
- 13 World Literature, Pyare Singh Chug House, Agra Road (Rest.)
- 14 M. & J. Service, 2A, Bahri Building, P. B. 6007 (Rest.)
- 15 Swastik Sales Co., Scientific & Technical Book-sellers (Rest.)
- 16 Popular Book Depot, Lamington Road (Reg.)
- 17 Sunderdas Gian Chand 601, Girgaum Road, Near Princess Street (Reg.)
- 18 Thacker & Co., 342, Kalvedvi Road (Rest.)
- 19 All India Supply Co., 342, Kalbedevi Road (Rest.)
- 20 Amalga Mated Press, 41, Haman Street (Rest.)
- 21 Asian Trading Co., 310, The Miraball, P. B. 1505 (Rest.)
- 22 Secretary, Salestax Practioner Association, Room No. 8, Palton Road (Rest.)
- 23 Usha Book Depot, 585, Chira Bazar (Reg.)

CALCUTTA

- 1 Chatterjee & Co., 3/1, Becharam Chatterjee Lane (Reg.)
- 2 Current Literature Co., 208, M. G. Road (Rest.)
- 3 Dass Gupta & Co. Ltd., 54/3, College Street (Reg.)
- 4 Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 6/1A, Banchharam Akrur Lane (Reg.)
- 5 Hindu Library, 69-A, Balaram De Street (Reg.)
- 6 M. C. Sarkar & Sons P. Ltd., 14, Bankim Chatterji Street (Reg.)
- 7 Oxford Book and Stationery Co., 17, Park Street (Reg.)
- 8 R. Chambray & Co. Ltd., Kent House, P-33, Mission Row Extension (Reg.)

CALCUTTA

- 9 S. C. Sarker & Sons P. Ltd., 1C, College Square (Reg.)
- 10 S. K. Lahiri & Co. P. Ltd., College Street (Reg.)
- 11 Thacker Spink & Co. (1933) P. Ltd., 3, Esplanade East (Reg.)
- 12 W. Newman & Co. Ltd., 3, Old Court House Street (Reg.)
- 13 Indian Book Dist. Co., 65/12, M. G. Road (Rest.)
- 14 K. K. Roy, 55, Gariahat Road, Cal-19, P. Box No. 10210 (Rest.)
- 15 Manimala, 123, Bow Bazar Street (Reg.)
- 16 Modern Book Depot, 9, Chowringhee Centre (Rest.)
- 17 New Script, 172/3, Rash Behari Avenue (Reg.)
- 18 Gyan Bharati, 171-A, M. G. R. (Reg.)
- 19 Mukherjee Library, 1, Gopi Mohan Datta Lane (Rest.)
- 20 S. Bhattacharjee & Co., 49, Dharamatalla Street (Rest.)
- 21 Scientific Book Agency, 103, Netaji Subhas Road (Rest.)
- 22 Sm. P. D. Upadhyay, 16, Munshi Sardaruddin Lane (Rest.)
- 23 Universal Book Dist., 8/2, Hastings Street (Rest.)
- 24 Manisha Granthalaya P. Ltd., 4/3B, Bankim Chatterji Street (Rest.)
- 25 N. M. Roy Chowdhury Co. P. Ltd., 72, M. G. Road (Rest.)

CALICUT

- 1 Touring Book Stall, Court Road (Rest.)

CHANDIGARH

- 1 Jain Law Agency, Shop No. 5, Sector 22 D (Reg.)
- 2 Mehta Bros., 1933, Sector 22 B (Reg.)
- 3 Rama News Agency, Book-sellers, Sector No. 22 (Reg.)

CHANDIGARH

- 4 Universal Book Store, Booth No. 25, Sector No. 22 D (Reg.)
- 5 English Book Shop, 34, Sector 22 D (Rest.)

CUTTACK

- 1 Cuttack Law Times, Cuttack (Reg.)
- 2 D. P. Sur & Sons, Mangalabag New Students Store (Rest.)

DEHRA DUN

- 1 Bishan Singh and Mahendra Pal Singh, 318, Chukhuwala (Reg.)
- 2 Jugal Kishore & Co., Rajpur Road (Reg.)
- 3 National News Agency, Paltan Bazar (Reg.)
- 4 Sant Singh & Sons, 28, Rama Market (Rest.)
- 5 Universal Book House, 39A, Rajpur Road (Rest.)
- 6 Natraj Publishers, 52, Rajpur Road (Reg.)

DELHI

- 1 Atma Ram & Sons, Kashmere Gate (Reg.)
- 2 Bahri Bros. 243, Lajpat Rai Market (Reg.)
- 3 Bawa Harkishan Das Bedi (Vijaya General Agencies), Ahata Kodara, Chamalian Road (Reg.)
- 4 Book-Weels, 4, Sant Narankari Colony, P. B. 1565, Delhi-9 (Reg.)
- 5 Dhanwant Medical & Law Book House, 1522, Lajpat Rai Market (Rest.)
- 6 Federal Law Book Depot, Kashmere Gate (Reg.)
- 7 Imperial Publishing Co., 3, Faiz Bazar Daryanganj (Reg.)
- 8 Indian Army Book Depot, 3, Ansari Road, D. Ganj (Reg.)
- 9 J. M. Jaina & Bros., Mori Gate (Reg.)

DELHI

- 10 Kitap Mahal (Wholesale Division) P. Ltd., 28, Faiz Bazar (Reg.)
- 11 K. L. Seth, Suppliers of Law, Commercial & Tech. Books, Shantinagar, Ganeshpura (Rest.)
- 12 Metropolitan Book Co., 1, Faiz Bazar (Reg.)
- 13 Publication Centre, Subzi- mandi, Opp, Birla Mills (Reg.)
- 14 Sat Narian & Sons, 3141, Mohd. Ali Bazar, Mori Gate (Reg.)
- 15 Universal Book & Stationery Co., 16, Netaji Subhas Marg (Reg.)
- 16 Universal Book Traders, 80, Gokhale Market (Reg.)
- 17 Youngman & Co., Nai Sarak (Reg.)
- 18 Adarsh Publishing Service, 5A/10, Ansari Road, Daryanganj (Rest.)
- 19 Amar Hind Book House, Nair Sarak (Rest.)
- 20 All India Educational Supply Co., Sri Ram Buildings, Jawahar Nagar (Rest.)
- 21 B. Nath & Bros., 3808, Charakhawalan (Chowri Bazar) (Rest.)
- 22 General Book Depot, 1691, Nai Sarak (Rest.)
- 23 Hindi Sahitya Sansar, 1547, Nai Sarak (Rest.)
- 24 Law Literature House, 2646, Balimaran (Rest.)
- 25 Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, Oriental Booksellers & Publishers, P. B. No. 1165, Nai Sarak (Rest.)
- 26 Premier Book Co., Printers, Publishers and Booksellers, Nair Sarak (Reg.)
- 27 Oversees Book Agency, 3810, David Street, D. Ganj 9 (Reg.)
- 28 Amir Book Depot, Nai Sarak (Rest.)
- 29 Rajpal & Sons, Kashmere Gate (Rest.)

DELHI

- 30 Saini Law Publishing Co., 1899, Chandni Chowk (Rest.)
- 31 Moti Lal Banarasi Dass, Bangalore Road, Jawahar Nagar (Reg.)
- 32 Sangam Book Depot, Main Market, Gupta Colony (Reg.)
- 33 Summer Bros., P.O. Birla Lines (Rest.)
- 34 University Book House, 15, U. B. Bangalore Rd., Jawahar Nagar (Rest.)
- 35 Om Book Stall, Civil Court Compound (Reg.)

DHANBAD

- 1 New Sketch Press, Post Box 26 (Rest.)

DHARWAR

- 1 Bharat Book Depot & Prakashan, Subhas Road (Rest.)
- 2 Akalwadi Book Depot, Vijay Road (Rest.)

ERNAKULAM

- 1 South India Traders, C/o Constitutional Law Journal (Reg.)
- 2 Pai & Co., Broadway (Rest.)

FEROZEPUR CANTT.

- 1 English Book Depot, 78, Jhoke Road (Reg.)

GAYA

- 1 Sahitya Sadan, Gautam Budha Marg (Reg.)

GHAZIABAD

- 1 Jayana Book Agency, Outside S. D. Inter College, G. T. Road (Rest.)
- 2 S. Gupta, 342, Ram Nagar (Reg.)

GOA

- 1 Singhals Book House, P. O. B. 70, Near the Church (Rest.)

GUNTUR

- 1 Book Lovers P. Ltd., Arnudelpet, Chowrasta (Reg.)

GURGAON

- 1 Prabhu Book Service, Nai Subzi Mandi (Rest.)

GWALIOR

- 1 Loyal Book Depot, Patankar Bazar, Lashkary (Rest.)
- 2 Tater Bros. Sarafe
- 3 Anand Pustak Bhandar, M. L. B. Marg (Rest.)
- 4 M. C. Daftari, Prop. M. B. Jain & Bros., Booksellers, Sarafa, Lashkar (Rest.)

GWAKIOR

- 1 Grover Law House, Near High Court Gali (Rest.)
- 2 Kitab Ghar, High Court Road (Reg.)

HARDWAR

- 1 Sewa Kunj, Kanshel Bhawan Brashempuri (Rest.)

HUBLI

- 1 Parvaje's Book House, Station Road (Reg.)

HYDERABAD

- 1 The Swaraj Book Depot, Lakdikapul (Reg.)
- 2 Bhaska Prakashan, 22-5-69, Gharkaman (Rest.)
- 3 Book Lovers P. Ltd., Kachiguda Chowrasta (Rest.)
- 4 Book Syndicate Devka Mahal, Opp. Central Bank (Reg.)
- 5 Labour Law Publications, 873, Sultan Bazar (Reg.)
- 6 Book Links Corporation, Narayanagoda (Reg.)

INDORE

- 1 Wadhawa & Co., 56, Mahatma Gandhi Road (Reg.)
- 2 Madhya Pradesh Book Centre, 41, Ahilyapura (Rest.)
- 3 Modern Book House, Shiv Vilas Palace (Rest.)
- 4 Swarup Bros. Khajuri Bazar (Reg.)
- 5 Vinay Pustak Bhandar (Rest.)

JABALPUR

- 1 Modern Book House, 286, Jawaharganj (Reg.)
- 2 Popular Book House, Near Omti P.O. (Rest.)

JAIPUR CITY

- 1 Bharat Law House, Booksellers & Publishers, Opp. Prem Prakash Cinema (Reg.)
- 2 Popular Book Depot, Chaurasta (Reg.)
- 3 Vani Mandir, Sawai Mausingh Highway (Reg.)
- 4 Raj Books & Subs. Agency, 16, Nehru Bazar (Rest.)

JAMNAGAR

- 1 Swadeshi Vastu Bhandar, Ratnabai Masid Road (Reg.)

JAMSHEDPUR

- 1 Amar Kitab Ghar, Diagonal Road, P. B. No. 78 (Reg.)
- 2 Gupta Stores, Dhatkidih (Reg.)
- 3 Sanyal Bros., Booksellers & News Agents, 26, Main Road (Rest.)

JHUNJHUNU (RAJ)

- 1 Shashi Kumar Sharat Chand (Rest.)

JODHPUR

- 1 Chopra Bros., Tripolia Bazar (Reg.)
- 2 Dwarka Das Rathi, Wholesale Books and News Agents (Reg.)

JODHPUR

- 3 Kitab Ghar, Sojati Gate (Reg.)
- 4 Rajasthan Law House, High Court Road (Rest.)

JULLUNDER CITY

- 1 Jain General House, Bazar Bansanwala (Reg.)
- 2 Hazooria Bros., Mai Hiran Gate (Rest.)
- 3 University Publishers, Railway Road (Rest.)

KANPUR

- 1 Advani & Co., P. Box 100, The Mall (Reg.)
- 2 Sahitya Niketan, Shradhanand Park (Reg.)
- 3 Universal Book Stall, The Mall (Reg.)

KAPSAN

- 1 Prakashan Parasaran, 1/90, Namdhar Niwas Azad Marg (Reg.)

KOLARPUR

- 1 Maharashtra Granth Bhandar, Mahadwar Road (Rest.)

KUMTA

- 1 S. V. Kamat, Booksellers & Stationers, (S. Kanara) (Reg.)

LUCKNOW

- 1 Balkrishna Book Co. Ltd., Hazaratganj (Reg.)
- 2 British Book Depot, 84, Hazaratganj (Reg.)
- 3 Eastern Book Co., 34, Lalbagh Road (Reg.)
- 4 Ram Advani, Hazratganj, P.B. 154 (Reg.)
- 5 Universal Publishers (P) Ltd., Hazaratganj. (Reg.)
- 6 Acquarium Supply Co., 213, Faizabad Road. (Rest.)

LUCKNOW

- 7 Civil & Military Educational Stores, 106/B, Sadar Bazar (Rest.)

LUDHIANA

- 1 Lyall Book Depot, Chaura Bazar (Reg.)
- 2 Mohindra Bros., Katcheri Road (Rest.)
- 3 Nanda Stationery Bhandar, Pustak Bazar (Rest.)
- 4 The Pharmacy News., Pindi Street (Rest.)

MADRAS

- 1 Account Test Institute, P.O. 760, Emgore (Reg.)
- 2 C. Subbiah Chetty and Co., 62, Big Street, Triplicane (Reg.)
- 3 K. Krishnamurthy, Post Box 384 (Reg.)
- 4 P. Vardhachary & Co., 8, Linghi Chetty Street (Reg.)
- 5 C. Sitaraman & Co., 33, Royapettach High Road (Reg.)
- 6 M. Sachechalam & Co., 14, Bankuram Chetty Street (Rest.)
- 7 Madras Book Agency (Rest.)
- 8 Nav Bharat Agencies, 18, Andiappa St., Sadhana Sadan (Rest.)
- 9 The Rex Trading Co., P.B. 5049, 31 & 32, James Street (Rest.)
- 10 Mohan Pathippagam & Book Depot, 3, Pyecrafts, Triplicance (Rest.)
- 11 Nares Co. 3, Dr. Rangachari, P.O. Mylapore (Rest.)
- 12 Reliance Trading Co., 79/10, Sambhu Das Street (Reg.)
- 13 Presidency Book Supplies, 8, Pyerofts Road, Iniplicane (Reg.)

MADURAI

- 1 Oriental Book House, 258, West Masi Street (Reg.)

MADURAI

- 2 Vivekananda Press, 48, West Masi Street (Reg.)

MANDSAUR

- 1 Nahta Bros., Booksellers & Stationers (Rest.)

MANGALORE

- 1 U. R. Shenoye Sons., Car Street, P. Box 128 (Reg.)
- 2 K. Bhoga Rao & Co., Kodial Bail (Rest.)

MATHURA

- 1 Rath & Co., Tilohi Bldg., Bengali Ghat (Rest.)

MEERUT

- 1 Loyal Book Depot, Chhipi Tank (Reg.)
- 2 Prakash Educational Stores, Subhas Bazar (Reg.)

MUSSOURIE

- 1 Hind Traders, N. A. A. Centre, Dick Road (Rest.)

MUZAFFAR NAGAR

- 1 B. S. Jain & Co., 71, Abupura (Reg.)
- 2 Gargya & Co., 139, New Market (Rest.)

MUZAFFARPUR

- 1 Scientific & Educational Supply Syndicate (Rest.)

MYSORE

- 1 H. Venkataramiah & Sons., Krishnarajendra Circle (Reg.)
- 2 Peoples Book House, Opp. Jagan Mohan Palace (Reg.)
- 3 Geeta Book House, New State Circle (Reg.)
- 4 Indian Mercantile Corpn., Ramvilas (Rest.)

NADIAD

- 1 R. S. Desai, Station Road (Rest.)

NAGPUR

- 1 The Executive Secretary, Mineral Industry Association, Mineral House, Near All India Radio Square (Rest.)
- 2 Western Book Depot, Residency Road (Reg.)

NAINITAL

- 1 Consal Book Depot, Bara Bazar (Reg.)

NEW DELHI

- 1 Amrit Book Co., Connaught Circus (Reg.)
- 2 Apki Dukan, 5/5777, Dev Nagar (Reg.)
- 3 Bhawani & Sons., 8F, Connaught Place (Reg.)
- 4 Central News Agency, 25/90, Connaught Circus (Reg.)
- 5 English Book Stores, 7-L, Connaught Circus, P. O. B. No. 328 (Reg.)
- 6 Jain Book Agency, C/9, Prem House, Connaught Place (Reg.)
- 7 Jayana Book Depot, P.B. 2505, Karol Bagh (Reg.)
- 8 Luxmi Book Store, 72, Janpath, P.O. Box 553 (Reg.)
- 9 Mehra Bros., 50-G, Kalkaji, New Delhi-19 (Reg.)
- 10 Navayug Traders, Desh Bandhu Gupta Road, Dev Nagar (Reg.)
- 11 New Book Depot, Latest Books, Periodicals Sty. Nouelles P. B. 96, Connaught Place (Reg.)
- 12 Oxford Book & Stationery Co., Scindia House (Reg.)
- 13 Peoples Publishing House (P) Ltd. Rani Jhansi Road (Reg.)

NEW DELHI

- 14 Ramkrishna & Sons, (Of Lahore), 16/B, Connaught Place (Reg.)
- 15 R. K. Publishers, 23, Beadonpura, Karol Bagh (Rest.)
- 16 Sharma Bros., 17, New Market, Moti Nagar (Reg.)
- 17 The Secretary, Indian Met. Society, Lodhi Road (Reg.)
- 18 Suneja Book Centre, 24/90, Connaught Circus (Reg.)
- 19 United Book Agency, 31, Municipal Market, Connaught Circus (Reg.)
- 20 Hindi Book House, 82, Janpath (Reg.)
- 21 Lakshmi Book Depot, 57, Ragarpura, Karol Bagh (Rest.)
- 22 N. C. Kauncal & Co., 40, Model Basti, P.O. Karol Bagh, New Delhi-5 (Rest.)
- 23 Rabindra Book Agency, 4D/50, Double Storey Lajpat Nagar (Reg.)
- 24 Sant Ram, Booksellers, 16, New Municipal Market, Lody Colony (Rest.)
- 25 Subhas Book Depot, Shop No. 111, Central Market, Srinispuri (Rest.)
- 26 The Secy., Federation of Association of Small Industry of India, 23-B/2, Rohtak Road (Rest.)
- 27 Glob Publications, C-33, Nizamuddin East (Reg.)
- 28 Standard Booksellers & Stationers, Palam Enclave (Rest.)
- 29 Scientific Instruments Store, A-355, New Rajendra Nagar (Rest.)
- 30 Shyam Pustak Bhandar, 28/9, Arya Samaj Road (Rest.)

NILGIRIS

- 1 Mary Martin Booksellers, Kogagiris Madras States (Rest.)

PATIALA

- 1 Jain & Co., 17, Shah Nashin Bazar (Reg.)

PATNA

- 1 Luxmi Trading Co., Padri Ki Haveli (Reg.)
- 2 J. N. P. Agarwal & Co. Padri Ki Haveli (Reg.)
- 3 Moti Lal Banarsi Dass & Co., Padri Ki Haveli (Reg.)
- 4 To-day & To-morrow, Ashok Rajpath (Rest.)

PONDICHERRY

- 1 Honesty Book House, 9, Rue Duplix (R.)

POONA

- 1 Deccan Book Stall, Deccan Gymkhana (Reg.)
- 2 Imperial Book Depot, 266, M. G. Road (R.)
- 3 Sarswat, 67, Patel Flats, 2, Bombay Poona Road (Rest.)
- 4 International Book Service, Deccan Gymkhana (Reg.)
- 5 Raka Book Agency, Opp. Natu's Chawl, Near Appa Balwant Chowk (Reg.)
- 6 Secy. Bharati Itihasa Samshodhalla Mandir, 1321, Sadashiv Peth (Rest.)

PUDUKOTTAI

- 1 Meenakashii Pattippagam, 4142, East Main Road (Rest.)
- 2 Shri P. N. Swaminathan Shivam & Co., East Main Road (Rest.)

RAJKOT

- 1 Mohan Lal Dossabhai Shah, Book-sellers & Sub Agents (Reg.)

RAJPUR

- 1 Pustak Pratisthan, Sati Bazar (Rest.)

RANCHI

- 1 Crown Book Depot., Upper Bazar (Reg.)

REWARI

- 1 Tika Ram Sing Lal (Rest.)

SAUGAR

- 1 Yadav Book Stall, Publishers & Booksellers (Rest.)

SECUNDERABAD

- 1 Hindusthan Diary Publishers, Market Street (Rest.)

SIMLA

- 1 Minerva Book Shop, The Mall (Reg.)

SIVIKASI

- 1 Ganesh Stores, South Car Street (Rest.)

SURAT

- 1 Shri Gajanan Pustakalaya, Tower Road (Reg.)
- 2 Gujrat Subs. Agency, Jawarhar Lal Nehru Margh Athwa Lines (Rest.)

TEZPUR

- 1 Jyoti Prakashan Bhawan, Tezpur, Assam (Rest.)

TIRUCHIRPALLI

- 1 S. Krishnaswami & Co., 35, Subhash Chandra Bose Road (Reg.)

TRIPURA

- 1 G. R. Dutta & Co., Scientific Equipments Suppliers (Rest.)

TRIVANDRUM

- 1 International Book Depot, Main Road (Reg.)
- 2 Reddiar Press & Book Depot, P.B. No. 4 (Rest.)

TUTICORIN

- 1 Shri K. Thiagarajan, 51, French Chapal Road (Rest.)

UDAIPUR

- 1 Book Centre, Maharana Bhopal Consumer, Co-op. Society Ltd. (Rest.)
- 2 Ashutosh & Co., Station Road, Opp. University of Udaipur (Rest.)

UJJAIN

- 1 Rami Bros., 41, Mallipura (Rest.)

VARANASI

- 1 The Manager, Benaras Hindu University Book Depot (Reg.)
- 2 Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Gopal Mandir Lane, P. B. No. 8 (Reg.)
- 3 Kohinoor Stores, University Road, Lanka (Reg.)
- 4 Viswavidyalaya Prakashan, K40/18, Bhairo Nath Marg (Reg.)
- 5 Globe Book Centre, P. O. Hindu University (Rest.)

VELLORE

- 1 A. Venkatasubhan, Law Booksellers (Reg.)

VZEGAPATAM

- 1 Gupta Bros., Vizia Building (Reg.)
- 2 The Secretary, Andhra University, General Co-op. Stores Ltd. (Rest.)

WARDHA

- 1 Swarajeya Bhandar, Bhorji Market (Reg.)

For Local Sale

- 1 Govt. of India Kitab Mahal, Janpath, Opp. India Coffee House, New Delhi, Phone No. 44561
- 2 Govt. of India Book Depot, 8, Hastings Street, Calcutta, Phone No. 23-3813
- 3 High Commissioner for India in London, India House, London, W.C. 2

Railway Bookstall Holders

- 1 S/S A. H. Wheeler & Co., 15, Elgin Road, Allahabad
- 2 Higginbothams & Co. Ltd., Mount Road, Madras
- 3 Gahlot Bros., K. E. M. Road, Bikaner

Foreign

- 1 S/S Education Enterprise Private Ltd., Kathmandu (Nepal)
- 2 S/S Aktiebologat, C. E. Fritzes Kungl, Hovobokhandel Fredsgation-2, Box 1656, Stockholm-16, (Sweden)
- 3 Reise-und-Ver Kehrsverlag Stuttgart, Post 730 Gutenleergstree 21, Stuttgart No. 11245 Stuttgart den (Germany West)
- 4 The Proprietor, Book Centre, Lakshmi Mansion, 49, The Mall, Lahore (Pakistan)
- 5 S/S Drghi Ranchi International Booksellers, Via Cavour, T-9-11, 35000 Padova, Italy
- 6 S/S Wepf & Co. Booksellers, English Deptt., ELSENGASSE 5 BASEL, Switzerland
- 7 Otto HARRASSOWITZ, BUCHHANDIUNG UND ANTIQUARIAL, 6200, WISESBADEN, TAUNUSTRA, GERMANY
- 8 S/S A. ASHER & CO., 386, HERENGRACHT, AMSTERDAM. C (HOLLAND)
- 9 S/S SWETS & ZEITLINGER N. V., 471 & 487, KEIZERSGRACHT AMSTERDAM (HOLLAND)
- 10 M. G. VON PIERE, RECHTTRACT 62, EINDHOVEN (HOLLAND)

FOREIGN

- 11 H. K. LOWIS & CO. LTD., 136, GOWER STREET, LONDON. C. 7
- 12 HERBERT WILSON LTD., BOOK-SELLERS & SUB AGENTS, 161, BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON S. E. 1. (ENGLAND)
- 13 BUCH UND ZEITACHRIFREN, M.B. H. I-INDEXPORT, GROSSO UND KNNISSIONBUCH HANDLING INTERNATION VERLAGSAUSLIEFERUNDENM HAMBURG (GERMANY)
- 14 S/s STORE NORDISKE VIDENSKABOGHANDEL, REMERSGADE 27DK 1362 COMPENHAGEN K.
- 15 The EX-LIBRIS, BUCHHANDELISGELLSCHAFF, HARINNON OSWOLD & CO. K. G. FRANKFURT/MAIN (GERMANY)
- 16 DR. LUDWING HANTASCHER UNIVERSITATS-BUCHHANDLUNG, 34 COTTINGEN (GERMANY)
- 17 OTTO ROELTZ ANTIQUAIAT, 624 KOENIGSTING/TAUNUS, RERRNWALDSTR-6 (W. GERMANY)
- 18 ASIA LIBRARY SERVICE, 1841, 69th AVENUES, CALIFORNIA (U.S.A.)
- 19 PUBLISHING AND DISTRIBUTING CO. LTD., MITRE HOUSE, 177, REGENT STREET, LONDON W. 1.
- 20 REISE-U-VERKEHRSVERLAG, 7 STUTTGART-VAIHINGEN, POSTFAH-80-0830, HOSIGWIESENSTR-25 (GERMANY)

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 1 The Asstt. Director, Extension Centre, Bhuli Road, Dhanbad
- 2 The Asstt. Director, Extension Centre, Santnagar, Hyderabad-18
- 3 The Asstt. Director, Govt. of India, S. I. S. I. Ministry of C & I Extension Centre, Kapileshwar Road, Belgaum
- 4 The Asstt. Director, Extension Centre, Krishna Distt. (A. I.)
- 5 The Asstt. Director, Footwear, Extension Centre, Polo Ground No. 1, Jodhpur
- 6 The Asstt. Director, Industrial Extension Centre, Nadiad (Guj.)
- 7 The Development Commissioner, Small Scale Industries, Udyog Bhawan, New Delhi
- 8 The Dy. Director, Incharge, S. I. S. I. C/o Chief Civil Admn. Goa, Panjim
- 9 The Director, Govt. Press Hyderabad
- 10 The Director, Indian Bureau of Lines, Govt. of India, Ministry of Steel Mines & Fuel, Nagpur
- 11 The Director, S. I. S. I. Industrial Extension Centre, Udhna-Surat
- 12 The Employment Officer, Employment Exchange, Dhar, M. P.
- 13 The Employment Officer, Employment Exchange, Gopal Bhaban, Morena
- 14 The Employment Officer, Employment Exchange, Jhabue
- 15 The Head Clerk, Govt. Book Depot, Ahmedabad
- 16 The Head Clerk, Photozincographic Press, 5, Finance Road, Poona

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 17 The Officer-in-Charge, Assam, Govt. B. D., Shillong
- 18 The O.I/C., Extension Centre, Club Road, Muzafferpur
- 19 The O.I/C., Extension Centre, Industrial Estate, Kokar, Ranchi
- 20 The O.I/C., State Information Centre, Hyderabad
- 21 The O.I/C., S. I. S. I. Extension Centre, Malda
- 22 The O.I/C., S. I. S. I., Habra, Tabaluria, Twenty four Parganas
- 23 The O.I/C, University Employment Bureau, Lucknow
- 24 The O.I/C., S. I. S. I. Chrontanning Extension Centre, Tangra, 33/1, North Topsia Road, Calcutta-46
- 25 The O.I/C., S. I. S. O., Extension Centre (Footwear), Calcutta-2
- 26 The O.I/C., S. I. S. I., Model Carpentry Workshop, Puyali Nagar, P.O. Burnipur, Twentyfour Parganas
- 27 Publication Division, Sales Depot, North Block, New Delhi
- 28 The Press Officer, Orissa Sectt., Cuttack
- 29 The Registrar of Companies, Andhra Bank Bldg., 6, Linghi Chetty Street, P.B. 1530, Madras
- 30 The Registrar of Companies, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, Shillong
- 31 The Registrar of Companies, Bihar Journal Road, Patna-1
- 32 The Registrar of Companies, 162, Brigade Road, Bangalore
- 33 The Registrar of Companies, Everest, 100, Marine Drive, Bombay
- 34 The Registrar of Companies, Gujarat State Samachar Building, Ahmedabad

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 35 The Registrar of Companies, Gwalior (M.P.)
- 36 The Registrar of Companies, H.No. 3-5-837, Hyder Guda, Hyderabad
- 37 The Registrar of Companies, Kerala, 70, Feet Road, Ernakulam
- 38 The Registrar of Companies, M. G. Road, West Cott. Bldg., P.B. 334, Kanpur
- 39 The Registrar of Companies, Narayani Bldg., Brabourne Road, Calcutta-1
- 40 The Registrar of Companies, Orissa, Cuttack Chandi, Cuttack
- 41 The Registrar of Companies, Pondicherry
- 42 The Registrar of Companies, Punjab & Himachal Pradesh, Link Road, Jullundur City
- 43 The Registrar of Companies, Raj. & Ajmer, Sh. Kumta Prasad House, 1st Floor, 'C' Scheme, Ashok Marg, Jaipur
- 44 The Registrar of Companies, Sunlight Insurance Bldg., Ajmeri Gate Extension, New Delhi
- 45 The Registrar of Trade Unions, Kanpur
- 46 Soochna Sahita Depot, (State Book Depot), Lucknow
- 47 Supdt., Bhupendra State Press, Patiala
- 48 Supdt., Govt. Press & Book Depot, Nagpur
- 49 Supdt., Govt. Press, Mount Road, Madras
- 50 Supdt., Govt. State, Stores and Pubs., P.O. Gulzenbagh, Patna
- 51 Supdt., Govt. Printing & Stationery Depot, Rajasthan, Jaipur City

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 52 Supdt., Govt. Printing & Stationery. Rajkot
- 53 Supdt., Govt. Printing and Stationery, Punjab, Chandigarh
- 54 Supdt., Govt. State Emporium, V.P. Rewa
- 55 Dy. Controller Prg. & Sty. Office, Himachal Pradesh, Simla
- 56 Supdt., Printing & Stationery, Allahabad, U.P.
- 57 Supdt. Printing & Stationery, M. D. Gwalior
- 58 Supdt., Printing & Stationery, Charni Road, Bombay
- 59 Supdt., State Govt. Press, Bhopal
- 60 The Asstt. Director, Publicity & Information, Vidhan Sandha, Bangalore-1
- 61 Supdt. Govt. Press, Trivandrum
- 62 Asstt. Information Officer, Press Information Bureau, Information Centre, Srinagar
- 63 Chief Controller of Imports & Exports, Panjim, Goa
- 64 Employment Officer, Employment Exchange (Near Bus Stop), Sidhi (M.P.)
- 65 The Director, Regional Meteorological Centre, Alipur, Calcutta
- 66 The Asstt. Director, State Information Centre, Hubli
- 67 The Director of Supplies & Disposal, Deptt. of Supply, 10, Mount Road, Madras-2
- 68 Director General of Supplies and Disposals, N. I. C. Bldgs., New Delhi
- 69 The Controller of Imports & Exports, Rajkot

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 70 The Inspector, Dock Safety, M/I & E Madras Harbour, Madras-1
- 71 The Inspecting Asstt. Commissioner of Income Tax, Kerala, Ernakulam
- 72 The Under Secretary, Rajya Sabha Sectt., Parliament House, New Delhi
- 73 Controller of Imports & Exports, 7, Portland Park, Visakhapatnam
- 74 The Senior Inspector, Dock Safety, Botawalla Chambers, Sir P. M. Road, Bombay
- 75 Controller of Imports & Exports, I. B. 14-P, Pondicherry
- 76 Dy. Director Incharge, S. I. S. I. Sahakar Bhavan, Trikon Bagicha, Rajkot
- 77 The Publicity and Liaison Officer, Forest Research Institute & Colleges, Near forest, P. O. Dehradun
- 78 The Asstt. Controller of Imports and Exports, Govt. of India Ministry of Commerce, New Kandla
- 79 The Dy. Director General (S. D.) 6, Esplanade East, Calcutta
- 80 The Director, Govt. of India, S. I. S. I. Ministry of I & S Industrial Area-B. Ludhiana
- 81 The Govt. Epigwaphist for India
- 82 The Asstt. Director, Incharge, S. I. S. I. Extension Centre, Varansi
- 83 The Director of Supplies, Swarup Nagar, Kanpur
- 84 The Asstt. Director (Admn.) Office of the Dte. of Supplies & Disposal, Bombay

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 85 The Chief Controller of Imports & Exports, Ministry of International Trade, Madras
- 86 The Dy. Collector of Customs, Custom House, Visakhapatnam
- 87 The Principal Officer, Mercantile Marine Department, Calcutta
- 88 The Director, S. I. S. I. 107, Industrial Estate Kanpur
- 89 The Director, I/C, S. I. S. I. Karan Nagar, Srinagar
- 90 The Director of Inspection, New Marine Lines, Bombay-1
- 91 The Dy. Chief Controller of Imports & Exports, T. D. Road, Ernakulam
- 92 The Asstt. Director Govt. Stationery & Book Depot, Aurangabad
- 93 The Asstt. Director I/C, S. I. S. I. Club Road, Hubli
- 94 The Employment Officer, Talcher
- 95 The Director of Inspection, Dte, G & S, Disposal, 1, Ganesh Chandra Avenue, Calcutta
- 96 The Collector of Customs, New Custom House, Bombay
- 97 The Controller of Imports & Exports, Bangalore
- 98 The Admn. Officer, Tariff Commissioner, 101, Queen's Road, Bombay
- 99 The Commissioner of Income Tax, Patiala
- 100 The Director, Ministry of I & Supply, (Deptt. of Industry) Cuttack

S. & R. Agents as on 31. 3. 70

- 101 The Dy. Director of Public Relations State Information, Centre, Patna
- 102 The Registrar General, India, New Delhi
- 103 The Officer in-Charge, State Information Centre, Madras
- 104 The Asstt. Director, S. I. S. I. M. I. Road, Jaipur
- 105 The Collector of Customs, Madras
- 106 National Building Org.. Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi
- 107 The Controller of Communication, Bombay Region, Bombay
- 108 The Karnatak University, Dharwar
- 109 The Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar

The Principal Publications Officer sending commission for Scientific & Tech., Terminology, UGC, Buildings, New Delhi

The Officer-in-Charge, Information Centre, Swai Ram Singh Road, Jaipur

The Director General of Civil Aviation, New Delhi

Contrôller of Aerodromes, Delhi

- do— Calcutta
- do— Bombay
- do— Madras

The Registrar, Punjab Agri. University, Ludhiana

The Land & Development Officer, M. of Health Family Planning W. H. & U. D., Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi

Director of Census Operations, Manipur, Imphal

- do— West Bengal, 20, British Indian Street, 10th floor, Calcutta-1
- do— Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad
- do— A. & N. Islands, Port Blair
- do— Bihar, Patna
- do— Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal
- do— Tripura, Agartala
- do— Nagaland, Kohima
- do— Mysore, Bangalore

Director of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh, Simla

- do— Goa, Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
- do— Punjab, Chandigarh
- do— Tamil Nadu & Pandicherry, Madras
- do— Gujarat, Karanwala Building, Ellis Bridge, Ahmedabad-6
- do— Delhi, Grand Hotel, 2, Under Hill Road, Delhi-6
- do— Arunachal, Shillong

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