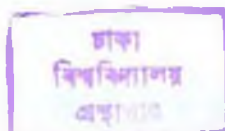


CHANGING POWER STRUCTURE IN RURAL BANGLADESH :
A STUDY OF TWO VILLAGES IN RAJSHAHI DIVISION

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A thesis submitted to the University of Dhaka for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Science

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DECLARATION

The material embodied in this thesis is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other diploma or degree of any University.

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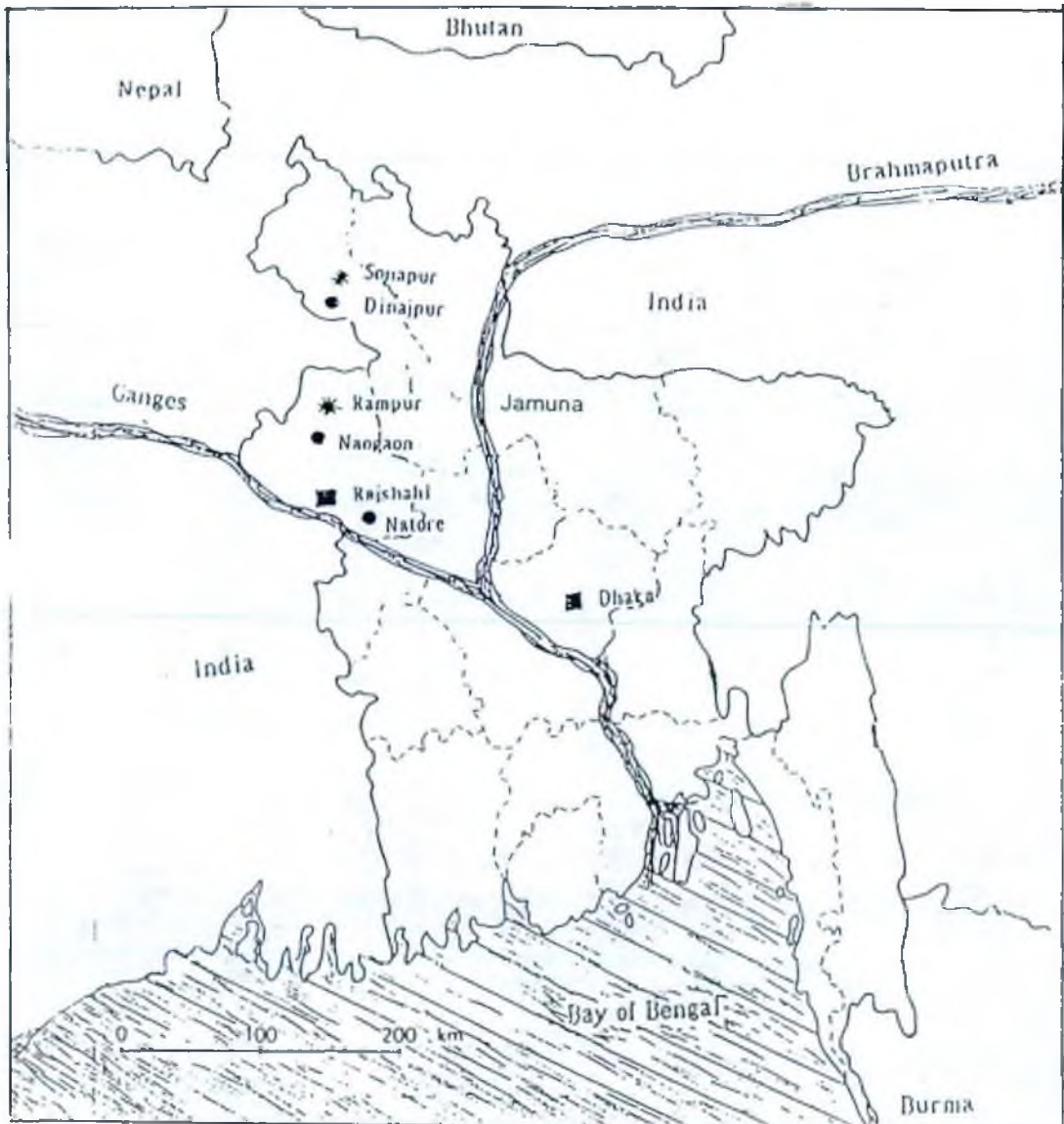
GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

<i>aam</i>	- mango
<i>adivasi</i>	- a tribal individual
<i>aman</i>	- a variety of paddy
<i>babla</i>	- <i>Acacia nilotica</i>
<i>bangsha</i>	- a lineage
<i>barga</i>	- sharecropping
<i>bari</i>	- a few households
<i>Bauls</i>	- a small ascetic community of South-Western Bangladesh and adjoining part of West Bengal
<i>beel</i>	- low-lying area
<i>bittaheen</i>	- propertyless
<i>Borindra</i>	- the Barind Tract
<i>chula</i>	- clay-made oven for cooking
<i>gram</i>	- village
<i>grameen</i>	- rural or village-based
<i>haor</i>	- marshy land
<i>jam</i>	- <i>Syzygium cumini</i>
<i>kamla</i>	- landless daily labourer, wage labourer
<i>khadim</i>	- cadre/follower
<i>khana</i>	- a household or family
<i>khandan</i>	- a household which is long associated with the ownership and control of land and most members have some education. Such a household can be distinguished from the <i>girhastas</i> and <i>kamlas</i> by the life style of members
<i>kharis</i>	- drainage channels
<i>kool</i>	- <i>Zyphus mauritiana</i>
<i>krishi</i>	- agricultural
<i>mahat</i>	- a leader of a Hindu samaj
<i>mohila</i>	- woman
<i>mohila samity</i>	- women's group/cooperative
<i>mouza</i>	- revenue village
<i>neem</i>	- <i>Azadirachta indica</i>
<i>para</i>	- neighborhood ward, part of village
<i>pardha</i>	- veil
<i>Pargacha</i>	- parasite
<i>prodhan/matbar</i>	- leader of samaj, village leader
<i>raiya</i>	- tenants
<i>samabai</i>	- cooperative
<i>samaj</i>	- village association
<i>sardar</i>	- a leader of Muslim zamat [samaj]
<i>salish</i>	- village court
<i>simul</i>	- <i>Ceiba petandra</i>
<i>taka</i>	- the monetary unit of Bangladesh
<i>thana</i>	- administrative unit of Bangladesh; similar to a sub-district
<i>zamindar</i>	- one who lived on rent in cash received from land through subinfeudatory rights

ACRONYMS

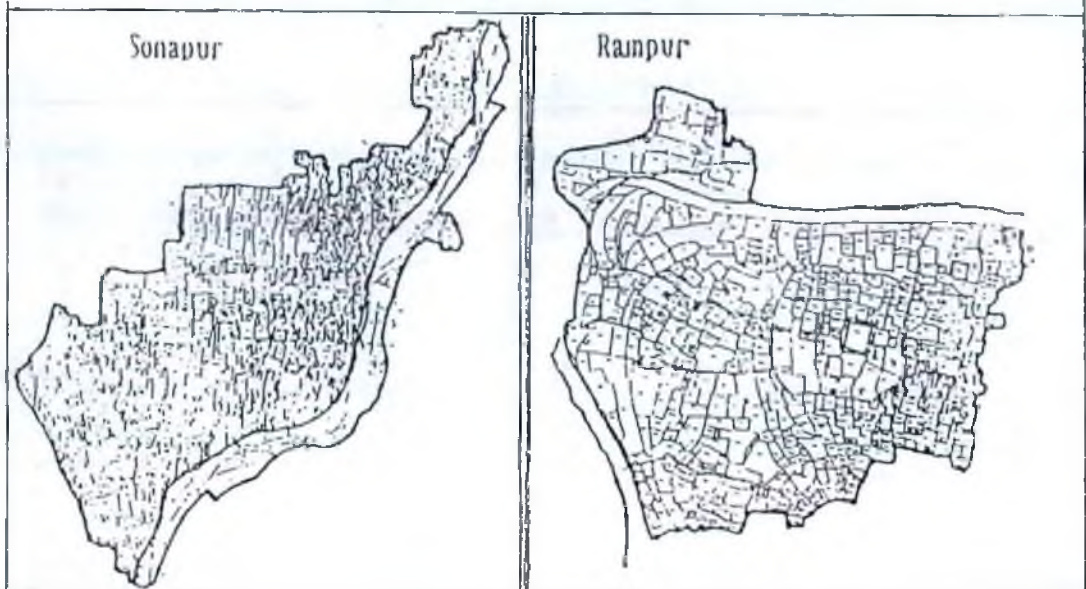
ADAB	Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh
AL	Awami League
BIDS	Bangladesh Institute for Development Studies
BKBs	Bangladesh Krishi Banks
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BRDB	Bangladesh Rural Development Board
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BSS	Bittaheen Samabay Samity (Assetless Co-operatives)
CARE	Co-operative American Relief Everywhere
CTCA	Central Thana Co-operative Association
GB	Grameen Bank
HYV	High Yielding Varieties (rice, etc.)
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
JP	Jatiya Party
JSD	Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (National Socialist Party)
KG	Kindergarten
KSS	Krishi Samabay Samity
LOS	Land Occupancy Survey
LUO	Land Under Operation
NCBs	National Credit Banks
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PVDOs	Private Voluntary Development Organisations
RDA	Rural Development Academy (Bogra)
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
STW	Shallow Tube-Well
TW	Tube-well
TVAA	Total Value of All Assets
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UP	Union Parishad
V-AID	Village Agricultural Industrial Development
JI	Jamaat-i-Islami [Party]

Map 1 : Bangladesh - Locations of the study villages



Map 2: Sonapur

Map 3: Rampur



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Thomas Costa

CHAPTER - 1 : INTRODUCTION

This is an intensive study of changing power structure of two villages in northern Bangladesh. It especially focuses on the emerging trends of the new form of leadership in rural power structure, including their causes and consequences. The two study villages that I have chosen are **Rampur**¹ and **Sonapur**. Rampur is situated in Badalgachi *Thana* of Naogaon District, about 240 km northwest of the capital of Bangladesh, Dhaka, while Sonapur is in Sadar *Thana* of Dinajpur District, about 415 km northwest of Dhaka. Rampur is more than 100 km away from the northeast Divisional town of Rajshahi; while Sonapur is situated about 18 km away from the northeast of Dinajpur District town. The distance between the two villages is about 200 km. Rampur is a traditional village where outside interventions (except government support) are almost absent. In Sonapur, development efforts are quite significantly present, made by both governmental and voluntary organizations, known as **supportive agencies**². Their activities are aimed at helping to bring about certain development and changes in the lives and livelihood of the rural population. Rajshahi Division has been chosen for the present study for particular reasons. First of all, there is a very little field-level research work being carried out or written about the region. Secondly, it is one of the remotest traditional rural areas of Bangladesh, where social change hardly takes place compared to the villages close to the big towns. The area is also a drought-prone region where change is almost exclusively brought about by nature, which, most

-
1. Rampur and Sonapur are the commonly used pseudo-names of my study villages. Most researchers of village studies of the past used pseudo-names.
 2. Rahman (1994) has used this term to refer to the agencies, both governmental and voluntary, which are engaged in rural development by organizing and helping the rural population, especially the landless poor and marginal peasants. The author, in the present study, has also used this term.

of the time, adversely affects the life of people in the area. Studies on the power structure in Bangladesh, in general, and on its rural power structure, in particular, are quite a few in number. The importance of such studies, and the need for basic research in this field, have long been felt by social scientists. In this respect, certain comments of some social researchers might be relevant. For example, Wood, with his vast research experience for many years in Bangladesh, suggests that "an understanding of rural power structure is especially relevant to any plan about rural development" (1994:31). In order to justify his own observation he cites the views of R. Nicholas, who maintains that "there will be no long-term economic growth, no general increase in the well-being of the people and no movement towards a just and equal society in Bangladesh without a great deal of objective study of its people, society and economy. At present our ignorance is profound" (1973:23). The need for acquiring knowledge, with a view to make it updated as far as possible about rural social transformation is undoubtedly very crucial.

In order to get a critical observation about village life I have made good use of four major works, viz. *Six villages of Bengal* by Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1971), *The Changing Society of India and Pakistan* by A. K. Nazmul Karim (1956), *A Bangladesh Village - A Study of Social Stratification* by Anwarullah Chowdhury (1978) and *Jhagrapur* by J. Arens and J.V. Beurden (1977). The former two are studies written before Bangladesh's independence in 1971 and the latter two in the post-independence periods. These studies provide us with valuable information about Bangladesh villages. But the social system of the villages analyzed by them has undergone certain major changes in recent times. However, since these studies are not strictly about the power structure, I have made a modest attempt to use the concepts and theories of power as proposed by western

classical and modern thinkers like – Karl Marx, Max Weber, Ralf Dahrendorf and also by some renowned social researchers of Bangladesh, viz. Atiur Rahman and others for formulating a general theoretical and conceptual framework for the present study. The theories of these scholars provide certain important facts to the understanding of the changing power structure in the villages under study. All the above-mentioned scholars almost invariably suggest that the population in human societies are categorized into various social classes and groups. The upper class owns property and holds power; while the classes at the bottom are being ruled and inhumanely exploited by the upper class. They have also noted the fact that people concerned have primarily conflicting individual as well as group interests in the society and for satisfying such interests power has been exercised mostly by those who are on the top of the class structure. Moreover, struggles exist between the contending classes, which are likely to bring about some basic changes in the social structure.

Marx mainly develops his theory of classes basing on property-ownership and the division of labour; while Weber and Dahrendorf emphasize the political or bureaucratic system and the occupational groups respectively. But Atiur Rahman has laid great stress on the need for building-up the countervailing force of the bottom. Rahman (1981, 1987 and 1989); Adnan (1985) and a few others who have dealt with rural power structure of Bangladesh have observed that the increased rural development work undertaken by both government and non-governmental voluntary agencies help the rural poor to organize themselves to build-up countervailing power among them. However, common people have diverse views for and against such efforts.

The present study is designed to attain some special importance in identifying the contemporary changing patterns of the rural power structure

in Bangladesh. In the above background, I have undertaken the present research work with a view to comprehend the existing power relations in rural Bangladesh. For a somewhat systematic analysis and accurate understanding the present work suggests the following seven **propositions** which are especially relevant to the problem under study :

- [i] That Marxian conflict theory (one-dimensional economic approach) suggests organizing the masses [who are unorganized] to bring about changes in the social stratification and power structure even by revolution. In response to this assumption, we would like to propose that almost similar changes are also being made possible by organizing the grassroot population for empowerment through articulation of thought and organization-building by introducing non-formal education programmes. This means: [a] individual member's awareness and capacity-building to become resourceful to be able to utilize resources; [b] formation of small groups for joint actions and mutual support; and [c] network-building of groups as an organization to work as interest-groups and provide greater linkage with the unorganized ones.
- [ii] Basing on the Weberian multi-dimensional approach which incorporates both socio-economic and political aspects of social stratification and power, we would like to propose here that for any sustainable changes in power structure, an integral or total human development model, encompassing all aspects of human beings, is especially needed. This means that only economic change is not enough for sustainability.
- [iii] That Dahrendorf, who takes into consideration all the strong points from both Marx and Weber concerning power structure, has suggested

formation of social occupational groups, what he has called 'imperatively co-ordinated associations' for socio-economic changes. Such occupational categories work for their own group interests. Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), *Grameen Bank* (GB), Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and other Private Voluntary Development Organizations (PVDOs)³ or supportive agencies are working to help organize the rural landless and marginal peasants into small homogeneous groups for their socio-economic uplift. Thus the third proposition is that such occupational groups, along with their socio-economic changes, also strive for bringing about changes in the rural power structure. These new social organizations and institutions, on the one hand, show the numerical strength of the masses, and on the contrary, act as a new source of power. This also brings about changes in the power structure.

[iv] Atiur Rahman observes that the organized groups of the grassroot population can achieve 'countervailing power' (1981:8;1989b:90), which Father Timm, CSC, terms as 'countervailing moral force' (1983:61). The present study has made a critical analysis on Rahman's [1989] following assumptions in order to understand their effectiveness in bringing about changes in the rural power structure :

[a] That the countervailing power can bring about a positive change to ensure participation of the rural masses in the power process;

3. Private Voluntary Development Organizations [PVDOs]. There are roughly 956 such voluntary organizations supplementing and complementing Government initiatives, registered under NGO-Affairs Bureau. Besides, there are as many as 13,000 voluntary socio-cultural organizations registered with the Social Services Department for socio-cultural purposes. By PVDOs we refer to the 956 agencies of which about $\frac{1}{4}$ th are International, including the UN organizations. The remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ th are national and local, operating in several geographical locations covering a number of Districts. Project funding of these organizations come from external individual and organizational donations, grants by Bangladesh Government and local collections in cash-kind-labour form. [The NGO-Section in Bangladesh : A Task Force Report, ADAB, Dhaka, 1992.

- [b] That the countervailing power can provide an effective challenge to the traditional rural leadership; and
 - [c] That the countervailing power creates a resisting force of the poor in accordance with their class interests.
- [v] While mobilizing occupational groups, most supportive agencies also organize women groups with equal emphasis on the assumption that sustainable changes cannot be brought about by ignoring the contribution of half of the total population. It is, therefore, worthwhile to look into the issue of women leadership in this respect. This proposition means that as women leadership becomes stronger by organizing their groups and organizations, women identify new sources of power for themselves and that male-domination gradually declines in the structure of power.
- [vi] It is expected that when the people will become organized and aware they will achieve power by themselves and the leaders thus become accountable to the people. Accountability of leaders to the people is taken to be a part of the total power relations. The sixth proposition is that, as people become more and more organized, the accountability-relationship between the leaders and the people also develops, which, in turn, brings about certain changes in the power structure.
- [vii] The last but not the least proposition of the present study is that, as people become organized and work for their own group interests, it is expected that their leaders work for development of villages and especially for the landless and the marginal peasants, and the disadvantaged rural population.

Taking into consideration all the above propositions the present researcher has tried his best to make a comparative application of them in the study villages. Rampur is a traditional village where changes hardly take place; while in Sonapur outside organizational inputs are provided for material and human development. The importance of selecting these two villages for intensive study lies in the above fact. In the Sonapur village, BRDB, Grameen Bank, BRAC, Caritas and CARE are working to organize people for their socio-economic changes. The present researcher has taken keen interest in identifying some aspects of major changes which have occurred in the rural power structures due to the interventions of the above-named supportive agencies, along with other relevant factors which might be considered equally responsible.

Methodology

The present study is primarily a **social-anthropological**⁴ one. A modest attempt has been made to do intensive fieldwork as a **participant-observer** in the villages under study during April 1993 to September 1994. Two short follow-up visits have also been made for two weeks in July-August and December 1995 for re-checking some of the field-data. As regards methodology of village studies, Chowdhury suggests- "anthropological method, which involves direct participation and observation in the field, seems to us the most useful method for the study of village communities in contemporary Bangladesh. Because we think we can gain insights into the society and culture of the people whom we are investigating through intensive field work" [1978:12].

4. Most social researchers who made village studies preferred to collect information through intensive field work. The approach is known as "Social Anthropological" one. Chowdhury (1985) in his book - *Pains and Pleasures of Fieldwork* - explains the approach quite thoroughly.

Social scholars and researchers, like Malinowski [1884-1942], Radcliffe-Brown [1881-1955] and many others also followed empirical intensive fieldwork method of investigation to understand the people and the society from their [people's] point of view. Malinowski saw the essence of fieldwork in what he called participant-observation which implies involvement in the social life of the people. Malinowski's method of intensive fieldwork inspired the latter researchers in the same field and discipline. While reviewing the - *Pains and Pleasures of Fieldwork* - Chowdhury noted that Sharit Bhowmik during his fieldwork among the tribal plantation workers of tea gardens of Jalpaiguri District in West Bengal also became actively involved in the struggle against the exploitation of the management. Chowdhury claims that this active involvement of Bhowmik in the plantation workers' movement against their exploiters adds a new dimension to the empirical fieldwork method [Chowdhury 1985:11].

In order to select two villages for the present study, I initially visited six villages, three in each district mentioned above. Finally, I have chosen Rampur and Sonapur villages, as they correspond most closely to the criteria of my selection. From the very beginning I decided not to live in any house of the villagers. In Sonapur, a village community centre located within the two villages was arranged for my accommodation, while in Rampur an extra-room in a school was allowed for my use. It was eventually well realized that the places of my accommodation provided me with good opportunities for participant-observation, which has been proved to be an important research technique in my work. This choice of my accommodation actually permitted me to stay in a more neutral and open place where everyone was welcome to enter. I also tried to lead a very simple life there, which helped me an easy access to the poor and illiterate people of the study area.

In Sonapur village, my entry was relatively easier because of the activities of Caritas in the Thana, with which I was involved. But in the Rampur village it was quite a difficult task. One of my colleagues who was well known to the influential Haji family of Rampur through marital connection introduced me to the present chairman of the Union *Parishad*, to which the study village belongs. It took me two days to introduce myself to the Chairman and a few other local leaders. I explained my honest and sincere intention to them. The Chairman, out of courtesy, proposed that if I have 'forms' for data collection, he would arrange to fill those in for me and I could collect them from him later. I had to convince him that I intended to live in the village for quite some time as an ordinary villager, meet people house-to-house, attend gatherings and participate in village activities. I found that it was rather difficult for them to accept my proposal. As I decided to live in the village, visit families, and meet the household heads and leaders, they slowly started to accept me.

During my stay in the villages, I was an observer-learner among the people. In fact, sitting, asking and listening were the main techniques of collecting data/information about the subject-matter of the study. Sitting implies the fact that the researcher is not in a hurry; he has patience as well as sympathy. Asking means that the researcher is a student; and listening suggests mutual respect and understanding. This was the methodological approach of the present researcher. A **census schedule** has been used for a household census and for collection of genealogical data. I preferred to have more open and informal discussions with all categories of people. I participated in the day-to-day activities of the people under investigation. These helped me develop cordial relationships with them. Some remarkable assistance was also provided by a few **key informants** in each village for testing the reliability of information. The census has helped me in several ways to

introduce myself to the households and to get a bird's eye-view about the study villages and the residents. The **genealogies** and **family-histories** have supplied me with many valuable facts, which were very essential to understand the nature of social mobility in the past. In addition to these, I attended many group meetings in both Sonapur and Rampur villages. In-depth **case studies** of leaders and some important persons belonging to the study villages were also collected. The accounts of eventful life of both formal and informal leaders were taken into serious consideration in this respect.

I have also used a **comparative method** in the present research. Comparative approach in social sciences, especially in economics, political science, sociology and anthropology are well-recognized. Comparison provides us with the instrument of making a distinction between the specific and the general aspects of the subject-matter in order to avoid absolute generalization. The comparative method draws upon our attention to similarities as well as dissimilarities of a certain phenomenon. Without a comparative approach, it is almost impossible to make a proper judgment of the relative importance of the causes of various situations. Thus, comparisons are not only inevitable, they are indispensable. According to Else Oeyen, "for most sociologists the very nature of sociological research is considered comparative and thinking in comparative terms is inherent in Sociology. Actually, no social phenomenon can be isolated and studied without comparing it to other social phenomenon. Sociologists engage actively in the process of comparative work whenever concepts are chosen, operationalized or fitted into theoretical structures" (1990:3-4). William van Schendel, citing certain examples, came to the conclusion that even in development activities (projects) success can only be judged in the long term by applying a comparative perspective [1992 : 33].

In the present study, two different types of comparisons of information have been made, viz. (i) comparison of the same type of data between the two study villages, and (ii) comparison of some basic data for a 10-year period, i.e. we took 1984 as the base-year and compared such data with those of 1994. The latter comparison has been made in the same village with a view to observe changes over time between the two villages.

I have deliberately spent a considerable amount of time with the leaders of the study villages and the adjacent ones in order to develop cordial relations with them. Thus, the leaders of the study villages, at least, apparently attempted to create an impression that they did not feel threatened by my presence, since I was not exclusively interested in leaders of the study villages. Nonetheless, the villagers on many occasions wanted to know the reasons for my coming over there. I tried my best to explain the fact that I was in their villages for purely academic purposes, with a view to write a book about the villages. Therefore, I needed to gain a deeper insight into the dynamics of the village life, including various problems faced by the villagers themselves. Even then I noticed that many individuals of the villages under study would not like to appreciate my honest intention. Some of them remained all through quite suspicious about my work. When I gradually began to know about land-related information and its ownership pattern, at least three household heads having land over 33 acres (100 bighas) appeared to develop suspicion about me. Two of them secretly inquired whether I was a government officer posted for collecting information about those who have landed property above the ceiling limit. Chowdhury (1985:104) and several other social researchers have faced the same difficulty, i.e. the suspicion of the land-rich people. One household head himself came to me several times and also sent his people to know about what I intended to do. He repeatedly stated the fact that in Rampur

village there was none who owned land over the ceiling limit. But ordinary villagers were unanimous that he owned more than 100 acres of land, registered in different names. With regard to the ownership of landed property the landless, marginal and small peasants were most sincere and co-operative, since they seem to have had no fear of losing anything. This appears to be quite natural.

As the villages were very large in size, I found it rather difficult to establish a close rapport⁵ with everyone of them with whom I intended to meet and talk. Besides this, in the initial period of my field work, especially in Rampur village, I had a peculiar experience that many residents of the said village had no prior contact with a Christian person. Perhaps, due to this I observed certain kind of hesitation on the part of some villagers to expose themselves to me; which, I think, is not at all unnatural in an underdeveloped agrarian country like Bangladesh.

I consider the fieldwork as an unique experience in my life. This is a very satisfying experience, both academically and personally. It has helped me develop a deep conviction that new learning and better understanding about people and social aspects are possible by living among the people, sharing their struggles and seeing things from their point of view. It has also helped me to have high regard and respect to the struggling people, especially the socio-economically marginalised groups, viz. the land-poor labourers, the ethnic groups and the poor women-folk of the rural Bangladesh.

5. Chowdhury, while explaining his fieldwork experiences, claims the difficulty of establishing rapport with the people as the "greatest problem in any field research in traditional Bangladesh" (1985:104).

Theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

The concept of power has many dimensions. Amitai Etzioni, in his work - *The Active Society: The Theory of Societal and Political Processes* - has expressed the concern of human beings regarding power in the following words-- "under most circumstances, societal goals and decisions not supported by at least some degree of some kind of power will not be implemented" (1968:314). This concern pinpoints the fact that power is an unavoidable and inseparable aspect of man's social existence.

In order to understand the concept of power more critically, I have here dealt with somewhat elaborately the theories of some important scholars, viz. **Karl Marx, Max Weber, Ralf Dahrendorf** and others. Their ideas of social stratification and classes have also been analysed with a view to comprehend their concepts, theories and the sources of power.

Karl Marx : Regarding the concept of power Marx takes a very objective stand from the viewpoint of class and considers political power as the organized power of the dominant class (the upper class) for oppressing the other (the bottom). In Marx's view, social order exists because the dominant class is able to maintain it through its power over the lower classes. The dominant class is an organized and oppressive force while the power of the lower class is in a dormant state and as such it is still an oppressed social category. Marx focuses on both the organized [or manifest] and the unorganized [or latent] group interests to understand the more fundamental aspects of social stratification and power. He considers class struggles [conflicts] of these two major classes as the moving force in history. In fact, Marx looks at social classes in terms of conflicts and class consciousness with respect to the organization of production. According to him -- "the

organization of production provides the necessary but not a sufficient basis for the existence of social classes. Repeated conflicts over economic rewards, ready communication of ideas between members of a class, the growth of class consciousness and the growing dissatisfaction with exploitation" (Bendix and Lipset 1954:30) were also necessary prerequisites for the emergence of a social class. The root of class conflicts has been based on different class interests. The Marxian theory suggests that the change in the lower class through organizing the unorganized and exploited groups for new relations of production, leads to more total or revolutionary social change, i.e. collective ownership of the means of production. Marx's theory of social change is mainly about capitalist societies, and as such it is a single class or economic dimension approach [Kerbo 1983 : 100-110].

I have found the above-mentioned Marxian analysis quite useful in the present study because the households of both Rampur and Sonapur villages are classified as owner and non-owner of the means of production. Land is the principal means of production in my study villages. Therefore, the people living in the villages have been categorized on the basis of ownership and non-ownership of land. However, the implicit weakness of Marxian theory seems to be the assumption that the economic conflicts are the only conflicts among people or social groups. Nevertheless, there have been some recent work by Marxian theorists who have made a sustained attempt to minimize Marx's apparent non-consideration of the function of the state in capitalist societies by applying Weber's insights.⁶

6. Eril O. Wright and Luca Perrone [1977] in their works - *Marxian Class and Income Inequality* and C. Wright Mills in his writing - *The Marxists* have expressed similar views.

Max Weber : The widely accepted definition of power seems to be provided by Max Weber. He has defined power as **"the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests"** (1947 :152). By this definition Weber actually indicates that for a man or a group of men, power is meant as the chance to realize his or their own will in actions within a community even if others oppose in doing it, while participating in the action. Thus, in the final analysis, it simply means that power is the ability to compel (through force, rewards or other means) another individual or group to do what the power-holder wants, although it goes against the interests of other persons or a group.

It may be argued, as has been done by Atiur Rahman (1981), a well-known social researcher of Bangladesh, that the Weberian concept of power is quite appropriate in the context of a developing country like Bangladesh. In such a context, 'groups' will of the dominating ones are realized even without the resistance of others, primarily due to the fact that the others [masses] are either (a) not in a position to participate in the community activities or (b) are not properly organized to put up any resistance.

As a matter of fact, Weber's concept of power is actually multi- dimensional, which is expressed in his triadic notions of class, status, and party in his analysis of social stratification. Weber appears to be more concerned with what existed in a society, rather than attempting to understand what a society could be [in contrast to Marx's attempt to perceive how a society is being changed for the better]. Hence, Weber maintains that a social scientist's main task is to understand human societies without any value-judgment. Weber was also aware of the limitations of the one-dimensional [historical-material]

approach of Marx. He observes that different groups' or individuals' interests, viz. economic or material, social, political, etc. might form the basis of conflict-relationship in human societies.

However, Weber did not fail to understand that 'property' and 'lack of property' are basic aspects of all class situations which are determined by market forces. According to Weber, classes are not communities. But it is the economic interest which creates class. And an economic interest is involved in the existence of markets (Weber 1948 : 181-183). Weber's definition of class is also useful in order to understand the class hierarchy of the study villages. Classes of Rampur and Sonapur are based on the ownership and non-ownership of property. The principal form of property in both the villages is land, which is also found as the most unevenly distributed. The landowners' own property (land) and the landless or the land-poor do not. Thus, the concept of class as provided by Weber is considered more useful in the analysis of class structures in both Rampur and Sonapur villages.

Weber's conception of status is also pertinent in order to observe scientifically the status and caste relationships in both the villages. It is quite interesting to note that the presence of social status group and non-status group is relatively very observable in the Rampur village, while it is not clearly visible in the Sonapur village. There are Muslim status groups in Rampur village. The life style of the *Khandans* (landed aristocrats) is quite different from that of the *Kamlas* (landless workers). The dimension of party or political power is quite relevant for the present study. Weber noted that political parties live in a house of power and their actions are oriented towards the acquisition of social power, i.e., influencing community activities for whatever their goal may be. The most important aspect of this dimension of power lies in the bureaucratic or rational-legal form of organization. In

both the study villages political parties are in action to achieve their political gains. A separate section on the styles of village politics has been added to the present study to understand it more critically and thoroughly.

In fact, it is here where Weber appears to stress on the political dimension of power [party] over the other two. The bureaucratic form of organization which is concomitant with the industrial societies, especially in the West, refers to the means of dominance of one group over others.

Ralf Dahrendorf : Dahrendorf draws together strong points from both Marx and Weber and builds-up his theory. He appears to accept Marx's dichotomy class model, but altogether rejects the idea that revolution would lead to class conflict. Here Dahrendorf agrees with Weber that although class conflict is inevitable in an organized society; but conflict of interest is not always seen only in the economic aspect of social life.

He also disagrees with Marx in another point. According to Dahrendorf, in industrial societies the upper class no longer controls the means of production; rather, the non-owning managers control the economy. Hence, control of the means of production is being separated from its ownership. It is, therefore, clear that Dahrendorf does not like to locate the basis of class conflict in economic interests alone, as defined by Marx. Rather, by using Weber's insight Dahrendorf observes that societies have some form of social organizations, which he calls 'imperatively co-ordinated associations' [Dahrendorf 1959 :165-168]. These associations are like bureaucratic organizations centred around major tasks or occupations [business, government departments, labour unions, educational institutions, charitable organizations, etc.] in the society. Such associations have organized social structures and differing roles or positions which are being occupied by certain

individuals. Individual and group interests are structured by their respective relationships to these associations. Dahrendorf recognizes the fact that all kinds of individual and group interests exist in an association; but the main point is that the means to satisfying these interests are related to authority-positions within the 'imperatively co-ordinated association'.

This means that those who hold top positions in the association might have more power to get what they wanted, while the subordinate class found it in their interests to challenge the status quo that assign them low positions and low rewards [Dahrendorf 1959 : 176]⁷. Each such position represents a different set of interests in relation to the 'authority' or 'lack of authority' position. Thus, Dahrendorf's class categories are being measured in terms of degrees of authority. These interests are only latent kept in common [a top versus a bottom member] until they become recognized and active.

According to Dahrendorf's conflict theory, it is also important to recognize that an individual may have positions in many of these associations at the same time. Moreover, in some nations economic associations are primary, while in others political, religious, military, environmental, etc. are more important in the overall structures.

Atiur Rahman and others Rahman and a few others who have made their intensive research work on the rural power relations of Bangladesh, have more or less used the Weberian concept in their analysis. Rahman, however, attempts to understand the relevance of the Weberian concept of power in

7. Herold Kerbo, in his book - *Social Stratification and Inequality : Class Conflicts in the United States* - has dealt with quite elaborately on Dahrendorf's works (1983 : 149 - 154).

Bangladesh as a developing country, where exceptions of some connotations of the concept have to be accepted. He has stated that “here ‘groups’ will of the dominating ones were realized even without the resistance of the others who were either [i] not in a position to participate in the community actions or [ii] were not properly organized to put up such resistance” [1981:8]. It is clear from the above propositions that the rural masses are not effectively involved in community actions as part of the power element and, moreover, the masses are not effectively organized to create necessary resistance to the existing power structure. Rahman’s later work on the impact of the *Grameen Bank* on the rural power structure of Bangladesh demonstrates the fact that the improvement of material power [ownership] of the rural grass-roots enables them to build up COUNTERVAILING POWER⁸ which can put up a challenge to the traditional power structure. Although revolutionary changes cannot be expected from such a countervailing power, there remains a huge potential to bring about certain radical changes by organizing the masses as an effective force. In another study, Rahman, while making an attempt to critically examine 44 other studies regarding social stratification and power concludes- “only the development of countervailing power through organizational efforts aiming at mobilizing the rural poor can reverse this [present] trend. As revealed in the above review, the growth of countervailing power is not significant enough to bring in structural changes in power relations” [1989b:90]. Father Timm suggests a new dimension to the concept of countervailing power, i.e. a ‘countervailing moral force’, similar to Gandhi’s Satyagraha [moral force] movement, which is already beginning to manifest itself and to challenge the amoral

8. Rahman is one of the important proponents of this concept. His writings on power structure suggest the fact that organisations of the people belonging to the bottom categories work as a force for their own interest. Rahman’s writings of 1981, 1987 and 1989 especially focus on the concept of countervailing power.

power of the prevailing power structure in the country " [1983:61]. In his study, Timm remarks that the rural poor are the "victims of their own insignificance, not in numbers but in terms of power" [ibid:60]. To create this countervailing moral force Timm maintains that a 'true development approach' based on the principles of 'social justice' and an 'option for the poor' has to be followed.

It is, therefore, clear from Rahman and Timm's views that an absolute power (control) by the holder(s) is not desirable and thus they recommend a countervailing power of the non-powerholders (masses). This is to help bring a necessary balance, which can create an accountability-relationship. The present study examines the nature and role of the countervailing power of the masses and how this power helps build up such an accountability-relationship between the leaders and the masses.

At this stage, it may be useful to look at a few other important explanations of power as developed by some social scientists. Mills [1956], in his study- *The Power Elite* - maintains that there is a power elite which controls the country for its own interests. While analyzing power Mills makes it not as a faculty for performance of function, rather exclusively as a faculty for getting what one group, the holders of power, wants by preventing another group, the out of power, from getting what it needs. Mills sees people as primarily striving for power and material wealth for personal interests [1956 : 52-56]. Bertrand Russell has made sociologically valuable contributions by analyzing power relations in a social system. He looks into the infinite desires of man, the primary of which is the desire for power and glory. In his book - *Power : A New Social Analysis* - Russell locates in power the key to social dynamics, as Marx has found it in wealth [1938 :11]. To Russell, the fundamental concept in social sciences is power. He understands power as the means for influencing

individuals and thereby establish control over material wealth. The major concern of political elite and parties is the struggle for power at individual and organizational levels. Thus, following the above concept of power, the people of any study area may hierarchically be classified as the power-wielders and the rest. In this connection, it may be relevant to take into consideration the view of Nicholas that the "control over resources, whether human or material" [1966:52] is primarily responsible for attaining power among the people.

Chowdhury [1978] in his study of **Meherpur** village in Dhaka District, observes that the formal power in Meherpur centres around the Union *Parishad*. The Union *Parishad* is institutionalized as the legitimate organ of power. The members of the said *Parishad* are usually the economic and administrative elite of rural areas, who are quite often considered as the bridge between the central authority and the masses. They are also regarded as 'local agents of change' [Sobhan 1968:9-10] and as 'rural conglomerates' [Gupta 1970:171]. Rahman in - *Rural Power Structure: A Study of Local Level Leaders in Bangladesh* - refers to these grass-root leaders who constitute the base of the overall power structure and they are called as 'contactors' and 'contractors' by the national elite [1981:4]. However, other village studies of Bangladesh suggest the fact that the informal rural power structure has to be taken into consideration. By informal rural power structure they mean village *matbars/ prodhans/ mondals* [varying from region to region], who run the *Samaj* [society]. Fernando [1973] observes that the national elite normally depend on the rural power groups for the leaders' abilities and skills to organise others. All political parties, in general, and the ruling class, in particular, try to recruit selective rural members who might be able to serve their vested interests and thus maintain their chain of command and influence. Wood [1978] in his anthropological study of a village in Comilla District

observes that power originates from both men and materials. In the rural setting, the persons who wish to earn the loyalty of the poor people to a larger extent have to distribute favours through credit support, *barga* land, etc. and thereby they could easily become powerful.

Besides the above, the classical functionalist theorists like Staint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and Emile Durkheim, as well as the modern functionalist theorists like Talcott Parsons, have considered morality to be the major factor which contributes to maintain the social order and work as a source of power. For Durkheim, the problems of modern societies are moral, not material. Problems of alienation, exploitation, structural inequalities or class conflicts are due "to the state of our morality" (Durkheim 1962:247). Thus, the functionalist theorists refer to the movement from 'mechanical solidarity' to 'organic solidarity' through occupational organizations or guilds in industrial societies. Such 'coalitions' act as a 'moral community' to achieve power to work for the benefit of the members concerned.

Summing up the above-mentioned empirical and theoretical studies, it may be said that the investigators have tried to analyze the concept of power in various ways. Here I have made an over-view of the relevant concepts for theoretical framework of the present study. It is clear from the above theoretical discussion that in a society people have conflicting interests and for satisfying such interests power is being exercised mostly by those who are at the top of the class hierarchy. In other words, by using power, control of people and material resources are being ensured. What is now emerging strongly is that it is also necessary to establish an accountability-relationship between the leaders and the masses by building up a countervailing power of the masses [the bottom]. In a democratic society, the process of

accountability-relationship between the holders of power and the masses prevents the power-holders from becoming the absolute holders of power or dictatorial. Keeping this view in mind, I have made a modest attempt to investigate the fact of accountability-relationship in my study, which I think is quite a realistic proposition and thereby it adds an important connotation to the Weberian concept of power relations. In addition, moral principles and values can also play an important role in regard to the use of power for the betterment of people's lives and conditions.

Review of Literature

In 1971, Bangladesh achieved its independent political identity of sovereign nationhood, while her people have a history of about 2,300 years. Among many factors responsible for today's endemic poverty of the vast majority of population is that the land was conquered and ruled by foreign powers for centuries one after another. The colonial foreign rulers and traders not only captured the land, but also ruined the economy. While the colonial rulers were economically developed, this land was pushed backward, destroying local and indigenous trades, industries and institutions. Hartmann and Boyce [1983] in their study of **Kanti**, a village in Rangpur District, observe the legacy of Bangladesh's colonial history. While depicting this region as a supplier of agricultural raw materials [muslin, indigo, jute, etc.] for the world market, they noticed that local industries had withered away and food production became gradually stagnated. They remarked --"ironically, the profits from the lucrative trade in Bengali textiles helped to finance Britain's industrial revolution... various and innumerable were the methods of oppressing the poor weavers ... such as by fines, imprisonment, floggings, forcing bonds from them, etc. Thus the country not only did not develop, it

actually remained underdeveloped" [Hartmann and Boyce 1983 : 28]. Prior to the British rule, other European rulers and traders, such as the Dutch and the Portuguese, occupied parts of this land. Similarly, before the Europeans - the Pathans and the Mughal prior to the Buddhist and the Hindu rulers also exploited the land of Bengal for more than five centuries. The major socio-structural element of the British colonial rule introduced in the Bengal society was the system of private land ownership. There is almost a general agreement among the scholars that private ownership in land did not exist in the western sense of the term in the sub-continent as a whole before the advent of British rule. The **Permanent Land Settlement Act of 1793** vested land ownership upon the *Zamindars* [who were required to pay a yearly tax to the British rulers] in Bengal and as such land became a commodity which could be bought and sold. As a result, various social categories of absentee landlords and intermediaries of different denominations arose between the *Zamindar* and the actual tillers of the soil. Abdullah, in his research work, has mentioned as many as 50 different such intermediaries-- to name a few-- *talukdars, patnidars, jotedars, gantidars, raiyots*, etc. [1976: 69]. Mukherjee, based on his field studies of *Six Villages of Bengal*, has identified three distinct classes in agrarian society, viz. Class I [landholders], Class II [self-sufficient peasantry] and Class III [agricultural labourers and sharecroppers]. Mukherjee has observed that it was the Class II only which existed in rural production relations in Bengal during the pre-British period and the introduction of the Permanent Settlement in 1793 made possible the emergence of Classes I and III [1971 : 154-155]. Similarly, Bertocci [1970] also refers to a form of stratification in rural Bangladesh society which had its roots in the colonial rule. The colonial administration became responsible for making numerous divisions among people based on caste and creed. Their policies led to the creation of different hierarchies of landed interests and

thus differentiated rural people. As the British made their original tax assessment so high that many estates were soon sold to pay arrears, land rapidly changed hands— from the old Muslim aristocracy to a rising class of Hindu merchants. But with the creation of Pakistan in 1947 many Hindu *Zamindars* migrated to India. In 1950 the *Zamindari* system came to an end and the government became the biggest *Zamindar*, instead of numerous Private Estate holders.

However, the abolition of the *Zamindari* system in 1950 led to a change of land ownership in East Bengal when a new rural landed elite, predominantly Muslim, arose. Islam [1974] observes that the Permanent Settlement of 1793 had really created economic bases for the emergence of traditional leadership in rural Bengal. The findings of several field studies suggest the fact that even after the abolition of the *Zamindari* system in 1950, inequality among social classes in the rural areas has further increased over time and the concentration of land in the hands of a few households has become a rule. The empirical studies based on different sample sizes indicate the extent of land concentration and social inequalities in the agrarian structure of Bangladesh, which is shown below :

Table - 1.1
Land ownership and mobility in landholding

Fractile Group	1960	1968	1974	1977	1978
Bottom 60 %	25	24	19	11	9
Middle 30 %	39	40	43	39	39
Top 10 %	36	36	38	50	52

Source : S.R. Osmani and Atiur Rahman 'A Study of Income Distribution in Bangladesh' [mimeo], BIDS, 1981: 24, Table 9.

Table-1.1 indicates that the top 10 % of households have been gaining land consistently and the size of their holdings continues to grow larger in the 1970's, while the bottom 60% had been losing their land ownership increasingly. Moreover, the high growth of population in a situation of acute concentration of land means an increase in the extent of landlessness.

It is well-understood that land in a rural society like Bangladesh is the major source of people's livelihood and power. Dr. Pramanik Md. Matiur Rahman in a recent study- *Poverty Issues In Rural Bangladesh*- has identified the causes of mobility in landholding between two successive generations. The study has demonstrated the fact that purchase of land by savings from salary, business and agriculture has an upward mobility which accounted for 81.48%, followed by mortgage [11.11%] and gift from father-in-law [7.41%].

Besides this, certain changes have been brought about because of various Local Government and Administrative Acts. viz, *Chaukidari Panchayats* of 1870, Village Self-Government of 1919, Basic Democracy in Pakistan in 1959, *Gram Sarker* of 1982, Upazila System of 1986, etc. All these Acts led to some changes in the agrarian structure of Bangladesh, including its rural power relations and leadership pattern.

Sen, in his book, *Political Elite in Bangladesh*, has made a macro-level study to examine the structure and forms of the political leadership and power politics of the erstwhile East Pakistan and independent Bangladesh during the period from 1947-82. He identifies the power elite as those who are presently 'in power' and those who are 'out of office' [1986: 2]. According to him, they have emerged from the same homogeneous middle and upper class families, but subsequently they are divided in political views. In his study, Sen hardly observes any basic difference between the various sections of political elite in Bangladesh as far as their educational and occupational background is concerned. Their origins are to be traced in the Jotedar and similar social categories and the self-sufficient-owner-cultivating families.

It is, however, true for all political elite that their primary concern is struggle for power both at individual and organizational levels. In the absence of normal political functions in Bangladesh [except for only a few years], elite conflicts have become more manifest and the number of political factions and groups has further multiplied. The ideological cleavages as well as personality clashes among the political groups are also responsible for elite conflicts at national level and similar conflicts are being observed to some extent, at the village level. In most of the semi-micro and fully micro-level village studies, one of the major findings is that the national elite tend to use the 'grassroot leaders' (Rahman 1981: 4) in order to mobilize the rural masses in Bangladesh.

Islam [1974], in his anthropological study of village (pseudo-named)-**Badarpur** - in Narayanganj District, observes that the introduction of Local Government, the Union *Parishad* by the Central Government of Pakistan under the title: 'Basic Democracy' had helped develop a group of formal local-level leaders. It is further noted by him that, although the Local Government Act gave legitimacy to these formal leaders, their sphere of influence could not surpass that of the traditional rural leaders. These formal leaders who were elected in the local bodies were mostly recruited from the informal power structure. They were themselves *matbars* or were close relations of them. Islam calls them as emerging leaders. Bertocci's village study in Bangladesh refers to a class of land-based rural gentry which emerged as by-products of the colonial land policy. This landed gentry enjoyed superior social status. Bertocci suggests that when high status and large landownership correspond there emerges a base for power [1970:45-49]. Chowdhury [1978] in his study of Meherpur village confirms this fact. In Meherpur, power was enjoyed by those families who had both status and

wealth. Chowdhury calls them *Khandan* families. These families had control over both human and material resources through which they had emerged as rural political power-wielders. In their research work, Arens and Beurden [1977], a Dutch couple, after a painstaking field work in *Jhagrapur*, in Kushtia District observe that the authority of the old [traditional] leaders of influential lineage increasingly came under greater pressure due to the rise of young leaders who were mainly the educated members of wealthy families. They were trying to assert themselves in the leadership roles. These emerging leaders also had physical force at their disposal. However, these Dutch researchers did not fail to notice the fact that economic and physical strength were not enough for acquiring power. An influential lineage and education are equally necessary. The educated youths who had links with political parties could influence local administration. Hence, Arens and Beurden claim that the educated and politically conscious youths were the potential powerholders of the village. As such they could only put an effective challenge to the traditional powerholders. In his study of the villages named - **Dhononjohpara and Gopalhati** - of Rajshahi District, Karim [1987] has observed certain changes in leadership pattern. This was due to the decline of traditional institutions in the village where modern institutions supported by the state are gradually getting prominence. He refers to the fact that the real political power of the *Samaj* is usually demonstrated in settling village disputes. This traditional function of the *Samaj* has been taken over by the village court, established with the *Union Parishad*, the chairman of which acts as its judge. It has begun to serially undermine the power and privileged position of the *Samaj*. Karim also observes that the educated youths, emerging from influential lineage, are coming forward to occupy formal leadership positions. It is higher education which has provided a new scope to the young members of the traditional lineage in getting an access to the modern institutions of the

rural areas in Bangladesh. However, Karim sees no basic change taken place in the rural power structure. Wood [1978], in his anthropological study on the rural power relations in village *Bondokgram* in Comilla District, observes that a new generation of powerholders is emerging in the rural areas by virtue of their access to trade, irrigation, construction and other state-sponsored activities. Since these newly-emerged powerholders are generally the sons and close relations of traditional *Sardars* they do not intend to challenge the traditional leadership from which they emerge. In this connection, the findings of Rahman's latest study, based on 50 selected *matbars* from six different *Thanas*, may be more significant. This study shows that the rural power structure normally centres around the pattern of transition of power from informal to formal structures [Rahman 1989b:74]. Rahman also notices the fact that the importance of agriculture as the principal occupation of the powerholders has been declining. Many of the rural leaders [27%], in his study villages, have secondary occupations along with agriculture. Business is gradually emerging as the next most important primary occupation [28%]. Among the rural leaders, already 47% pursue business as their secondary occupation [Rahman 1989b:75]. Based on the above review of literature, the following observations may be made about the changing pattern of rural leadership in Bangladesh:

- [a] Although some new faces are coming up in the leadership role of both informal and formal institutions, they belong to the traditionally wealthy families. Hence, no major change in the rural power structure is expected.
- [b] The emerging powerholders have more than one source of income.
- [c] In general terms, it may be said that the proportion of non-agricultural income has been increasing, especially among the young leaders.

[d] The village studies of Blair [1978], Karim[1987] and a few others refer to the contributions of the **State** in the formation of a particular type of rural power structure. It is clear from their studies that the government have been consciously pursuing a policy of supporting the rich peasantry for its own class interests. Rahman regards this phenomenon as 'generous spoon-feeding' [1989b:37].

[e] It is interesting to note that during the post-independence period in Bangladesh, there is a growing concern about the acute problems of increasing poverty, powerlessness and vulnerability of the rural masses. With a view to respond to this concern a growing number of supportive agencies voluntarily have come forward to work with the rural poor and have taken up some experimental schemes for developing the countervailing power of the poor, who may be called a 'critical mass'⁹ through using a non-formal education approach. Therefore, the supportive agencies have adopted a kind of educational process of empowerment in **THOUGHT, ARTICULATION and ORGANIZATION BUILDING**, which imply:

9. **Critical Mass** : Defined by Paulo Freire in *Paedagogy of the Oppressed*, Seawry Press, N.Y. 1970. Freire suggested this countervailing power as a nucleus of mass who have developed **Critical Consciousness** through the adult education learning to perceive social, economic and political contradictions and to take actions—"critical interventions" [ibid: 68]— against the oppressive elements of reality. Every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he/she may be, is capable of looking critically at his/her world in a dialogical encounter with others. This dialogical encounter of learning requires an intensive faith in men, faith in their power to make and remake the reality for being more human. Faith in men is an a priori requirement for dialogue. This, again, then requires a **profound love and commitment for men and for the world** [ibid: 78]. The process finally makes the critical mass "**dialogical men**" [ibid: 79], who first "become" more human beings [or resourceful people] and then are capable to appropriate or to have resources for themselves. The "dialogical men" in their relations with reality produce not only material goods, but also make required social institutions, systems, ideas and concepts [ibid: 91]. **Organization building** serves the ends of this education process [ibid:185] and organization building is a highly educational process in which leaders and the masses together experience true authority, power and freedom. Organization builds direct links of unity, cooperation and communion of people. In an organization, the leaders and the people learn both the process of dialogue and the use of power.

That countervailing force needs to use the ability to THINK freely, by themselves and for themselves;

That countervailing force needs to be ARTICULATED and to be able to express itself freely, fearlessly, openly, timely and in the proper forums and forms; and

That countervailing force needs to build up ORGANIZATIONAL strength to work for its class-interests.

The above process follows the psycho-social contrast of adult education and dialogical method of Paulo Freire of Brazil to organize a nuclear mass with critical consciousness. Faith in people and a profound love and commitment for them and for the world are the essential elements of the method. It is not like the present 'banking' concept of education, in which students are only receiving, filing and storing, as if the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing. Critical consciousness helps people perceive contradictions in their society, their causes and take 'critical interventions' against the oppressive elements of social reality. The process provides priority to people 'to be' more human; rather than 'to have' more material resources. That is, people first 'become' resourceful or capable, so that they can appropriate/have resources for themselves. Organization building serves the purposes of this educational process, in which leaders and the masses would be able to develop direct mutual links of unity and co-operation, and experience of both the process of dialogue and the use of power.

While defining the role of the supportive agencies in regard to help organize countervailing force - *The NGO Section in Bangladesh : A Task Force Report*- which is in line with what Rahman [1989:90] suggests: "In fact, the role of Development NGOs is primarily that of a catalyst making

sustained interventions to promote self-directing, self-financing, locally accountable institutions and initiating the process of **people-centred development** at the grassroot " [1992: i-ii]. It is estimated that BRDB, *Grameen Bank*, & PVDOs together have roughly organized the bottom 2,000,000 families [one-tenth of the total families] scattered throughout the country. This grassroot mobilization is contributing to and is paving the way towards a transition to a new orientation of effective democratic processes, and institutions at the grassroots. It aims at building an alternative organizational leadership pattern of the poor. Based on the experiences of the experimental schemes of the PVDOs of Asia, micro-level studies and evaluations, Timm [1992], Brown and Korten [1989] and others have identified the following criteria of the countervailing power:

- A self-reliant organization which must not depend on outside initiative and funding;
- A mutual benefit association that would exist to serve its members;
- A democratic structure that might provide members with ultimate authority over its leaders;
- A self-aware group of members with a habit of regular savings, capable of using its own resources and generating projects to create new wealth for themselves. Any external funding is to be primarily used for capability development of concerned members;
- An organization being aware of basic human rights must undertake actions for social justice in order to safe-guard the interests of its members;
- An organization that could be capable of acquiring government and local level resources and services; and
- A self-conscious group of members who would always strive to acquire basic literacy.

In fine, it may be said that the above review of literature on rural power structure fairly clarifies as well as justifies the theoretical and conceptual framework of the present study. Since the rural masses of Bangladesh are primarily classified on the basis of land ownership, this is at the same time a fundamental source of their livelihood and power. The households belonging to the land owning class [class I], who are on the top of the class structure, form the 'grassroot leadership' with whom the national elites (leaders) establish a close connection for their political gains. The social status of the rural population normally depends on one's control over material and human resources. The literature-review also testifies to the fact that there is a gradual transformation in the rural power structure, i.e. from informal to formal structures. A changing trend in the power structure is quite noticeable when the rural masses, the non-powerholders, are mobilized for socio-economic institution-building purposes.

The present work has been divided into six chapters. Chapter-1 provides introduction, propositions, methods, theoretical and conceptual framework and review of literature particularly relevant to the present study. Chapter-2 tries to put forward an over-view of the villages under study with their socio-economic profile. The traditional power structure of Rampur and its recent changes have been discussed in Chapter-3. Chapter-4 deals with the emerging leadership pattern of Sonapur and the impact of interventions of the supportive agencies in this regard. The sources of power in the villages under study and their relations with the wider society have been pointed out in Chapter-5. And finally, Chapter-6 presents certain conclusions about the findings of the present study.

CHAPTER - 2 : THE VILLAGES UNDER STUDY : SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

The villages under study fall within the 'Barind' Tract of Rajshahi Division. 'Barind' is a Persian word. It means elevated land or hills. Since the land in the main Tract is elevated, it may be assumed that the name was derived for this reason. Many people of the area believe the mythology that Indra, god of the rains, gives the order or 'Bar' for rains in the hard red soil of the Barind. Without the orders of Indra there is no rain on this vast land. So, 'Bar' and 'Indra' were combined to be 'Barindra' (Hussain 1991:14). It is often said that the Tract is one of the four neglected zones of Bangladesh. The other three are -- the saline coastal belt, the extensive *char* lands contiguous to the great rivers, and the *haor* basins of the northeast. It seems to be a traditional belief among the Tract people that the Barind was forgotten when the Creator drew up His plans for earthly abundance.

Physical features and socio-historical background

The Barind Tract overlaps Bangladesh [70%] and the Malda District of India [30%]. In Bangladesh, the Tract covers 2.1 million acres, spread over three sub-zones: [i] dissected Barind [high and dry zones of the northwest] with undulating topography and terraced rice fields on graduated slopes, [ii] the level Barind [east part] and [iii] the northeast terrain (Hamid and Hunt 1987 : 1-7)¹. The villages under the present study are located in the level Barind Tract, which cover the plain portions of Naogaon-Bogra Districts and the eastern central part of Sadar *Thana* in the district of Dinajpur. There is less rainfall in the Barind areas in comparison to other parts.

1. Hamid and Hunt's study on *Barind* is up to now a basic research natures/ environment's effects on people's life and livelihood.

Maximum rainfall occurs between June and September. Water resources in the area are also scanty. Surface water resources are ponds, ditches, *kharies* [drainage channels] and only a few low lying areas (*beels*). Extreme scarcity of water, even drinking water, continues from winter till the beginning of the Monsoon rainfall. Temperatures in the Barind are also most extreme for Bangladesh.

Soils in the Barind Tract are usually classified as infertile to moderately fertile; thus this area is not favourable for crop production. A single rain-fed transplanted amon rice crop is the dominant land use pattern of the region. Vegetation is very scarce and even homesteads contain few trees. The homesteads are surrounded by clustered or scattered trees. Trees are to be found on the field bunds, on pond banks and along the roads. The major trees are *aam*, *jam*, *neem*, *babla*, *koroi*, *simul*, *kool*, etc.

A majority of farmers (both owners and tenants) possess cattle and (a few households) buffaloes for draft purposes, ranging between one to several pairs, depending on the area being cultivated. The number of households with goats, poultry and birds is also significant. Ducks are usually found where ponds exist. Renting land and sharing of livestock are being practised.

Available ethnological studies show that the original inhabitants of the Barind were Astrics, Nishad, Putna, Mokta, Santals, Oraos, etc. They were non- Aryans. The Aryans came much later and were considered as outsiders by the original inhabitants. Meharab Ali,² a well-known historian on the Barind, claims that the blood and flesh of Bangalis is an

2. Meharab Ali has written 34 historical and anthropological books on the different aspects of the Barind.

admixture of many human groups. This has become a blessing as well as curse at the same time. Ali asserts that when people's blood originates from many sources it helps them develop physical structures, both of males and females, to be strong and attractive, but in heart to be confused and cunning (1988 : 1-13).

The absence of any written documents about the present study villages, as well as adjacent areas, has made my task of making a socio-economic profile more difficult. However, the views of elders, leaders and household heads of both study and adjacent villages are immensely helpful. The villages are apparently appeared to be very old and their original settlers were Hindus. The Sonapur village was granted to the forefathers of the present villagers from the Dimla *Zamindari* Estate of Sorebindra Nath Roy, who was subordinate to the Rangpur Maharaja.

The Muslims of the village were the *khadims* of the *Zamindar* and as such they were given a part of the village for settlement. Similar was the case for Rampur village. *Zamindar* Mathuranath granted Rampur and portions of adjacent villages to four families, viz. Talukdars [two], Chowdhury and Basak families for revenue collection. Most of the residents claim that the village was named after Mathuranath. The present inhabitants are largely the off-spring of those four families; but some outsiders subsequently settled down there.

The brick-made old buildings and houses of the Talukdar and Chowdhury families of Rampur village still bear testimony to the subordinate *Zamindari* system through which they are ascribed to their present social status. The situation is now fast changing and the original traditional families are declining. Both Rampur and Sonapur are situated on the bank of small

tributaries of the rivers *Jamuna* and *Atrai*, respectively. Once considered as a blessing for agriculture, trade and commerce, the tributaries have now become a curse for the villagers. They face a severe flood almost every monsoon because of siltation of their beds and the Farakka Barrage built on the river Ganges in the Indian territory. During the non-monsoon period [about 10 months of the year] they remain dry and dusty. The Dinajpur village experienced four unusual flash floods in the last ten years, in each of which crops as well as about two-thirds of the houses [mostly clay & thatch made] have been washed away. The landless and marginal peasants are always the worst victims. As a matter of fact, recurring natural calamities [drought and flash flood] affect human lives and properties most parts of the northern districts in the country, for which the affected people are found always busy re-building and starting anew their dwellings. Only the poor peasants can realize the extremity of such sorrows and pains in their hearts. It is to be noted here that the situation for all the adjacent villages is similar. Having lived with them, I have sincerely observed how strong are the people's determination and the will to live on, hoping and trying to change their lot a little every day.

Population, settlement pattern and community structure

While tracing the history of settlement of the villages, elders and household heads are able to identify 32 and 77 families, mostly Muslims, who came from outside to settle in Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively. And almost an equal number of families, mostly Hindus, left the villages in the wake of partition of India and creation of Pakistan in 1947. The household heads who were born outside the study villages also correspond to the above numbers. Table-2.1 below shows that there are at

present 508 [Rampur 198 and Sonapur 310] households in the study villages, with 2595 [Rampur 997 and Sonapur 1598] residents settled scatteredly in 13 different *Paras* [neighbourhoods]. The male-female ratio of the residents is male 52.3% [Rampur 52.9% and Sonapur 51.9%] and female 47.7% [Rampur 47.1% and Sonapur 48.1%]. The *Paras* are separated from one another by narrow mud lanes and as such the dwellings are in a clustered form in every *Para*.

Table - 2.1

Households and population by *Para*

<i>Paras</i>	Muslims		Hindus		Ethnic Group		Total	
	H.Holds	Pop.	H. Holds	Pop.	H. Holds	Pop.	H. Hold	Pop.
Rampur Village :								
1. Talukdar <i>Para</i>	14	69	-	-	-	-	14	69
2. Chowdhury "	69	346	1	5	-	-	70	351
3. Bashak "	17	103	11	72	-	-	28	175
4. Kalani "	35	190	-	-	-	-	35	190
5. Khan "	33	134	5	17	-	-	38	151
6. Hari "	-	-	13	61	-	-	13	61
Sonapur Village :								
7. Shamisha <i>Para</i>	53	277	-	-	-	-	53	277
8. Modi "	-	-	28	140	-	-	28	140
9. Daktar "	44	210	14	70	-	-	58	280
10. Gual "	30	123	45	227	-	-	75	350
11. Motasaha "	32	201	-	-	-	-	32	201
12. Bania "	2	10	43	248	-	-	45	259
13. Moshuhar "	-	-	-	-	19	91	19	91
Total	329	1663	160	841	19	91	5 08	2595
% and average "	64.8	5.05	31.5	5.3	3.7	4.8	1 00	5.1

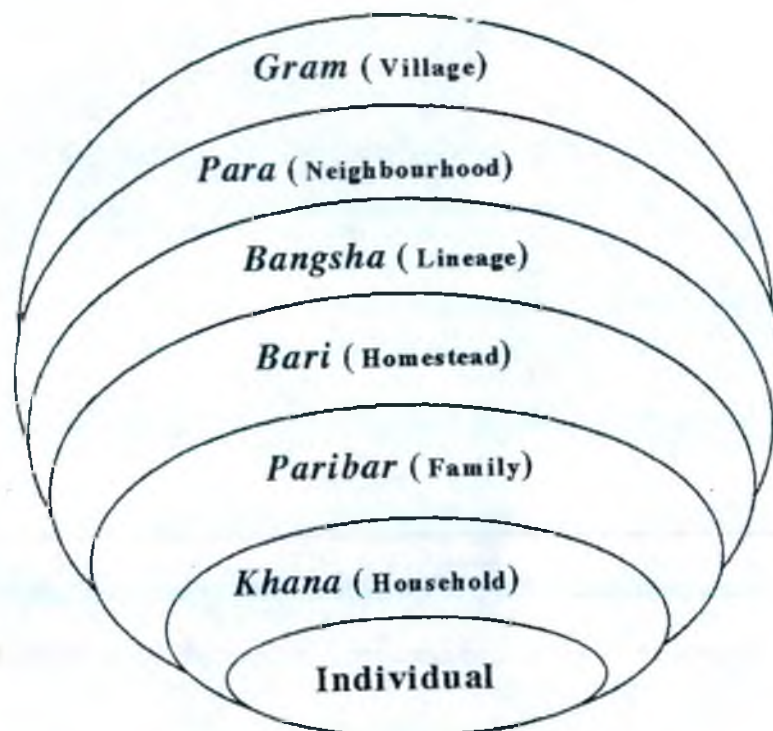
[According to the household census of the present study there are 527 male and 470 female population in Rampur village, while in Sonapur 830 male and 768 female.]

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The *Paras* in the study villages are mainly divided according to their physical features that characterize a village and, therefore, they lack any

distinct legal boundary lines. Yet the *Paras* possess peculiar socio-anthropological importance in almost all local affairs. I have taken the liberty to revise the chart of hierarchical stages of a village developed by Barman (1988). In the Barman's chart, I have incorporated family (*paribar*) separately, as household (*khana*) takes a separate role from that of family. The following chart draws the nature of hierarchical stages of the social structure that exists in the rural Bangladesh from the individual level to the village shown at large. This structure refer to the placement and position of individuals and of groups in regard to the systems of obligation-relations within the structure.

Chart- 1
Organic structure of the study villages



Source : This chart is taken from - *Emerging Leadership Pattern of Rural Bangladesh*, by Dalem Chandra Barman [1988: 47].

As is demonstrated in the above chart, it may be said that an **individual** is the basis of social hierarchies in the villages. A rural individual, from his

birth to his death, associates himself with the existing social institutions in some way or other. In the present study villages, altogether 2595 individual villagers are residing, of which 1357 are males and 1238 females. At the second stage, two or more individuals form a **household**,³ the primary unit of production and consumption. The members of a household unit take food from the same hearth and so it is called *chulla* which means hearth group. The third stage is a **family** [*paribar*]. A *paribar* may consist of one or more households. A family or household is the smallest core unit where the socialization process of an individual starts and on it the edifice of the wider society rests. Without a household an individual remains unprotected and isolated. The present study villages - Rampur and Sonapur- have 198 and 310 households respectively of which altogether 382 are single and 126 are extended households. The average household size of the study villages is 5.1. A few households form a *Bari*, which commonly refers to an extended household group (Islam 1974 : 6) or collection of households living together but occupying a separate space. In the study villages 75.2% *Baris* are single and 24.8% are extended household *Baris*. It is observed that wherever a household breaks, it forms a new household and goes for a separate *Bari*. People belonging to different lineage very rarely live together within the compound of a *Bari*. Usually, the eldest male member of the *Bari* occupies the position of the *Bari* head.

Bangsha or lineage is an extended unilineal kinship group (Hoebel and Weaver 1979 : 414) descended from a common ancestor. It may be either patrilineal [when the relationship is determined through males] or matrilineal [relationship through females]. In the study villages, Muslims and the

3. Here a household or *khana* is meant to refer to a common kitchen. T. Raymond Smith used 'one cooking pot' as the criterion for a separate household [1958 : 51; 104]. A household is conditioned by the fact of cooking and eating together. Bannan[1988] and several other social researchers have used the same definition.

ethnic group trace their original descent through males and the Hindus through females. There are now 78 lineage in the two study villages, while Barman found 57 lineage in one village. In the case of village disputes, conflicts and local-level elections, lineage play an important role. They act as cohesive groups. Intra-lineage conflicts are also common and sometimes conflicts continue for generations.

Gram [village] comes next after the *Paras* [already discussed above] and encircles all the layers that have been discussed so far. A Union, which is administered by a *Parishad* [council], is the next higher level to the village itself. In Bangladesh, there are two concepts of villages, *mouza* or revenue survey unit [or a territorial village], and residential [or non-territorial] village. In today's Bangladesh the boundary lines of a village are determined by mutual social agreement. Chowdhury, Adnan and others in their studies have used the residential village concept. In the present study, the same residential non-territorial notion has been applied, which is also widely accepted and commonly mentioned by the villagers. A village in Bangladesh is a small community which is composed of two or more *Paras*⁴. The study villages - Rampur and Sonapur - have 6 and 7 *Paras* respectively.

As noted in Table-2.1, the villages are inhabited by Muslims [64.8%], Hindus [31.5 %] and a few households of an ethnic group, known as Musahars [3.7 %]. The settlement pattern of the villagers indicates a number of interesting phenomena shown below:

4. Anwarullah Chowdhury, in his writing --*The Role of Kinship and Lineage in Rural Bangladesh* (an unpublished manuscript) and Barman also used the same concept, (1988:3-4).

The concentration of households in different *Paras* is primarily based on religion. In about a little less than one-fourth *Paras* Muslim households and more than one-third *Paras* Hindu households are absent, while one ethnic group is living in clustered in one *Para* of Sonapur village.

The most interesting aspect, however, is that in half the *Paras* both Muslims and Hindus are living together as neighbours in a mixed settlement pattern and this trend is on the rise. Mixed settlement took place mainly when Hindus left the village and Muslims came in to settle in those places.

Most elders and household heads still remember the inhuman activities of the major communal riots in 1946 throughout Bengal and the looting of property at the time of liberation war of Bangladesh, which also affected the study villages to some extent. Interestingly enough, in Rampur village not a single house of Hindus was looted, as the Muslim households gave them a strong and sincere protection during the liberation war of Bangladesh. However, the opposite was the case for Sonapur village. Because of such historical events, the Hindus began to feel insecure gradually. This feeling of insecurity led them to migrate to India and this trend still continues (Chowdhury 1978 : 79-96). Except for such unfortunate inhuman acts, the Muslims, the Hindus and others all over the country and in the study villages are living in a harmonious relationship. This cordial relationship is witnessed during major religious festivities and households' functions, in which intimate and friendly members of other religious communities are invited as guests who share meals together. As the villagers are living in their every day life through

dialogue and interaction with each other, these help them develop a cordial and peaceful environment among themselves. Most household heads feel that ill-feeling is always infiltrated into the village life from outside. The outside vested interest groups, through such acts, create grounds for their self-interest. Political parties and contestant of local level elections occasionally use such tricks for getting votes.

In Sonapur village, Muslim households outnumber Hindus. The village also has a few households of an ethnic group. They are known as **Musahar** (as in Bihar) and have migrated and settled from a nearby village. The Rampur village is inhabited predominantly by Muslims [84.9%]. It is interesting to note from the above Table that the average household size in both villages is 5.1, while Chowdhury [1988; data collection in 1973] and Barman [1988; data collection in 1981] found the household size as 6.3 and 5.8, respectively in their village studies. The above comparison with the present study clearly shows a declining trend of household size. When compared further, it is found that while both Chowdhury and Barman found the average Muslim household size 0.2 and 0.14 more, respectively, than the Hindu households. The present study shows a reverse trend, i.e. the Hindu household's average size is 0.25 more than the Muslims, while the Musahar's average household size is 0.21 less than the Muslim households. I do not have any clear explanation for such findings.

Occupational and economic structure

Life and condition of livelihood of the study villagers are primarily dependent on agriculture. It is the dominant occupation [83.7%] in the study villages. Other professions include small business [12%] and service

[4.3%]. The following Table 2.2 shows the occupational status of the villagers comparatively :

Table -2.2
Occupations of the Villagers

Occupations	Rampur	Sonapur	Total
Agriculture	58.6	40.3	47.5
Small business	16.1	9.4	12.0
Service	5.1	3.9	4.3
Day labour	20.2	46.4	36.2
Total	100	100	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The villages possess quite a large area of agricultural land, which is divided into sub-plots. Households of Rampur village also own one-third of their arable lands outside the village. Paddy is the main agricultural crop of both villages. Besides, sugarcane is being cultivated as a cash crop and its cultivation is increasing. Very few households cultivate jute in small plots only for family use. Households have completely lost their interest in producing jute, which was once the main cash crop of the villages. Seasonal vegetable production, especially in winter, and the rabi crops, viz., various pulses, wheat, etc. are also getting more and more importance. Most farmers are trying to have a general crop cycle which is to grow paddy twice, i.e. *aman* [without irrigation] and high yielding variety [with irrigation] and vegetable or rabi crop once each in the same plot of land. Insufficient rain and water supply hamper cultivation and this seems to be the major natural problem for the farmers. Rich and middle farmers own and use 34 (Rampur 22 and Sonapur 12) shallow tube-wells to raise ground water for cultivation, especially for producing IRRI and *aman* paddy.

Of those who depend on agriculture for a livelihood, a significant number [36.2%] actually live on selling their own physical labour as wage earners, locally known as *Kamla*. In addition, there is almost a similar number of

households with small agricultural plots of their own who occasionally sell physical labour. The *Kamlas* are always on the search for some sorts of temporary work. As the number of rural households increases, the agricultural sector gradually loses its capacity to absorb all the households for livelihood. The class of day labourers, who are basically the landless and near-landless, are more and more being pushed out of agriculture for livelihood. Still, whatever temporary alternative arrangements they would like to make are also agriculture-related.

It is, therefore, clear from the above analysis that less than half of the village households can fully depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The rich and the middle peasant households generally dominate the village. Most of them cultivate their own land without hiring much outside labour, except in the peak season. The rich farmers usually do not work in the field. They hire a few permanent labourers to do agricultural work for them. Table 2.3 demonstrates the fact that households are being divided between landowners and land cultivators.

Table -2.3
Economic structure as reflected in landed relationship

Land related particulars	Rampur		Sonapur	
	Land [in acre]	HHs [in %]	Land [in acre]	HHs [in %]
a) Total land of the village [as per Mauza map]	483.2	-	596.3	-
b) Land owned by the villagers	712.2	-	441.0	-
In the village	360.1	87.4	364.3	79.4
Outside the village	352.1	30.3	76.7	10.0
c) Land under operation [LUO]	716.8	86.4	458.0	82.6
Own land of the household heads[+]	712.2	87.4	441.0	79.4
Land leased in [+]	15.8	7.1	18.7	3.9
Land mortgaged in[+]	12.2	4.0	6.7	3.2
Land leased out[-]	17.8	6.1	4.8	1.0
Land mortgaged out[-]	5.6	6.1	3.6	2.9
d) Share-cropping	220.3	43.9	45.2	17.8
Share-cropped in	50.2	31.8	25.2	12.3
Share-cropped out	170.1	12.1	20.0	5.5

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

According to Table- 2.3, while the two villages have 1,079.5 acres of land, the two villagers own 1,153.2 acres, i.e. 73.7 acres more. Of the land owned by the villagers, almost half of it [428.8 acres] is outside of the present study villages. It can easily be calculated from Table- 2.3 that the average land-ownership per household of both the villages is 2.27 acres. However, it varies significantly between Rampur and Sonapur villages, i.e. 3.6 and 1.4 acres respectively. The above figures demonstrate a clear difference in the average landholding patterns between the two study villages. In Sonapur village, the average possession of land by each household is less than that of Rampur i.e. 2.2 acres less. According to government statistics, the average size of landownership per household is 1.63 acres [Land Occupancy Survey, 1977:118]. Thus in average the households of Rampur village possess 2 acres more and the Sonapur villagers have 0.23 acre less land than the national average.

The above Table- 2.3 also shows that the extent of land under operation by the households is slightly more [22.6 acres] than their own land and the trend is the same in both the villages. However, in Rampur village 170.1 acres of land is given out to others for sharecropping, which is about one-fourth and more than one-third of the lands owned by the households of Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively. Usually landless and near-landless households cultivate lands of the middle and rich farmers under share-cropping system. In the present study villages, 101 households [19.9%] sharecropped in, while 41 households [8.1%] sharecropped out lands. Of the two study villages, in Rampur one-third (31.8%) households take land for share-cropping whereas Chowdhury (1978) in his study village found 12.2% tenants or share-croppers. The reason for such a high percentage of share-cropping system in Rampur is mainly due to the fact that the presence of more

land-rich households in Rampur encourages the system of sharecropping. This is because the landed gentry dislikes to work in the field. The sharecroppers themselves do not form any social or economic class in the villages. They also cannot maintain their existence without share-cropping.

In order to comprehend more about the agrarian structure the households under the present study have further been classified on the basis of land ownership as shown in Table- 2.4. Rural Bangladesh society is primarily classified on the basis of land ownership⁵ and such economic classification is also on the basis of social divisions.

Table -2.4

Classification of villagers on the basis of land ownership

Land-based Category	Rampur				Sonapur			
	Household		Land owned		Households		Land owned	
	No.	%	l acres	%	No.	%	l acres	%
a) Landless poor	25	(12.6)	-	-	64	(20.7)	-	-
b) Marginal farmer [0.01 to 1 acre]	73	(36.9)	15.2	(2.1)	151	(48.7)	36.67	(8.3)
c) Small farmer [1.1 to 3 acres]	39	(19.7)	82.64	(11.6)	46	(14.8)	91.97	(20.8)
d) Middle farmer [3.1 to 7 acres]	30	(15.1)	182.11	(25.6)	33	(10.6)	153.31	(34.8)
e) Rich farmer [7 acres and above]	31	(15.7)	432.14	(60.7)	16	(5.2)	159.05	(36.1)
Total and %	198	(100)	712.09	(100)	310	(100)	441	(100)

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

Table-2.4 presents land-based economic classification of the households of

5. The *Land Occupancy Survey* [LOS] conducted in 1977 in 128 villages and in 1978 in another 137 villages, was a major survey by the Government on land occupancy. In these surveys landless families were divided into three groups. These are : landless -I have no homestead or other land; landless -II owning homestead only but no other land and landless -III owning homestead and agricultural land up to 0.5 acre. These surveys divided the rest of the households as marginal [owning 0.51-1 acre], small holding [1.1-2.49 acres], medium holding [2.50-7.49 acres] and large holding [7.5 and above acres]. Socio-anthropological researchers in the past have categorized land ownership slightly differently. Bertocci [1970] categorized marginal holding owning .01-0.49 acre, small holding owning 0.50-2.49 acres and medium holding owning 4-4.99 acres. Thorp [1978] divided on the basis of subsistence. The present study gave more importance on the understanding and categories that the villagers themselves make.

the present study villagers. Although they have been shown here into five land-based groups, the villagers classify themselves into three major classes viz. [i] the land-poor [landless and marginal peasants], who are little less than two thirds of the households; [ii] the middle-peasants [small and middle farmers] are about thirty percent; and [iii] the rich peasants, who are 9.3% in number. It is interesting to note that the rich households having more than 7 acres of land own more than half [51.3%] of the village land; while the small and middle farmers [with 1.1 to 7 acres of land] comprise 29.1% of the households and own 44.2% of the land. Thus these 3 groups together comprise 38.4% of village households and own 95.5% of the land. As a result, the remaining 4.5% land of the villages is owned by 61.6% households, and 17.5 % households live under absolutely deprived condition by having no homestead and no possession of any land and assets whatsoever. As a result, they form the lowest and the last social stratum or class, who have no social address, dignity and prestige. The land-based comparison shows that Rampur village has more rich and less land-poor households; while Sonapur village has less rich and more land-poor people. In general, the lower land-holding households have been found quite free and frank to discuss about their extent of land and ownership of other assets, but some of the rich households are extremely reluctant and suspicious to disclose such information. I have found at least four households in the Rampur village whose personally admitted information regarding landownership significantly varied with the data collected from their neighbours and key informants. This is shown in the Table-2.5:

Table-2.5

Households of Rampur having more land than admitted

Households	Information given by the household heads .	Data collected from the neighbours and informants
"A"	22 acres	50 acres
"S"	17 ..	100 + [8] ..
"AK"	11 ..	24 + [1] ..
"J"	25 ..	32 ..
	75 ..	206 + [9] ..

Source : Field Work in Rampur village.

I had the opportunity of having several discussions with each of the four household heads. Each time when the issue of land ownership has come up for discussion they have become suspicious and as such they used to ask me why I was interested in knowing about their land ownership. A general tendency I have observed among these rich farmers has been to disclose land ownership less than the limit of land-ceiling prevailing in the country. However, the excess lands over the ceiling limit are being maintained by them under different names. There is none with excess land over the ceiling limit in the Sonapur village; only one household in a neighbouring village owns about 100 acres of land but maintains such lands under three different names of own relatives. These findings corroborate with those of Siddiqui [1989] regarding land reform. Although it is legislated and talked about by various governments, it has not been seriously pursued, especially at the level of implementation. It is interesting to note that when the first government after Liberation re-fixed the ceiling of land, in reality, no one was affected in our study villages, whereas some households in Rampur village would have lost a great deal of their land. As already said earlier, the landless and near-landless category constitute about two-thirds of the study households but own 4.5% land of the villages. Actually, they are the day

labouring group and face lack of access to lands to earn their minimal livelihood. The high level of landlessness also indicates the situation of underemployment in agriculture. As a result, the landless and near-landless households are in constant search for alternative means of livelihood.

Land remains the key [source] of rural power; the theory of Kulakism is not found valid. The proponent of the cyclical mobility [cyclical kulakism] theory, Peter J. Bertocci, made a study on social structure and community organizations in two villages [Hajipur and Tinpara] of Comilla District in the early 1970s. The researcher found that there is a regular rise and fall of the families with the increase and decline of wealth [particularly land] and therefore, there is a high degree of mobility of individual families between economic classes and status groups. This happens primarily when someone of poor economic class by marrying into the high economic class acquires high status. Bertocci claims that the lineage, after acquiring land and power, also sometimes acquire high status by marrying into *Sardari* lineage. He calls this process "cyclical kulakism."

Chowdhury [1982] has criticized Bertocci's theory on various grounds. The present study also finds strong grounds to disagree with Bertocci. First of all, Bertocci seemed to underestimate the possibilities of polarization within the class structure and the process of pauperization. In Bangladesh, the rich peasants are more stable than the poor peasants and the poor peasant class is always vulnerable to natural calamities and they are also affected by the Muslim laws of property inheritance which leads to further subdivision and fragmentation of land.

Table -2.6

Landownership of households in Rampur from 1984 to 1994

Landed categories	Households [in %]	Present land in acres [+ %]	Land owned in 1984 in acres [+ %]	Difference [in acres]
a) Landless poor	12.6	0	0	0
b) Marginal farmer	36.9	15.2 (2.1)	19.26 (2.2)	- 4.06
c) Small farmer	19.7	82.64 (11.6)	49.83 (5.6)	+ 32.81
d) Middle farmer	15.1	182.11 (25.6)	165.16 (18.6)	+ 16.95
e) Rich farmer	15.7	432.14 (60.7)	653.83 (73.6)	- 221.69
Total and %	-- [100]	712.09 (100)	888.08 (100)	- 175.99 --

Source : Field Work in Rampur village.

The above Table on Rampur shows that marginal and rich households have lost land in the last 10 years. The rich lost lands for two specific reasons, as noted below:

A few landed-rich sold their lands in the village to buy landed-property in the cities and towns.

The system of inheritance also played a great role for transfer of land. Some rich households had to give part of their shares of land to their near relatives. This does not mean that there was always loss and no gain of land by any of the households. The said loss is the net-loss of land by the villagers. The residents of Rampur in a 10-year period have lost 175.99 acres of land as the net loss. It is interesting to note that the land-rich farmers lost the land, to the highest degree which is exceptional to the trend of land concentration by this category. This loss is rather intentional and planned on the part of those who possessed more land than the ceiling limit.

In Sonapur, although one of the poorest villages, land concentration only in the hands of top households did not occur. The marginal and small farmers also gained land. This is, first of all, because of the last many years' direct involvement of the supportive agencies among the bottom category households. Secondly, easy-availability of credit facilities out of group savings and supportive agencies' Credit Programme have helped stop the selling of valuable assets [land and others valuable goods] in disasters and in times of urgent need. Thus, in disaster situations, be they natural or man-made, households get institutional support. It becomes easier for them to rebuild and re-start without much loss of valuable assets. A comparison of land-mobility over the last 10 years illustrates that the institution-building process of the bottom majority can help create an environment to reverse the trend of land concentration in the top category alone. The Table[2.7] below shows the trends in Sonapur village:

Table -2.7
Landownership of households in Sonapur from 1984 to 1994

Landed categories	Households [%]	Present land in acres [+ %]	Land owned in 1984 in acres [+ %]	Difference [in acres]
a) Landless poor	20.7	0	0	0
b) Marginal farmer	48.7	36.67 (8.3)	14.58 (4.9)	+ 22.09
c) Small farmer	14.8	91.97 (20.8)	60.80 (20.5)	+ 31.17
d) Middle farmer	10.6	153.31 (34.8)	119.5 (40.1)	+ 33.81
e) Rich farmer	5.2	159.05 (36.1)	102.5 (34.5)	+ 56.55
Total & %	100	441.00 (100)	297.38 (100)	+ 143.62

Source : Field Work in Sonapur village.

The above Table [2.7] on land mobility indicates an important changing trend. As land is considered the most important source of livelihood and key to power in the rural society, this changing trend in Sonapur indicates that the power bases are also gradually shifting. In Sonapur, except the

landless households category, other bottom categories, viz. marginal and small farmers are also gaining lands and thereby power.

According to Table-2.8, the households of the upper strata possess most of the valuable assets and articles, while the landless and the near-landless categories hardly own such goods.

Table -2.8

Ownership pattern of valuable assets and goods by the households

Valued Assets and goods	Rampur		Sonapur		Total	
	No.of HHs	%	No.of HHs	%	No.HHs	%
a) Radio	61	30.8	67	21.6	128	25.2
b) T V	38	19.2	24	7.7	62	12.2
c) Bicycle	82	41.4	60	19.4	142	28
d) Motorcycle	13	6.6	5	1.6	18	3.5
e) Tube well (TW)	17	8.6	8	2.6	25	4.9
f) Shallow Tubewell (S T W)	22	11.1	12	3.9	34	6.7
g) Bank Account	14	7.1	23	7.4	37	7.3
h) Electricity	66	33.3	69	22.3	135	26.6

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

It is important to take note of the fact here that the precarious material condition of the majority households, in general, indicates massive poverty, their structural helplessness and social vulnerability. It is obvious that this majority households are the landless, marginal and small peasants categories.

Educational status of the villagers

The following three Tables present an educational profile of the study villages. It is encouraging to observe that the literacy rate⁶ is 57.5% and

6. The population Census of 1961 defined literacy as the ability of a person to read in any language with understanding. In 1974 Census literacy was defined as the ability of a person to both read and write. But in 1981 the Census treated literacy in line with international usage, when one can write a letter in any language. The present study used the definition of the 1981 Census.

71% in Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively which are much above the national rate (32%). The following observations may be made based on the said Tables and my empirical findings :

The reasons for such high rates of literacy are not far to seek. In Rampur there is a government high school for boys and girls and a junior primary school for girls, which are quite old. While in Sonapur there is a government primary school and a private high school. Moreover, PVDOs are running two centres for children education and several adult literacy centres in Sonapur village. The main reason for such a high literacy rate in Sonapur is the additional support provided by the PVDOs. This additional 30.9% literacy (adult education 17.4% and primary education 13.5%) in Sonapur village was made possible because of the additional inputs provided by PVDOs. BRAC runs a children education and adult literacy centre and Caritas has a 'Feeder School' for children [for feeding them into the normal education system] and adult literacy centres in Sonapur village.

Table-2.9
Educational status of the villagers

Education	Rampur			Sonapur		
	Male	Female	Combined	Male	Female	Combined
	No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
a) Can write	50	33	8.4	156	116	25.8
b) I-V	71	70	14.2	159	132	27.7
c) VI-X	114	86	20.1	92	44	12.3
d) S.S.C.	47	32	8	19	4	2.3
e) H.S.C.	38	10	4.8	16	1	1.6
f) Degree	17	-	1.7	5	3	0.8
g) Above degree	3	-	0.3	-	-	-
h) Cannot write	175	247	42.5	174	131	29
Total	515	478	100	621	431	100
B. Present school going-students :						
a) KG-V	54	45	45.8	161	139	70.4
b) VI-X	30	30	27.8	30	44	17.4
c) S.S.C.	11	11	10.2	15	6	4.9
d) H.S.C.	15	10	11.6	14	4	4.2
e) Degree	7	1	3.7	12	-	2.8
f) Above degree	2	-	0.9	1	-	0.3
Total	119	97	100	233	193	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

A comparison of educational situation between Rampur and Sonapur at VI to X and SSC level shows that the relevant percentages in educational success are much less in Sonapur village. It is clear from the figures that without direct additional support no significant result can be achieved even at these levels.

Another important fact about education is that while the high literacy rate of a community is considered as a positive aspect, it is also crucial to see how such a rate of literacy is useful or life-oriented. If this phenomenon is not analyzed, new problems might emerge among the educated ones. Such is the case with Rampur village. The major problem that has been confronted in Rampur is the lack of employment opportunities for the educated youth who suffer from frustration about personal life as well as society. This problem has been dealt with separately in this Chapter.

Education is considered as one of the key indicators in comprehending the character of influential forces of a given society. From the viewpoint of the functional value of literacy, the mere ability to sign one's name as well as the primary level of education have hardly any importance. Although the literacy rates in both the villages are quite substantial, the rate of functional valued literacy [i.e. above the primary level] is not very high; these are roughly 34.9% and 17.5% in Rampur and Sonapur, respectively. The above situation explains the fact that in Sonapur village great importance is given to primary and adult education through the support of different PVDOS; but no such effort is being made at the high school and other levels. According to the Table- 2.10 shown below, although the literacy rate of household heads in both the study villages is quite encouraging, the literacy rate in their female households is not equally satisfactory.

Table-2.10
Educational levels of male and female household heads

Educational Category	All Household Heads		Female Household Heads who themselves are 3.9%	
	Rampur	Sonapur	Rampur	Sonapur
a) Literacy rate	74	61	51.1	46.2
b) Education above primary level [above class V level]	50	24.8	42.9 [up to SSC level]	07.7 [up to X level]

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

For knowing further, I have investigated about the literacy rates of male and female household heads separately. Table- 2.10 presents the literacy rates of male and female household heads of Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively. It is interesting enough to note that the literacy rates of male household heads are 74% and 61%; while the literacy rates of female household heads are 51.1% and 46.2% respectively in Rampur and Sonapur villages. The difference between the genders is very significant. This means that the importance of education of women at large has been less.

Table- 2.11 validates the findings of Table- 2.10 even further by presenting the educational levels of the parents of household heads. It is clear from Table-2.11 that the average educational levels of fathers of the household heads of both the study villages are much higher [i.e.66.6% and 51.9% in Rampur and Sonapur] than mothers which are 35.9% and 11.4% respectively.

Table-2.11
Educational levels of the parents of household heads

Educational Category	Fathers of Household Heads		Mothers of Household Heads	
	Rampur	Sonapur	Rampur	Sonapur
a) Overall literacy	66.6	51.9	35.9	11.4
b) Education above class V level	42.4	14.8	15.2	01.6

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

According to Table- 2.11, the differences between educational levels of fathers and mothers of the household heads above the primary level also significantly vary in both the villages, i.e. the average educational levels of mothers in both the study villages are much less than those of the fathers of the householdheads. It is worth mentioning here, as an example that, less than 2% mothers of household heads of Sonapur village has education above primary level.

I also inquired if the household heads wished to pursue further education, and the major causes as to why such wishes were not fulfilled. The percentage of respondents who are willing to study upto Secondary School Certificate are 31.8% and 35.2%, whereas 40.4% and 12.6% wished to study up to degree level in Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively. Such wishes of the respondents reflect the fact that the villagers primarily target to achieve clerical and white-collar jobs with such educational qualifications.

The causes responsible for not fulfilling such wishes are noted below:

Because of poverty	:	55 %,
Had to work for the family	:	23.4%,
Orphan	:	8.4 %,
Parents not aware	:	5.1%,
Got married	:	1.5 %,
Others	:	6.6 %.

The villagers strongly feel that education needs to be life and livelihood-oriented : In Rampur the state of formal education is very encouraging, but it fails to become life and livelihood-oriented. The village now has 91 educated persons with Class VIII and above levels, but unemployed. The whole formal education system in Bangladesh is similar to this situation of Rampur which demands much more than mere

imparting knowledge and information. While the country expects that those who got opportunities of formal education should come forward to pay back to the nation by contributing to those who do not get such opportunities; we see that the educated ones themselves become a new problem to the nation. Educated unemployed youth, especially of Rampur village, strongly feel that the education system of the country needs to be more life and livelihood-oriented. Perhaps, the experiences of Sonapur village may show some modest way out to get of the situation, especially to the disadvantaged households.

In Sonapur the situation to some extent, is different. Adult literacy and primary level education are very high [71.1 %], which is very encouraging. But the secondary and college level education is much less inspiring. The members of organized groups get the opportunities to have various capacity-building and professional skills development trainings, as well as credit support to initiate small enterprises of their own choice and self-creativity. The initiatives are indeed not big, rather traditional, but quite useful to generate self-employment and additional earning activities. As in Sonapur the supportive agencies are directly involved in adult and primary level education and the household heads, leaders and villagers express their keen interest in the support of education up to the level of Class VIII. They think that more openings and opportunities exist, especially in the field of skills development and technical education. A few young boys and women have already received training for skills and are now engaged in jobs or self-employed. It appears to me that what the rural society of Bangladesh urgently needs today is in the field of technical, skills development education and scope of employment and earning in and outside the country. Thus there is a strong urge of the

people of Sonapur village to have opportunities of formal education up to the level of Class VIII and more scope of skills and technical education. During my living in the study villages I became convinced about these felt needs of the rural population. Rampur village can create new opportunities and new hopes in the life of the educated unemployed youth by replicating some of the experiences of Sonapur village. Thus the scope of skills and technical education with formal schooling can create opportunities of 'earning while learning' to some extent. It is my personal observation that Bangladesh being economically a poor country needs such an approach.

Social structure and cultural patterns of the villagers

Rampur village

Although Rampur is a traditional and ancient village where some of the elements and social patterns of the erstwhile *Zamindari* system are still present, yet the life of the villagers is rapidly changing. It was once largely inhabited by wealthy, landowning and moderately educated people. Today we do not find the existence of *Zamindars*, i.e. people living on rent in cash received from land through subinfeudation rights. Before the abolition of the *Zamindari* system in 1950, there were two Muslim *Talukdar* families in Rampur and one Hindu *Zamindar* family in the adjacent village. The Hindu *Zamindar* family subsequently migrated to India and some members of the Muslim *Talukdar* families came to the cities and towns. The remnants of their houses today look like small 'islands in the sea' in Rampur. As per the present landownership category, the basis of class differentiation, the top 15.7% [having land more than 7 acres] form economic Class I of the village social hierarchy and own 60.7% of the land property. They are known as *borolok*, i.e. rich farmer [Hartmann and Boyce 1983 : 243-244]. This is a very deep-rooted social

status of the Class I category households in Rampur village. Through this status the rich farmers differentiate themselves from the rest of the households.

The *borolok* households do not work in the field, but live on the toil of others. They possess a high social status; Chowdhury [1978] called them *Khandans*. They are very conscious of their own social status. Land is their main source of both livelihood and power, and their children also go for education to acquire additional qualifications to maintain their leadership positions in the village over which they used to dominate for years together. They are the real 'power wielders' of the village [Chowdhury 1978]. Seven out of ten [i.e., 70%] leaders of Rampur village come from the rich farmers category. This means that almost total power and decision-making authority of the village is being exercised by them. The *Khandan* households have the most easy and regular mobility to the towns and cities for education and jobs. Already some of them have alternative homesteads in the towns.

The middle and small farmers [having land of 1.1 to less than 7 acres] are 34.8% of the households and own 34.8 % of the land. They are known as *Madhyabitta*, i.e. middle farmers and form Class II of the village social hierarchy. They are also regarded as *girhastas* and enjoy a lower status than the *borolok*. The rest of the households [49.5%] are the landless agricultural labourers and marginal peasants [having 0-1 acres of land] and owning 2.1% of the land. They form the lowest [Class III] in the social hierarchy; they are locally termed as *Kamla*, who constitute an economic status group at the bottom.

Today, Rampur represents a few exceptionally rich villages of Bangladesh where land ownership of households is much above the average. Chowdhury [1978], Adnan [1978] and other scholars in their studies found that the fundamental basis of class differentiation in rural Bangladesh is the ownership and non-ownership of the means of production and the functions performed by the individuals in the organization of production. This differentiation of households is theoretically very close to the Marxian interpretation of 'class-in-itself' and the Weberian concept of 'property owner' and 'property-less' classification.

The basis of class differentiation of our study villages has also been the ownership or non-ownership of land [as means of production and the key to the village power]. Villagers are actually classified on this basis of land ownership and social relationships, which also evolve on the basis of such classification.

Sonapur village

Sonapur is one of the poorest villages of rural Bangladesh and represents the vast majority of the 68,000 villages of Bangladesh. Here land ownership is much less than the national average. There is hardly any existence of social and behaviour-patterns of the old landowning class, i.e. *Khandani* status and attitudes in Sonapur village. The biggest landowning household has 15 acres of land there are only 16 households with more than 7 acres of land while in Rampur there are 31 households having more than 7 acres of land and the largest land ownership is more than 100 acres. However, adjacent to Sonapur village, one Hindu household which was once a *Zamindar* of the area still owns approximately 150 acres of land shared by three sons, each of whom has homestead in the district town.

In Sonapur, although a few households own more than 7 acres of land, it is difficult to identify them as *borolok*. The villagers also do not call them *borolok*. Strictly speaking, there is no actual existence of *Khandani* i.e. old landed aristocracy in Sonapur. The land ownership records show that all land-based categories, except the landless, have gained land in the last ten years. Thus, in Sonapur there are no Class I category households. According to the opinion of the villagers there are only two class-categories of households, viz. the *madhyabitta* [Class II] who are the *girhastas* and the *Kamlas* [Class III] who are the landless agricultural labourers and the marginal peasants. The *Kamlas* constitute the lowest category in social status. Hartmann and Boyce in their study observe that the *Kamlas* are called *chotolok* in Kanti. This was true in two of our study villages long ago, but not at present. Although there are rich farmers who are called *borolok*, the *Kamlas* are not known as *chotolok*.

The settlement and structural patterns of the villages also indicate socio-cultural aspects of the households. It is clear from such patterns that Muslims, Hindus and the ethnic Musahar group in the present study villages lead quite different life styles, having distinct socio-cultural, and religious beliefs and practices. The Muslims of Sonapur village [161 households] have four Mosques [two for Hanafis and two for Mohamadis, 54 households] and thus four separate *zamats*⁷ [village Muslim *Samaj* or societies] and in Rampur village there is only one Mosque and one *zamat* [the word seems a new induction and yet not much in use] for 169 households. The head of a *zamat* is called a *Sardar*, which means leader. While the Imam of a

7. In rural Bangladesh, village Samajes are formed on the basis of religion of the inhabitants. The muslim Samaj of Sonapur village is called a '*Zamat*', which means a congregation of people. This word is not in much use in Rampur village, even though the villagers understand its meaning. The leader of a *Zamat* is known as a *Sardar*. Hence, the word *Zamat* should not be understand in political sense. It does not refer to the Jamat-e-Islami, a religious fundamentalist political party of Bangladesh.

Mosque is the prayer-leader, the *sardar* is to lead and guide the *Samaj* community in all its social functions, including *Salish* [informal body to settle disputes]. The Muslims of Sonapur are primarily divided into two sects, viz., the Hanafis and the Mohamadis, and each group has two different village *Samaj*, while all the Muslim households of Rampur belong to the Hanafi group. All Muslim households of both the study villages, including almost 98% Muslims of Bangladesh, belong to the Sunni sect. Most households of the villages are not sure about their such sectarian origin; but a few religiously enlightened persons could explain that they acknowledge the first four Khalifahs who have been the rightful successors of Hazarat Mohammad [SM] and they belong to one of the schools of jurisprudence founded by Imams - Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafii or Hambal. Religion seems to work as an important unifying factor among the Muslim households of both villages and it gives shapes to socio-cultural behaviour patterns and practices of the Muslims. There is a strong bond of unity among the Muslims of Rampur, which is primarily centred around the Mosque and the *samaj*. Yet the people do not appear to be religious fanatic. On the other hand, the Muslims of Sonapur, especially the Mohammadi groups, are found to be more traditionalist than the Hanafis and their social unity is deeply divided on the basis of *zamats* and sects. However, this division sometimes also takes the shape of social rivalry. An outsider can easily sense such a situation.

With regard to the social status of the Muslim households two different situations are prevailing in two villages. In Sonapur village, only economic classes seem visible. The Muslim households of this village primarily belong to middle, lower middle and poor economic classes. Thus, the social status

groups, viz. high or low status, are not clearly noticeable, which is very strongly and visibly present among the Muslim households of Rampur village. Rampur village was once inhabited largely by the wealthy, landowning and moderately educated people. The housing pattern of the few Talukdars and Chowdhuries, which are mostly one or two storied old buildings, exhibit a few islands of prosperity in a sea of adversity. These few families definitely fall under the same high status or *Khandan* category as claimed by Chowdhury [1978 : 40]. Their *Khandani* status is still visible and it was once highly obvious, as most heads of households expressed the same feeling during their discussions. However, such *Khandani* status is gradually declining. Even then the formal leadership of the Union *Parishad* viz. [Chairmanship and a portion of Union *Parishad* membership] rotates among those few households of Rampur. Moreover, the informal leadership of the whole village community almost completely concentrates in those listed few leaders. They are more or less the decision-makers of the total affairs of the village, including who should contest the election for formal leadership positions. It is almost impossible for others to join this informal leadership group of the Rampur village. For settlement of any household or para-level disputes the members of the households have to come to the informal and formal leadership of the village. The leaders have a team work and good understanding among themselves which they maintain for their own individual and collective interests.

All the 130 Hindu households of Sonapur village belong to a caste group which they claim Kshatriya. All except one household use the caste title "Roy" and one household uses the caste title 'Barman'. There is no Brahmin [the highest status caste group] and other lower castes [Sudras and Namasudras] in this village. Two Brahmins of the next village are invited to

serve them in the religious ceremonies during such occasions. The so-called Kshatriyas consider themselves of higher status after the Brahmins. But in reality, because of their middle and lower economic class position, they seem not to belong to the high social status group. In Sonapur village, the social status group of the Hindu households, like the Muslims, is not noticeable and seems not so important to them. Based on the socio-economic situations of Sonapur village, it may be concluded that the absence of rigid economic class differentiations helps establish a kind of social relationship where equality of social status is somewhat maintained to a certain extent.

It is quite interesting to note that these 130 Hindu households are grouped into 11 different village *Samajes* [except 4 households who left the *Samaj* and do not join the others]. These *Samaj* groupings are primarily based on *Bangsha* [i.e. heredity]. For someone leaving one *Samaj* group and joining another depends on his contacts and understanding with the new *Samaj*. Each *Samaj* has a leader, known as *mahat*⁸. A Mahat's main function is to organize and lead the *Samaj* gathering on the three main occasions of a Hindu's life, viz. birth, marriage, and death.

The Brahmins perform the religious rituals and prayers, while the *mahats* enjoy the social leadership role. I had intensive discussions with those 4 independent household heads. It became clear to me that they decided to withdraw from their own *Samaj* because of family and land-related disputes. If they want, they can join any *Samaj* of their own choice. It is also interesting to know how the village *Samajes* are disintegrating due to minor factors and thus they are losing their internal strength. About 20 years ago, there were only five such *Samajes*

8. The leader of Hindu *Samaj* of Sonapur village is known as a *Mahat*, which means a noble man whom others are to follow. However, this word is not used in Rampur village.

in Sonapur village and people used to respect and listen to their *mahats* as leaders. On the one hand, general social awareness and the need for education of the households have increased, while the economic status of the *mahats* has declined along with the majority of households. As a result, the *mahats* have been losing their previous power to command due respect and submission from the households. In such a situation, a serious leadership vacuum has been observed in all the 11 *Samajes*. In addition to that, the village *Samaj* has lost its inherent strength to hold the members together and prevent the breaking up of the *Samaj* in the Hindu religious group. While in the Muslim social group religion functions as an important unifying and guiding force to help maintain social harmony and unity, whereas such unifying solidarity seems to be lacking in the Hindu social group.

When the two religious social groupings, viz. the Muslims and the Hindus of Sonapur village are compared with regard to their social behaviour-patterns, two opposite trends are quite visible. The Muslim social group has maintained a strong tendency of unifying and integrating the *samaj* as a whole, basing upon the intrinsic force of religion, while the Hindus appear to be lacking such unifying and integrating factor, and as such they are rapidly disintegrating. This is definitely a disturbing trend for any social grouping which eventually becomes a disintegrating entity in the absence of any such internal force that help uphold unity and bring the 'broken pieces' back together. Here I strongly feel the need for many more socio-anthropological researches in order to understand more analytically the rapidly changing such social situations.

The Hindu households [30] of Rampur village belong to the low [Sudra] and scheduled caste [Namasudra] categories. In the low caste category

falls the Basaks [16 households], Mahantas [13 households] and one Das [fisherman] household. The Basaks were once a well-to-do business group, mostly trading in gold ornaments. About half of the households still pursue family business and have shops at home as well at the market of the Union concerned. They disclose the fact that the big businessmen of Basak group had left Bangladesh during the Partition of Indian Sub-Continent in 1947. They also claim to have been the majority population of the village before Partition. The Mahanta households consider themselves above the Basaks in terms of social status, even though they are landless and live on selling physical labour and two households by begging. In theory, Basaks and Mahantas have mutual social acceptance, but in practice they have hardly any social intercourse. The poor economic condition of the Mahantas seems to be the main barrier to such social interactions. All the Mahanta households fall in the landless category and live congestedly in small huts. Four Mahanta families have no homestead and other lands, thus are occupying roadside land for shelter. The Das household is a fisherman family, but it can hardly depend on this occupation for 2 months in a year; for the remaining months the household simply lives on selling physical labour of its members in agriculture and also works on its own small cultivable land.

Regarding the socio-cultural attitudes and practices prevailing in the Hindu households of Rampur and Sonapur villages, a distinction can easily be made that the members of the households of Sonapur have been found more liberal and open-minded about themselves and even about others in comparison to those of Rampur village. One can still get a strong sense of caste attitudes and practices in Rampur village, which is almost absent in Sonapur village.

Musahar Households

In the Sonapur village, there are 19 nuclear Musahar households with 91 members. Each household is separated and has no extended family. After marriage the new couple constitutes its own household. The language of the Musahars is called **Mongari**; but the people belonging to this social group also know Bangla and speak with little difficulty. The Musahars still trace their original ancestry in the Mongar District of Bihar.

The word 'Musahar' is said in Bihar to mean "rat-eater".⁹ In Bangladesh there are only about 250 Musahar households in two areas - viz. in the Sonapur village and in Khurakhai village under Parbatipur *Thana*.

All Musahar households of Sonapur had migrated from Parbatipur *Thana* to Sonapur village in 1973. All the Sonapur households of this social group have still maintained good relations with Parbatipur for matrimonial and other socio-cultural purposes; but they have no links with the Musahars of Mongar District of Bihar. Hakkiad Musahar [75], the oldest household head, states the fact that their forefathers were believers in the Sun-god; but, in the course of time, the Musahars have adopted Hindu gods and goddesses.

Thus they themselves claim to be Hindu and *Rishi* by caste, while the local Hindu households do not accept this claim of the Musahars. Local Hindus and others rather consider them one of the ethnic groups.¹⁰

I have spent a considerable amount of time for understanding the socio-cultural aspects of the Musahars. The hunting and food gathering activities of

9. The Musahars of Sonapur explain that in Mongari language 'mus' means rat and 'ahar' means eater. Thus, they are named -Musahar.

10. Fr. Stephen Gomes and others [1995:34-37], in their work on *The Indigenous People Thirst for Solidarity*, have identified 59 different ethnic groups in Bangladesh and the Musahar is one of such groups.

this primitive people still continue to be their major means for livelihood. It is interesting to note that during the harvesting time, almost all members of their each household go in the field to collect paddy from the holes of rats. They appear to feel comfortable in collecting paddy this way, instead of working in the field as wage labourers. Only in case of extreme poverty they used to go out for selling their physical labour on agricultural work and sometimes even they migrate for work; but at heart they do not like it. Women are the main earning members of their households, although males are considered as household heads. Women have a special dignity and honour in the family as earning persons. All the male members have been working unitedly by forming a small co-operative for last fifteen years. They have bought a piece of land by using their small savings and taking loans; in this way they have built their small huts for shelter. Women members of the Musahar households who can afford to have accumulated a little wealth began to gradually start rearing of goats and cows. The domestication of animals is completely their new learning as well as life style for the concerned social group as a whole. Through the co-operation of the male members, the Musahars are gradually developing social links with the neighbouring groups and *samaj* communities of both the Hindus and the Muslims of Sonapur.

Major social problems and the role of leaders

During discussions with the inhabitants and the leaders of the study villages, I asked them to identify three major social problems on a priority basis. The following are their views :

Table - 2.12

Major Rural Problems

Rampur		Sonapur	
Villagers	Leaders	Villagers	Leaders
Lack of employment	Lack of village roads	Dowry	Lack of Village roads
Dowry	Lack of water	Lack of employment	Lack of employment
Migration of villagers	Lack of government facilities	Migration of villagers	Lack of Government facilities

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

Besides the above, they also expressed their views on land-related disputes, stealing and dacoity incidents, illicit relationships, abortion cases, child marriages, suicides, etc. It is rather interesting to note that a recent **Listening Survey** among 3,000 poor households of 70 villages and 22 slums in Bangladesh conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1996 reveals the following four priority-problems: [i] not able to find work, [ii] lack of access to homestead and health care, [iii] inability to pay dowry, and [iv] education of children. The survey followed the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)¹¹ method to identify 'Poor People's Perspective' and this has been included in the UNDP's Human Development Report of 1996.

However, most households under the present study were concerned with the three major problems already listed on a priority-basis.

It is interesting to note that the villagers identified the problems that directly affect their lives and livelihood, which are to some extent different than those of the village leaders. The leaders are usually expected to perform certain developmental activities for the common good of the village and they themselves are also interested to adopt

11. PRA, a method of social investigation, is used all over the world and also being used by the non-governmental agencies in Bangladesh since 1992 for planning their project proposals.

certain types of activities in order to show people their performances and thereby to gain their support.

For undertaking such activities leaders need government's financial support which they think is not forthcoming. It is widely expected that the village leaders take initiative to [a] improve village roads and communications, [b] try to obtain government benefits for the village as much as possible, and [c] help maintain peace and order in the village. These are the three major expectations of the villagers from their leaders. As such, the villagers are also accustomed to judging a successful or an unsuccessful village leader on the basis of their performance in this respect. Perhaps, because of such expectations of the villagers, the leaders have the tendency to express their views from the perspectives of expectations of the villagers concerned. I would, however, now intend to describe the problems as identified by the villagers themselves on a priority basis as listed below. And then I would like to evaluate the role of leaders in overall village development by tracing the following six socio-physical problems of the present study villages :

- [a] Lack of employment;**
- [b] Dowry;**
- [c] Migration of villagers;**
- [d] Lack of village roads;**
- [e] Lack of Government facilities; and**
- [f] Lack of water;**

a] Lack of employment

In the villages rich and middle class households generally control the employment opportunities of the poor and landless households. In other

words, the land ownership pattern determines who should work and who only eat. The former also dictates the terms and conditions of employment and [through such exercise] controls the economic and political life of the latter. The latter, though much larger in number (61.6%) than the former, own an insignificant amount of land (4.5%) to use their labour. Thus, the former own surplus land, while the latter has surplus labour. But the decisions to use or not to use both surpluses actually depend on the former. "One of the best things a well-to-do landlord can offer to a poor neighbour is employment, and one of the worst things he can do is to deny him employment when the poor neighbour asks for it", wrote Erik G. Jansen in his study - *Rural Bangladesh : Competition for Scarce Resources* [1987:189]. In both the study villages, the household heads and their family members were found ever ready to use their labour in economic activities in order to earn livelihood. In Bangladesh more than one-third of the labour force are unemployed and under-employed, which is roughly 23 million and each year there are 1.5 million new entrants in the labour market. It is definitely a serious problem and a growing challenge for the country. "Not to meet this challenge would clearly imply huge increases in poverty, human misery and sufferings, social and political instability" (UNDP Report, 1996:29). Moreover, the growth rate and density of population make the situation worse. Because the scope and opportunity of the unemployed work-force is very limited to utilize their labour for any gainful employment. This category of the households are always ready to accept any chance of work wherever they get it.

In view of the above precarious situation, there is serious competition between unemployed and under-employed for employment. A similar situation prevails in case of land. Competition for obtaining employment is a

permanent phenomenon for existence in rural Bangladesh. It should be mentioned that the agriculture sector has no capacity to absorb the total existing rural work force. Hence, one of the options open for the landless category is to try to get or create off-farm employment opportunities.

I spent a considerable amount of time to look into the problem of unemployment, as it has been identified as the number one problem by the villagers themselves. The villagers consider lack of employment as a major and the most acute problem in the study areas. They think, once this problem is solved, it would help overcome many other problems of the households. In Rampur village, the lack of employment among the educated youth is very serious. Paradoxically enough, the spread of formal education has worsen the situation of unemployment in Rampur village. There are at present 91 and 54 fully unemployed educated youth in Rampur and Sonapur respectively. Their level of education ranges from Class VIII to Master degree. Of the other educated persons, some of them have gone to different cities and towns for work, a few have got some jobs in schools, government and non-government projects and self-employed business enterprises to earn livelihood.

As we have seen, there is a high degree of functional literacy [secondary and above] rate [34.9 %] in Rampur and this high rate has become, in the one hand, a blessing and, on the other hand, a curse for the educated unemployed. Unemployment of the educated of this group in Rampur is three times more than that of Sonapur. Table- 2.13 below presents the facts regarding the educational qualifications of the rural unemployed youth:

Table-2.13
Educational qualifications of the rural unemployed youth

Educational Qualification	Rampur	Sonapur
Classes VIII - X	48	25
SSC	24	19
HSC	12	8
Degree	5	2
Above Degree	2	-
Total & %	91 [46%]	54 [17.4%]

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The following possible options are open for the unemployed and under-employed as expressed during my discussions with them. I would like to make some observations on each of such options of the study villages:

- [i] One of the major options open to them is to migrate to other villages, cities and towns for work. This internal migration is one of the three main problems of the present study villages. In Rampur there is a strong tendency of migration of the educated unemployed persons to any part of the country, or even abroad for employment. But this trend of migration for employment is not so severe in Sonapur.
- [ii] The second option is to help the villagers create employment opportunities by themselves. The institution-building process of the poor, their savings, income generating activities, various sorts of training for skill development, credit support, etc. have helped the villagers in Sonapur to create mostly off-farm opportunities along with their agricultural labour or semi-farming. Perhaps, different training scopes for trade-skill development for the educated unemployed of Rampur (and more for Sonapur) could help create opportunities of employment within and outside the villages

concerned. One of the major factors for a less serious unemployment problem in Sonapur is the relative creation of employment opportunities in the village itself.

- [iii] The third option is selling out of valuable asset, i.e. land in order to meet minimum basic requirements of the households. Land gained and lost in last 10 years provides a clear indication of this option. Rampur has lost 21.4% [or 193.7 acres] of land over what it owned 10 years ago [i.e. 905.9 acres], while Sonapur gained 56.8% [or 159.7 acres] of land over what it owned 10 years ago [i.e. 281.3 acres].

- [iv] The fourth option seems to be the increase of frustration, violence and other anti-social activities. At present there exists a high degree of frustration among the unemployed youth and this frustration is likely to increase. Regarding violence and other anti-social activities, there is less likelihood of such incidents in Sonapur village primarily because of the socio-economic development activities of the supportive agencies which help bring people closer and make them united. But if frustration generates in Rampur, this may lead to create ground for anti-social activities. Serious sociological researches are especially required in finding out the impacts and causes of the said social problems.

- [v] The fifth option seems to be present, to some extent, in both the study villages. The traditional norm that women should not claim their part of inherited land is being changed. In the rural areas, women are coming up more and more with their own claim of property

rights. The increasing trend of claim for dowry is one of the major features that are closely related to the acquisition of property.

One Raihan [25] of Rampur passed Higher Secondary [College] education in 1988. Since then he gave up study and has been looking for a job. His parental family possesses about 3.5 acres of land. Raihan thinks that after acquiring such a level of education one should not work in the agricultural field. "People will not accept it. They will think I am worthless. I have simply wasted my valuable time in education and now work in the cultivable field. I am frustrated and need a job very badly", said Raihan. Other unemployed villagers express the similar attitude to a great extent. In such a situation, what is really needed, as indicated by Timm, "not only social and economic rights that we emphasize, but the most basic human rights, such as the right of life, which implies a right to employment and to just wage" [1994: 106-107].

The role of the village leaders is really important in this respect. But the leaders of the study villages hardly play any positive role to help overcome the unemployment problem. They generally think that it is not their responsibility. The leaders rather compete with each other to avail the opportunities of jobs for themselves or for their relatives. For instance, about two years ago one of the positions of an assistant teacher in a primary school was obtained by giving Tk. 15,000/ as a bribe. It is also interesting to know that the person who was thus employed happened to be a close relation of an influential leader of the area.

Villagers very strongly feel that the problem of the lack of employment should be addressed directly : The task actually is gigantic, but an all-

out effort is needed in this respect. The creation of employment opportunities in the rural areas can help at least reduce the flow of rural migration to the cities and towns. The socio-economic activities of the supportive agencies especially aimed at helping the landless poor, marginal and small peasants according to their capacities. I have observed that in Sonapur village the landless and marginal households are very sanguine in search of alternative sources of income and employment. When no job is available in the village, they migrate to cities and district towns, and live like a floating people and or lead a slum life. Therefore, villagers expect that the government organizations and PVDOs initiate direct and specific steps to help villagers face this huge unemployment situation with courage and conviction.

UNDP Annual Report of 1996 suggested the following priorities and policies for Bangladesh to address this challenge, which also correspond greatly with the above noted findings in my study villages:

Creating a conducive and pro-poor environment to help redouble and refocus on-going efforts:

Creating more gainful employment opportunities; and

Initiating special programmes of employment generation for the poorest (1996:31).

[b] Dowry :

The villagers of Sonapur consider dowry as the foremost social problem, while the Rampur villagers think it as the secondary one. But all the villagers generally regard it as an open-secret act against the law of the land, and above all, a social sin. Neither giving nor accepting dowry is permitted legally; still it is largely practised and is on the rise irrespective of any creed, rank or educational state of the people. Such wide-spread practices

force parents to consider a daughter as a great burden. Surprisingly enough, it is more prevalent among the educated persons, who practise it in a sophisticated form. In fact, I found dowry as the source of many other social problems. Therefore, the families with young girls consider dowry as the core of social problem which creates a social environment for many other social evils. At any rate, women and only women are the victims of this social sin. In the last 10 years out of 9 suicide cases in the present study villages, 7 were due to dowry. Suicide is the self-destructive act of women which is very common all over Bangladesh, and almost all the daily news papers of the country report such cases every day. But many remain unreported.

It appears to me that we are now used to such incidents i.e. they do not make any surprise to us. In the rural areas, the frustrated women generally kill themselves by taking insecticide or rat-poison. Hartmann and Boyce also found many cases of suicides that occurred on account of dowry. In this context, these two writers stated - "as long as they lack an independent means of livelihood and a broader social movement to back them, women are likely to respond to male domination only with small acts of self-assertion or, in extreme cases, by recourse to the ultimate weapon of suicide" [Hartmann and Boyce 1983 : 98].

Beating of wives for dowry is another common form of expression of social evil, originating from the practices of dowry. There are many such incidents that took place in both the study villages. Divorce due to failing in the realization of dowry-claims is still another type of common village occurrence. A wife, most often, becomes as a 'hostage' for obtaining more money from her parents under the threat of divorce from her husband. The villagers themselves could count 17 cases of female divorce

in both the study villages since liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, of which 12 were due to the demands of dowry.

The household data demonstrated that out of 203 cases of marriage in the study villages in post-independence of Bangladesh dowry was given and taken in 174 cases [i.e. 85.7 %]. It should be noted here that 89.6% of the household heads expressed their opinion that they were against dowry. Ordinarily, villagers are not ready to give dowry. But the household heads expressed mixed views about taking dowry. As the bride's parents need to give dowry, they are normally against of it. The parents of grooms feel themselves in a better and superior position and about half of the household heads (52.2%) do not mind taking dowry. They think that after all it brings better economic support to the new couple's family. It is also understandable that the issue of dowry is generally dealt with by the parents and guardians of the brides and grooms. Of those who have given dowry, the following are the relevant facts:

Selling of land to give dowry	:	34 cases
Mortgage of land	:	23 „
Loans taken to give dowry	:	57 „
Selling of valuable items	:	10 „
Payment in cash	:	149 „ [Tk. 250 - 87,000].

Let me now state four cases concerning dowry.

One Jumanara Begum [28] of Sonapur village was married into a household of marginal peasant in an adjacent area. She only stayed for two and half years in the husband's family. Besides clothes and other things, the demand of her husband's household was Tk. 4,500/. Jumanara's father could pay Tk. 1,000/ at the time of marriage. Her father lost all capacity to pay the remaining amount. Two-and-a-half years

later Jumanara had to come back to her father's family with a son who is one year and three months old. Now Jumanara acts in a neighbour's house as a domestic servant and earns livelihood for herself as well as for the boy.

Tania [22] of Rampur village married in the same village and was divorced after 2 years with a son. Her father had to sell 33 decimals of land to give a black and white television, TK. 5,000/ to buy an old shallow tube-well engine and another Tk. 3,000/ cash payment as dowry. The story of Tania also tells us that in many cases, the full payment of dowry can not guarantee the continuity of the marriage. Mahafuja Begum [33] of Sonapur village is also another divorce case due to non-payment of dowry committed by her father. She now lives in her father's family.

One Dipali Rani [23] belongs to a marginal household family. Five years ago her father arranged marriage and agreed to pay Tk. 40,000/ cash and clothes for the bridegroom and his daughter. But Dipali's father could manage Tk. 20,000/ and requested the bridegroom and his father to take the remaining amount later on, for which marriage could not take place. Dipali accused bitterly during the discussion saying "goods and money are more valued than human beings." She told me that her father gave some money to one of the village leaders, who is their relative with a view to facilitate the process and convince the bridegroom and his father. Dipali opined that if the leaders were good they could help solve many social problems; but it is difficult to find such dependable leaders. Dipali would have a different life-history if the concerned village leader could play a positive role.

However, it is interesting to note that the women groups in Sonapur village were able to altogether reject the demands of dowry in 6 cases among their own group members and in many cases they were successful in reducing the volume of demand among themselves. These women groups refer to their collective pressure and also partial contributions to the most needy members to meet the demands of non-members. But it appears that such few inspiring instances could hardly change overall people's attitudes and their practices even in Sonapur village where the supportive agencies are working quite extensively.. The following are my personal observations regarding the said problem:

That dowry is unfortunately on the rise and it is tremendously influencing the existing social norms and values. It is found that only good will of people and good laws of the land are not always enough to stop ill-practices of people. Based on my experiences living in the villages and discussing with the people I am convinced to say that good will and good laws are not enough to stop dowry. The law of the land is also against dowry. Still, the practice of dowry is considered as one of the first three problems in both my study villages. This proves that mere good will and good laws are not enough. As a researcher, I cannot but mention that the case of dowry is one of the examples of many such good laws and policies which are not implemented and thus fail to bring the expected results. The UNDP Report of 1996 also observed the fact that in Bangladesh there is wide gap between legal provision and social practice. Even though the law is prohibiting, dowry have been operative in the country. Legislation is important as it enshrines the ambitions of a society and enables citizens to seek recourse. But the number of people who seek recourse will only increase with social awareness (1996:41). Vigorous social movements

for the eradication of the said problem are badly needed, for which a few voluntary organizations can exclusively start working on this problem.

That the dowry syndrome is increasing among the boys and especially among the educated ones. One of the reasons I have noticed is that educated boys are increasingly developing an attitude to change their luck over-night by any means. Dowry is considered as one of the ways to do so. This is probably due to the continuous infiltration of a consumerist attitude in the people by modern media. The possession of fashionable goods like radio, television, bi-cycle, motor-cycle, etc. are considered an ideal to be reached. As a result, young boys try to obtain such items, even by taking them as dowry.

That it was easily discernible three different types of attitudes among village leaders regarding dowry stated below:

Do not feel that leaders should do anything about it;

Feel themselves helpless to do anything; and

Feel to do something, but do not know what to do.

The majority of the village leaders fall in the last category. The leaders of the villages always play either a direct or an indirect role in almost all social matters, including the issue of dowry. Both parties usually approach the leaders to help settle dowry cases and the leaders take advantage to exert their power and influence over the concerned families. The leaders think that the issue of marriage is one of the important areas of their role. Thus the role of leaders becomes very crucial in the process of marriage, including dowry. Leaders also expect rewards for helping in this respect, if not in the form of monetary rewards, definitely social ones i.e. honour, support, etc..

Critical observers are not so hopeful that a solution will come from the existing leaders, as all of them are male and eventual beneficiaries of this evil social institution. Thus the only hope that exists is the leadership of women themselves. The researchers of Kanti village also agree with this observation, saying: "Yet the women are united through their shared experience and informal support networks. Some day, they could use that unity to change their lives" [Hartmann and Boyce, 1983:98]. Perhaps, the process has started through the institution-building activities of the poor women in Sonapur village. A few such attempts have started to be seen in this direction in collective actions of the women groups.

Most villagers have opined that existing efforts of the government and the PVDOs are not enough. Many more efforts are required for an effective outcome. The views expressed by the villagers to me during my field work in this regard are stated below as specific recommendations for the abolition of dowry:

That government needs to find out ways and means to implement the spirit of the existing laws. Major responsibilities lie on government machinery. Punishments also have demonstrative effects.

That some supportive agencies may become specialized in dealing with dowry by working exclusively on this problem. The purpose of such specific emphasis would be to organize a social movement against this social evil. As women are the ultimate victims of this social evil, some women organizations may take this up boldly and develop an appropriate technique to face this as a new challenge. New women organizations may be encouraged to initiate work on this problem specifically.

That more research and studies are required on the social problem of dowry in order to sensitize public opinion through in-depth knowledge and information.

[c] Migration of rural population

Migration of the rural population is one of the first three major problems; it is on the rise and affects village development. In the present study villages, there are four specific types of rural migration as noticed by me which are stated below:

- [i] The Hindu villagers continue to migrate to India :
- [ii] The village households migrate to cities and district towns for education of children, jobs, etc.:
- [iii] Households migrate to neighbouring villages for various reasons; and
- [iv] Individual villagers temporarily leave the village for education, job, etc.

Table -2.14

External and Internal migration of rural population

Types of rural migration	Ramnur		Sonapur	
	No.	Reasons/remarks	No.	Reasons/ remarks
i) Hindus migrate to India.	16	Since 1971, these households left Rampur and went to India.	12	Households left in different years since 1971 and went to India.
ii) Households migrated to cities and district towns.	13	2 in the capital [Dhaka], 2 in Naogaon town & are already settled. Remaining 9 are living in different towns and have relatives and land in the village.	14	One in Dhaka, 8 in the district town (Dinajpur) the rest in other towns; but have land and relatives in the village.
iii) Households migrated to other villages.	10	2 in father-in-laws houses, and the rest work for rich households. They have nothing in the village.	8	3 in father-in-laws house, 5 left after floods and have nothing in the village.
iv) Individual villagers have gone out for education and jobs.	10 + 29	10 villagers live outside for jobs, 18 boys and 11 girls live outside for higher education [college and university].	15 + 18	15 villagers are now working in different parts of the country. 14 boys and 4 girls are living outside for higher education.
Note: Educated unemployed individuals are ready to leave the village for employment.	91	2 Masters degree, 5 degree 12 HSC, 24 SSC and 48 classes VIII-X.	54	2 degree, 8 HSC, 19 SSC, 25 classes VIII-X.

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

In Table- 2.14, I have presented statistical figures on different types of rural migration that I have found in the study villages. Details of the views of the villagers are being stated below:

[i] Migration of Hindu households to India

There was a series of communal riots between the Hindus and the Muslims throughout Bengal in 1940's. The British Raj used religion to create divisions among the people and continue their colonial rule without much trouble. Their policy of "divide and rule" created long-lasting wounds in the social fabric of the sub-continent. In fact, the British colonial policies, the communal riot of 1946, the migration of the landed Hindu aristocracy of the then East Pakistan to India and the looting of many Hindu households during the Liberation War in 1971 -- led to a feeling of insecurity among most Hindus in Bangladesh. Chowdhury also observed the same situation and noted that due to the large scale migration of upper caste Hindus, the Hindu society in Bangladesh lost its guardians [1978 : 96].

"We have also seen in the past" said a Hindu retired primary school teacher and two-time Union *Parishad* member, "the dictatorial rulers used the situation for their political gains. The situation is now changing with the democratic governments. Because the government now seems more accountable to the people."

In 1951, in the then East Pakistan Hindu population was 22.0%. After becoming Bangladesh in the 1974 census the Hindu population came down to 13.5%, while in 1981 12.1% and in 1991 census it fell further to 10.5%¹². This indicates that the extent of migration is rapid and quite high.

12. Population Census Reports by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning.

Weekly Holiday on 7.1.94 published an article with the headline - *The Missing Population* - and highlighted as- "This missing population was about 1.22 million during the period of 1974-81 and about 1.73 million during the last inter-census period of 1981-91. As many as 475 Hindus are disappearing everyday from the soil of Bangladesh on an average since 1974". This phenomenon of migration of Hindu households has created the following mind-set among the people in the present study villages:

That those who do not as yet migrate to India have been passing through a serious mental anxiety, feeling of insecurity and live in a state of indecision. This hampers an overall development work in the villages. Moreover, about every fifth household in the study villages continuously invest a good part of their earnings in India. This may be done with the ultimate purpose of migrating at a suitable time. This trend is quite strong among the well-off and educated households. However, people are not ready to open their mouths on this issue. There have been a few cases in both the study villages that landed property was sold to Muslim households, which was not acceptable to the immediate Hindu neighbours. In several cases, it was not at all possible for the Hindu neighbours to know anything about the selling of those lands and homesteads. Thus, in the process, the 'best kept secret' eventually creates intolerable miseries for those who are still not migrating.

Another important reason for such a situation is that the Hindu village social groups continue to break into pieces for minor reasons. As the social groups lack any inner strength and mechanism to re-unite themselves, it is easier for the vested interests to take advantage of the situation.

That in Sonapur village, a Hindu group member took a loan of Tk. 18,000/ from the Group Saving Fund and supportive agency's credit

programme for buying cows and for repair of his house. On receipt of the money in hand, one night the whole family left the village. Before that the household was able to sell all its homestead and land secretly. The whole group is passing through a tremendously difficult situation because of the incident. Two other similar cases took place in two different social groups in adjacent villages. It is definitely hampering the development efforts of the institutions of the poor. The migration of Hindu households to India, as a matter of fact, destroys the morale of those who can not migrate and stay back. This is an unhealthy situation for any nation. The process of this migration began to threaten the institution-building activities of the poor as well. The incidents seem to be a new trend and a new challenge for socio-economic co-operatives as well as for the supportive agencies.

We must realize the fact that people normally do not like to leave their own homesteads and their known "little world". They do it either in an extremely difficult situation or with a definite purpose for which no other alternative exists. The Hindu households definitely migrate due to the feeling of insecurity. Today, this migration is an open secret, a national issue. We should be courageous enough to discuss this issue openly at all levels to help heal the wounds and adopt positive measures as much as possible. Human Rights Organizations may come forward to take initiatives in this regard.

Salam Azad in his recent publication- *Hindu Sampraday Keno Desh Tyag Korse* (Why are the Hindus migrating from Bangladesh)- has identified five major causes of this migration, viz. (a) communal oppressions of the past, (b) major communal attacks on the Hindu Community, (c) Enemy (Vested) Property Act that allows government to acquire minority-lands, (d) grabbing of *Debattar* Properties, i.e. properties dedicated to god or goddess and (e) discrimination of Hindus in government jobs. Azad claims that it is possible to fully stop this migration if all the five causal factors are removed. He

further makes a 21- point specific recommendations as conclusion of his writing (1996:93-94), most of which are very crucial and correspond to the views of the households of the present study.

I have discussed the issue quite extensively with the Hindu leaders of both the study and adjacent villages. Most of them seem to realize the need of awareness about the situation, but think that it is the responsibility of government to help change the situation. They also feel that the Hindu social groups lack really committed leaders, either political or social, who can take initiatives in this respect. The impression that I got in the study villages indicates the fact that the discussions, various trainings and institution-building processes of the poor and marginalized groups in Sonapur try to help reduce the rate of migration to a certain extent. However, such a process fails to involve the non-poor villagers who are the real holders of power, the rich and the middle households. As a result, the processes of the supportive agencies remain almost ineffective on the issue.

ii] Other types of migrations: Lack of employment opportunities in the villages are another major factor for rural migration. Both the educated unemployed and the landless categories of people have strong tendencies to migrate for employment purposes. Thus, creation of employment opportunities in the villages can help reduce such rural migration to a great extent.

Problems perceived by the rural leaders

About the problems identified by the leaders, I shall not go into detail but make some comments based on what I have observed in the present study villages. The leaders usually identify -- lack of rural roads and means of communication as the number one problem of the villages. This is because of the role expected of them by the people. In Bangladesh, a

general outlook and expectation of people - both in urban and rural areas, is that construction and repair of roads and communication are the responsibility of the government and leaders' role is to obtain government resources for such work. Successes and failures of leaders are also judged on what they can or cannot obtain from government. For obtaining financial support from the government, the leaders of Rampur were found to be more active and capable because they could maintain links with Thana and District level officers. They were able to have established two junior high schools, one in Rampur village and the other between Rampur and two adjacent villages. They were found regularly obtaining different kinds of governmental grants and benefits for the schools. Besides, the leaders, especially the formal ones, were active in getting government grants for development of roads, local market, building of river-embankment, etc. This was not the case in Sonapur. The leaders of Rampur village has a strong dependency attitude towards government grants to express their effective leadership role. Political leaders and government also use this dependency attitude of the village leaders for obtaining their political gains and support. For rural infrastructure development, CARE and supportive agencies are doing some work as per government approvals; but their main purpose is to provide temporary employment opportunities to the landless and marginal households in the lean seasons only.

The leaders of Rampur also identified lack of sufficient surface water as one of the worst natural problems in the northern districts. This is an acute natural problem, especially in the Barind Tract areas. In the monsoon period [April - September] there is occasional rain. Most food and cash crops grow in this period. In some years rain is so little that crops could not grow. That there is only one alternative to face this problem is to raise ground water. The water layer in Sonapur village areas is between

10-30 metres, in Rampur areas it is around 100 metres. Hand tube-wells do not work in Rampur or Sonapur in dry season.

Besides this, I would like to make further observations that the trend of internal migration for employment and education to the town areas is on the rise in Rampur. If appropriate measures are not taken immediately to create opportunities in the rural areas, both for higher education and job opportunities, it would be impossible to stop such rural migration. It should be mentioned with great concern that any migration of the educated persons from a country is considered as a brain-drain and a loss for that society. Similar is the case for the study villages. Those who get rearing and education, using the resources of the villages and cannot pay back and contribute to the village economy are definitely a loss of those villages. This means that what is learned in school is hardly found useful in the improvement for their lives and livelihood.

Needless to say that the creation of employment opportunities in the rural areas will help, to a great extent, reduce the rate of rural migration. In Sonapur village, most villagers expressed their satisfaction about the impact of the activities of the supportive agencies in helping create employment opportunities and scope of earning for the landless poor and the marginal households. Such efforts help RE-CREATE HOPES in the rural society, to a certain extent. One of the significant aspects of such recreated hopes is that the landless and the marginal peasants of Sonapur gained confidence in themselves that subsistence without lands is also possible. Non-land assets [cows, small business, poultry, etc.] are equally valuable and perhaps here lies the hope of the bottom majority. The off-farm [non-land] income generating and employment creating activities among the organized group members are setting a viable ground for such hope.

Rahman [1987] in his study on the impact of the *Grameen Bank* activities on the rural power structure referred to it as a new dimension of the issue of power. The findings of the present study may corroborate those of Rahman's study that by improving the material power of the poor, they are also helped to build up their social strength. In this way the present trend of migration of rural households to towns and cities can be substantially reduced by creating opportunities of employment and income-generating activities in the villages.

The villagers and the leaders

In order to understand the power structure some political anthropologists and political scientists have developed the approach of 'Elite-Mass Dichotomy' [Rahman 1981: 11]. This approach is basically a stimulus-response model of political and social change. While applying the same approach in his study of - *Local level leaders in Bangladesh*- Rahman notes that such approach helps identify the 'unity of opposites' and their differences as well "in order to make anti-mass role of the leaders explicit" [ibid:20]. This approach of elite-mass dichotomy helps one to understand the situation in which a leader grows and develops. After analyzing the socio-economic aspects of the study villages and before making an in-depth observation on the leaders, it seems now quite logical to approach the problem under study within a general framework of the said dichotomy model i.e. in terms of elite-mass opposites. However, in the present study major comparisons have been made between the leaders and the household heads¹³. As it seems to me, a comparison of the leaders and the

13. The present study made comparisons between village leaders and household heads on several issues. The main justification for this comparison is that the household heads are leaders of their families - the first social institution which produces and prepares leadership as the first function.

masses is not required and even not so useful. We would not expect leadership qualities among the general mass. But a comparison between the village leaders and the household heads has been well justified, as the household heads are also the leaders at the most micro level, i.e. the household, the smallest unit of social organization.

This comparison is based upon some salient features which are crucial in understanding of leadership role. Such features have also been used by other studies.

Gender

Table- 2.15 demonstrates the leadership of the present study villages by gender. It shows that out of the 508 household heads only 20[3.9%] are female and there is no existing female leaders out of the total 28 persons. This means that the leadership pattern as well as power structure of the study villages is basically characterized by the dominance of male members. Table-2.15 below is a clear indication of such a phenomenon in the present study villages :

Table -2.15
Household heads and leaders by gender

Sex	Rampur		Sonapur		Total	
	HH Heads	Leaders	HH Heads	Leaders	HH Heads	Leaders
Male	191	10	297	18	488	28
Female	7	0	13	0	20	0
TOTAL	198	10	310	18	508	28

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

As there are no village leaders from among women, it also indicates to the fact that women are not yet recognized as village leaders. However, it will be also seen later in chapter-4 that a new trend is being emerged in Sonapur

village with the following features: a greater political awareness than that of Rampur, more participation of villagers to exercise their right to vote, women groups organized by the supportive agencies are more and more taking the traditional role of *salish* and, above all, a few women members of the groups organized by the supportive agencies are planning and preparing themselves for contesting in the forthcoming local level elections.

Marital status and family structure

All household heads and leaders in the study villages are married. Only 1% of household heads constitute with single member. At present, 8 male household heads have 2 wives and there is none with 3 or more wives. Although polygyny is very much in practice in the study villages, polyandry is not acceptable because it is against the socio-cultural norms. One wife of a household in Sonapur village, however, is living with a close relative [also a leader] along with her husband. Although the husband concerned has accepted it, the villagers dislike it. Table- 2.16 presents the household heads and leaders of the study villages in terms of family structure:

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Table-2.16
Households and leaders by family structure (in %)

Household Structure	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H Holds	Leaders	H Holds	Leaders
Single household	73.2	50	76.5	42.1
Extended "	26.8	50	23.5	57.9
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The single family structure is extremely high among the households in both the study villages, i.e. 73.2% and 76.5% in Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively. However, more than half of the leaders come from extended

families structure, i.e. 50% and 57.9% in Rampur and Sonapur villages respectively. It is also interesting to note that the average household size of the household heads is 5.1 and the leaders' is 7.5. This, once again, proves the fact that the possession of more human and material resources means more power. The above finding clearly indicates that in a single family structure, the household head is the bread-earner of the family and thus cannot spare time to work voluntarily for others. In rural Bangladesh, leadership activities are generally performed in voluntary terms. Needless to mention that household size serves as an important source of power for the leaders. A large family structure seems to help develop leadership qualities, provides greater support, economic viability and availability of spare time.

Age

Table- 2.17 shows average age of the household heads and the leaders of the two study villages.

Table-2.17
Average age of leaders and household heads

Category	Rampur	Sonapur
HH Heads	42.3 years	41 years
Leaders	43.4 ..	52.3 ..

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

According to the above Table [2.17], average age of the household heads and the leaders is over 40 years; while the average age of the leaders of Sonapur village is above 50 years. In Rampur, the majority [80%] of leaders fall within the age range of 35 to 45 years, while 61 % leaders of Sonapur village are between 45 to 60 years of age. It is also interesting to observe that in Rampur there is no leader below 35 years of age, whereas Sonapur has 16.7% leaders between 25 to 35

years of age. According to the above findings, rural leaders primarily belong to the age groups of 35-55 years. Needless to mention that in Sonapur young people are coming in the leadership positions [16.7% within the age range of 25-35 years], which is an emerging trend. This has been possible through the institution-building process among the organized group members.

Occupation

Table-2.18

Occupation of leaders and households (in %)

Occupation	Rampur		Sonapur	
	Households	Leaders	Households	Leaders
Agriculture	58.6	60	40.3	72.2
Business	16.1	20	9.4	11.1
Service	5.1	20	3.9	5.6
Day labour	20.2	0	46.4	11.1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

Table- 2.18 presents data on occupation of leaders and households. It is clear from this Table that both leaders and households predominantly depend on agriculture; while the leaders outnumber the households in small business and service as occupations for livelihood. On the other hand, about half of the households and more than one in every ten leaders of Sonapur village depends on selling physical labour as *Kamla* [day labourer] for earning a livelihood.

Income

It is widely accepted that household income has a strong correlation with leadership. Although leaders are found among all the socio-economic classes, they clearly come from upper levels, i.e. the probability of leadership opportunities increases as one moves upwards in socio-economic scale. The data presented in Table- 2.19 show that the leaders usually have more

income than that of the households and thus the leadership comes from higher income groups :

Table-2.19

Yearly income of leaders and household heads (in Tk.)

Category	Rampur	Sonapur
IHH Heads	34,416	16,750
Leaders	136,000	33,279

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

If the above income-data is compared with the national average income [Tk. 8,800] during the period of data collection, the leaders have much above it [Tk. 69,965], while the households average income is Tk. 23,636.

Ownership of landed property and other valuable assets

In the present study villages, ownership and control over land gives one ample scope to exert his own will on others. It provides one with economic security and social prestige. Here, land ownership acts as the fundamental source of power and is positively correlated with leadership. This can be proved from the fact that the average land-holding size of households is 2.27 acres, while the leaders own 8.13 acres, on an average. Rahman [1981] in his study has found that 60% of the formal leaders of Union Parishads own more than 7.5 acres of land. The present study shows that in Rampur 10.1% households and 70% leaders and in Sonapur 3.6% households and 33.3% leaders own more than 7.5% acres of land. With regard to the ownership of land, the leaders of Rampur are above Rahman's data, and the leaders of Sonapur are below the leaders of Rahman's finding. Traditionally, the rural landed gentry have in their possession the two most important traditional sources of power, viz. material [land] and human [support of people]

resources. By using such resources and power, the landed gentry can build up strong linkages with the leaders at national and local administration levels. Table- 2.20 below provides a comparative picture of the valuable assets and articles possessed by the households and the leaders :

Table-2.20
Valuable Assets and Articles owned by leaders and households

Valued Assets and Articles	Rampur (no.+%)		Sonapur (no.+%)		Total (%)	
	H Holds	Leaders	H Holds	Leaders	H Holds	Leaders
a] Radio	61 (30.8)	9 (90)	67 (21.6)	8 (44.4)	25.2	60.7
b] T V	38 (19.2)	9 (90)	24 (7.7)	8 (44.4)	12.7	60.7
c] Bicycle	82 (41.4)	6 (60)	60 (19.4)	9 (50)	28	53.6
d] Motorcycle	13 (6.6)	4 (40)	5 (1.6)	2 (11.1)	3.5	21.4
e] Tubewell	17 (8.6)	7 (70)	8 (2.6)	3 (16.7)	4.9	35.7
f] Shallow T. W.	17 (9.0)	5 (50)	6 (2.1)	6 (33.3)	4.8	39.3
g] Bank Account	14 (7.1)	5 (50)	23 (3.9)	5 (27.8)	7.3	21.4
h] Electricity in household	66 (33.3)	9 (90)	69 (22.3)	11 (61.1)	26.6	71.4

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

It is seen in the comparison in Table- 2.20 that for all listed valuable items, leaders own several times more than the households. With regard to their bank account the leaders were very reluctant to disclose and even discuss about it. I have every doubt about the data on bank accounts of households and leaders in the Rampur village.

Acquisition and disposition of land

As there has been no previous baseline survey on the ownership of land in any of the study villages, household heads and leaders have been asked about their present land and how much it was 10 years ago. In general, the trends seem to be quite opposite in our study villages. In Rampur village, both households and leaders have lost land, 193.3 and 5

Sonapur village have gained land, 143.62 and 9.2 acres respectively in last 10 years¹⁴. Table-2.21 below shows the average pattern of land ownership and mobility [in acres] :

Table -2.21

Land mobility patterns of leaders and households during 1984 to 1994

Category	Rampur			Sonapur		
	1994	1984	Difference	1994	1984	Difference
H Holds	712.09	888.08	-175.99	441	297.38	+143.62
Leaders	130 (+9)	135	-5	97.5	88.3	+ 9.2

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The summary of the above data [Table- 2.21] clearly demonstrates the pattern of land mobility in both the study villages. In Rampur, both households and leaders have lost land, while in Sonapur both categories have gained. Reasons for such land mobility patterns have been discussed in the earlier chapter.

Sharecropping

There are 101 households [19.9%] and 4 leaders [14.3%] of the sharecroppers in the present study villages. However, in Rampur village 31.8% are sharecroppers among the households and none among the leaders. On the contrary, 8.1% households and 39.3% leaders lease out lands for sharecropping to others in both the villages together. In Rampur, 70% leaders sharecrop out lands, while 21.1% leaders of Sonapur village do the same. The following Table[2.22] below shows such indicators clearly :

14. Households census of the study villages included the point of land mobility in the last 10 years i.e. during 1984 to 1994. Findings show a great deal of land mobility during the said period.

Table-2.22**Patterns of sharecropping of leaders and households**

Sharecropping	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H Holds	Leaders	H Holds	Leaders
a) Sharecropped in	31.3	0	12.3	14.3
b) Sharecropped out	12.1	70	5.5	21.1

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The above situation indicates a number of interesting points noted below :

Usually the big landowning class gives more land than others under sharecropping.

The landed gentry themselves do not work in the field and thus they lease out land under sharecropping as an easy way for big land owners to get 50% of the products without any investment and toil.

The big landowning class leased out lands under sharecropping in order to command the political and factional allegiance of the sharecroppers and thus to maintain their power in the village social structure of the village concerned. In Rampur village, leaders give out a big chunk of arable lands, i.e. one-third of their land, for sharecropping; but they do not need to cultivate any quantity of land under the same system. Thus giving out land for sharecropping is usually done by the big landowners, while cultivation of such land through sharecropping is almost an exclusive affair of the landless and near-landless households.

The predominant system of sharing production under sharecropping-cultivation in both villages is the 50%-50%, i.e. one-half of the production goes to the landowner and the other half to the sharecropper.

The sharecroppers quite easily understand that they are the losers under the present system but they are helpless about what to do. Because they can not get land if they demand larger share of the production.

Taking land for cultivation under a fixed rate of money [as rent] per season is also in practice. It is also important to note that the landowners are the decision-makers under any system and thus they are gainers, both economically and socially.

Rate of literacy

Table- 2.23 demonstrates that, on average, leaders are generally more literate than those of villagers and household heads. In the present study villages, leadership positions are occupied more by the literate than illiterate persons especially in Rampur village. There is no illiterate leader in Rampur and only 5.6% of the village leaders of Sonapur are illiterate. In Sonapur the rate of literacy of the household heads is below the households and the leaders which seems quite abnormal. This actually happened due to the literacy programmes of the supportive agencies among the households in general; without which the rate of literacy among the households in Sonapur would be much less than that of the household heads. Table-2.23 below shows the average literacy rates of villagers, household heads, and leaders comparatively :

Table-2.23

Rate of literacy of villagers, household heads, and leaders

Category of villagers	Rampur	Sonapur
a) Households	57.5%	71%
b) Household Heads	74.7%	60.6%
c) Leaders	100 %	94.4%

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

In Rampur village, educational level 1 out of the 10 leaders is below SSC and all the 9 are SSC pass and above; while in Sonapur village 16 out of 18 leaders fall below the SSC level and only 2 are SSC pass and above level. The leaders of Rampur village are moderately to highly educated, 30% are degree and above levels. Both Barman [1988] and Rahman [1981] have noted that the people with higher education, especially graduates and post-graduates, are not interested in becoming Union *Parishad* leaders. The similar situation is also observed in the present study. Although there are 4 village leaders with degree and above educational qualifications, none have become Union *Parishad* leaders. The 3 Union *Parishad* leaders of the present study have educational qualifications up to classes IX, X and HSC levels respectively.

Support-base of the political parties among the households and leaders

The village leaders, in general, are quite aware and keep more information about the activities of the political parties than the household heads and the villagers at large. For the leaders information is power. The more one keeps such information and maintains regular linkages with the parties and government administrative offices, the more powerful this person is considered. The Table-2.24 presents a comparative status on the support-base of political parties among leaders and households:

Table- 2.24
Political affiliation of leaders and households heads

Name of Party	Rampur		Sonapur	
	HH Heads	Leaders	HH Heads	Leaders
a) BNP	42	30	34	32
b) AL	29	40	33	42
c) JP	3	30	10	5.3
d) JI	1.5	0	2.9	0
e) Not aware & interested	24.5	0	20.1	20.7
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

It is clear from the Table[2.24] that the first two major political parties of the country have their support-base among the households as well as leaders in both the study villages. However, more than one-fifth of the villagers are neither aware nor interested in political affairs. They remain uncommitted to any particular political party. It is interesting to note that in Sonapur the percentage of 'not aware and interested' households is less than that of Rampur. One of the reasons for such difference might be the impact of organized development activities of both government and voluntary agencies.

CHAPTER-3 : THE TRADITIONAL POWER STRUCTURE OF RAMPUR AND ITS RECENT CHANGES

The traditional leadership : forms and styles

There are ten leaders in Rampur village, two formal and eight informal. They can easily be identified by any one after staying in the village for some times. In reality, village power is concentrated in the hands of these few individuals. On average they hold more land [leader 18.0 and household 3.6 acres] than the households and have more family members [leader 7.7 and household 5.1 persons]. Besides the human and material resources, education also plays a significant role as a source of power. In Rampur, the education of all leaders is above class-X level to Master degree. Of the formal leaders, one is the present Chairman of the Union *Parishad* and the other one is a member of the same *Parishad*. The Chairmen and members of Union *Parishads* are known as the formal leaders in rural Bangladesh. They usually come from the informal leadership of the villages and have direct influence in the villages. Traditionally, those who run for formal leadership understand that Union *Parishad* leadership is very important in the socio-political matrix that runs the state. In fact, they constitute the base of the overall power structure. To reach the rural masses, the national leaders need to use the Union *Parishad* leaders as their 'contactors' and 'contractors'. In the above context, the present study has laid due emphasis on a careful empirical inquiry into the mechanism of social formation and the sources of power of the existing formal leaders of the study villages. Observations suggest that village-power and its style of politics are understood through the activities of those institutions which exercise such power. They are Union *Parishad*, village level elections, political party activities in the village, *salish*, village factions and touts, etc.

Union Parishad and the formal leaders

With the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, rural political institutions were also re-organised. The new constitution of Bangladesh prescribed the re-organisation of Local Self-Government. I shall limit my present discussion about the Union level to the extent that has direct relevance with our study villages. The then 'Union Council' was replaced by '*Union Parishad*' as the lowest tier of the Local Self-Government. But there are some differences in the organisations and structures of the *Union Parishad* as compared with the Union Council. A number of villages group together to constitute a Union and a *Parishad* with the responsibility of local administration, both executive and judicial. The *Union Parishad* is the lowest formal political unit in the present political set-up for rural Bangladesh representing the state. The next higher unit is the Upazila (Sub-district) *Parishad*. The traditional functions that the *Union Parishad* has to perform are providing safety and security to the village people and settling village disputes.

For the purposes of the *Union Parishad* elections, every Union is divided into three wards and three members are elected from each ward. A ward may cut across the boundary of a village, depending on the population size of a village. Of our study villages, Rampur is one of the 10 constituent villages of Rampur Mouza (revenue village), while Sonapur is one of the constituent villages of another mouza. Rampur has one and Sonapur has two members of the *Parishad*. The Chairman of Rampur *Union Parishad* has been mostly elected from the Talukdar and Chowdhury families since the introduction of the Local Self-Government in 1919 during British rule. During the Bangladesh period four persons were Chairmen of the Rampur *Union Parishad*. Of these four persons, two were from the Talukdar families, one from the Chowdhury families and the other one is a close relative of the Talukdars.

In fact, Rampur village has been still playing an important political role in the area, and especially at the election of Union *Parishad* level. As the Union *Parishad* office is located in Rampur village, and the leaders are comparatively rich and educated, it is easier for this village to exert greater influence over other villages. In the past, the landed Muslim individuals or families with high social status and upper caste Hindu businessmen were very prominent and influential in the locality but at present mostly the rich households of Chowdhury and Talukdar families are leading. These few households always control the local affairs and local politics of Rampur. They are influential because they were traditionally the owners of land and as such they control the livelihood of the locality. In fact, they were the traditional repositories of power in Rampur as well as in the neighbourhood. The local people referred to another adjacent but less influential village in the area with which Rampur village has conflicts and competition, particularly at the time of local level elections and also during the distribution of government grants at the village level.

On the other hand, Sonapur has no such past record of political leadership having a Union *Parishad* Chairman within itself. It only had the leadership of the Union *Parishad* at the level of member. Moreover, they do not come from traditional family background as leaders as is seen in Rampur village.

According to Table-3.2, it is very interesting to investigate and observe that in the Rampur village all the leaders [10 persons] have some form of kinship relation and have a kind of peer-group spirit. Almost every evening they sit together to play cards and as such they get the opportunities to collect up-to-date information about the village and other related matters through mutual dialogue.

However, they are strongly divided ideologically as the local level organizers of the different political parties of the country. They act as the local agents of power and influence their respective political parties. But in Sonapur village, power is distributed among many hands and as such the leaders are never politically united. Major national political parties have influence in both the villages.

Salish

Settling the village disputes is one of the major functions of the village leaders through a *Salish* or *shava*. *Salish* itself suggests an important aspect of village politics. In rural Bangladesh, the Union *Parishad* is a formal body responsible for providing the safety and security of the village people and settling village disputes. Besides, a *Salish* is one of the informal bodies at the village level through which power is exercised. The members who sit in the *Salish* as arbiters to settle disputes are both the formal and informal leaders of the village, who are generally known as *matbars*. A *Salish* usually sits in the house of a *Khandan*. All *Salishies* in Rampur village sit in the house of the Union *Parishad* Chairman, while in case of Sonapur *Salish* meetings are held in the houses of 5 to 7 different *matbars*. For the settlement of any dispute in the village, the parties involved in the dispute generally seek arbitration from the *matbars* of the village. The *matbars* then meet in *Salish*. After hearing views from all parties involved and the witnesses, they pronounce the judgment. Thus, the *matbars* are traditionally the recognised arbiters of the village disputes. In all the disputes, the *matbars* may not be the same set of persons (Chowdhury, 1978:127-129). However, in Rampur village arbiters constitute the single set of 10 existing leaders. No *Salish* can be held without them; but some may be absent in any *Salish*. The influence of the

matbars belonging to Rampur is so overwhelming that they are sometimes called to settle the disputes of the neighbouring villages.

In my study I have observed that two new aspects of *Salish* are gradually emerging in the Sonapur village. First, disputes of the members of the groups organized by the supportive agencies are being settled in the collective meetings amicably. In such cases, group leaders take the role of arbitrators. The role of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Secretary of the group become prominent. This is possible when all the parties involved in dispute are members of a group or groups. During my stay in Sonapur I observed two cases of disputes which were settled at group level. In one case a group member's vegetable plot was destroyed by a goat of another member. In another case a widow group member was beaten by her relatives. The first case was settled by a single group in two meetings. However, the second case was settled by taking the support of the leaders of two other groups and two village leaders who are not group members. But the concerned group took the initiative to settle the dispute. I attended such meetings of the groups as an outside observer.

The second emerging aspect of the *Salish* is that through the group or organizational process women are being involved to settle their disputes. Women group members themselves take initiatives to settle disputes of the group members among themselves. This aspect of *Salish* is emerging as a **new element**, which is fully absent in Rampur village. From the above observations, we can assume that if the number of organized groups increases, the traditional function of village leaders to settle disputes and the traditional role of *Salish* will slowly be taken over by the groups. This means that a basic change in the nature and function of the rural power structure is emerging through the institution building process of the supportive agencies.

Support-base of political parties

Table-3.1 presents the extent of support the households and the leaders give with regard to the national political parties. Their support occasionally appears as political factions in the village. This tendency of the masses and the leaders is always visible during the period of holding elections at both local and national levels.

It is clear from the Table that Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Awami League (AL) and Jatiya Party (JP) are the major political forces in our study villages. These parties have both village level organizers and followers. Village leaders are the major organizers of the parties. It is interesting to note that other political parties have neither organizers nor supporters at the leadership level.

Table-3.1

Extent of support-base of political parties

Name of Party	Rampur		Sonapur	
	Leaders	Households	Leaders	Housholds
a) BD Nationalist Party [BNP]	30	42	32	34
b) Awami League [AL]	40	29	42	33
c) Jatiya Party [JP]	30	3	5.3	10
d) Jamaat-i Islami	0	1.5	0	2.9
e) Not aware and interested	0	24.5	20.7	20.1
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party have respectively 29%, 42%, and 3% supporters among the households and 40%, 30%, and 30% supporters among the leaders of Rampur village. In Sonapur they have 33%, 34%, and 10% supports among the households and 42%, 32% & 5.3% among the leaders.

Jamaat-i Islami has 1.5% and 2.9% support only among the household of Rampur and Sonapur respectively. About 24.5% and 20.1% households of Rampur and Sonapur respectively are neither aware nor interested in supporting a political party. The same attitude is evident among 20.7% leaders of Sonapur while it does not exist at all in case of Rampur. Another important conclusion may be drawn from the 'not aware and interested' group, especially on the difference of political awareness between the two study villages. The difference is about 4.4%. This difference means that the villagers of Sonapur are politically a little more aware than those of Rampur village. The main reasons for such difference are the regular meetings, various trainings and institution-building process of the socio-economic groups formed by the supportive agencies. Such discussions also include the successes and failures of the national political activities.

Elections

During the Parliamentary Elections of erstwhile East Pakistan in 1970, more than 90% of villagers voted for the Awami League. Gradually this support declined, especially because of the famine of 1974, and the change of governments in later periods. Such changes also altered the attitudes of people towards national politics. The BNP Government during its first tenure in power [1975-82] introduced "*Gram Sarkar*" [Village Government] system, a 12-member village development committee, which helped establish BNP's political base at the village level. Similarly, the Ershad regime [Jatiya Party] through its Upazila [sub-district] local level government body could create the party organization in the village. Jamaat-i-Islami, after independence, was a banned political party and in 1986 the BNP Government allowed it to resume political

activities. Jamaat-i-Islami is now primarily working through the village Muslim religious institutions, viz. Mosques, Madrasas, etc. They use religious forums in the village for political propaganda and follow a 'door-to-door approach' to motivate people. In some cases, they use 'fatwa' [religious edict] to serve their political purposes.

In Sonapur village, the Jamaat is increasing its influence, especially among the Mohammadia sect. The first local level election held after the independence in the study villages was the Union *Parishad* election of December 1973. In the election of Rampur Union *Parishad* in 1973 the chairman and one member were elected. It is interesting to note that all the chairmen of Rampur Union *Parishad* till today have always been elected from Rampur village, i.e. either from the Chowdhury, Talukder or their close relative families. The member of Rampur village has also been elected from these two families. Several members of these families contested in such elections. Sonapur village can elect two members of the Union *Parishad* if they are united. Up to now, Sonapur was able to have two members at a time in the Union *Parishad*. The techniques of political campaigns have also changed to a certain extent in Sonapur, where unlike Rampur, organized groups play a significant role. Contesting candidates, instead of individual contacts, give more emphasis on meeting the organized groups. In the Union *Parishad* elections of 1991, one of the contesting candidates for the membership gave one member of a group Tk. 300/- to distribute among the members and vote for him. It should be stated that the group members discussed the matter in the meeting and decided not to vote for that candidate and they gave the money back. This also means that an individual member of a group can not decide unilaterally for others; they need to discuss the matter in the meeting for final decisions.

An important observation that may be made regarding the activities of the above political parties in the study villages is that parties exist through their organizing structures, viz. the leaders, but without “a political programme to help people develop” [Rahman and Mamatajuddin in ‘The Daily Sangbad’ on 29-8-94]. The leaders themselves are ‘centre-oriented’ and make people [supporters] to be of the same attitude. Each of the parties has its recognized and ‘recruited’ village level leaders as ‘organizers’ to reach the party-supporters for obtaining votes. The *Thana*, District and also the national level leaders depend on those formal and informal village leaders, and in return, most village leaders consider this linkage with the upper level leaders as their important source of power and influence. Since the parties at the village level lack activities for the people, the leaders are found to be in a search for getting a share of *Thana* or District level government projects. In such cases, the leaders of the party in power are always in the most advantageous position. However, it is also observed that most of the household heads consider the activities of the political parties as merely the politics of words and commitments. In most cases, such politics of words eventually led to blaming and condemning other parties as well as other leaders.

Rural factions and touts

In the study villages, there exist conflicts and competitions concerning control over resources-- both human and material. Creation of political factions among the villagers are the ultimate results of such conflicts. However, conflicts always may not give birth to factions. On the other hand, factions may also lead to conflicts. A faction is generally identified by its hostile opposition to another faction and close interaction among its members. In the present study, faction is used to describe a pervasive form

of villagers' political and inter-group interactions. This also refers to the political grouping of villagers recruited by leaders on the basis of diverse ties [Pocock 1957: 295-306].

In Rampur, to some extent, there is a presence of kinship rivalry between the Talukdar and the Chowdhury families. Villagers claim that it was worse in the past. A faction in the rural areas assumes crucial importance before and during the Union *Parishad* election. Rampur has demonstrated a kind of rivalry behaviour with the adjacent village which is almost equally rich and influential in many respects. On different issues like- elections, getting government grants, maintaining influence in local schools, etc. there were conflicts and tensions. In several occasions such conflicts took the shape of political factions and groupings. Sonapur had much less of such situations. Two factors seem to play positive roles. The 'dialogue programmes' create opportunities for sharing of views by the villagers in different forms and forums. Such discussions and forums help result compromises for the good of the village. Another reason may be, as noted by Rahman, "the increase in the non-agricultural income is directly responsible for the declining significance of faction as a source of power" (1989b:87). In Sonapur, non-farm activities are continuously increasing through the project activities of the supportive agencies.

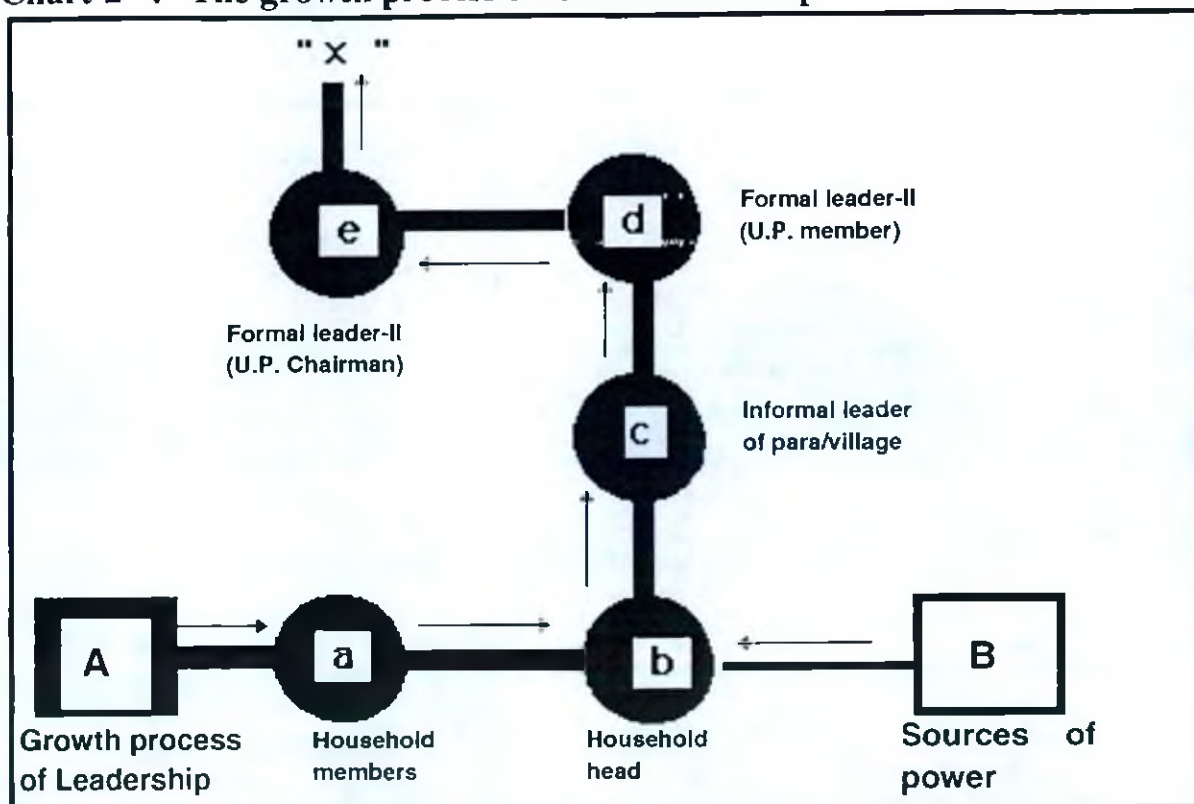
The relationship between the touts and the rural powerholders is indeed very intimate. Touts are either themselves local powerholders or represent the leaders or institutions and work as agents of the rural influential. Touts enjoy the confidence of local influential because of their more active, strategic and manipulating skills. They work as liaison and brokers (Rahman, 1989a, 312-329). They primarily work for money and have no scruples. The role of touts

as village middlemen is mainly emerging in connection with the extension of formal credit facilities in the rural areas. They are known as 'recovery agents', identified by a case study by Binayak Sen who has observed that the role of such agents is quite essential to facilitate the process of agricultural credit disbursed by the National Commercial Banks [NCBs] and Bangladesh Krishi Bank [BKBs] (1988:160). The touts also have the capacity to create problems, conflicts and even initiate violence in the village in order to satisfy their goals. During my stay in the study villages I was able to identify 3 persons [one in Rampur and two in Sonapur] who are acting as village middle-men and touts. In Rampur two village leaders and in Sonapur several leaders use them and take the help of those middle-men for their different individual and factional purposes. They are primarily involved for buying and selling of lands and cattle, contacting clients for sterilization, and one person in Sonapur is working as a broker for bank loans for the villagers.

Growth process of formal leadership

The following Chart-2 and its description demonstrate major trends in the growth process of formal leadership. Box "A" of the said chart denotes the growth process with 5 developmental stages shown as **a, b, c, d, e**, etc. Box "B" represents the sources of power which help strengthen the growth process of the formal leadership. The process starts with strengthening "b" and then "c" and other upward steps of the ladder. It is clear from the said chart that in order to become a formal leader, a villager usually has to follow the steps shown in the chart one after another.

Chart-2 : The growth process of formal leadership



As shown in the above chart, "a" represents household members. Of the household members one becomes a household head, mentioned as "b" in the chart. Since a rural household is usually a male-dominated, the husband/father in the single household normally becomes its head. Only in his absence, the wife gets the opportunity to head the household. The present study found 20 cases where women are household heads. In an extended household, the first son normally occupies the leadership position when the father retires because of age and physical capability does not allow him to continue as leader any more. In almost 18.8% cases, the second son was made household head because of higher education and / or the first son leaving the family for some other reasons. Household

heads receive leadership formation informally by performing their role as household heads every day. Thus from among the household heads those having very strong backing of "B", i.e. the sources of power, normally have the chance of becoming informal leaders at the higher level.

The "c" is the informal leadership step to provide leadership in one or more *Paras*. However, to become informal leaders, the support of "B", which refers to the sources of power, is necessary. The stronger the source is, the more likelihood is that a household head will become an informal leader. The present study found altogether 28 village leaders, of whom 3 are formal leaders, viz. one chairman and two Union Parishad members. The "d" refers to the first step of formal leadership. In the present study, one Union Parishad member in each study village is functioning as a formal leader. Both before stepping into "d" were informal village leaders. The formal leadership -II, referred to as "e", is the chairman of the Union *Parishad*. It is the highest leadership position in rural Bangladesh at the village level.

The present study shows that only Rampur village has one Union *Parishad* Chairman and another 3 ex-Chairmen and none from Sonapur village since our independence in 1971.

The "X" represents upper level leadership, viz. *Thana*, District or Parliament levels. In almost all cases, such leaders come from step "e". It is also interesting to note that once some village level leaders are elevated into the "X" step, they move out from the village. Usually such leaders also have houses in the *Thana* or District towns. They live

there and visit the villages only occasionally. In Rampur village, long ago there was an "X" level leader and the household permanently settled in the town, although it still has homestead and landed property in the village.

"B", in the chart, refers to the bases of power which strengthen the process of "A". For the household heads, "B" is not adequately present, they continue to remain household heads. But only a few who have "B" as supporting element are able to become informal leaders. Table- 3.2 shows that most village leaders [more than 70%] of Rampur are landed gentry. They possess a solid base of material and human resources. Besides, they are moderately educated and are allied with the upper echelon of political hierarchy and local administrative authority.

Table-3.2 shows a brief account on each of the present formal and informal leaders of Rampur village. If the data shown in this Table [3.2] are compared with the general masses, it becomes explicit that the leaders normally emerge from the households with big land ownership, large households and lineage, education and households having linkages with political parties. All these factors operate as the sources of power. While this traditional trend of leadership development is very positive in Rampur village, there are some interesting exceptions found in Sonapur where 22.22% of the leaders have emerged from the households which do not have social background of leadership.

Table - 3.2
A summary of the major characteristics of the village leaders of Rampur

Leaders	Age	Household Member	Household Structure	Education	Occupation	Land (in acre)	Household Background as leaders				
							Self	Father	Grand-father	Father-in-law	
A	76	11	Single	V	Business + Agriculture	7	Matbar	Matbar	Matbar	Matbar	
B	55	4	Single	HSC	Agriculture + Business	4.28	"	"	UP-Member	Matbar	
C	40	6	Extended	B.Com	Agriculture + Business	11+	"	"	Matbar	UP-Member	
D	44	5	Single	HSC	Business + Agriculture	12	"	"	Matbar	UP-Chairman	
E	43	8	Single	B.A	Service + Agriculture	25+	Contested UP-Ch.	"	UP-Chairman	UP-Member	
F	40	9	Extended	HSC	Agri- UP Chairman	22+	UP-Chairman	"	"	Matbar	
G	46	4	Single	M.A.	Service Chairman	20	Matbar	x	Matbar	"	
H	42	4	Extended	SSC	Agri UP Chairman	16	UP-Member	Matbar	"	"	
I	40	5	Single	IX	Agriculture	3.1	Matbar	UP-Chairman	"	x	
J	40	7	Extended	HSC	Service + Agriculture	10	Matbar	UP-Member	"	UP-Chairman	

Source : Field work in Rampur village.

It is needless to mention that in the rural areas of Bangladesh land is seen as the most important source of power and the major means of livelihood of the households. Thus a land-based categorization of existing leaders helps further understanding of the rural power structure which has been presented in Table-5.1.

This classification clearly demonstrates the fact that Rampur village which is a traditional one, is a landed village. About 70% leaders of this village come from the land-rich category. The leadership of Rampur village is very concentrated in the hands of a few landed households. The lower land owning categories have hardly any chance to enter into the traditional power circle. As noted earlier, leaders of Rampur village come from the two traditionally influential *gostis*, viz. the Talukdar and the Chowdhury. These leaders are moderately to highly educated and they used to control activities of different political parties in the village.

On the other hand, according to the above empirical data and my personal observations, power and leadership is highly decentralized in Sonapur village. The only formal leader [member of the Union *Parishad*] also very much depends on several informal leaders for making major decisions. A 70-year old informal leader, who himself was a Union *Parishad* member twice, said; "now-a-days people do not want to hear the leaders, but during Pakistan time and also before nobody dared to say anything against the few '*jadrel neta*'¹ (very powerful leader). It seems today everyone is a leader". Another 62-year old and respected informal leader, who claims to be the first matriculate in the village, and a school teacher for 18 years, ex-Union *Parishad* member, and a contestant for the Union *Parishad* Chairmanship said, "today leaders can not

1. '*Jadrel neta*' is a local term, used to mean a very powerful and influential leader. Villagers use this term to evaluate a leader- whether the leader is powerful or not.

make decisions by themselves alone.” He claims that the villagers do not depend much on the leaders for their decisions. The Union *Parishad* member of the village and the Chairman [whom the village people supported] come to the masses quite often, even on ordinary occasions. They discuss with the informal *Samaj* leaders and the groups organized by the supportive agencies. It is also easy for the Chairman/members of the *Parishad* to meet the poor people, especially in their *samities* [groups] who collectively appear to be enjoying power of making decisions to some extent. Many villagers think that the major change that has taken place in the Sonapur village during the last two decades is the growth of many *samities* of the poor and marginal people. A school teacher [also a leader] has expressed his views in the following manner: "Many small groups of people have sprung up and you can see noticeable socio-economic activities especially among the poor and the marginalized people. The most visible change which I can witness and feel as a village leader, is the change of people's attitude. They now do not ask the leaders whom to vote for. Women also do the some thing. Now-a-days during election time I do not like to suggest about any candidate. I still remember well, before the last Union *Parishad* election 3 candidates for the post of chairman came to me individually and requested me to ask people to vote for each of them. I told them straight that my advice will be useless."

Thus it is quite clear from the above growth-process of formal leadership that it is almost impossible for an ordinary villager to become a leader without following this general process. What makes possible the breaking of the process will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE EMERGING LEADERSHIP PATTERN OF SONAPUR : THE IMPACT OF INTERVENTIONS OF THE SUPPORTIVE AGENCIES

Models of rural development in Bangladesh : Interventions of the supportive agencies

Rural development in the Asian and Pacific countries have been considered as an important part of the nation-building task which involves government's responsibility. Most governments have taken this as an advantage to consider it as a field of politics to be used for their political gains [Siedentof 1987: 1-2]. For doing so, governments use their highly centralized political and administrative system to establish a separate ministry/directorate to deal with it. In some countries, the activities of the local government organs were also merged into those of the concerned ministry/directorate so that the local bodies may use the governments' rural development initiatives to reach the goals of the central government. In fact, these are the lingering attitudes and interests of the colonial regimes. Surprisingly, the end of colonial rule could not lead to the abolition of the systems that had been developed by it. However, due to administrative bottlenecks, inefficiency and failure to reach the poor, two alternative ways gradually emerged for rural development. viz. :

- [i] Governments in some countries of Asia and the Pacific initiated self-governed semi-autonomous organizations within government systems to reach specific target groups. Specifically, East Pakistan [later Bangladesh] initiated the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), later Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) from the top; and
- [ii] Voluntary efforts of local communities or organizations were initiated from below [ibid :25-26].

The impact and experiences of the above-mentioned initiatives of rural development have been discussed in detail with particular reference to the study villages.

Although the region which is known as Bangladesh today remained subjected to the foreign domination for many centuries, there was never any genuine initiative of rural development during this long period of colonial rule. Some benevolent rulers at best undertook few casual welfare measures, like construction of roads and bridges, digging tanks and canals for supply of water and building of roadside shelters for tourists and passers-by, etc. But there was no conscious and planned effort in this respect. The Permanent Settlement Act of 1793 brought about a major change in the existing land tenure system of Bengal, which had profound impact on its social structure. It created a new class of landlords with a view to ensuring regular revenue realization ; but the *Zamindars* did not invest their revenues for the improvement of land. Rather, the landlords and other rent-receiving intermediaries were free to collect any amount of rent from the tenants and thus exploited them according to their own will. This created serious discontents among the tenants who started no-rent campaigns and compelled the authorities concerned to introduce the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 which was followed by several other amendments in 1920, 1938 and 1940 [Chowdhury 1982 : 71 - 74].

The Sher-e-Bangla, A. K. Fazlul Haq, the first Premier of undivided Bengal Government, introduced a number of measures for the benefit of the people of rural Bengal, especially the tenant class, by the amendment of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1938. These steps had a far-reaching effect on the rural development of Bengal. T.I.M. Nurunnabi Chowdhury, a veteran civil servant, encouraged people to organize **Pally Mangal Samities**

[Village Welfare Societies] when he worked as District Magistrate in several Districts during 1931-42. He urged the rural people to raise agricultural production by using improved seeds and fertilizers, and establish night schools for their literacy. He was later made the first Director of the newly-created Department of Rural Reconstruction in 1938.

Rabindranath Tagore advocated for creation of co-operatives in agriculture; his programmes of '*Sriniketan*' gave priority to the establishment of the Pally Mangal Samity, health co-operatives, adult education centres, etc. The land reform of the erstwhile East Pakistan by the *Zamindari* Abolition Act of 1950 gave rights of land ownership to the *rai-yats* [tenants]. Consequently the Hindu *Zamindars*, the main big landowners of East Bengal, began to migrate to India. Meanwhile, the first organized rural development programme was launched in the name of - Village Agricultural Industrial Development [V-AID] by the East Pakistan Government in 1954. The V-AID basically encouraged a Community Development Programme and brought the concept of government involvement in development work to the forefront " [Haq 1978 : 15]; but it met with very little success. The main reasons for its failure were the absence of people's participation at the grassroot level and its over-dependence on foreign experts and aid, for which it was stopped in 1961.

Comilla Model

In Bangladesh, the 'Comilla Model' of agricultural farmers' co-operatives were the first grass-root organizations for rural development. This model was replicated throughout the country before the birth of Bangladesh in the name of 'Integrated Rural Development programme' [IRDP], which was later re-named 'Bangladesh Rural Development Board' [BRDB]. Although the Comilla Model has made a substantial contribution in

introducing irrigation facilities and High Yielding Varieties [HYV] of paddy throughout the country, including the study villages, the critics commented in their evaluations on the major limitations of the model [Rahman 1994:8-9]. In Rampur village there is no *Krishi Samabai Samity* [KSS] or farmers' co-operative; yet most rich and middle farmers produce HYV paddy through using irrigation. And in the Sonapur village the only KSS has not been functioning since 1986, primarily because of the non-recovery of loans. The large farmers, usually the office-bearers [Chairman, Secretary, Manager, Cashier, etc.], borrowed loans nearly five times more than the ordinary members and thus they became the biggest defaulters [Monin 1992:155-160]. The same is the situation in Sonapur village with the BRDB group. The KSS of Sonapur also had a deep tube-well with one and half k.m. long concrete water drains, which are not now being used.

Huge government subsidies on agricultural inputs generally went to the KSS members directly, who were mostly the rich and the middle farmers. As such subsidies acted as incentives to grow more food; production increased tremendously. But when such subsidies were curtailed gradually, the farmers became skeptic about the existence of the KSS. This meant that the 2-tier co-operative [KSS at the village level and Central *Thana* Cooperative Association-- CTCA at the *Thana* level] lacked the inner strength to continue without government support and subsidies. Besides this, it has become apparent that in most places the co-operatives are now being taken over by large farmers, which has discouraged the small and middle ones. This is one of the important aspects that if the government programmes are not carefully implemented and directed towards the specific target groups, the benefits of such efforts would eventually reach only the top economic category of the society. The same

is true for almost all government programmes in Bangladesh; i.e. they are pro-rich/elite, even though the objectives might have been to giving priority to the poor and weaker sections of the population. In fact, the BRDB model ignored the need for exclusive attention to the poor, especially the women which was, however, strongly felt later on.

Moreover, the evaluation reports of these programmes did not find much differences between the economic performance of KSS members and non-members. The size of the co-operative was another important point that they were too large to respond to the individual needs of the members.

In view of the failures of the KSS of Comilla model to reach the poor, the BRDB subsequently had to introduce a special co-operative programme for the *Bittaheen* [assetless] *Samabay Samity* [BSS] in 1983. This scheme was started in some selected *Thanas*, especially for the assetless women for poverty alleviation through off-farm income-generation activities. In none of our study villages or even in the respective *Thanas* this special scheme is in operative.

Grameen Bank¹

It is one of the most important initiatives for the rural development in Bangladesh, which has already made a remarkable coverage throughout the country in the recent years. It was established in order to organize exclusively *Grameen* [rural] poor women, i.e. the below 50% households through credit programme; so that they can generate productive self-employment for themselves through the activities of their own choice and

1. Prof. Md. Yunus, a former professor of economics in Chittagong University during the days of 1974 famine began experimenting with lending small amount of money from his own pocket to the starving poor without any collateral to see if they could produce something which they could sell in the market and earn some margin for themselves after returning the capital. He found that it worked. By 1994, it has served 2 million of its members with the total accumulated disbursements of about \$ 1.1 billion through 1,045 branches and 11,000 staff.

eventually could have earned the ownership of a bigger thing, viz. a bank by the poor. The UNDP Human Development Report of 1996 quotes Dr. Yunus regarding priorities of the poor for employment - "Creating gainful work opportunities is more than employment. People should be able to work for themselves, not have to be employed ... We are trying to get away from the job concept. We should create our own income-earning opportunities... However, my emphasis is not self-employment as such - that means doing my own thing, not sharing with my neighbour or anybody. It is ok. But if I want to do a bigger thing, if I want to create a bank, say, I need somebody else's co-operation. So we create a company which is owned by many people, like a corporation. The Grameen Bank is owned by the borrowers" (UNDP Report, 1996:31). From the very beginning, the *Grameen Bank*-model took note of the major limitations of the Comilla Model of rural development, and made its own approach to organize small groups of five, which are then federated into women's centres at village level and then branches, areas, zones, etc. at higher levels.

To my understanding *Grameen Bank* not only makes available credit to the poor without land as loan security, who once were denied institutional credit facilities, but also helps establish **access to credit as a human right**. And this access to capital is considered as an entry-point for overall socio-economic changes of the poor households. One of the significant economic impacts of *Grameen Bank* and other supportive agencies is that the exploitative old money-lending system has significantly been stopped through bringing institutional credit facilities closer to the poor. Dr. Mahabub Hossain, the former Director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies [BIDS], made an impact study in 1984 on women's involvement in productive activities among *Grameen Bank* groups to primarily focus on employment, productivity and

income of the poor women. Hossain's major findings were as follows:

Thirty six percent loan applicants did not have any productive employment at the time of joining the bank. Of these loan applications, each took up new activities to create new employment opportunities for themselves.

The net income of group members was positive, while their labour productivity was extremely low. Hossain found that in 4 out of 7 cases of such economic activities, labour productivity was higher than the existing wage rate. But the fact remains that in a rural society like Bangladesh whatever earnings poor women make are considered as an additional or extra income for the households. Most rural poor women utilize their own and other members' labour in their new earning activities. It was difficult to estimate the earnings of women members separately because those who initiate self-employment activities also helped men in the families in other income-earning activities. Employment opportunities in the rural labour market are extremely limited even for the male members of landless and near-landless categories. This means that employment opportunities for women are not at all available. Moreover, because of socio-religious factors most women prefer to stay indoors and initiate home-based self-employed activities as much as possible. Hossain claimed that this was the reason why such a large number of poor women join the *Grameen Bank* and the other similar initiatives.

According to Dr. Hossain the *Grameen Bank's* work among the poor women has generated a strong feeling of protest against the male-manufactured social taboo that women were completely dependent.

As such a large number of women started coming forward to avail themselves of credit facilities for initiating self-employed activities for additional earning of their households. Hossain also found that women's earnings were primarily used on education of children, health and household purposes. The top priority was for education of children, which means more investment on people for future betterment. Hossain claimed that the earnings of women, how small they were, helped elevate the position of women in their families and in society (Hossain 184 : 11 - 25).

A recent study on the *Grameen Bank* by Atiur Rahman (1994) of BIDS identified some of the factors behind the success of the *Grameen Bank*. These are :

The *Grameen Bank* goes closer to the borrowers and not the other way round, as is mostly the case in other banks and organizations. This has served to encourage more participation by the rural poor. It has been also noted that the *Grameen Bank* has been able to identify and reach the hard-core poor (i.e, poor women). Rahman found that already 92% of more than a million borrowers of the *Grameen Bank* are rural poor women. The poor women, being the poorest and the weakest who are constantly in search of alternative opportunities for livelihood, respond positively to the *Grameen Bank's* efforts at strengthening them economically and socially (Rahman 1994:15-17).

The *Grameen Bank* encourages their borrowers to initiate more than one activity (project). In case a borrower buys a cow which will start giving income after some time, the *Grameen Bank* suggests initiating a second activity (say, raising chickens or another activity) so that they may be regular in paying installments. Moreover, there is an incentive

of repeating loans for those borrowers who do not default and who ensure a high rate of recovering loans.

Savings is another essential component to partially contributing to self-employed activities. Group members deliberately decide about regular savings which help them develop [i] a savings habit, and [ii] accumulation of capital within each group.

It may be noted that credit is not an end in itself. It does not mean anything more than giving some amount of money to the borrower, if he/she is not mentally prepared to utilize it in innovative as well as income-earning activities. This requires proper understanding and collaboration of other members within the group itself and also with other groups. Thus, the key to the success of the *Grameen bank* is, no doubt, the ability of the borrowers to invest loans for profitable use. The Bank's extension workers are required to play an initial role for strengthening the abilities of the borrowers. For doing so, bank staff are provided with a 6-month field-based intensive training. All these are important to help develop commitment and professional skills of the staff, which bring success in activities.

It is also important to note that alternative appropriate institution-building is another key aspect of the *Grameen Bank's* rural development strategy and effort. The small groups, together with their net-works and the Bank as a whole, form such an alternative institution which provides the poor to have an access to institutional credit facilities.

The bank has evolved a few basic principles which work as a source of strength and of the cause for which *Grameen Bank* stands. This has

been noted under 18-point principles followed by the supportive agencies, given in page 146.

There are, however, certain limitations of the *Grameen Bank* groups. The *Grameen Bank* forms very small groups of only five members. Small groups are ideal from an economic point of view, but not from the point of social, political or joint actions against local level injustices. In the latter case they are less effective. I have found that such small groups can well manage and undertake more economic activities than the bigger groups. On an average, each member of a *Grameen Bank* group has almost two times more economic activities/projects than the bigger-size groups organized by other PVDOS. Small groups can effectively lead people to gain only personal-material benefits, leaving social and community responsibilities un-attended. Moreover, mere economic activities of such tiny groups tend to make people individualistic and create unbridgeable divisions among people and eventually this serves the interests of the rich and the oppressors. Social solidarity and empowerment of the poor is an essential pre-condition to build up countervailing power of the poor to work for their own and the wider community's interest and well-being.

Another serious limitation of the *Grameen Bank* programme is that as more and more members engage in similar income-generating activities the prices of their goods and services lose demand in the markets locally, unless some direct organizational support is given to enlarge markets in and outside the village. The mechanism of such support has not yet been developed by the *Grameen Bank*. As a result, what happens now is the re-distribution of limited employment opportunities and income of the village. But in a very few cases, real new employment opportunities have been created.

In view of the above mentioned limitations, Fawzi Al-Sultan, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) while addressing to the first-ever Micro-Credit Summit held in February 2-4, 1997 in Washington has remarked that "Two decades after the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh launched what is now called 'Micro-Credit revolution'; those with experience in providing small loans to the very poor say that such programmes are effective, but only as one of many necessary tools of development. Micro-finance requires a balanced and careful approach and needs to be combined with complementary measures to make real inroads in poverty reduction. Those measures include access to better technologies, education, health care, fair markets and adequate infrastructure" (The Daily Star, February 7, 1997, page 7, Dhaka).

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)²

The BRAC is now considered the largest and one of the leading PVDOs, not only in Bangladesh but also in the whole of Asia. Its involvement is primarily based on an integrated multi-dimensional rural development approach. The BRAC gives priority to the participation and empowerment of the rural poor women, like most other PVDOs which eventually help build-up institutions of the poor. The development strategies of the BRAC consists of two major goals: the alleviation of rural poverty and the empowerment of the poor. To achieve these goals, the BRAC prioritizes people and their participation in the development process [BRAC Annual Report 1991:9].

Naveeda Khan and Eileen Stewart (1993), in their recently published three case studies, explained the BRAC's strategies under the title - *Institution*

2. BRAC has been established in 1972 with the initiative by its executive Director, Fazle Hassan Abed. The agency is now working among 1.8 million poor households, mostly women, for poverty alleviation. Another 1.2 million poor children are receiving primary education from BRAC's school programme.

Building and Development in Three Women Organizations of BRAC: Participation, Ownership and Autonomy - have highlighted the objectives, tactics and strategies of rural development. The authors have examined the extent of women's participation, ownership and autonomy in three different groups of three different villages on the basis of the following key indicators:

- Critical thinking by the group members;
- Involvement in the process of social change;
- The development of formal systems;
- The sense of ownership; and
- The development of autonomy.

They found that the process of institutionalization was taking place in all three groups. The building-up of viable institutions of the poor is one of the major strategies of the BRAC. The maturity of a group is measured in terms of its self-reliant leadership, management and funding. The process is similar to that of the *Grameen Bank* except: [i] the size of groups and [ii] the approach to activities. In regard to the critical thinking, members of the youngest groups were found to be uncritically supporters of the BRAC, whereas the members of the older groups could demand accountability unhesitatingly from the BRAC. Women in all three groups were seen to be aware of their legal and human rights. As women in the group, they develop a sense of common identity and dignity. They are commonly known as '*Samiteer Mohila*' [women of the groups] in the village. Each group has a history of its growth and the method of collective actions in order to establish their rights. Thus, their mutual sympathy and support to one another is very strong, which helps them in establishing their rights collectively. The older groups have relatively more ability to have access to public [government] goods and services. Each group has variety of experiences to tell to others. All these suggest the fact that a greater

number of women are increasingly coming forward through the institution-building process of the BRAC as well as the other PVDOs to involve themselves in the process of social change. A clear emphasis is shown on development of social awareness which will eventually help develop critical thinking for social change [Khan and Stewart 1993: 8-10].

The development of the formal systems, including members' acquisition of knowledge of holding meeting, election of leaders, credit management, groups' collective actions, etc., demonstrate clear progress in these respects over time. Women groups have developed a recognizable sense of ownership and autonomy. The following major indicators refer to the nature and extent of a group's sense of ownership and autonomy :

Women consider their own little savings as an essential contribution in the development process. Savings have given them a new sense of social security as well as potentiality for progress in future (ibid:10). Savings are also considered as an important component to build-up self-confidence of the rural poor, who used to generally think that it is impossible for them to save.

The selection of a group's leadership and the interaction between leaders and members are important phenomena of participation. This process helps the groups develop a democratic attitude and accountability-relationship in the group. The capacity to challenge the leadership and to demand accountability from them is something that the groups are generating day-by-day. This is the way through which development of a leader in the groups becomes possible. These are regarded as the elements of autonomy.

Group members genuinely feel that education is another important aspect in which the BRAC has been contributing significantly. The BRAC follows a 3-year non-formal education approach for school-aged but out-of-school children. In each of the working areas, the BRAC arranges some basic education to the children so that a good number of them may continue further studies after graduating from the BRAC schools. In Sonapur village the BRAC has been running two centres for adult literacy and in Rampur village its extension workers have started initial contacts in the adjacent villages of Rampur to start literacy centres sometime in 1995-96.

The BRAC has also made a significant contribution to motivating people regarding the preparation and the use of Oral Dehydration Saline [ORS] and plantation of mulberry trees for production of silk fabrics for helping the group members so that they can make additional earnings.

The BRAC's above-mentioned integrated rural development activities are reshaping the traditional inequality of power and thereby creating an environment in favour of the poor to have greater access to resources, participation in village activities and ultimately the village power as a whole. The BRAC and the other PVDOs believe that the development of the poor in Bangladesh can not be made possible independently, ignoring the problems and issues of human rights and social justice. There is a growing trend in the development activities of the PVDOs to give more emphasis on the problems of human rights for overall rural development. The PVDOs play a specific role in safeguarding and providing the rights of the poor which is essential for an integral or a total human development, rather than trying for mere improvement of their economic well-being. Thus development ultimately becomes the activities of establishment of the rights of the people,

in a holistic or an integral sense of the concept, as explicitly indicated by the internationally reputed economist, Amartya Sen (1990:120-21).

Caritas³

Through its Development Extension Education Services [DEEDS] and Integrated Women Development programmes, the Caritas has organized over 280,000 landless and marginal household members into groups of 15-30 each, of which 9 groups and 109 households are situated in Sonapur village. In the process of rural development, the Caritas realizes the importance of establishing close connection between human development and human rights in order to establish social justice. The analysis of a tradition-bound society like Bangladesh shows that its agrarian structure supports the existence of few elites at the top who control almost completely the lives of the majority of the population, who are poor and marginalized. In such a social structure, the poor remain as object of charity rather than subject for self-reliant development. In this situation, human rights, especially the right to life and livelihood, and the demand for social justice have become very much related with the activities of rural development. It is, therefore, through its efforts for rural development that the Caritas continues to strive for reducing poverty, inequality and discrimination of all forms, and finally wants to build up self-reliant institutions of the poor which may be human or inter-religious in nature [Timm 1994 : 20-21].

The homogeneous groups of the poor and the marginalized individuals can critically analyze, discuss their realities and problems, the main causes underlying such realities and the effective remedies they can initiate by

3. "Caritas" is a Latin word, means love. It is a Bangladeshi, non-profit, charitable organization established by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh to carry on activities to human welfare and development. It was founded in 1967 as the eastern branch of Caritas Pakistan.. As on June 1996, a total of 284,205 rural poor people are organised by Caritas into 14,394 groups in 77 Thanas[Caritas Annual Report 1995-96].

using their personal and local level resources. While development- education or dialogue programmes help people organize, the organized groups themselves initiate two major types of activities, viz. :

- [i] Different types of income-generation and employment-creation measures of the individual member's choice by using their own savings and credit available from the concerned supportive agency. Also the various types of skills development and back-up support services for capacity creation are provided through different supporting projects. For the groups interested in fish-culture are provided with technical, credit and management by a separate project. Similar support is given in sericulture for the employment creation of the members of the women groups. Different types of training courses in vocational trades are provided by Mobile and Fixed Trade Schools projects; pre/feeder school project provides opportunities of education to the school-aged children of group members. However, decisions on activities are taken by the members themselves. Activities are planned in such a way that an individual household member of a group gets several types of support for an integral development. A thorough assessment made by the NGO-Affairs Bureau and conducted by a 5-member research team of Rural Development Academy (RDA), Bogra who spent 6 months in the field studying groups organised by the Caritas came to the following conclusions:

Members of the organised groups attend 20 different types of training courses for the development of social awareness and professional skills which aim at making them resourceful and capable.

Members undertake as many as 18 types of income generating activities.

The trend was positive for employment in both main and subsidiary occupations, which is taken together, increased by 35.5%, and income from main and subsidiary occupations taken together increased by 59.62% (Aziz 1992:8-12).

- [ii] Identification of local-level injustices and initiation of collective actions against them: The groups became involved in as many as 12 types of social actions against local-level injustices and social problems, viz. marriage without dowry, resistance against repression of women, settlement of social conflicts, financial assistance to the poor, road repairing, etc. (Aziz 1992:13-14). Each group has experienced such social struggles with great human interest and inspiration. Simultaneously, each group together becomes a small moral force which stands for its own rightful causes. Establishment of the right of life and livelihood of people is the core to the empowerment and institution building process. Net-working and linkages of groups into federations at Union, *Thana* and Regional levels are seen as essential for greater sustainable changes.

After reviewing the rural development initiatives in the study villages the following major observations may be made:

That in Rampur village the poor and the marginalized are not organized by the supportive agencies while in Sonapur village a process of self-reliant development has begun and is taking root in thought, articulation and an organization-building process of the poor and the marginalized population. It is not mere economic change, but the beginning of a fundamental integral change in values and structures.

The specific and eventual task of the process is to create alternative values, structures and institutions for the benefit of the majority

population who are poor and marginalized. Development is not feasible unless the poor are empowered to restructure the institutions which exploit them. As such, the process is a political action as well [Shams 1987 : 108-112]. This politics means taking side and providing support to the weakest in the society, so that they can stand up for their basic human rights.

Another important aspect of rural development noticeable in Sonapur village is that decision-making power and implementation authority of projects and activities are more and more transferred from the centre to the periphery - the groups and their **net-works**⁴. This means that more involvement and participation of the poor and the marginalized themselves through their institutions in planning, managing, implementing and evaluating are taking place as an outcome of the development activities at the grass-roots level. This eventually strengthens the self-governed organizations of the poor and the marginalized. In the final analysis, the process of rural development activities of the supportive agencies in Sonapur are creating an environment for greater participation of the grassroot population in the decision-making process that affect their lives and livelihood. Consequently it leads to certain changes in the traditional power-structures.

Emerging leadership from below

A number of supportive agencies have been experimenting and have also gone a long way towards replicating their socio-economic programmes exclusively for the rural poor and the disadvantaged households, who constitute the a vast majority of the rural population. Such efforts aim at

4. Net-work: In different sections of the study this word has been used to refer to the groups and the institutional structures of the groups for greater linkages at area, regional and national levels. The supportive agencies consider such groups and their institutional structures as alternative institutions for safeguarding the interest of the poor and the marginalised households.

awareness-raising and **institution-building** of the bottom majority population. The Union in which Sonapur village is located has 23 villages, of which 20 are exclusively covered by such supportive agencies. In fact, Sonapur village has been selected in this respect because a maximum number of agencies are working there and a maximum coverage has also been made. The Table- 4.1 provides some information about the nature and extent of the involvement of those agencies :

Table -4.1**Affiliation of households with supportive agencies**

Name of agency	No. of Households covered	No. of members	
		Total	Female
BRDB	35	38	1
GB	61	62	62
BRAC	12	12	12
Caritas	109	126	55
CARE	1	1	1
TOTAL	218	239	131
No.& % of coverage	*[no.of actual coverage of HH182] *(% of actual 58.7)		

Source : Field Work in Sonapur village.

Of the above-mentioned agencies, some are working for a quite long time. The Caritas started its work immediately after the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971, especially in rebuilding the war-damaged houses. Then it took up an agricultural pilot scheme in the area for introducing HYV paddy, wheat and potatoes to boost up agricultural production. For this purpose the Caritas developed the **Target-Group Approach** with a view to form homogeneous self-reliant groups of the landless and marginal households. As many as 9 groups have been organized by the Caritas during the period of the present study. The BRDB started its activities in 1978, and have formed one group. Grameen Bank and BRAC began

their efforts in the early 1990's and so far organized 12 and one groups respectively.

Selection criteria of the households

The supportive agencies use three main criteria for the selection of the households under their programmes, viz. ownership of land to be less than half an acre per household, monthly income of family not more than Tk.2000/ and the dependence of the households primary on selling physical labour for livelihood. By using these criteria the supportive agencies generally select members of groups or *samities* mostly from the landless and near-landless or marginal households. However, it would be seen later that some of the supportive agencies have also included a few household-members from the upper land-based categories, viz. small, middle and even rich peasant households. This happened for various reasons. Several members who are today in small and middle peasant categories, actually belonged to the marginal one when they were drawn into the group. In some groups, the members themselves decided to take one or two members from the middle and rich household categories, especially from the households where women were household heads and bread-earners or widow. They are supportive to the causes of women groups and agree not to take loan and other economic benefits for themselves.

Although the Table-4.1, shows the coverage of 218 households [70.3 %] by the supportive agencies, the actual coverage of households is 182 [i.e. 58.7 %]. It is also interesting to note that according to Table-4.2, of the covered households, 144 households [79.1%] have been covered by a single supportive agency and 37 households [20.3%] by two supportive agencies. Triplicate efforts from BRDB, Grameen Bank and Caritas are found for one household.

Table -4.2
Nature of involvement of supportive agencies

Organization	BRDB	GB	BRAC	CARITAS	CARE	TOTAL
BRDB	16	2	-	17	-	35
GB	2	43	3	13	-	61
BRAC	-	3	8	1	-	12
CARITAS	17	13	1	77	1	109
CARE	-	-	-	1	-	1
TOTAL	35	61	12	109	1	218

Source : Field Work in Sonapur village.

In case of houses being duplicated, each supportive agency is covering different members of the same household. The above situation suggests the fact that the supportive agencies need to have a closer co-ordination among themselves to avoid wastage of resource, time and effort. Besides the co-ordination of the supportive agencies, a more important issue is to have a 'Village Development Plan' which should ensure the participation of people, village leaders and others concerned.

As already indicated above, land has been found to be the most important source of power and means of livelihood of the people. Therefore, the supportive agencies select the households to be the members of organised groups on the basis of landownership and major occupation of the households. The following Table [4.3] presents the nature of households selected by the supportive agencies to be included in their programmes on the basis of landholding:

Table-4.3
Affiliation of households with supportive agencies by land-owning categories

Land category	Total HHs	BRDB	GB	BRAC	Caritas	CARE	Total coverage of HHs		Actual total cover. of HHs	
							No.	%	No.	%
a) Landless household	64	3	17	3	19	1	43	67.2	34	53.1
b) Marginal farmer	151	11	40	9	60	-	120	79.5	102	67.6
c) Small farmer	46	12	3	-	15	-	30	65.2	26	56.5
d) Middle farmer	33	8	1	-	12	-	19	57.6	15	45.5
e) Rich farmer	16	3	-	-	3	-	6	37.5	5	31.3
TOTAL	310	35	61	12	109	1	218	70.3	182	58.7

Source : Field Work in Sonapur village.

It is clear from the Table-4.3 that the supportive agencies have quite an extensive coverage [actual coverage 58.7 %] of households. Of course, the coverage is a mixed category in economic terms. The landless [landholding up to 0.5 acre] household category consists of 20.6% households of Sonapur village, of which 53.1% households are covered by all the 5 supportive agencies. This means that almost half of the landless household category still remains outside such development efforts, whereas a significant number of households of the upper categories have been covered, including almost half of the households having lands more than 7 acres. Reasons for such a situation have already been stated above.

As we have seen earlier, "Under Acquisition and Disposition of Land", Sonapur village has gained about 143.62 acres of land in last 10 years. Organized group members, except the landless households, also have gained land. Those who have irrigation facilities and regular employment have gained the most. But middle and rich farmers have comparatively gained more land than the others.

Awareness-raising and institution-building activities

Historically speaking, a major part of social welfare activities was carried out through an 'individual approach' of work, which was primarily alms-giving in nature. The individual-in-need was considered the cause of his/her situation. The same approach continues even today, to some extent. The same process is in vogue for the poor who live on begging. In the study villages, 3 widows [2 in Rampur and one in Sonapur] live completely on begging. It may be noted here that such an individual approach primarily emphasizes the economic well-being of the person-in-need. It is not possible to remove the factors responsible for such a condition of the persons-in-need. Moreover, if a poverty situation is

widespread and affects a great majority of the society, the individual approach of social welfare is found to be not effective.

As a matter of fact, the vision and understanding of social work has been changing quite rapidly. The focal point of such changes is to ascribe increased dignity on the persons-in-need. And as such the concept of social justice came to the fore-front. So also changes took place in the approach of work. The massive poverty situation of any society is now considered as a result of exploitation of both the past and the present socio-economic systems. The poor societies of today were once exploited by the colonial rulers and the same process still continues in modified forms. In such unjust and unequal situations, individuals of the bottom stratum find themselves helpless to get access to the material resources. Although majority in number, the landless and the near-landless population of Bangladesh society live at the bottom of the class structure; and are exploited. Thus a change in the vision and approach of social welfare activities were inevitable. On an experimental basis, in many of the Latin American and Asian countries, including Bangladesh, the vision adopted to work with the population of the bottom category is that ---- there is power among the powerless people, who are the majority in number. This power lies in their human potential and in the numbers of the poor. Hence, awareness-raising and institution-building of the poor is seen as an important investment for developing the human potential of the poor and supporting their causes of human rights and development. Most supportive agencies today have introduced a non-formal development-education process following a 'Target-group-oriented approach' in order to achieve the following objectives:

- i) Developing critical awareness, human capability and skills of the poor and marginalized population to make themselves resourceful as human beings. Several supportive agencies call the process 'Dialogue programmes'.
- ii) Building-up of viable institutions of the poor so that their number is counted and thereby they are able to appropriate resources and fulfill their rights. The group approach, therefore, is expected, besides economic development, to bring changes in the socio-political aspects of the poor and the marginalised and the society at large.

Anisur Rahman, in one of his recent articles on *People's Self-Development*, claims that the group approach is "the constructive engagement rather than economic achievements per se, which is the more universal aspect of popular initiatives -- the fact that the people are mobilized, engaged in tasks set by themselves and going about them together, pooling resources and energy whereby they can do better than walking alone, drawing strength and sustaining power from a shared life and effort" [1989:11]. This process eventually helps people to be self-creative, thrift saving and austere, collaborating and supporting one another for major common causes, taking new initiatives in every possible area and work to establish their rights as citizens. All the involved agencies have evolved some basic principles for the group approach work and for their involvement. The following 18-point⁵ of the major principles are being applied used by most of the supportive agencies

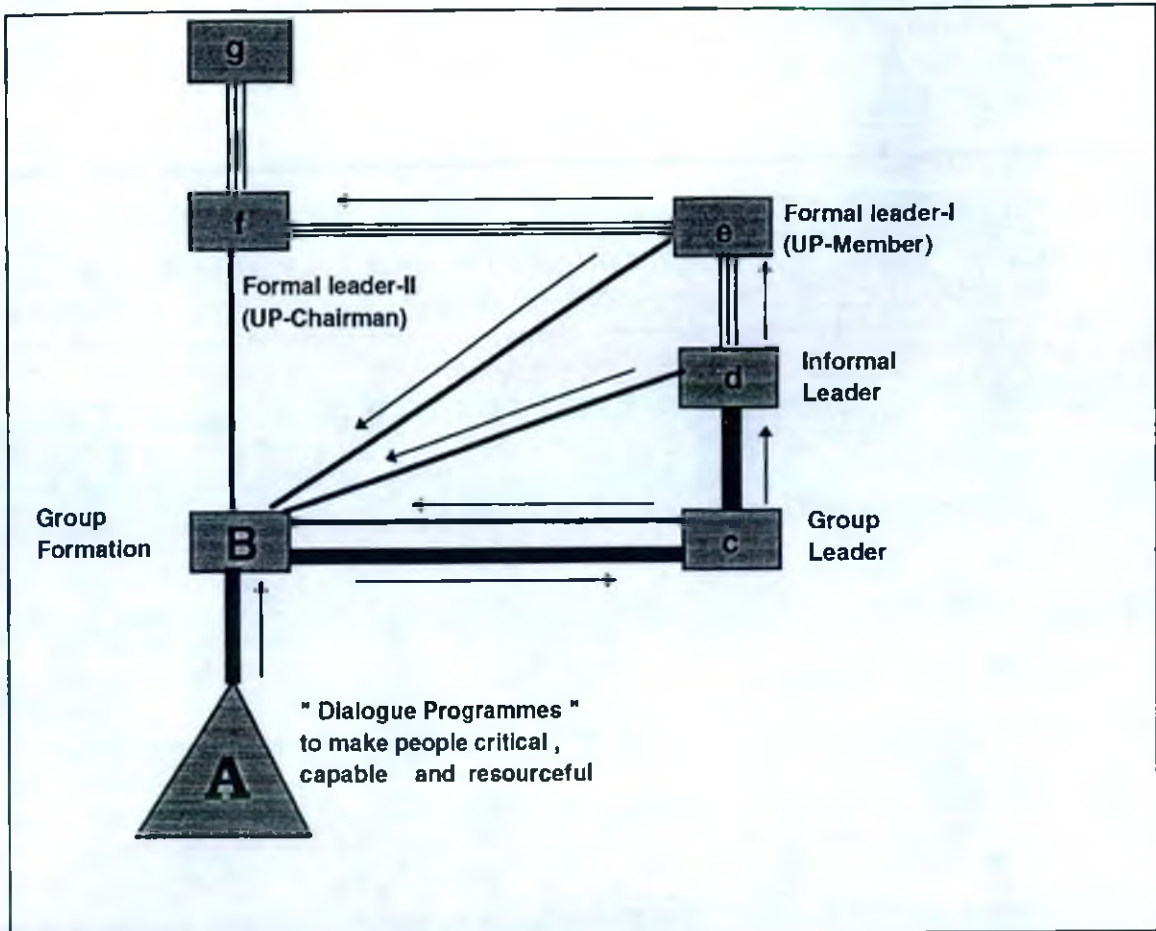
5. These are the major principles and guidelines of activities and projects used by the supportive agencies, which are presented here in compiled and summarized form.

18 - Point Basic Principles followed by most supportive agencies

1. Exclusive focus on the poor and the marginalized.
2. Priority to the poor and disadvantaged women.
3. Empower people through :
 - a) "Dialogue programmes" as a fundamental support element to make people critical, capable and resourceful.
 - b) Building self-reliant institutions of the poor.
4. Invest the maximum in people.
5. Emphasis on integrated socio-economic development agenda.
6. Eliminate local injustices.
7. Priority is given on Children education and adult literacy.
8. Flexible to support people's initiatives, both individual and collective.
9. Maximum people's participation, minimum of 20% contribution.
10. Institutionalization of individual savings. It gives a new sense of social security and confidence for progress.
11. For loans no collateral is needed; use of peer-family-social pressures.
12. Strict credit discipline and close supervision. More than one activity [loans] and repeat loans to those borrowers who do not default ensure high rate of recovery of loans.
13. Management --highly decentralized, but having a strong centre, like the principle of having circles within a circle.
14. Train-up 3-5 leaders in each group to serve as "Seboks" and thus become leaders.
15. The guiding slogan --" *Eka gore na keu , gore oneke miley* " [None build alone, together we build].
16. Remain open to changes, adaptations and support innovations.
17. Remain politically neutral.
18. Dedication and accountability of field extension staff to the people and to the organizations.

While I have tried to focus on the overall impact of the group approach work, special attention has been given to draw a picture of the leadership growth process, which is indeed the main concern of the present study. As a matter of fact, the group approach activities of the concerned agencies are likely to help develop a leadership growth-process, which is shown in the Chart-3. I shall now discuss the process in detail with suitable examples from Sonapur village.

Chart-3 : Emerging leadership development process from below



As noted earlier, the emerging leadership growth process has two major aspects, which need elaborate discussion, viz. (A) the 'dialogue programmes' which enable members to be critical, capable and resourceful in bringing changes by themselves; and (B) to build institutions appropriate to safeguard the causes of the poor and marginalized at the grassroots level and give them the opportunities to decide on changes which affect their lives. Through such institutions, the grassroots population can decide for themselves and also they can implement decisions to a great extent. The institutions of the poor and marginalized, small groups and their networks together, can work as countervailing power and can oppose decisions of leaders which go against the interests of the poor at the local level.

The whole emerging process of leadership growth is described below :

(A) The Dialogue Programmes⁶

The 'Dialogue Programmes' are the support components, which are fundamental to the above-mentioned process. They are the foundations, without which '(B)' can not be started. Today, it is widely perceived that the main cause of endemic poverty and massive assetlessness of the majority population of a society is their powerlessness - the power of thought, articulation and institution building. In other words, poverty is synonymous with powerlessness of the poor and the marginalized. Thus, the powerless people themselves need to be empowered. The experimental mechanism is, of course, the group-oriented approach. The starting point, which works as the base of the approach, is the Dialogue programmes. It is primarily a continuous educational process for creating critical awareness among the poor about their actual condition and also their capacity to analyze the major causes of their problems. But this awareness is not individual awareness only, it is also a group awareness with the view of creating a group or a community response to the situation.

It is not the individual alone, but the group with their net-works that can facilitate change of their existing actual situation. The 'Dialogue Programmes' consist of two types of activities of the agencies concerned, viz. (i) routine group meetings and discussions; and (ii) training for motivation and capacity- building. Some detailed discussions of the above two types of activities are being made below :

6. Different agencies call this differently. It is primarily a non-formal education approach. However, the goal for all agencies of their educational activities are more or less similar, i.e. to help make people become critical, capable and resourceful.

(i) Group meetings and discussions

Each of the organized groups sits regularly in routine meetings on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. Besides normal business matters, viz. follow-up of decisions of the last meeting, reviewing of group activities, savings collection, financial statement, etc. each group takes up an issue of their concern for educational discussion. The routine group meeting is generally held for three major purposes, viz. to review decisions and activities of the last meeting, to plan activities for the period up to the next meeting and to take up an educational issue for discussion which concerns the members. The meetings of the groups and their educational discussions are the pillars and sources of inner strength of the whole process. In other words, in this dialogue-process each one shares his/her life experiences and observations which are the real learning for one another. One encourages another and all members of a group to continuously learn from each group and also from outside or other groups' experience. The process is, therefore, a dialogue on real life experiences. The charts 4 and 5 present how they sit in small groups, 5 to 35 members in each group, and interact with one another.

Chart- 4 : A men-group in session



Chart- 5 : A women-group in weekly meeting



This dialogue-process makes them a small 'dialogical critical cell', which gradually develops its skills of thought and articulation in the group process. Most organizations have published a **Lesson Primer** to help facilitate groups' discussions through charts, pictures and lead-questions. Living in the village among the people, especially among the organized and unorganized people of similar socio-economic class, one can easily distinguish the difference. This variation is almost similar to the difference between the literate and the illiterates. It is like the literate having something which the illiterates are lacking, i.e. literacy. To my understanding the basic difference between the organized and unorganized villages is the difference of an "alternative morality" of human values, which is primarily a combination of some "new social values" which are more pro-people and pro-poor. The Daily Sangbad in its editorial on October 29, 1994 published the proceedings of a recently held seminar (August 8,1994) on the rise of fundamentalism, organised by the "Centre for Policy Dialogue" in Dhaka. This Daily, in the line of views expressed by the main speaker, Prof. Barun De of India,

suggested something similar - an 'alternative morality' of human values, which should be community-oriented, instead of individual-oriented. Living in the Sonapur village, discussing with the villagers and the organized members of the groups and observing the social behavior of the people, I am encouraged to take note of the fact that the dialogue-programmes, and especially the group meetings and joint activities are creating grounds for such a **new morality** with the following characteristics, social values and behaviours :

- **Solidarity and spirit of co-operation among the group members as well as in the village are discernible;**
- **The concept of 'common good' is growing in place of 'individual good';**
- **Positive changes in attitude and awareness towards life, education, health care; people's collective initiatives are present :**
- **Social discriminations and barriers are diminishing ;**
- **Tendency for showing respect and dignity of women has increased ;**
- **An inter-religious harmony and regard for the religious practices of others are being enhanced among the members as well as in the villages;**
- **The spirit of democratic process, and participation in decision-making by the general members have taken root :**
- **The neglected ones of the past realize that they are also important and can contribute to the above-mentioned 'common good'.**

(ii) Training for motivation and capacity-building

Each supportive agency has its own priority and different sets of training for motivation and capacity-building of their organised group members. The

following are the major areas along with the approximate number of group members trained in 1-12 day courses during the last 10 years up to June '94 :

<u>Areas of Training</u>	<u>No. of members trained</u>
a) Social awareness and development approaches	118
b) Leadership and management	35
c) Accounts and record keeping	24
d) Basic health awareness (using tubewell water, sanitation, immunization, etc.)	84
e) Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)	2
f) Pond fish cultivation	23
g) Social forestry and tree plantation	78
h) Nursery development (under tree plantation)	7
i) Sericulture (Rearing and Reeling)	6
j) Poultry and cow fattening	10
k) Traditional weaver's training	5
l) Legal education	12
m) Small business	8
n) Technical training	2
o) Training teachers for Child education and adult literacy	6
p) Discussions in the groups about Family planning All groups.	

The supportive agencies consider training as direct investment in people to help create motivational awareness of the members and develop their capability for greater participation and initiatives by the members to bring required changes. The members who receive such training are directly benefited. After such trainings most of the members themselves can initiate or improve their professional activities. However, a few also fail for various reasons. The village has at large been benefited by the above-stated non-formal educational services to achieve a common good for the villagers.

(B) Institution-building of the poor⁷

Institution-building of the poor is understood as the fundamental concern as well as a key to sustainable development and establishment of the rights of

7. Different agencies follow different models and structures for institution-building of the poor, but the aim is to enable the people to build up alternative institutions to directly serve their causes and also to gain power of their numbers by the poor majority.

the poor. With " B " starts the institution-building process of the poor and the stages of leadership growth are shown as - c, d, e, f, g, etc. in the chart-3. Of the whole leadership growth process, " B " is not only the centre or pivot on which the other steps develop but also through it "B" accountability- relations are being maintained to a great extent. In the said chart " B " itself presents the group formation step. As in the traditional process a household is to the individual, so is a group to the members in the group process. A household develops individual-oriented morality in the socialization process of its members, while a group sows seeds of the " new morality " of the "common good" among its members. Thus, a leader of a group becomes a "sebak" of many households.

Selection criteria of members and leaders of groups

The supportive agencies use more than one criterion for the selection of group members, usually through a simple household survey based on the following indicators:

Landownership of a household not more than 0.5 acre;

A household's monthly total income not more than Tk. 2000/ (US \$50);

A household primarily depends on selling physical labour for its livelihood. Usually in the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh households in extremely poor economic conditions sell physical labour for wage earning.

Once a group is formed, the 'Dialogue Programme' are gradually implemented through group meetings and training in an orderly manner. The next important step is the identification of group leaders (step-c). Leaders are either elected or selected by the whole group. Usually 3 main points are taken into consideration while electing/selecting a group leader as noted below :

- Personal skills and qualities of a member;
- Willingness of a member to act as a leader and the ability to spare time to work for others;
- Acceptability of the potential leader-member to the rest of the members.

As in each household, one member acts as a head, in a group 3 to 5 members act as leaders. Once the leaders are selected the supportive agencies give them formation/training as *sebak*. They are also given leadership and organizational management trainings for upgrading their skills. The *sebaks* may be formal leaders [chairman, secretary, treasurer, etc] or remain as informal leaders in a group. Thus there is no exclusive dependency on any particular leader. All group decisions are taken in the group meetings by consensus or votes. It is here that the leaders and members collectively experience, and learn the use of power and authority and accountability-relationship as shown in "c → B" in chart-3. It is already mentioned that the leaders of each group continuously receive leadership and organizational management training. Since there is no scope of subsidized financial programmes (except after disasters and for training by the PVDOs and by the BRDB in its regular programme) for the groups, the members do not depend on or aspire for such support. Moreover, as the size of groups is small (usually the range is 5-35 members and the average is 20 members), individual needs and aspirations of the members, to some extent, are being taken into consideration. All the above factors contribute to the inner strength of the whole process of leadership growth.

The "d" refers to the village level informal leadership position, which emerges from group leadership and also builds up an accountability-relationship shown as "d → B" in the chart. According to Table-4.4, in

Table - 4.4
A Summary of the major characteristics of the village leaders of Sonapur

Leaders	Age	Household Member	Household Structure	Education	Occupation	Land (in aca)	Household Background as leaders			
							Self	Father	Uncle(Mahat)	Grand-father
A	25	6	Single	V	Day labour+Small business	0.02	Matbar		X	X
B	70	7	Extended	V	Agri+ Small Business	1.5	Matbar (ex-UP-Member)	Matbar	Matbar	Matbar
C	33	4	"	Can sign only	Daylabour	0.2	"	"	X	X
D	28	8	"	III	Agri+ Small Business	0.72	"	X	X	X
E	42	8	Single	III	Share cropping+ Small business	0.09	Matbar	Matbar	Matbar	UP-Member
F	41	6	"	Can sign only	Weaving +Small business	0.06	"	"	"	X
G	62	7	Extended	SSC	Agri + Service	8	Matbar	Matbar (uncle)	X	Matbar
H	43	8	Single	III	Agriculture + Business	2	"	Matbar (uncle)	Matbar	Matbar
I	65	13	Extended	VI	Agriculture + Business	4+	"	Mahat	Matbar	Mahat
J	60	10	"	III	Agriculture	7.05+	"	Matbar	"	X
K	63	3	"	VI	"	8	"	Matbar	"	UP-Chairman
L	58	4	Single	VI	"	12.5	Mahat (Sardar)	X	X	Matbar
M	50	16	Extended	X	"	15	"	"	Sardar	Matbar+Ex-UP Member
N	52	10	"	III	Agriculture + Business	9	"	Matbar	Matbar	X
O	60	14	"	IV	Agriculture	6.75	"	Sardar	Sardar	Sardar
P	43	6	Single	B.A	Service + agriculture	10.5	"	Sardar	Sardar	Imam
Q	80	6	Extended	Can sign only	Agriculture	12.48	"	Matbar	X	Ex-Up Member
R	66	15	"	II	Agri+ UP-Member	1.25	UP-Member	X	X	X

Source : Field work in Sonapur village.

Sonapur village, there is an emerging trend of leadership among the marginal and small former households, which is fully absent in Rampur village. Out of 17 informal leaders 5 are group members who are all male. This means that more than one-fourth of the informal leaders have emerged from the said group leadership process. All the 5 informal leaders who emerged from the group process fall in the category of marginal and small farmers households as shown in the Table- 5.1. They are now accepted as village leaders and sit in the village *Salish* in spite of their poor economic condition.

This indicates that village leadership is now emerging from the lower socio-economic strata through the group process. In comparison to the traditional leaders, the said emerging leaders of Sonapur [the 5 leaders through the group process] also do not possess traditional family background as leaders.

The "e" represents the first tier of formal leadership in the village level i.e. membership in the Union *Parishad*. The only Union *Parishad* member in Sonapur village is not a group member of any of the supportive agencies. However, the groups consider him as 'their own man', because all the groups, with mutual understanding, voted for him and he won in the last election. The Union *Parishad* member has a very good relationship with the groups and occasionally he joins the group gatherings and takes decisions by consulting the groups quite frequently. Although none of the group members is in the "e" position, there is an in-built accountability-relationship between the leader of "e" and the group members, which is expressed as e---->B. In addition, at least 3 group members, one man and two women, expressed their interest in contesting the next Union *Parishad* elections.

A survey was conducted in 1993 in seven *Thanas* among the group members to find out if there is any Union *Parishad* member from the groups organized

by the supportive agencies. It was found that 167 group members contested in the last Union *Parishad* membership, of which 65 members have won (Annual Report of the Caritas 1993-94 : 28). This means that through the group process the poor and marginal households are gradually acquiring the capability of gaining their ranks of formal leadership in the local level and thereby contributing to the leadership activities of the village.

The "f" is the highest level of village leadership, the formal leadership-II, i.e. Union *Parishad* Chairmanship. There has been none in such a position from the groups and Sonapur village at large. It would be a matter of great interest to wait and see whether those who have now become members of Union *Parishad* out of the group process in different areas could obtain the position of Chairman in future. Although it is pre-matured to predict about it, the signs are already there to indicate an emerging trend in the same direction. The present Chairman of the Union *Parishad* in which the Sonapur village is situated, has genuine interest and support for the activities of group process. In the last Union *Parishad* elections all the groups of Sonapur voted for the present Chairman on the basis of mutual understanding. Since the Chairman occasionally visits group-gatherings in the study village the groups have strong support for the Chairman. During our long discussions all groups confirmed that they would vote for the present Chairman for a third term. When any Government assistance financial or in kind comes for the said Union the Chairman visits his constituency, including the study village, calls meetings of all the groups, consults village leaders about the allocations. During my field work I discussed with the Chairman for three consecutive days about the situation that existed in his Union *Parishad* including relationship prevailing among the people, the groups and leaders in my study village. He admitted the fact that he had to face strong opposition from the traditional power-wielders including a court case; he also admitted that he

had to depend on the support of the groups. The Chairman frankly stated that in his last two elections he mostly worked within the groups. He also pointed out that there have been changes in the techniques of election campaigns. Where there are no groups one needs to work with village leaders in order to get the votes of villagers. It was rather easy on various considerations. Most of all, there was no accountability.

At present the candidates seeking votes in the villages like Sonapur, need to meet neither the leaders nor individuals but the organized groups, which are quite conscious and updated of placing their demands that might benefit them. This change has been confirmed by the Chairman and the concerned groups as well. In the Union *Parishad* election of Chairman of 1991 three candidates contested and one of them gave Tk. 20,000/ to one of the group members for a few groups of Sonapur village. It is interesting to know that the concerned groups met together to discuss the matter and decided to return the money to this candidate saying that they would never vote for him. But the candidate who was elected as Chairman admits that the organized groups voted for him and such he is committed to work for them as long as he will remain in power. The above situation implies a definite indication of accountability relationship of "f" to "B" (f--->B).

The "g" signifies the leadership at higher level, either *Thana*, District or national. Sonapur village has no experience of having such leaders from within. According to Chart- 3, there seems to be no scope for an accountability-relationship between "x" to "B" i.e. the higher level leaders do not have the formal mechanism to establish relationship with individual groups. Only future may perhaps speak about it and thus it may very well become a subject-matter of investigation by social researchers in the long run.

However, on the basis of my field observation and the net-work building process of the organized groups of Sonapur village and another 277 such groups federated at Union and Sadar Thana levels as a people's organization some forecasting may be made with regard to such higher level accountability-relationships. As the groups are being federated at the Union and at the *Thana* levels and are being registered with the respective government office, the accountability-relationships between the higher level leaders [i.e. the "g" level] and the organised groups may also develop at such higher level. A trend is already emerging to that direction.

Countervailing power through building institutions of the poor

It is definitely an interesting issue for the social scientists to look into how the organized members and the groups participate and involve themselves as countervailing power. How effective are the groups as a resisting force of the poor and marginalised households in their class interests? Are they able to challenge the authority of traditional leaders, if needed? These are the major areas of concern on the subject-matter. The following important points have been discussed along with my findings, observations and the views of Sonapur villagers:

(a) Groups are primarily functioning as economic organizations

As economic organizations, the groups are mainly concerned with varieties of income-generating activities by the members. Each group has regular compulsory savings, at the rate of Tk. 2-12 weekly or fortnightly. As of June 1994 a total accumulated savings of all the groups of Sonapur was Tk. 151,164.6, i.e. Tk. 632.49 (US \$ 15.80) per group member. Members take up some small income generating projects, mostly individual, taking loans from the group fund and also from revolving funds of the supportive

agencies. Approximately Tk. 1,152,110/= (i.e. average Tk. 5,284 per member-household) has been borrowed by the members from the fund and the credit programme of the supportive agencies up to the said period. Small business, cow/goat-fattening, pond fish culture are the major income generation activities. A good number of houses have been built and repaired through the support of credit programmes. Loans have been taken for 12 different types of projects. One of the most remarkable achievements in the economic aspect is the total abolition of 'mohajani protha' (money-lending custom with exorbitant interest rate) among the groups. The groups themselves consider this as one of their own victories over an age-old exploitative system. It has also boost up their confidence for achievements in other issues that concern them. The experience of stopping of the mohajani protha among the organized group members suggests that to prevent an unjust practice in a society an alternative system needs to be introduced. In Rampur village and among the non-members of Sonapur village money-lending remains a major means of exploitation and a source of rural power. The non-members of Sonapur still go to the money-lenders. Yet they think that both interest rate and oppressive behaviour of the moneylenders have tended to decline. Most non-members say that 12-15 years ago they used to take Tk. 100/ from moneylenders with Tk. 20/ as monthly interest [i.e. 240% interest rate]. But at present they pay Tk. 5-10 as monthly interest for Tk.100/ [i.e. 60-120% interest rate]. The non-members expressed their views saying that it is possible to abolish fully such unjust practices from the village if the remaining landless and marginal households who are not yet organized are covered by the group formation process.

The organized group members first take advantage of the group savings fund and then also take loans from the supportive agencies' credit programmes. The groups and the supportive agencies take 12-18% service charge. It is to

be understood that the less is the service charge is, the more the gain of the loanees.

While participating in the group meetings on several occasions it was observed that the group savings fund has greatly helped the organized members to develop a strong sense of economic confidence and social security. Groups are now recognised as economic institutions for such money-lending functions in Sonapur village.

In the traditional villages like Rampur, money-lending is considered as one of the highly profitable businesses, especially by the rich farmers. Wood [1976] in his study of a village [Bondok-Gram] in Comilla District found that the surplus of agricultural income of the rich farmers is invested in non-agricultural activities like money-lending. He also found that in Bondok-Gram the class differential is determined by usurious capital. In many cases, credit provided by public financial institutions is monopolized by the rich peasants and used for money-lending to the poor and the marginal peasants. Most leaders and rich farmers of Rampur invest their surplus in money-lending to the landless, marginal and small farmers at exorbitant interest rates. Money-lending is also used as a means by the leaders and the rich farmers to get the allegiance and support of the loanees.

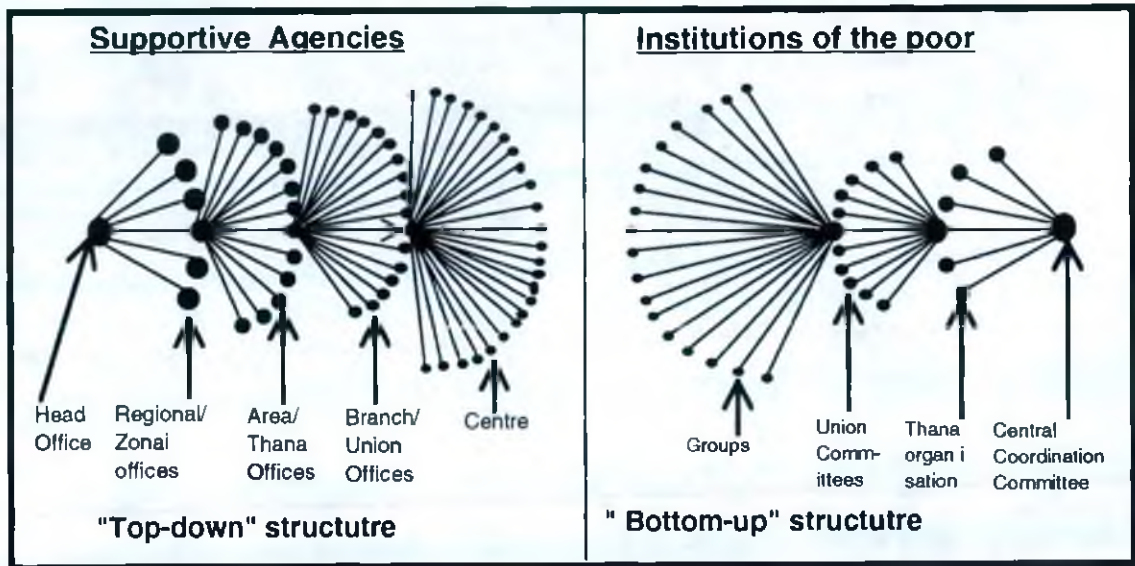
Another important point is that in Sonapur village 18 out of the 23 organized groups, are women groups. In terms of economic activities, women groups are found better and more regular to pay loan installments than the men groups. It is evident in earlier Table- 2.7 on land gained by the villagers of Sonapur that, except the bottom 20.7% households, all other categories have been able to gain some land. Group savings and credit activities contributed significantly to the process. The groups and the support organizations realize

the fact that once the economic power of the poor is institutionalized on some solid foundation, the same creates a base for social security and countervailing power of the poor. Therefore, all economic activities are considered as a means to bring about desired socio-political changes as well.

(b) Groups and their net-works act as a mutual benefit-association of members

The supportive agencies themselves are structured as 'top-down' in nature, while the institutions of the poor they facilitate are 'bottom-up' in form and functioning. This is shown in the following Chart-6 :

Chart-6 : Structural process of the supportive agencies and organizations of the people.



Source : Atiur Rahman, *Grass-roots*, April-June, 1994

The evolution of the process of supportive agencies suggests that one or a few individuals initiate a supportive agency, which gradually expands to grassroot level, having necessary structures and stages. The supportive agencies initiate and organize individuals of the poor who gradually

constitute small groups at the grassroot or micro-level, which, in course of time, form net-works or federations at semi-macro (union and *Thana*) and macro (regional or national) levels. Each group develops as a matured self-reliant institution following three major criteria. All these facilitate activities of the supportive agencies:

Developing 3-5 committed leaders (sebaks) in each group;
Having enough socio-economic activities in each group; and
Self-management of the group (having regular meetings, educational discussions in each meeting, maintenance of group accounts and records by the members themselves).

The groups and their net-works at semi-macro and macro levels primarily work as a mutual benefit association, which eventually brings all benefits to the members. One of the main criticisms made about the institutions of the poor is that their activities are highly supervised by the supportive agencies and they depend very much on their respective agencies. Although some degree of maturity of groups and their net-works have been achieved, they still need a long way to go to achieve full self-reliance.

(c) Social actions experienced by groups and their net-works bring a new realization of their own strength and more recognition to the outsiders: The poor are generally everywhere deprived of their basic human rights. In Bangladesh, there exist a number of laws and regulations in favour of the poor and disadvantaged groups. But such good laws are hardly implemented. I fully agree with what Professor Md. Yunus of the *Grameen Bank* stated in his writing on the *Steps Needed to be taken for Poverty Alleviation*-- " If we can ensure the rule of law in the country, the poor will have a better chance to have access to national programmes and institutions and better chance to establish their human rights "(1992:13). Today

development and human rights are inseparable. One of the major purposes of building institutions of the poor is that their rights might be safeguarded and achieved only through the united actions and organizational approach. The *Grameen Bank* is one of the good examples that is primarily endeavouring to materialize-- **the right of the poor to access to credit**. This means that viable village institutions are essential to establish the rights of the poor and the disadvantaged sections of the population.

It is interesting to note that each of the groups has acquired ample experience of collective actions in connection with safeguarding their interests for common good. I am citing here a few examples:

A village leader of Sonapur was forced to pay Tk. 4,000/ as fine because he was accused of illicit connection with a woman. The women groups played a prominent role in this regard, as one member of the women group was involved in it. Villagers claim that this was the first collective action by the women against a village leader. One of the village leaders commented on this particular issue that his eyes became open to see the strength of women. According to him, this incident had shaken the very fabric of the rural society in the area.

The richest household head who was a leader of the adjacent village of Sonapur once suspected one of the day labourers when some goods were missing from his house. The day labourer is a group member who occasionally used to work in the rich man's house. The day labourer was beaten severely without any proof for which a few groups unitedly *gheraoed* the rich farmer's house for almost one and a-half days. The household head later on begged pardon and regretted for the incident and bore all expenses for the treatment of the day labourer member of the group.

The above-mentioned rich household head and a village leader used to give most of his land for sharecropping to the landless and marginal farmers of Sonapur and adjacent villages, many of whom were group members. The behaviour of the rich farmer with the sharecroppers was inhuman and he used to collect, as his part of the share of production, more than what he was supposed to get. Due to this all sharecroppers were unhappy and they finally decided not to take any of his land for sharecropping. Groups played a vital role for the decision. Even today, nobody takes any of his land for sharecropping. The poor sharecroppers had to find alternative sources of livelihood, which was of course difficult for them.

One women group took the lease of a derelict pond from a rich farmer for 10 years. They re-excavated the pond and started fish cultivation. After 3 years, when the good harvest was about to come in, the pond owner informed the women group of his decision to discontinue the lease contract without any reason. The women group, along with two other adjacent groups [one women's and one men's] of the village, became united and stood solidly on the issue. They also took the help of the Union Parishad Chairman to force the pond owner to get back the lease of pond. As the women group was strong enough and also knew the technique, it was possible for them to force the pond owner to abide by the lease-contract.

A few cases of women-beating and family disputes, were stopped and settled amicably through group interventions. Women groups played the leading roles in most of those cases.

The list of similar incidents may be quite long. The stories of such may be cited from adjacent villages and other districts. In Rajshahi, several landless groups were trying collectively to get long term lease of several big plots of *khas* land [government land] through proper legal documents. The actual problem started when they went to occupy those lands. The groups had to face as many as 13 court cases of different nature against them by the local power-wielders who were occupying those lands. The groups finally won and became owners of those lands. One supportive agency in Pabna District had to face a similar type of long struggle with regard to getting lease of *khas* lands by the groups which were organized by that agency.

All the above-mentioned instances of incidents provide sufficient indication that the groups and their net-works can very well help eliminate local level injustices, and at the same time, work as opposing forces against the traditional village leaders who used to oppress the poor majority inhumanely. The group process is thus helping the emergence of a countervailing power as well as a moral force at the grassroot level which ultimately strengthen the position of the poor and the disadvantaged.

Analyzing the whole process of dialogue programmes, institution-building activities and their impact on the people one can easily come to a consensus-point that an environment, in favour of the poor and the disadvantaged for change, is being created. Such changes are also creating grounds for emerging leaders through the groups and their net-work processes. This observation is in conformity with what Rahman (1994) says about the *Grameen Bank*. Rahman notes by saying-- "**it is creating grounds for a stronger social movement or an organization which aims at defending the rights of all the poor**" (ibid:15).

There is another very important issue concerning to the promotion of countervailing power among the rural masses. This is the role of a social development worker who acts as an initiator, an extension force. Based on my observation in Sonapur village, it may safely be said that a social development worker, with a vision and commitment, is able to create an environment for the growth of countervailing power among the rural masses that can bring about changes in the power structure.

Md. Kaleq-u-zaman [44] (the villagers call him "Khaleq Bhai"), is a well-known person, not only in Sonapur, but in some 205 villages of the *Thana*. Khaleq Bhai's home is located in the adjacent [Chinirbandar] *Thana*. He is married to Kulsum Begum for the last 17 years and they now have 2 sons. The couple desperately wanted to have a girl. Khaleq Bhai has been working in Sonapur area for the last 19 years. He himself has now become an institution to work with the landless and marginal households and the people in need. In the last two elections of the *Union Parishad* he was requested by the villagers to contest for the chairmanship of two different unions of the *Thana*, including the union in which Sonapur is situated. On the said occasion his simple reply was that his vision and commitment is to help give power to the powerless people. "Not I, but the people with whom I work should gain power. A political party's followers empower its leader, a social worker with a vision and commitment helps empower people, so that they can select their own leaders. If I hanker after power, I would take away the people's right to find their own leaders. I would like to die as a social worker, as 'Khaleq Bhai' among the people with whom I am working. This is a great joy". He commented further, "Leaders come to me for advice and blessings. They come especially before the elections. I bless them whole heartedly; but ask them to work selflessly for the service of

people. People are very grateful to them who work for them and they love them whole-heartedly. I consider myself a leader above the leaders. I am a leader not to take power, I rather prepare the people to take over power."

Khaleq Bhai was incidentally a freedom fighter. He fled away from his home when he was a student of Class VIII and joined the Hamijapur training camp. Later on he fought in the 7th sector under Captain Idris in Dinajpur areas. Khaleq thinks that as a freedom fighter his goal was to free the nation from foreign domination, while his present work is also that of a freedom fighter to rebuild the nation. "The vision and commitment is the same in both the struggles," said Khaleq. In spite of his dedicated services for the past many years, Khaleq seems to be now a little frustrated. This is partly because of the fact that "the vast majority of people still live at the very bottom while the bureaucrats, the political leaders and a few landed rich live at the very top. There is a big gap between the two. People's voices do not reach the top and vice versa," said Khaleq. He further says, "any genuine effort of individuals or of organizations can at best work as curative measures in some limited areas. Country-wide preventive measures are the responsibility of the Government. We need to work for 16 to 20 hours each day to rebuild our nation. Why are then so many young people remain unemployed? When I meet an unemployed person, it hurts me." Khaleq strongly suggests that "to rebuild the nation we should start from below -- with the poorest and the disadvantaged. We need a country-wide specific programme for an active participation of the down-trodden people for their self-development. There should be a national consensus on this very important issue which concerns the majority of our country's population. This should have been the second phase of our freedom fighting.

However, a freedom fighter always 'dreams and fights' for a better future and thus renews his commitment every day."

Emerging Trends of Women Leadership

Women Studies in Bangladesh, especially of rural poor women refer to problem of double exploitation through class and gender relations (Wood 1994:155). Rural women are one of the most marginalized groups in Bangladesh society. The life-picture of a woman is being shaped by her relationship with men as her -- father, brother[s], husband and son[s] - who are supposed to provide her "security". For such security, women accept their subordinate roles as daughter, sister, wife, and mother.

One could easily assume from the above situation that women's key concern is economic security. It means that women are made to depend on men, from birth to death, for food, shelter, clothing and social security. But women's work in the rural households is so essential that they are the first to rise early from bed to work and the last to go to sleep almost everyday at mid-night. This is a regular feature of women's life in rural Bangladesh. If compared with men, women definitely work twice as much as men in terms of volume and hours of work. Yet, the fact remains that women's work is neither measured in economic terms nor given due social recognition. So women themselves do not consider the value and importance of whom they are and what they do. This inferior status of women in Bangladesh is reflected in social institutions, such as marriage, education, religion and the role they play in their social life. Women are not supposed to take part in the activities of the outside world; they are primarily permitted to stay and work at home.

Attitudes of men towards women

The following are a few glimpses which illustrate how women are being thought of and how men behave with them in day-to-day life in the rural households:

Women are the first to rise and start work very early to prepare breakfast, make things ready for their school-going children, get things done for their husbands' work in the field, and finally begin other household work.

They are the last to go to bed after finishing all the work of the day. The women of the study villages are also familiar with the old common proverb of rural Bangladesh society: " Women's work is never done " [Hartmann and Boyce 1983 : 85-94].

Women eat last and even least every day in each meal, after their husband, children and other male-members. This they do with full submission, without any question.

Food processing and preparation take almost 3/4ths of the time of women, (which are all arduous and time-consuming). One discernible development has taken place regarding husking of paddy. The *dheki* has been replaced in the last 5-10 years by rice-husking mills. Husking was the hardest of all work done by women. This change has been brought about due to transmission of electricity in rural areas. There are 3 electrical husking mills in our study villages, one in Rampur and 2 in Sonapur. Cooking is also a very time-taking job. It takes almost half the life-time of our women and is the core of rural household activities. Cooking includes collecting fire-wood, which is becoming increasingly scarce; grinding spices; chopping

the vegetables; collecting water; cleaning rice and other items with water; constantly watching the fire of the *chula* (clay-made oven for cooking) and cleaning all utensils and plates after each meal.

Taking care of children, poultry birds and the few cattle in each household are all included in the routine work of women. In each of such work, women need to spend a considerable amount of time and give special attention.

Almost all the women of the landless category have to supplement their husband's meagre income by taking temporary work in more prosperous households and even in the field. Employment is extremely scarce, especially in the lean period. A phenomenon which is seen in both of our study villages is that the poor women are taking temporary employment in the fields, especially during removal of weeds and harvesting time. Women's work in the field is a sign of extreme poverty of the households. I had the chance to have extensive discussion with four widows in the areas of Sonapur including one from the said village itself, who are receiving 'Wheat for work', with the support of CARE. They are engaged in repairing work of village roads and each one receives 90 kgs of wheat per month. Alo Bala [41], a widow with 5 children, is working in CARE wheat project. She is also a member of a women group organized by Caritas. She has no land of her own and is living with her children in a hut by the roadside. She is the only bread-earner of the household and strives her best for the education of her children. She is an active member in the group and takes loans from her 'Group Savings Fund' as well as from the 'Revolving Fund' of the supportive agency. Of the other three

women of CARE project, two are widows and one is divorced. All of them are the only earning members of their respective families. They all appreciate the attitude of the Union *Parishad* Chairman and the member, about whom I have already mentioned.

In both the villages, I have observed a very strong will among the women to engage themselves in income-making work either at home or outside. They indeed prefer to work at home. Naturally the women of landless, marginal and small farmer households have more eagerness towards work than those of the women belonging to middle and rich farmer households. The latter do not seem to have such interest and acute need for income-making work. However, the educated women of this category are ready to do white-collar jobs in the village or outside. With regard to women's participation in the rural economy and income-making activities, an emerging trend in Sonapur village is noticeable. The women group members of Sonapur organized by the supportive agencies are taking different types of income-generating activities by using group savings fund and credit support of such agencies. All such activities help them get cash in their hands and thus help strengthen their economic security. This point has been discussed later on in a little more elaborate manner as part of the women's response to changing their situation.

Hartmann and Boyce 20 years ago in their study village - **Kanti** in Rangpur District - found divorce and dowry as the major threats to womanhood. The present study identified dowry as the number two problem of the study villages as a whole. Fear of divorce among the Muslims women has been found almost common. The former is a

religiously sanctioned act, while the latter is a social creation. Both help husbands to secure their wives' obedience which has been institutionalized and commonly expressed as : ' a woman's heaven lies under her husband's feet ' and this is seen as a virtue of an ideal woman. Such sanctions give husbands the ' right ' to beat and inflict other physical and mental tortures on wives [Arens and Beurden 1977: 35-53].

All the above illustration suggest the fact that women's status is lower than that of men. It implies that women are always dominated by men. Women are found to be living at the mercy of men in both the study villages. This is true for the whole of Bangladesh as well.

The women-headed households

As mentioned earlier, there are 20 woman-headed households in our study villages, of which 13 are widows, 3 divorced and of the remaining ones their husbands are out for employment. The following land-based categories of the women-headed households will help to understand the actual economic status of such households :

Table-4.5

Women-headed households by land-based category and status

Land category	Rampur		Sonapur	
	No.	Status	No.	Status
a) Landless household	2	widows	7	6 widows and 1 divorced
b) Marginal farmer	1	widow	5	4 widows and 1 divorced
c) Small farmer	1	husband works out	1	husband works out
d) Middle farmer	1	divorced	-	
e) Rich farmer	2	husbands work out	-	
Total	7		13	

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

It is clear from Table-4.5 that 75% women household heads fall in the landless and marginal categories and they are all widows and divorced. They belong to the lowest social category in economic terms. One Sulochana Roy [32] became a widow at the age of 26 and has 4 children [3 boys and one girl]. She read up to Class VIII and for the last few years she has been teaching in a pre-school in Sonapur and earns Tk. 500/ per month, the only source of earning of her household. She is completely landless and is living in a small hut constructed with a financial help partially provided by a supportive agency and partly from the loan of the group's savings fund. Taking small loans from the group's savings fund, she has become able to give education to all her children, and the elder son passed the Secondary School Certificate education in 1993. Sulochana says that providing education to all the children is her only goal because, she believes, if the children are educated they will be able to earn their livelihood.

Another Margina Bewa [35] who is also a widow with 4 children has 16 decimals of land and a hut of her own. She works in other households as well as in the field. Margina is a leader of a women's group of 15 members. She is determined to educate her children, who are now reading at the primary and secondary schools.

Nurjahan [45], being divorced by her first husband, got married for the second time. She did not know the causes of her divorce. Nurjahan neither likes polygamy nor divorce; she really dreads both. Although Muslim law allows men to divorce their wives on any ground, Nurjahan does not like it. After divorce, women return to their parents' house, if possible, leaving their children behind. Nurjahan's husband died later. She has two girls who are now approaching marriageable age. She is not yet a

member of any group, but intends to be a group member soon. She sells clothes of children and women from house-to-house and thereby earns her livelihood.

Attitudes of household heads and leaders towards women

[a] **Major activities expected of women** : The general view about the main function of women is taking care of children as well as doing all the household activities, including cooking. The following Table [4.6] shows the views expressed in this regard:

Table -4.6
Major activities expected of women

Types of Activities	Rampur		Sonapur	
	HH Heads [%]	Leaders [%]	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]
a) Taking care of children and doing all household activities.	80.8	70	68.4	61.2
b) Helping husband in the field.	5.6	-	14.8	11.1
c) Contributing to the society in any possible way.	3.0	10	10.7	11.1
d) Remaining at home and following <i>pardha</i> strictly .	10.6	20	6.1	16.6

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The above Table- 4.6 clearly indicates the fact that the villagers very much like the women to remain indoor and always give priority to taking care of children and doing all the household activities. Cooking is considered as a very important function. Even when employment opportunities are available women are expected to remain at home. It means that women should perform double functions i.e. doing any money-making job outside the home after performing all assigned household activities.

[b] **Education of women:** The following Table- 4.7 shows the views expressed by the household heads and leaders regarding the education of women :

Table -4.7

Attitudes towards education of women[in %]

Attitudes	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H H Heads	Leaders	H H Heads	Leaders.
a) Women need education	71.2	80	88.4	83.3
b) Only religious education	20.7	10	6.5	11.1
c) No need of education	8.1	10	5.1	5.6

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

It is evident in the above Table[4.7] that more than 70% of the household heads and leaders belonging to the study villages support the need for women education. But the percentage is slightly higher in Sonapur than that of Rampur, for being under the influence of supportive agencies. It should be mentioned here that Rampur is quite free from the interventions of PVDOs. Regarding religious education for women almost similar differences are being demonstrated. However, a small percentage of household heads and leaders responded negatively regarding female education. Here the difference between the two study villages is quite same. In addition, it may be mentioned that I found the attitudes of women household heads towards women education itself are fairly positive during my discussions with them..

[c] **Attitudes towards employment of women :** The following opinions have been expressed by the household heads and the leaders on the issue of employment of women. In the present study employment refers to all money-making activities. It is explicit in Table-4.8 that majority of household heads and leaders are in favour of women employment; but their definite

preference is that women should stay at home while doing any work for earning. Although the percentage of household heads and leaders opposing female employment is less in Sonapur than Rampur, it is still not negligible.

Table -4.8

Views on employment of women

Attitudes	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]
a) No objection to women employment	15.2	10	31.6	16.6
b) Women can do jobs for earning while staying at home	51.5	50	49	55.6
c) Not in favour of women employment	33.3	40	19.4	27.8

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

[d] **Leadership of women** : The following responses in Table- 4.9 show how the villagers generally look at the leadership of women :

Table -4.9

Attitudes towards leadership of women

Attitudes	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]
a) No objection to women leadership	41.4	20	51.9	50.0
b) See no difference between m/f leadership	3	10	9.7	11.1
c) Not in favour of women leadership	55.6	70	38.4	38.9

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The above Table[4.9] testifies to the fact that the opinion of the villagers strongly varies on the issue of women leadership. The views of household heads and leaders of Rampur are predominantly negative regarding women leadership. Two factors are responsible for this divergent views. First, the vast majority of household heads and all present leaders are men and they would prefer the leadership of men which is likely to work for their own interest. Secondly, the socio-religious teachings are generally meant for

the maintenance of status quo. About one-fourth of the women household heads also do not like women leadership.

One Aziz Sardar [81], the oldest and very respected man of Sonapur village, strongly believes that women are born to serve men; while his grandson [26], an intermediate student, thinks that women also have similar responsibilities as men and he has no objection to women leadership. It is clear from the views of Aziz Sardar and his grandson that people of different age groups are having different views on the same subject-matter.

[e] Ownership of landed property by women : Household heads and leaders of the present study villages have expressed the following views regarding the ownership of landed property by women:

Table -4.10

Views regarding women's ownership of landed property

Views	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]	H H Heads [%]	Leaders [%]
a) Women should get equal	32.3	30	40.3	27.8
b) Not equal, men more	51.5	60	49	61.1
c) Women should not get landed property at all	16.2	10	10.7	11.1

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

More than half of the household heads and leaders are not in favour of equal rights and share of landed property by women. However, about one-third of them are support equal shares. Those who do not want to give any share of landed property to women argue that women after marriage go to the husband's house and as such they should not claim any property from their father's household.

Response of women

The poor women of landless and marginal households, especially widows and divorced, who have almost nothing to lose, are often more willing to break with tradition. Their economic necessity forces them to search for opportunities of work in other households, in the fields of our study villages, and even beyond their own villages. This means that although women accept their subordinate roles and rarely challenge the authority of their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, yet many women harbour deep feelings of discontent [Hartmann and Boyce 1983 : 95]. This gives a clear-cut indication, especially among the women household heads that they can exist and manage without the 'protection' and 'security' of men. The next category of women who hold more or less the same attitude are the women of landless and marginal household categories, who mostly work outside their own households and engage in money-making activities. Thus these two categories of women are found to be more assertive and seem to enjoy greater equality with their husbands than the women of more prosperous households. This assertiveness is more visible in Sonapur village among the members of organized groups. The major factors emerging among the group members and acting as their bases for collective actions and greater influence of women in Sonapur village are:

- a) **Unity and mutual support of women ;**
- b) **Gaining of more economic security by women ;**
- c) **Social consciousness and education of women ; and**
- d) **Acquiring leadership capabilities and positions by women.**

The above factors eventually help develop self-confidence and self-respect among women and these also foster the growth of creativity to find ways and means to bring change, especially in the sphere of women leadership.

a) **Unity and mutual support of women and [b] Gaining of more economic security by women**

The writers of *Jhagrapur* accurately stated the fact that most women in Jhagrapur react to their situation of oppression and exploitation by adapting to it. However, in some instances women register some protests which are usually not easy to recognize. The researchers suggest "to channel such protests into effective action and use them as starting points for organizing women to change their situation" [Arens and Beurden 1977:77]. The supportive agencies, on an experimental basis, have organized 131 women members of Sonapur into 18 small homogeneous women groups. Thus in this respect necessary attention has been given to the understanding of changes of women due to such organizing activities and to measure them comparatively with that of the Rampur village, where such organising efforts are absent. The women groups, as institutions of the poor, are creating new opportunities and opening up of windows for the women to unite themselves and extend mutual support. Women rarely get the opportunity to discuss their own situations, analyze the causes of their problems and the subordinate conditions. The 'Dialogue programmes', which are primarily group discussions, and the various training courses organized by the supportive agencies create the opportunities for real exchange of life-experiences of women. The processes release the accumulated tensions and ill-feelings of women, in the one hand, and encourage them to come up with constructive plans to alter the 'negative feelings' into positive forces, on the other hand. By talking to all the 18 women groups I got the impression that since the women are the most marginalized, they are serious and sincere in their efforts to change their conditions. The performances of the women groups, in general, are better than the men groups in different aspects, including group meetings and

attendance rate, regularity in savings, using loans in more urgent family needs, regularity in paying loan-installments, etc.

Table-4.11

A comparative picture on the performances of men and women groups

Particulars	5 Men groups	18 Women groups
a) No. of members [total]	108	131
Average members	21.6	7.3
b) Group meetings :		
- Frequency	Fortnightly/monthly	Weekly
- Regularity of meetings	77 %	98 %
- Attendance rate	62 %	94 %
c) Savings :		
- Average	Tk. 653.7	Tk. 615
- Rate/Range[per meeting]	Tk. 5-12	Tk. 2-8
- Regularity	68 % are regular	91% are regular
d) Loans :		
- How many times	1-4 times	2-6 times
- Average per loan	Tk. 1,000-15,000	Tk.500-7,500
- Recovery Rate	74 %	96 %
- Why defalcated	-Mostly group leaders	-Failure of projects
e) Major purposes of loans	Agriculture and land-based activities.	Off-farm and home-based activities.

Source : Field Work in Sonapur village.

Dipali Mohila Samity [a women group] is one of the oldest groups, formed in 1982. It started with 17 members and rose to 26; but during my study period the members came down to 22. It is a mixed-religious group of Muslim and Hindu household members. It is one of the most active groups in Sonapur village. The following are the major activities initiated and done by the members:

- Members have an accumulated savings of Tk.32,330/ as of June 1994;
- Children education through pre-schools: 15 boys and 35 girls;
- Received adult education and training for proper maintenance of groups' accounts and book-keeping: 4 persons;
- Several members have been given different types of training for development of leadership, management, fish-culture, rearing and reeling of sericulture, small business, etc.

- Six members have newly built their houses with C.I. sheets within the range of Tk. 5,500/ to 7,500/. These members admitted that it is the first time of having C.I. sheet houses for their families.
- Twelve members have made 10 clay-made and 2 cement-made slab pit latrines for the first time in their households. Four others used pit latrines before joining the group. Now, about 72.7% group members are using low cost latrines.
- Due to the campaign for social forestry, the members have planted 102 fruit trees, 25 timber trees and 1685 mulberry trees. Five group members are involved in sericulture activities.
- For pure drinking water and mini-irrigation purposes the group obtained one UNICEF-supported hand tube well and 2 rower pumps.
- The group took up one joint project for pond fish culture on lease and has the following individual projects :
 - * 3 Goat-raising projects [in 1984, 1985, and 1989] for Tk. 3,000/, 8,000/ and 10,000/ among 15 members;
 - * 2 Cow-raising/fattening projects [in 1987 and 1991] for Tk 18,000/ and 60,000/ among 18 members;
 - * Small business in 1992 and 1993 for Tk. 35,000/ and 15,000/ among 5 members.

Two other examples are given in Table 4.12 of two different small-size groups with their economic activities which will help us to understand the extent and nature of such activities. It is clear from two examples of Table- 4.12 that small credits taken by the members are used for specific income-generation and productive purposes. Two members used part of their credit for taking in mortgage and purchase of land, the main source of livelihood and sustainable asset in rural Bangladesh.

Table - 4.12
Economic activities of two women groups of Grameen Bank in Sonapur Village

Group 1	1st loan		2nd loan		3rd loan		4th loan		Remarks (How installments are paid)
	Amount (in Tk.)	Purpose	Amount (in Tk.)	Purpose	Amount (in Tk.)	Purpose	Amount (in Tk.)	Purpose	
member-A	1000	Cow	1,500	One goat+10 decimal of land mortgaged	3,000	Milching Cow	1,500	Invested in Agriculture	Tk. 90/ from selling of cow and Husband's day labourer
member-B	1000	2 goats	1,500	Cow	4,000	Cow+pupped rice business	1,500	Business	Tk. 80/ from business. The business is done by herself
member-C	1000	Small shop (betail nut)	2,500	C.I. Sheets (2000)+500 in shop	4,000	Tk. 500 in shop and 3500 to take land mortgage	2,000	Agriculture	Tk. 120/ from the income of husband's shop
member-D	1000	Cow	1,500	Repayment to money lender	1,000	Cow	4,000	Cow+ purchase of paddy	Tk. 60/ Husband's income of rickshaw pulling
member-E	1000	Husking business	1,500	Husking business	2,000	2 Cow	2,000	Tube-well	Tk. 90/ from husking business
Group 2									
Member A	1000	2 goats	1,500	Husking business	2,000	Cow	2,000	Part payment of rickshaw	Tk. 90/ from husband's rickshaw pulling
member-B	2000	Cow + house repair	1,500	Cow + repayment of loan	2,000	Cow	1,500	3 goats	Tk. 80/ very difficult to pay Husband day labourer
member-C	1000	Cow	1,500	Cow	2,000	Small business (not working well)	2,000	Cow	Tk. 100/ from husband's day labouring
member-D	1000	Cow	1,500	Land court case	3,000	2 Cows	4,500	Purchase of 3 decimal of land	Tk. 200/ from selling milk and working in other households
member-E	1000	2 goats (one died)	1,500	Repair of house (Tk. 1000) and pupped rice business (Tk. 500)	2,000	Repayment of previous loans	2,000	Cow	Tk. 80/ from her shop

Source : Field work in Sonapur village.

Besides the above, as part of their involvement in social actions the larger group twice helped financially two poor women, one group member and another non-member for treatment and purchase of medicine out of the service charge earned of their group savings. This also indicates their desire to help the poor for the common good.

There are two other experiences of the Dipali group of their collective involvement in social action. One of the widow group members was once beaten by her relatives over a minor issue. The group protested the incident and called a meeting of the village leaders and some members from the other groups. The relatives of the widow begged her pardon and regretted what they have done. On another occasion, one member's husband wanted to divorce his wife for giving too much time for group and outside activities. He was also reluctant to allow his wife to join the group. However, with the intervention of the total group the husband had to change his mind. The group decided to hold regular group meetings in the said household. The household is now using one of the meeting places of the group on a regular basis. I talked to the couple and found the husband regretful for his said attitude and action. He has now become one of the main supporters and helpers of the group.

The above facts amply suggest that the organized group members are now not alone. They have institutions of their own to support their causes. They have now a **collective identity** through the *Mohila Samities*. They have the opportunities to make some decisions which affect their lives. This also indicates that these women's

institutions have achieved some degree of empowerment to express their views and aspirations collectively.

They can now easily come out of their households for social and other activities. Most importantly, these institutions have created a congenial environment for women's PARTICIPATION in various socio-economic activities, which eventually help their own households and ensure common good of the village. All these might have given them a new sense of security and a self-confidence for more involvement in making a better future for themselves as well as for their children.

One of the major limitations of the institution-building process of the poor is that the institutions are organized by the supportive agencies, viz. BRDB, Grameen Bank, BRAC, Caritas, etc. in Sonapur village. The groups continue to maintain their involvement with the supportive agencies whose principles and guidelines have created great influence upon them. But the process itself is creating a division among the poor which is detrimental to the interests of the poor. The writers of *Jhagrapur*, while advocating institution-building activities of the poor for consolidating a unity of the exploited as much as possible, warned that any division among the poor will eventually encourage and support their enemies [1977:88]. Thus the supportive agencies and the institutions of the poor need a deeper understanding, co-ordination and more mutual support on an urgent basis to achieve greater goals of empowerment of the poor.

c] **Social consciousness and education of women**

The 'Dialogue Programmes' and the groups of the women have created opportunities to discuss important issues and exchange ideas among

themselves. Motivational and skills development training, as components of 'dialogue programmes,' help members of the women groups develop their critical thinking and awareness. Such awareness encourages the group members to be assertive **to participate in decision-making process** that affects their lives.

In addition, formal education also has a far-reaching influence in facilitating women's participation in decision-making process and leadership roles. A critical analysis of the comparative educational levels of men and women between the study villages might have encouraged the members to be optimistic for the future.

Table -4.13
Comparative educational level of men and women

Education	Rampur				Sonapur			
	Present Literacy		School going		Present Literacy		School going	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
a) Can write /K.G.	9.7	6.9	3.7	3.24	24.2	28.6	4.23	4.23 KG
b) Classes I-V	13.8	14.6	21.30	17.59	24.6	32.5	33.57	28.40
c) Classes VI-X	22.1	18.0	13.89	13.89	14.2	10.8	7.04	10.33
d) S.S.C.	9.1	6.7	5.09	5.09	2.9	1.0	3.52	1.41
e) H.S.C.	7.4	2.1	6.94	4.63	2.5	0.02	3.29	0.91
f) Degree	3.3	--	3.24	0.46	0.8	0.7	2.82	--
g) Above Degree	0.6	--	0.93	--	--	0	0.23	--
h) Cannot write	34.0	51.67	--	30.8	26.1	--	--	--
(%)			55.0	45.0			54.69	45.31

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

The data presented in the above Table[4.13] suggest the fact that women are not so much lagging behind men in regard to education. With regard to literacy, participation of women at primary and secondary levels is even more than those of men; only at higher levels women are to some extent lagging behind. In spite of many odd circumstances, education and awareness activities help make women resourceful and capable of participating in decision-making process and leadership roles.

d) Acquiring leadership capabilities and positions by women

All existing 18 groups or institutions of the women in Sonapur have been creating opportunities for a few women in each group to be acquainted with the functions of organisational leadership. By playing small leadership roles every day a few women in each group become little leaders. While discussing with the women groups I tried to understand whether some of the group leaders would be interested to contest the Union Parishad elections in future. Almost all women group members referred to two women of the two different groups, one widow and another from a marginal household, whom the women groups contemplate to nominate them in the next Union *Parishad* election. I had the chance to talk to both of them. Both seem to be interested in contesting the elections provided the women's groups support them. The important point is that a base for women's participation in political election has taken root. This might help develop a propensity for power struggle among the women. In this context the process of institution-building of the poor would definitely create grounds, as claimed by Rahman, "for a stronger social movement or an organization which aims at defending the rights of all the poor" [Rahman 1994:15], especially among the women.

Traditionally, women have no role in the village power structure. Decisions that affect their lives are taken by men. The institution-building process of the poor in Sonapur and their experiences in group activities suggest that, if opportunities are given, women can do equally good work as men, and sometimes even better than men. In socio-economic activities some women and their groups were found better than men's groups, especially in terms of regular saving, use of loans for productive purposes, payment of loan installments, etc. The experiences of women groups of Sonapur suggest the fact that if women are given opportunity to participate in decision-making process and leadership roles in the households as well as in the village

matters, the progress of village could be faster. This might help create an egalitarian society in Bangladesh. Of course, for this a more positive out-look of men and a greater determination of women are essential. Almost this type of determination of women is emerging in Sonapur village among the members of organised groups. The process is gradually becoming faster. Critics may even say that, like in Sonapur, a **silent social revolution** is taking place in Bangladesh with regard to the situation of women. It is very encouraging to observe that women are participating in greater number than any time of the past and contributing almost in all sectors. But there is still absence of efforts to develop a more positive out look of men in this regard. The process may take many decades, or even centuries. What the organized women groups fear most and do not want it to happen is the backlash. Many a times, in matters of urgent social changes we go three steps forward and draw two steps back-ward. The trend of backlash seems to be now knocking at the door. Already some quarters have started characterizing PVDO activities as "...anti-people, anti-state, ulterior motive for capturing state power and.... growing influences in changing the rural power structure " [Khan 1994:13-14].

The situation also creates a tension in regard to women and gender, which is largely based upon religious and cultural issues. Wood in his observations on the situation of women in Bangladesh noted that "the difficulty of 'targeting' women by interventions of projects, in the sense of artificially abstracting them from their complex social and cultural environment, is especially problematic for project modes of development thinkers" (1994:159).

Rural masses and leaders : Accountability - relationship

At this stage, it is necessary to further identify the power-wielders and their roles so that we are able to analyze the nature of relationships

between the rural masses and leaders, including the phenomena of dominance and control. This would also help one to understand the key problems and issues of village development (B. Hartmann and J.K. Boyce 1983:214-218). We have already identified and discussed the power-wielders of the present study villages. They are both the informal and the formal leaders. The informal leaders are known as - *matbars*, *Sardars*, *Mohats*, etc, and the formal leaders are Union *Parishad* members [2 persons] and the chairman who are living in the villages. It should be noted here that in the present study I have considered the village leaders as the nucleus of the power elite. Wood [1976], Chowdhury [1978] and a few others had done the same [Chowdhury 1982 : 52-55].

In the discussion on 'villagers and leaders' earlier I have tried to explain the key issues of relationships between the villagers and the village leaders. In regard to this relationships two elements come to the forefront, viz. [a] the accountability of the leaders to the villagers, and [b] the trust of villagers to their leaders. These two elements work as the core of such relationships between them. Khalid Shams in his study on *Organizing Local Initiatives for Decentralized Rural Development: Regional Experience* also suggested these two elements as the core of such relationships. [Shams 1987:128-130].

In the process of developing such relationships, leaders' accountability leads to the creation of trust of the villagers on their leaders. This is considered as the starting point. The more the leaders are accountable, the greater the people trust their leaders. It is fundamental to this relationship process. How this process works in the present study villages and what types of relationships exist between the villagers and their leaders are being shown below:

Table-4.14**Views on accountability-relationship**

Nature of relationships	Rampur		Sonapur	
	H H Heads	Leaders	H H Heads	Leaders
a) Accountability of leaders	21.2	34.0	33.2	51.1
b) Trust of villagers	27.7	66.3	35.0	64.8

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

Accountability of the leaders to villagers

Table- 4.14 shows that the villagers have, in general, a more negative attitude towards their leaders i.e. more than two thirds of the households heads of both the study villages think that their leaders are not accountable to them. This feeling is very strong among the household heads. The main reasons behind such an attitude are stated below :

Most informal leaders tend to act in such a way, as if " they were made leaders by themselves". No votes or any other people's mandate were required for informal leaders. The basis of their becoming leaders were to the extent of land ownership, leadership positions traditionally inherited, educational background, linkages with political parties, etc. in which the villagers themselves had very little or no participation. In the context of the above situation, the majority of informal leaders do not understand and accept the need for accountability of leaders to the villagers. However, the formal leaders who have been elected by the votes of villagers as Members and Chairman of the Union *Parishad* realize and give some importance to such an accountability-relationship with the villagers to certain extent. But there exists no formal system or mechanism

established anywhere, even in adjacent areas, through which such an accountability-relationship may be practised.

Another important factor responsible for the lack of accountability is that all the village leaders [both informal and formal] come from the household heads, who are predominantly male, who do not feel accountable to anyone in their households. In the societal system characterized by male-dominated household, there is hardly any practice and tradition of accountability. Basic leadership qualities and values are generally developed in the milieu of households which need to be the training grounds of accountability-relationships for the members, especially the household heads. A household head who is normally accountable to other members of a household, is expected to be accountable as village leader to the villagers as a whole, because of his/her formation in the family. Hence, we need to initiate a process of accountability-relationship in each household.

An emerging trend of accountability-relationship is taking root at the organizational level in the institutions of the poor in Sonapur. The group leaders of this village in every weekly/ fortnightly meeting are bound to give an account of their activities to the members and vice-versa. Besides, there are annual meetings [assemblies] and regular elections, etc., all of which help establish formal accountability-relationship of the leaders.

Khalid Shams in his study of the experience of local-level initiatives of rural development in the Asia and Pacific regions suggested that "local leadership should be accountable to the group on the basis of broad

democratic principles. This would mean that a leader who did not enjoy the group's confidence would have to be replaced by the group through an established process. The leadership, after losing the group's confidence is either challenged or effectively overthrown by the general assembly of the organization " [ibid:129-130]. Shams further observed that a broad-based and **collective leadership** which is democratically elected at frequent intervals is usually given importance in most organizations.

The concept of '*Gram Sarkar*' was perhaps a step forward to perform various regular functions for village development on the basis of accountability-relationship to the people at large. But before it could take a proper shape, it was abolished [Barman 1988:174-181].

The villagers strongly expressed their views that accountability of the village leaders to the villagers should be unquestionable. The villagers think that it is possible to establish some systems of accountability. My own view here is that the accountability of leaders to the villagers needs to be part and parcel of the power-relation. The concept of power, therefore, needs to be re-defined to incorporate this connotation of accountability-relationship. The socio-political context of rural Bangladesh demands such a re-definition of the concept of power.

Trust of villagers in their leaders

Khalid Shams in his study of local-level initiatives of rural development has observed that the local leadership should be able to win the trust of the members of the organization. The leaders usually should be able to represent the majority members of the group. Because usually the local-level leaders are vested with numerous functions, including the

management responsibility for planning, organizing, implementing of various activities. Thus, the trust and confidence of people in their leaders is an issue of utmost importance [ibid:128-129].

As a matter of fact, the findings in both the present study villages on this point is not so encouraging. Approximately one-third of the household heads have trust and confidence in their village leaders, while the two-thirds of the leaders themselves think that the villagers have trust and confidence in them. Of course, the views of the leaders are not always true, according to our findings. A number of reasons were pointed out by the household heads and the leaders as responsible for such a situation which are noted below :

As a process, it is necessary that the leaders first become accountable to the people to win their trust and confidence. Where there is absence of such accountability, the trust of people can not grow.

It is also another important reason that there is a gap between the expectations of villagers and the performances of leaders. Today, the villagers expect their leaders to take up more developmental activities than the traditional social roles only. The group leaders of the institutions of the poor in Sonapur believe that it is through participation in development activities and doing a successful job that one can make oneself a good leader in the village. Barman also found the same expectation of villagers in his study of emerging leadership patterns in rural Bangladesh [1988:177-181].⁸

8. Hartmann B. and Boyce J.K. [1983], in their study --*A Quiet Violence - View from a Bangladesh Village* -- [University Press Ltd. Dhaka , pp. 214-227] also hold similar views.

Therefore, it can be said that accountability by the village leaders is a must for rural development. One of the central concepts of the changing trends of the rural power structure is that the changes are more oriented towards people and building accountability-relationships between the leaders and the people through an institution-building process. Without accountability even governments become autocratic and dictatorial. A democratic government, sooner or later has to be accountable to the citizens. The colonial and the dictatorial-military rules of the past destroyed all possibilities of accountability of the power holders in our society, from local to national levels. The present democratic process has to go a long way to really build up all necessary democratic institutions, norms and set examples. The institution building process among the poor in Sonapur is a specific experimental step in that direction. The outcomes are encouraging. In such institutions accountability-relationship is taking shape.

The small groups at the grassroots level make their leaders accountable through an organizational process. Likewise, the local government bodies may gradually be made accountable to their respective constituencies. The government and political leaders also need to make sincere efforts on their part to be accountable to the people. This accountability is a must and we are heading in that direction.

Further, a village level social development worker with a vision and commitment, works as a social bridge-maker to help establish accountability-relationship between the leaders and the masses. The experiences of Khaleque Bhai gives evidence to the same. Wood suggested further that the accountability of the supportive agencies and of the state to the poor are also important. The rise of democratic politics in Bangladesh does not ensure that such accountability will be improved automatically (1994:538).

CHAPTER-5 : THE SOURCES OF POWER IN THE VILLAGES UNDER STUDY AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WIDER SOCIETY

Major sources of power of the rural leaders

Most social scientists who have dealt with power have tried to identify the bases or sources of power. Terry N. Clark, in one of his writings - *The Concept of Power: Some Overemphasized and Under-recognized Dimensions - An Examination with Special Reference to the Local Community* - notes that "A number of writers on community power have compiled lists of important bases of power" [1971:32]. Dahl did refer to 9 main factors in this respect (1961:266) which are as follows:

1. Money and credit;
2. Control over jobs;
3. Control over the information of others;
4. Social standing;
5. Knowledge and expertness;
6. Popularity, esteem and charisma;
7. Legality, constitutionality and officiality;
8. Ethnic solidarity; and
9. The right to vote.

Chowdhury (1978) has divided the sources of power into two i.e. **internal** and **external**. The internal sources are those that are available in the villages themselves, both material and non-material, like land, money, machines, groups and lineage of people. The external sources of power refer to factors that help one to acquire power and control over community affairs from outside the villages, viz. honourable jobs, linkages with powerful

persons or organizations. Most of these internal and external sources of power are found to be prevailing and effective in the study villages. However, in the present study it has been observed that **ownership of land, large family size and lineage, education, family heritage as leader and linkages with political parties** are the major sources of power in both the study villages. In addition, **the socio-economic organizations formed by the initiatives of governmental and voluntary agencies** are also working as a new sources of power which influence community actions, to a great extent. The following facts are stated regarding the major sources of power as identified under the present study :

Big land ownership: We have already seen in Chapter-2 that leaders own more land and also earn more than the masses. In Rampur, about two-thirds and in Sonapur, about one-third of the leaders come from the rich farmers' households. All village studies up to now found land as the most basic source of power in rural Bangladesh. The present study has also found the same. While the households of both the villages own 2.27 acres, the leaders own 8.13 acres of land on an average. It is very evident in Table-5.1 that the village leaders of Rampur basically come from the rich farmer's households for whom the ownership of large quantity of land is the fundamental source of power.

Table -5.1
Pattern of land-ownership among the leaders

Land categories	Rampur		Sonapur	
	No. of leaders	%	No. of leaders	%
a) Landless household	0	0	0	0
b) Marginal farmer	0	0	5	27.8
c) Small farmer	1	10	2	11.1
d) Middle farmer	2	20	3	16.7
e) Rich farmer	7	70	8	44.4
TOTAL	10	100	18	100

Source : Field Work in Rampur and Sonapur villages.

In addition, the average annual income of the leaders is much more than the average households' income. Still more, both land ownership and average annual income of the leaders of Rampur village is much higher than that of leaders of Sonapur village. Perhaps it is one of the main reasons for Sonapur village having no formal leaders in the position of Chairmanship.

Large households and lineage: Leaders usually come from the large lineage and have larger households than those of the masses. On average, the families of leaders belonging to villages have 7.5 members, while households have 5.1.

Education: When education is added to the ownership of land there is more likelihood to be leaders. In Rampur all, and in Sonapur, the majority of leaders are well-educated. Education provides a strong source of power. Arens and Beurden (1977) found in their said study that the educated youth are the most potential power-holders in the village. Karim (1987) also observed that education has given a new power to the young members of the traditional lineage in getting access to village leadership.

Family background : The fathers, grandfathers and father-in-laws of most of the existing leaders were also leaders. In village communities there is a common saying regarding the leadership that the son of a leader also becomes a leader [*matbar-rer beta-ee matbar hoai*]. In other words, village leadership continues through traditional leader-families. Table-3.2 testifies this fact that family background acts as an important source of power. The said Table demonstrates the fact that the fathers of nine out of ten leaders in Rampur and 6.6 out of ten in Sonapur [according to Table- 4.4] of the present leaders were either formal or informal leaders. It is also interesting to note that all grand-fathers of the present leaders of Rampur village were village leaders, while only about six out of every ten present leaders' grand-

fathers were leaders. The fathers-in-law of the present leaders were leaders in significant numbers. In Rampur, fathers-in-law of nine leaders out of the ten were village leaders, while the same was true for half of the leaders of Sonapur village.

Linkages with the political parties: It has been observed in the study villages that leaders used to have more linkages with the political parties and government administrative offices and keep more information about parties and government activities. Such linkages and information provide their sources of power. Normally, party-supporters seem to display more power in the villages than the ordinary villagers.

The socio-economic groups and their net-works organised by the supportive agencies in Sonapur village are emerging as a new and an alternative source of power of the 'powerless' majority villagers: In Sonapur village, groups of the villagers act as an emerging source of rural power among the landless, marginal and small farmers. This is a new emerging bottom-up factor which is people-centred. Savings and small income-generation activities of the organised households give them a new sense of social security and help increase their material power as well. The process of groups' socio-economic activities are creating an environment for greater participation of the grassroot population in the decision-making that affect their lives as well as livelihood. Organised members are participating more in exercising their right to vote, some are also contesting the local level elections against the traditional leaders, and are demanding governmental funds as their legitimate right. Thus the emerging alternative power of the 'powerless' once again proves that -- there is power among the powerless people, who are the majority in number. This power lies in their human potential and in their numbers. Moreover, in chapter- 4 it has been revealed

that a significant part of the emerging leadership is constituted by the womenfolk for which the following factors are mainly responsible:

- Unity and mutual support of women;
- Gaining of more economic security by women;
- Social consciousness and education of women; and
- Acquiring leadership capabilities and positions by women.

The women groups, as institutions of the poor, are creating new opportunities and opening up windows for the women to unite themselves and extend mutual support. They now have a collective identity and have achieved some degree of empowerment to voice their views and aspirations collectively. The above factors, as a whole, have developed self-confidence, self-respect and a new sense of social security among the women of organized groups and also the growth of creativity among women to find ways and means to bring necessary changes by themselves.

My empirical observations suggest that there are two distinct types of leadership styles prevailing in the two study villages which I would like to explain in the following manner:

- [i] **The Top-down or leader-centred style:** Rampur village has a highly centralized leadership style and practices. This is more 'top-down' and 'leader-centred' than that of Sonapur. In Rampur, it is difficult to hear the voices and the views of the villagers, especially the poor and the disadvantaged ones. In Rampur, people almost have no say in the matters that affect their lives. Present organizations in the village [viz. a hat, 2 schools-Government primary and a high, a mosque, an *Eidgah*, *Gram Sarkar*, a non-functional socio-cultural youth club, etc.] are all run by the existing leaders and their near-relatives. They hold important positions in the different committees and various village organizations.

People hardly have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. They are 'goo listeners' in such organizations.

- [ii] A **bottom-up and people-centred style** : The leadership style that has been seen in Sonapur village is just the opposite of the first one. Here the leadership is highly decentralized. This is more 'bottom-up' and 'people-centred' i.e. leaders can not decide on major issues alone. They feel the need to go to the people, discuss matters with them. The poor and the disadvantaged of Sonapur village also have some say in village matters. The organizations that are currently active in Sonapur village include-- a hat, 4 schools [one government primary and one private high, 2 schools up to three levels supported by the supportive agencies], 4 mosques and *zamats*, 11 village *Samajes*, 25 socio-economic groups [BRDB-1, Grameen Bank-12, BRAC-1, Caritas-9]. Each is run by its own committee. In some of such committees village leaders are serving as members in an individual capacity. Most of the management committees of these organisations are formed with the leaders of *samaj* groups and the socio-economic groups organized by the supportive agencies. As there are so many different organisations in the village, many ordinary household members are getting the opportunity to participate and perform a kind of leadership role. The above situation also suggests the fact that the more the number of organizations present in the village, the more are the opportunities for people to participate in various activities and play leadership roles. As noted above, BRDB, GB, BRAC, Caritas and CARE have exclusive socio-economic programmes in the village for the landless and marginal households for their awareness and capacity-building as well as for institution-building to serve the interests of the poor majority.

Relationships of the study villages with the wider society

At this stage of the Thesis, I would like to analyze the relationships and linkages of the present study villages with the wider society by taking a few important issues which the study villages talk about most. The study villages are two small dots or like mirrors which reflect very intensively on a small part in order to pinpoint certain characteristics about the whole. Thus what happens in the study villages reflects the nature and extent of relationships of the parts to the whole. During my field work in the study villages, I have very strongly felt the necessity of writing the views of the villagers themselves about the wider society. Otherwise many important things relating to the present study villages would remain untold. Here I have tried to see the 'outside world' with the eyes and feelings of the study villagers.

The villagers of the present study relate their own village with that of neighbouring villages for various socio-economic needs and also relate with the concerned Union for various administrative purposes. The Unions where Rampur and Sonapur are located have 34 and 21 villages respectively. As mentioned earlier, Rampur considers one of the adjacent villages as strong competitor to it on various issues and especially on Union *Parishad* election, while Sonapur has no such particular village to compete with. If Rampur is compared with the adjacent villages the main difference that an outsider can easily notice that Rampur is exceptionally rich with regard to big land ownership and having a good number of pucca and semi-pucca buildings. From the outer appearance Rampur looks like a small island in a sea; on the contrary, Sonapur is lacking such valued assets to a great extent.

Rampur village very strongly relates itself with the Union, the higher level administrative set up and the formal political institution. As the Union *Parishad* office is situated in Rampur village itself, the villagers of Rampur and especially the leaders have the tendency to consider themselves as 'guardian of the Union'. The villagers of Sonapur has no such a feeling about the Union. On the other hand, the organized members of Sonapur village have a very strong feeling, solidarity and net-working of the groups at Union, and Thana levels. There are 203 groups already federated into said network building process as a people's organization to work for the interest of the organized groups. Thus the relationships of the study villages with the wider society have two different types in nature i.e. Rampur village is more formal power-based and Sonapur is more people-based. It is interesting to observe that Rampur sees and seeks power in the formal office, whereas Sonapur village sees and seeks power in the groups and their net-work organization.

The Study villagers are continuously deprived of just prices of their agricultural products : On this issue the villagers, first and foremost, cite the example of **jute**, the 'golden fibre' of Bangladesh. The villagers produce food crops like rice, wheat, potatoes, etc. for their own consumption. They used to produce jute as their cash crop. As the jute growing area, the study villagers can abundantly produce jute for the wider society and thereby earn cash to buy their other needs and also the agricultural implements; but farmers buy from the outside-- agricultural implements such as, shallow pumps, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. and other necessities like --clothes, kerosene oil, etc. A critical analysis of the consequences of trade between the producers of agricultural products and the producers of agricultural implements that on the whole the rich are benefited and the

poor lose out. Although the international trade agreements like the Uruguay Round of GATT, etc. advocate that "we are all gainers, there are no losers" [Khore 1994 : 35-38]. This is not at all true. Here I shall cite few examples concerning the impact of the products that go out and come into the study villages, and also Bangladesh as a whole. The examples clarify that through national and international trade the poorest of Bangladesh and of the study villages are the ultimate losers. They suffer severe losses to their economic standing. This is a great concern for the poor countries as well as the poor and marginal peasants.

In the early 1970s, the farmers of the study villages were able to obtain a small-size power-tiller at the cost of two and half tons of jute and in the 1990's the same power-tiller is bought with about 10 tons of jute. In the meanwhile, the price of jute has doubled, i.e. increased from Tk. 150/ to Tk. 300/ per 40 kg in the local markets; but in real monetary terms the price has gone down many times because of several devaluation of the Bangladesh currency. The above figures clearly indicate that the farmers of the study villages are paying about 4 times more for the same products of the industrially-developed countries. The same is true in case of other agricultural products. **This means that the weakest always lose and the strongest win. The traditional concept of power has become operationalized through this game of exchange.**

One Mafiz Master [43], a primary school teacher and a marginal household member of the Rampur village, during my long informal discussion tried to explain that the colonial exploitation of the past and the policies of the rich nations work in such a way that poor nations remain the poor for ever. According to him, the rich man also exploits their poor fellow

villagers in the same manner, which would keep the poor in the similar state for ever. He continues " but I can not take it easily. Poor people work in the field and those who do not work, will enjoy the fruits ".

Mafiz Master made a modest attempt to explain other relevant points. " If someone sees things critically he or she can understand what really happens in a village," he claims. It is difficult for him to provide specific figures about the amount of money that the villagers deposit in banks and the amount they get back from banks as loans for development work. He strongly feels that definitely their savings are used for investment by others, and thereby the villagers are always the losers. I have cited this example to Mafiz Master in order to get his views about it. In 1977, Tk. 250 million was deposited in the district banks of Bogra, but Tk. 25 million was returned to the farmers as agricultural loans. The rest was siphoned off to the cities. Mafiz Master fully agrees and asks me in return:" Who can stop this process? Why will the rich stop it? They will not kill themselves."

However, an alternative situation is now emerging among the poor and marginalized households in Sonapur village. The savings of the organized group members and credit of the supportive agencies are invested by the group members in the village to find out alternative and additional means of income and employment for themselves. A possible alternative which Mafiz Master refers to, is that people should organize themselves and collectively strive to create alternative ways and means for improving their condition.

Religions bind as well as divide the villagers to and from the wider society. Villagers of both of the study villages are composed of Muslim and Hindu religious groups. Each religion creates a common bond among its followers, while it also separates one from the other. Though none of the religions had originated in our study villages, each gave birth to universal identity and experience among our villagers. Situated on India's eastern frontier, Bengal was on the periphery of early Hindu culture. Caste stratification gradually emerged and spread all over. Buddhism was originally a reaction against caste system of the Hinduism. In the 13th century, dedicated Muslim missionaries, scholars, mystics and saints-travelled from village to village to preach the brotherhood of Islam and converted people. The preaching of the equality of all believers before Almighty Allah carried more appeal for the ordinary villagers. Even today the legendary Muslim saints and peers attract both Muslim and Hindu supplicants. The synthesis of Hinduism and Islam perhaps finds its best expression in the philosophy of the *Bauls*, a small ascetic group of south-western Bangladesh and the adjoining parts of West Bengal. Confirming both Hindu and Islamic imagination together with Bengali folk themes, they composed songs to establish direct communication with God. Villagers have a strong feeling and admiration for such universal appeals. In spite of such preaching and efforts for unity, the two religions in the study villages still separate the villagers from one another. In view of this reality, Hartmann and Boyce in their study of village Kanti found 'religion having the double edge' [ibid : 214-221]..

Thus religions made almost a permanent type of social division among the villagers. The villagers have the tendency of feeling security and comfortable

to live among the people of the same religion. In most *Paras* the villagers live in clusters based on common religion.

Political parties and their ideologies create divisions among the villagers: As noted earlier, the division of villagers into four major political parties is quite clear and such divisions have important implications in the social-living of the villagers. Before, during and after local and national level elections, such divisions and groups among the villagers generally become more prominent. All political divisions in the present study villages have come from outside. It is interesting to note that some villagers have frequently changed their political ideologies and parties in the course of time. For instance, immediately after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 almost all villagers supported the Awami League; but subsequently many had changed their views and began to support other new parties.

Programmes and activities of supportive agencies help the study village [Sonapur] to build linkages with the wider society; but create divisions in the village as the groups organized by the supportive agencies include some villagers and exclude many others: The supportive agencies have organized altogether 23 small groups [*samities*] in Sonapur for socio-economic development of the poor and the marginalised households. Each group now has a separate identity in the village. The groups have good interaction and co-operation under the banner of each supportive agency separately. No co-operation and collaboration exist among the groups of different supportive agencies. In view of such a situation, issues which affect the whole village or several villages remain unanswered, to a great extent.

The divisions of villagers along the line of the supportive agencies have some similarity with the British colonial policy of "divide and rule". However, as noted earlier, without an active collaboration of the supportive agencies at the village-level the opponents of the poor peasantry are likely to be benefited. As a field researcher, I am convinced that the benefits of the services of the supportive agencies will be many folded if the concerned agencies can make concerted actions at the grassroot level.

CHAPTER - 6 : CONCLUSIONS

To sum up my experiences gained during my field work in the villages -- it may be said that Bangladesh society is basically composed of a vast number of the poor and the underprivileged people. Nobody can deny this stark reality. This means that there exists a high degree of scarcity of **land** [the main source of livelihood of the rural population and the key to village power] and **employment**, and it is about these two sources that the villagers are largely found to compete for their actual existence. Due to the increase of population, the scarcity of land is gradually on the rise and consequently the pattern of land ownership is fast changing. As a general rule, landless poor, marginal and small peasants are continuously losing their land which the rich and the more influential households are taking over their land.

At the beginning of this century there was one person to one acre of land in Bangladesh. Faaland and Parkinson in their study - *Bangladesh : The Test Case of Development* -- forecast that with the existing growth rate of population, there could be as many as eight people to each acre by the end of this century [1976:124]. Based on the ownership of land, the study villages - Rampur and Sonapur- have 1.4 and 3.6 persons to each acre respectively. This means that the situation will not be so severe as was forecast. Still, Bangladesh is one of the most densely [about 830 persons per sq. km] populated countries of the world.

Equally stark reality of Bangladesh is that a major part of the said competition [for the scarce land and employment] directly affects the bottom majority who are poor and powerless. The experience shows that the condition of this bottom majority cannot be altered without direct interventions of the supportive agencies. Since the situation is grave and the task is gigantic, such direct interventions should also be extensive and manifold. A general awareness is beginning to grow among this bottom majority that without the understanding of the main causes of their endemic poverty situation and without any decision-making power in their hands they will always remain in the vicious circle of poverty. A critical awareness in thinking, empowerment of raising their voices, and building self-reliant organizations to safeguard the interests of the bottom majority are seen as possible ways to make a break-through in this circle.

The above mentioned process is taking root in Sonapur village; but lacking in Rampur. A new orientation almost exclusively began in the mid- 1970's in the South Asian countries by PVDOs, following a process of awareness-raising and organization building. Sonapur village is a small dot of the areas covered by such efforts. A preferential option to reach the poor and the marginalised households and to form the groups has been the core process which has been found effective, to some extent, in changing the situations of the landless poor and marginalized population by following a multi-dimensional integrated development approach. Timm calls this process a 'Social Justice Approach' [1994:113-114]. The rural landless, agricultural labourer households, women, unemployed youth, ethnic groups, etc. who are being most marginalized, are largely attracted to such a process. The ultimate end

of the process is to enable the poor and the marginalized population to establish their most basic human rights of life and livelihood. The people who are organized in the process work as a truth-force [ibid : 92-93]. In this context Rampur and Sonapur villages have been selected for the present comparative study.

The findings of my study suggest the fact that the villages I have chosen for this purpose have many similarities and dissimilarities in several respects. My primary focus has been on the changing trends in regard to power relations and the factors responsible for the emergence of the new leaders. The following trends deserve serious consideration in this respect:

- [i] In both the study villages, leaders basically emerged from the households with big land holdings, larger households and lineage, moderate educational qualifications, households with leadership heritage and having connections with the national political parties. All these elements are found to contribute to the growth of village leadership and are the sources or bases of village power. In Rampur village, all the five bases are prominently present and seem to be major traditional criteria of the rural leadership. However, in Sonapur village, a new base is seen to be gradually emerging, which led to certain changes in the leadership as well as the structure of village power relations. This new base in Sonapur village is the newly organized institutions of the grassroot poor and marginalised households initiated by the supportive agencies. This new factor is affecting the power relations of the village concerned in the following manners :

As the organizing process covers more than half of the said village households, its voters have been able to influence the local-government elections. For example, the only member of the Union *Parishad* from Sonapur village and the Chairman of the respective Union *Parishad* acknowledge the support of the samities, since 23 organised groups cover 58.7% households of the said village. The samities are expected to definitely affect the local level elections by electing the candidates of their own choice in most cases.

A trend is also emerging among the group (samity) members themselves to contest the Union *Parishad* elections for membership, basing on the support of local *samities*. This trend will continue to be strengthened.

A major change in the techniques of campaign in the local level election has taken place. Unlike previous occasions the contesting members now need to contact the *samities* directly, instead of the few 'middle men' matbars. In Sonapur village, no individual member of the *samities* holds the absolute influence or control to decide for whom to vote or not to vote any candidate. Discussion and consensus of the groups play a vital role in such decisions. This implies that the importance of the role of matbars as traditional leaders in influencing decisions in the village and decision-making process have declined to some extent. Simultaneously it also means that today in Sonapur village those who have influence and control over the institutions of the poor and the marginalised households organized by the supportive agencies, hold power to a certain extent. During the period of the campaign of the last Union

Parishad election 'Khaleq Bhai' had to stay away from Sonapur for several weeks. But all the contesting candidates recognized him and other extension workers of the supportive agencies to act as 'middle men' between them and the *samities*. It appears that, in order to influence the *samities* the 'would be leaders' might try their best to identify some 'middle men' in the *samities* or could develop some mechanisms which would foster good relationship between the leaders and the *samities*.

The impact of the 'Dialogue Programmes' and the institution-building process is clearly evident in the over-all development of political awareness and practices in Sonapur. The present study shows that the number of adult villagers, who are 'not aware and not interested' in politics, is larger in Rampur village than in Sonapur. The difference is about 4.4%. On the basis of this fact it can be said that in Sonapur the political consciousness among the adult villagers is more evident than that of Rampur villagers. This is primarily due to the introduction of non-formal adult education and continuous discussions/ dialogues including political issues at the group levels.

- [ii] **'Change and continuity'** is the dominant feature of the emerging leadership process of the present-day rural Bangladesh. Although the old traditional leadership households are still playing a dominant role for the village leadership positions, especially in Rampur; in Sonapur at least about 22.2% village leaders have come from non-leader households. Barman in his study (1988) observed that only 9.04% leaders came from non-leader households. This trend of the increase of leaders from the

non-leaders households is primarily due to the existence of newly organized *samities*. This means that while the domination of the traditional households continues, the new leaders from the non-leader households are also on the rise. This is what is called 'change and continuity' in the power structure of rural Bangladesh.

- [iii] **The leadership role is being played more and more collectively. This is very explicit in Sonapur where institutions organized by the supportive agencies of the poor and marginalised households give more collective leadership in the village.** The phenomenon of leadership in Rampur is highly centralized, top-down and leader-oriented in nature, while in Sonapur it is more de-centralized, bottom-up and people-oriented. The former is the traditional style of leadership present and the latter is the emerging one. In Sonapur village, members of the *samities* have greater participation in the decision-making process that affect their lives and livelihood. This means that the more the organizations are present in the village, the more opportunities are available for people to participate, to influence decisions that concern them and to learn the techniques of organisational leadership role and functions. The institution building process has created such opportunities in Sonapur village, especially among the landless and marginal household categories.

The collective leadership role and the collective social strength of the *samities* are very much interrelated to help them solve their various socio-economic problems, to some extent. The *samities* and their networks have quite a few inspiring examples of joint social actions as a countervailing power. Resisting to local level injustices by the single or

collective actions of the groups can be seen as a challenge to the traditional oppressive power structure, in one hand, and an opposing force of the grassroot marginalised population to interests of the vested groups, on the other. This collective strength of the groups is developing as an emerging countervailing force in Sonapur village where the existing power structure has seen to be definitely reversed to a great extent. This changing trend in the rural power structure is increasingly developing in Sonapur among the landless and marginalised households, while this is almost absent in Rampur.

- [iv] *Salish* is considered as an important institution of the rural power structure to settle village disputes. This institution has also undergone a major change in Sonapur at two levels noted below:

The disputes among the group members are being amicably settled more and more in group-meetings. The role of *Salish* is gradually being taken over by the group[s]. The groups do not go to the leaders, both formal and informal, for the disputes in which they are involved and could be solved by themselves alone.

The second level of change in regard to *Salish* is that women are also being involved in settling disputes through the group-process which is totally a new and an emerging phenomenon in Sonapur whereas it is completely lacking in Rampur. Thus the traditional function of village-leaders to settle village-disputes and the previous role of the *gram-salish* are slowly being taken over by the organised groups. This is considered as an element for the ultimate basic change in the rural power structure.

- [v] Women belonging to the poor and marginalized households are increasingly attracted to the socio-economic *samities* organized by the supportive agencies. They are gaining economic power by these opportunities of participation in such activities which further strengthen their countervailing power. As women in the groups they find a common identity and social dignity. In spite of signs of those limited positive changes, the whole issue of women and gender is still complex in the context of the existing socio-cultural environment in Bangladesh. However, the emerging trend in Sonapur is that the women are coming out of the households for *samity* meetings and participating in money-making activities which eventually enable them to determine village decisions, to some extent. It is interesting to note that both the positive and the negative [by the fundamentalist forces] trends are equally on the rise. As a whole, a kind of silent revolution with far-reaching changes is taking place in terms of greater participation, raising-voices and leadership of women. Such changes are creating a better socio-economic environment not only for the women themselves, but also contributing greatly to the nation-building endeavours.
- [vi] It has been observed that there is an emerging trend with regard to the expected role of rural leaders. Villagers are, more and more, expecting their leaders to undertake developmental activities rather than performing only the traditional social roles. Because of this expectation, the leaders who do more developmental work are being recognised as the most popular. This is why Wood (1994) emphasized on the understanding of the rural power structure for village development. Based on the experiences gained through the field work in Sonapur village, I can almost safely assume that the villages of rural Bangladesh

may be increasingly structured into different organizations, the majority of which would be, of course, economic in nature. The majority rural population at the grassroot level, due to their endemic poverty-situation, are likely to be attracted to those economic organizations. This trend is on the rise. Consequently, leadership positions in the villages will be distributed on organizational bases.

- [vii] Another important aspect of the changing trend is the development of accountability-relationships between the leaders and members of the socio-economic organizations (*samities*). In chapter- 4, it has been seen that the leadership growth-process in Sonapur has an in-built mechanism for the leaders to be acceptable to the groups, while such mechanism is missing in the traditional system of Rampur. It is also interesting to note that the accountability of the leaders to the people helps develop the trust of people in their leaders. In most cases, such trust is totally absent in the traditional leadership-approach.
- [viii] A strong optimism for the generation of off-farm rural employment for the poor and marginalised households and opportunities for earning additional income by women in Sonapur has been expanded under the direct patronage of the supportive agencies. It has been observed among the members of the organized groups that by improving material or economic condition of the marginalised masses at the grassroot, they are being helped to build up their social strength and dignity. This has been manifested among the 'powerless population' in Sonapur. The foundation of economic functions of the landless and marginalised households is their own small savings and credit programmes of the supportive agencies. The savings and their collective activities have helped develop a new sense of social security and establish their right to the access of resources which, in turn,

greatly contribute to the complete abolition of the existing rural money-lending system of exploitative character. Similar views are being expressed by Khalid Shams when he says that “development is not feasible unless the poor are empowered to re-structure the institutions which exploit them. The processes are political actions” [1987: 108] which eventually affect the power structures as well.

- [ix] The supporting agencies are institutionalizing a PROCESS of change. The core of this process is to help people ‘to be’ capable and resourceful to change their conditions. In the process, people learn and practise new social values and norms and thus develop an alternative or ‘new morality’ for themselves which are pro-people and pro-poor. In addition, basing on such new values and norms people initiate various new institutions and activities (projects) which are possible on their part. The process helps them to be self-creative, collaborative and supportive to each other, which are considered to be basic elements for bringing about changes. Accountability–relationship between the leaders and the masses is an example of the new social value being emerging in the rural Bangladesh. Today, the holders of power are also expected to be accountable to their followers. Thus a new political culture is taking root at the very bottom of Bangladesh society.
- [x] An active co-operation among the supportive agencies at the village level and a greater understanding and mutual support of the government, political leaders and academicians require adequate attention and due recognition. This need for the above mentioned co-operation is strongly felt by the organized groups themselves in order to fulfill the following objectives:

No agency has an over-all understanding about the village where it works. The basic approach to be followed is to contact individual households on the basis of each agency's selection criteria of group members. When the households satisfy the criteria of the supportive agencies they could be encouraged to form groups. Besides, the supportive agencies among themselves have no co-operation and co-ordination at the level of the study [Sonapur] and the adjacent villages. Consequently, the supportive agencies are duplicating their efforts which is not liked by the most villagers.

That collaboration among the supportive agencies will also help begin a process of co-operation among the groups and institutions of the poor themselves which is almost lacking. Without this collaboration among the groups themselves, people will remain divided, which will ultimately go against their interests. Here we intend to remember as a warning, the views of Arens and Beurden [1977] expressed in their study of **Jhagrapur** -- " If one wants to elicit support for the most exploited ones in their struggle against their exploiters, the unity of the former has to be promoted as much as possible. They should be helped in gaining insight into the common features of their problems. To divide the poor peasantry is to support their enemies " [Arens and Beurden 1977 : 87-88]. It is evident in Sonapur that the countervailing forces of the poor are now divided among themselves and this is due to the supportive agencies concerned. Thus for an effective role of the countervailing power of the poor, who are to be organized as an alternative base of power, they should be encouraged to work

unitedly. This, however, very much depends on the supportive agencies themselves and on their ability to act collectively.

A village-survey is a must. Before initiating the process of group formation a village-survey is necessary. Both cost and time factors generally discourage the supportive agencies to undertake such survey.

The socio-economic awareness of the people helps develop their capacity and ability to participate in the political process and also to make decisions on political issues that affect their lives. Politicization of the people is a function of political parties. According to their legal status and code of behaviour, the supportive agencies can not be involved in politicizing people as a political force. It is clearly understood that to make any political choice totally depends on the individual member, group and their net-works. The organised households as groups also remain politically neutral, while as individuals they decide whom they should vote for in their interests. "If PVDOs were to impose a particular political philosophy on any group it would be contradictory to their [PVDOs] role of educating and inducing groups to be self-reliant and to make decisions for themselves " [Timm 1994:102-109].

Government and political leaders also require to develop mutual understanding on the changing trends as a whole and especially the changes in the contemporary rural power relations. In this respect social scientists can contribute significantly. In addition, the

approaches of most supportive agencies are short-term and welfare-oriented in nature. Long-term hard-core development goals to achieve fundamental changes require multi-faceted interventions and active participation of the state, community and the supportive forces.. In fine, historical evidences teach us the fact that big changes of tomorrow may start today, though insignificantly. The present study has really been a modest attempt to understand the nature of minor changing trends in the rural power structure of contemporary Bangladesh.

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Household Census Schedule

Rampur

□

Sonapur

1. Identification of the respondent [household head]

1.1.) Name : _____ Age : _____ Name of husband/wife _____

1.2.) Sex M F

1.3] If a female is household head, why ? _____

1.4) Marital Status : a Married b Unmarried c Widow d Divorced, Why : _____1.5) Occupation Main : a Farmer b Business man c Service Holder
 d Daily Labour e other Secondary : _____

Occupation of other earners

 a b c d

1.6) Educational level of the respondent :

1.7) Religion: a Muslim b Hindu c Christian d Buddhist e Tribal1.8) Family structure
Nuclear/joint/.....

1.9) Total household members.....

Male : Female

1.10) Household members by age :

Age groupNumber

a) Upto 5 years

b) 5.1 -15 ,,

c) 15.1 -35 ,,

d) 35.1 - 45 ,,

e) 45.1 - 60 ,,

f) 60.1 - above ,,

1.11) Household head born :

a) in the village (local) ;

b) outside the village (Non-local) ;

c) For non-local, years living in the village -----

e) From where and why has come in the village :

1.12) No. of members/family left the village :-----

Why and where : -----

1.13 Household members by education [persons 5 yrs and above]

Education Male Female Total

a) Can write a letter [,, '81]

b) Up to primary level

c) Up to Junior level

d) S.S.C. Pass

e) H.S.C.Pass

f) Graduate

g) Post-Graduate

1.14. School-going children :

	Male	Female
K.G		
Class I		
Class II		
Class III		
Class IV		
Class V		
Class VI		
Class VII		
Class VIII		

Class IX		
Class X		
Class - Intermediate		
Class - Bachelor		
Class - Masters		

1.15 Awareness level of Household head (Knowledge and Practice) :

		At Present	10 yrs ago
a]	Marriageable age of Girls..... Boys..... Practised : GirlsBoys.....		
b]	Dowry [knowledge of the Act : Yes/No Practised : For girlsFor Boys.....		
c]	Need of trained TBA : Yes/No. Practised :		
d]	Need of breast-feeding : Yes/No. Practised : First milk of mother (knowledge) Practised :		
e]	Additional food to infants of 4/6 months : Yes/No. Practised :		
f]	Knowledge of 6 child killer diseases : Name 1/2/3/4/5/6/ Nil Practised immunization : Infant mortality in last 10 years		
g]	Need of the use of latrine : Yes/No. Practised :		
h]	Safe drinking water : Yes/No. Practised : Tube well/Boiled water/ Pond/ Ringwell/Pitwell/Brickwell		
i]	Use of ORS : Yes/No. Practised : Prepared : Market/Home/.....		
j]	Cutting of vegetables after washing: Yes/No.		
k]	Alternative food : Yes/No. Practised :		
l]	Need of planting trees for environment : Yes/No : Planted no. of trees in last 3 years .		
m]	Knowledge of family planning : Yes/No Practised : Yes/No. Method used :		
n]	Knowledge of NFP : Yes/No. Practised :		
o]	Need of education : Yes/No. Where children get education :		
p]	To divorce it is needed : Practised :		
q]	For 2nd marriage-permission of 1st wife: Yes/No. Practised :		
r]	Institutionalization of Savings : Yes/No. Practised : Amount save per month : Tk.....		

s]	Knowledge on Sources of Loans : Bank/GB/ BRAC/CB/Relatives/Money lender/..... Sources used :		
t]	No. of political parties : Nationality :..... In the <i>Thana</i> In the village		
u]	Support to political party : Name the party voted to the last M.P. election Received money to give vote : No/Yes		
v]	Knowledge of govt. resources at <i>Thana</i> level Obtaining such resources :		
w]	Khas land [knowledge] : Yes/No Obtained :		
x]	Knowledge of the village : : No. of voters : Don't know/ No. : No. of Matbars		
y)	What is no. one problem of the village : * Why is this problem ? * What should be done ?		

1.16. Skills training, Employment and Income: (H H head and other members)

Training Nature	Name of Skills	Employment		Monthly earning
		Self	Family member	
a] 4/6 months trg.		Yes/no		
b] 12 months trg.		Yes/no		
c] 2 years training		Yes/no		
d] 3 years training		Yes/no		
e] Livestock fordays		Yes/no		
f] Poultry training fordays		Yes/no		
g] Vegetable gardening		Yes/no		
h] Horticulture		Yes/no		
i] Small business		Yes/no		
j] Weaving		Yes/no		
k] Tailoring		Yes/no		

2 Land ownership [both in and outside the village] :

Category	Quantity in acre	
	At Present	10 years ago
a) Landless (upto 0.5 are)	-----	-----
b) Marginal farmer [0.51 to 1.0 acre]	-----	-----
c) Small farmer (1.1-3 acre)	-----	-----
d) Middle farmer [3.1 to 7.5 acres]	-----	-----
e) (Rich farmer) [7.51 and above acres]	-----	-----

2.2. Total Land within the village and outside the village :

	At present	10 years ago
a) Land within the village (acres)	_____	_____
b) Land outside the village (acres)	_____	_____
c) Land under operation (LUO)	_____	_____
+ Land owned	_____	_____
+ Land leased in	_____	_____
+ Land mortgaged in	_____	_____
Sub Total (B)	_____	_____
LUO = (A - B)	_____	_____
d) Irrigated land	_____	_____
e) Total production of paddy per year	_____	_____
f) Yield per acre	_____	_____

2.3. Share-cropping :

	At Present	10 years ago
a) Sharecropped in .	-----	-----
b) Sharecropped out	-----	-----
c) Nature of distribution of production	-----	-----
d) Is the system unjust ?	-----	-----
e) Do you support absentee ownership ?	-----	-----
f) Should absentee ownership be abolished ?	-----	-----

3. **Assets (At present and 10 years ago)**

Assets	Number/Quantity		Value in Tk.		Difference in Tk.
	At Present	10 yrs. ago	At Present	10 yrs. ago	
a) Land (all types, in acres)					
b) Houses					
c) Furniture : Chair/ Table/Almirah, etc.					
d) Livestock & Poultry					
e) STW/DTW/Tractor					
f) Shop/Business					
g) Gold/Ornaments					
h) TV/Radio/VCR[P] Motor cycle/bi-cycle					
i) Cash /Bank deposit					
Sub-Total :					
Minus loans :					

3.1. Reasons for increase of assets , if any :

- a
- b
- c
- d
- e

3.2. Reasons for decrease of assets, if any :

- a
- b
- c
- d

3.3. How do you assess the difference of 10 years :

- a Economically [class] :
- b Socially [status]
- c Politically [power]

4. Sources of income [yearly]

At Present
[in Tk.]

10 Years ago
[in Tk.]

- Land [main/subsidiary]
- Business [main /2nd/3rd]
- Service [main/2nd/3rd]
- Day labouring [main/2nd/3rd]
- Others [main/2nd/3rd]

5. Employment

	At present	10 Years ago	Income per Year
5.1 Name of occupation of the respondents	_____	_____	
If changes occurred, why ?	_____	_____	
5.2 Name subsidiary occupation of family members			
a)	_____	_____	
b)	_____	_____	
c)	_____	_____	
d)	_____	_____	
e)	_____	_____	

5.3 Nature of employment :

Nature of employment	At Present		10 years ago	
	On farm	Off farm	On farm	Off farm
a) Self-employed				
b) Waged employed				
c) Day labourer				
d) Others				

6. Village problem (Only main three) :

	Problem - I	Problem - II	Problem - III
a) Landless peasants			
b) Marginal "			
c) Small "			
d) Middle "			
e) Rich "			

7. Amount of Loan received :

Land-based category	At Present (Amount)	From where
a) Landless peasants		
b) Marginal "		
c) Small "		
d) Middle "		
e) Rich "		

7.2. Purposes of loans received :

- a) Against land mortgage
- b) Purchase of land
- c) House building repair
- d) Purchase of Cow

- e) Marriage
- f) Medical treatment
- g) Education
- h) Other

8. Land-based Category of households by purchase & sales & mortgaged taken/given in last 10 years :

Land based Category	Land mortgage given	Land mortgage taken	Land purchase	Land Sold	Other valuable items purch.	Other valuable items sold
a. Landless peasant						
b. Marginal "						
c. Small "						
d. Middle "						
e. Rich "						

- 8.1. What are the reasons for :
- a) Land mortgage given :
 - b) Selling land :
 - c) Selling other valuable items :

9. Food intake :

No. of Meals	At Present	Ten years Ago
Once a day		
Twice a day		
Thrice a day		

10. Quality of Food :

At present	Ten Years Ago
a) Better than before	a) Good
b) Same as before	b) Moderate
c) Worse than before	b) Not good

11. Housing :

11.1 No. of Houses

Houses	At Present	10 years Ago
a) 0		
b) 1		
c) 2		
d) 3		
e) 4 and above		
f) Kitchen		
g) Cow-shed		

11.2 Type of Houses

Type of Houses	At Present	10 years Ago
a) Nil		
b) Chhan/ roof of fencing/mud-wall		
c) Mud-wall /Bamboo fencing & tin roof		
d) Bricks wall & tin roof		

12. **Clothing :**

No. of Clothes a) One for each b) Two for each c) Three for each d) Four for each e) More than four	At Present	10 years Ago
--	------------	--------------

13. **Marital status**

Land-based category	No. of married couple	Male divorced	Female divorced	Male: No. of times divorced received	Female: No. of times divorced received
a) Landless peasants					
b) Marginal "					
c) Small "					
d) Middle "					
e) Rich "					

14. **Household head**

Person(s)	At present	10 years ago
a) Father/Husband		
b) Mother/Wife		
c) Elder brother		
d) Other brothers		
e) Elder Sisters		
f) Grandmother		
g) Grandfather		
h)		

14.1. **If changes of head, why**

- a)
- b)

14.2 **Why is he/she household head [main two causes]**

- a)
- b)

14.3 **Is he/she a good household head? [Identify 3 reasons]**

Respondent	If Yes	If No
Wife/husband	a) b) c)	a) b) c)
Elder son/daughter	a) b) c)	a) b) c)

15. Attitudes towards women :
16. Attitudes towards girl's education :
17. Attitudes towards womens employment outside the household:
18. Attitudes of women (wife of Household head) towards women employment outside household :
19. Attitudes towards equal share of property of women :
20. Attitudes towards village leaders :
21. Attitudes towards women leadership :
22. Which identity of you is first : Bangalee/religious -----why
23. Migration of Households :
 - 23.1 Members migrated from the family
 - 23.2 Where migrated :
 - 23.3 Members came in the households :
 - 23.4 From where came in :
 - 23.5 Do you foresee anymore migration: Yes/No.
If yes : Why
 - 23.6 Why is this migration?
 - 23.7 Do you like/support such migration :
 - 23.8 What do you suggest to change the situation :