

## 16. VILLAGE LEVEL SURVEY REPORT

To fulfil the objective of my study, I have chosen the two villages, namely; *Shiromoni* under the block of *Jamalpur*, Dist. *Burdwan* and the other village is *Berachampa* under the *Deganga* block-I, Dist. *North 24-Parganas*. Our sample survey consists of 2 villages covered by 2 different *gram panchayats* (GPs) or local governments. For each of these villages, author visited the concerned Head of the Panchayats to collect information like vested land, issue of land titles (*pattas*), registered tenants, class-wise composition of panchayat members, etc.

I have also conducted the household survey to collect the socio-economic status of the villagers, ownership pattern of the farmers, use of modern equipments and loan distribution etc., of the concerned villages.

From these surveys, I have collected the data on two villages and I made an empirical study to show how the changing trends in agrarian relations at the macro-level are reflected at the micro-level.

Secondly, caste is an important indicator of social status in Hindu Society, its peculiarity being that it is confined to Hindu Society. *Ghurye* defined caste as social grouping characterized by (1) segmental division of society; (2) hierarchy (3) restrictions on feeding and social intercourse (4) civil and religious privileges and disabilities of different sections (5) lack of unrestricted choice of occupation and (6) restrictions of marriage. Hindu society is divided into a multitude of castes and sub-castes<sup>1</sup>.

For operational convenience, I have made a three-fold classification of castes. These are S/C=Scheduled Caste, S/T=Scheduled Tribe, Brahmin and Non-Brahmins i.e., General Castes. Besides these, there are also two main religious people inhabited in these villages, they are Muslim and Buddhist.

The questionnaire used for this field survey work is given in Appendix-I.

### Reference :

1. Ghurye, G.S. : Caste and Race In India, Popular Prakashan, Bombay. Ch.I

## EMPIRICAL FINDINGS



### **A : Field Survey Report of Shiromoni village**

*Shiromoni* village is located in the *Jamalpur block* of Burdwan district. The village is governed by *Abujhati-I Gram Panchayat*. Its J.L. No. is 1302. The name of the *mouza* is also *Shiromoni mouza*. The Left Front has formed the panchayat body in this village. The nearest railway station is at *Jhapandanga* (Howrah-Burdwan chord rail link). Burdwan sadar is just 30 minutes by train from this station. The Durgapur express way runs beside this village. A canal known as *Binod Canal* runs through the middle of the village and this helps in irrigation in some of the agricultural land of this village. Nearly 80 per cent of the villagers are engaged in agriculture or agriculture related work and the rest are engaged in either small-scale industries and cottage industries or employed in service sector. The land of this region is quite fertile. So multi-cropping is practiced. The main crops are paddy, jute and vegetables. There is one primary school in this mouza and a Madhyamik school for boys and girls just 1 km away, located at *Jhapandanga*. There is one *Co-operative Society* in this village which provides loan to the villagers. The socio-economic profile of the villagers (community-wise) after land reform programme is as follows :

**(i) Age-sex compositions :**

In table-1, the age and sex composition of the Shiromoni village is presented. It shows that 33 males and 23 females belong to the age group of 0-4 years. Of the 33 males, 7(21.2%) belong to the Scheduled Castes, 11(33.3%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 15(45.5%) under the General Castes. Of the 23 females aged 0-4 years, 5(21.7%) belong to the Scheduled Castes, 7(30.4%) belong to Scheduled Tribes and 11(47.9%) belong to General Castes.

Next under the age group of 5-14 years, a total of 73 males and 60 females are found. Amongst the 73 males, 25(34.3%) belong to the Scheduled Castes, 21(28.8%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 27(36.9%) represent the General Castes. Likewise in the case of 60 females, 20(33.4%) belong to Scheduled Castes, 19(31.6%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 21(35.0%) are to the General Castes.

In the age group between 15-44 years, there are 145 males and 117 females. With reference to males, there are 55(37.9%) belong to the Scheduled Castes, 48(33.2%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 42(28.9%) represent the General Castes. In the case of females, 43(36.7%) belong to Scheduled Castes, 37(31.6%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 37(31.6%) under the General Castes.

Under the age group of 45-59 years, we find a total of 47 males and 44 females. Amongst the males, 18(38.3%) belong to the Scheduled Castes, 12(25.5%) belong to Scheduled Tribes and 17(36.2%) represent the General Castes. Of the 44 females, 17(38.7%) belong to Scheduled Castes, 14(31.8%) are to Scheduled Tribes and 13(29.5%) belong to the General Tribes.

Finally in the age group of 60 and above, there are 31 males and 20 females. In the case of males, there are 11(35.4%) belong to Scheduled Castes, 8(25.8%) belong to the Scheduled Tribes and 12(38.8%) are to General Castes. And in the case of females, there are 9(45%) are in the Scheduled Castes, 3(15%) belong to Scheduled Tribes and 8(40%) belong to the General Castes.

**Table-I**  
**Age-sex composition of the Shiromoni Village**

Name of the Community	Age group (yrs.)										Total population	
	0-4		5-14		15-44		45-59		60+		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
S/C	07 (21.2%)	05 (21.7%)	25 (34.3%)	20 (33.4%)	55 (37.9%)	43 (36.7%)	18 (38.3%)	17 (38.7%)	11 (35.4%)	09 (45.0%)	116	94
S/T	11 (33.3%)	07 (30.4%)	21 (28.8%)	19 (31.6%)	48 (33.2%)	37 (31.6%)	12 (25.5%)	14 (31.8%)	08 (25.8%)	03 (15.0%)	100	80
General	15 (45.5%)	11 (47.9%)	27 (36.9%)	21 (35.0%)	42 (28.9%)	37 (31.6%)	17 (36.2%)	13 (29.5%)	12 (38.8%)	08 (40.0%)	113	90
Total	33 (100%)	23 (100%)	73 (100%)	60 (100%)	145 (100%)	117 (100%)	47 (100%)	44 (100%)	31 (100%)	20 (100%)	329	264
											=593	

**Source : Field Survey & Local Panchayat**

**NB : S/C= Scheduled Caste, S/T=Scheduled Tribe, General= General Caste**

**(ii) Occupational distribution:**

The occupational pattern of the sample households of Shiromoni village has given below :

**Table-II**

**Occupational distribution of the sample house-holds**

Name of the community	Agricultural labourer		Cultivation		Petty Business		Animal husbandry		Service		Others		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
S/C	32 (36.3%)	17 (33.3%)	41 (61.2%)	17 (58.7%)	03 (21.5%)	01 (33.3%)	-	03 (33.3%)	03 (21.5%)	-	02 (18.2%)	-	81	38
S/T	41 (46.6%)	31 (60.8%)	11 (16.5%)	07 (24.1%)	01 (7.1%)	-	-	01 (11.1%)	01 (7.1%)	-	03 (27.2%)	01 (25.0%)	57	40
General Castes	15 (17.1%)	03 (5.9%)	15 (22.3%)	05 (17.2%)	10 (71.4%)	02 (66.7%)	08 (100%)	05 (55.6%)	10 (71.4%)	02 (100%)	06 (54.6%)	03 (75.0%)	64	20
Total	88 (100%)	51 (100%)	67 (100%)	29 (100%)	14 (100%)	03 (100%)	08 (100%)	09 (100%)	14 (100%)	02 (100%)	11 (100%)	04 (100%)	202	98
													=300	

**Source : Field Survey**

Table-II shows that 88 males and 51 females are agricultural labourers. Of the 88 male agricultural labourers, 32(36.3%) are from SC, 41(46.6%) from ST and 15(17.1%) are from General Castes. Of the 51 female agricultural labourers, 17(33.3%) are from SC, 31(60.8%) belong to S/T and 3(5.9%) are from General Castes.

Likewise in the cultivation category, the SC community represents 41(61.2%) males and 17(58.7%) females, while in the S/T community there are 11(16.5%) males and 7(24.1%) females and in the General Caste category 15(22.3%) males and 5(17.2%) females out of total 67 males and 29 females.

In the case of petty business category, 14 males and 3 females are found. Amongst the 14 males, 3(21.5%) belong to the S/C, 1(7.1%) belong to the S/T community and 10(71.4%) under the General Castes. Of the 3 females, 1(33.3%) is belong to S/C, none is found in the S/T community and 2(66.7%) represent the General Castes.

In the animal husbandry sector, there are 8 males and 9 females. Out of 8 males there are none found in the S/C and S/T communities, only 8(100%) belong to the General Castes. Out of 9 females, 3(33.3%) belong to the S/C, 1(11.1%) is belonging to the S/T and 5(55.6%) are to the General Castes.

Likewise in the service sector category, the SC community represents 3(21.5%) males and none found in female category, in the S/T community, 1(7.1%) male and none female is found and in the General Caste category there are 10(71.4%) males and 2(100%) females out of total 14 males and 2 females respectively.

Last in the others categories, 2(18.2%) males belong to SC and none female is found. 3(27.2%) male and 1(25%) female belong to the ST community and 6(54.6%) male and 3(75%) female are in the General Castes out of total 11 males and 4 females respectively in the Shiromoni village.

The agricultural labourers surpass the other categories in sheer numbers.

**(iii) Land Distribution :**

Table-III provides average of the ceiling surplus land and patta (legal rights) distribution, which achieved by local panchayats under the land reform programme.

**Table – III**  
**Land Reforms Implemented : Sample Average**

Name of the community	Numbers of beneficiaries (persons in sex ratio) & patta (legal rights) holders				Total number of beneficiaries and percentage	Area of land distributed (in bigha)
	0-1 bigha		1-2 bigha			
	M	F	M	F		Total (%)
S/C	11(45.8%)	3(75.0%)	6(46.2%)	1(50%)	21(48.9%)	20(50.0%)
S/T	6(25.0%)	1(25.0%)	3(23.0%)	-	10(23.2%)	9 (22.5%)
General Caste	7(29.1%)	-	4(30.8%)	1(50%)	12(27.9%)	11(27.5%)
Total	24(100%)	4(100%)	13(100%)	2(100%)	43(100%)	40(100%)

**Source : Field Survey and Local Panchayat**

Above Table shows the numbers of beneficiaries with patta holders, total numbers of beneficiaries with percentage and area of land distributed in bighas among the beneficiaries.

In the category of numbers of beneficiaries with *patta* (legal rights) holders, the total numbers of 24 males and 4 females have been benefited under the distribution of vested 0-1 bigha land and. Of the 24 males, 11(45.8%) are from S/C, 6(25.0%) from S/T and 7(29.1%) to General Castes. Of the 4females, 3(75.0%) are from S/C, 1(25.0%) is from S/T and none in the General Caste.

13 males and 2 females owning 1-2 bighas benefited from land reforms. Amongst 13 males, 6(46.2%) belong to S/C, 3(23.0%) from S/T and 4(30.8%) are belonging to General Castes. In the category of females, 1(50%) from S/C, none in the S/T and 1(50%) is belonging to General Caste category.

The total numbers of beneficiaries are 43 persons under the land reform programme in this village. Out of them 21(48.9%) beneficiaries belong to S/C, 10(23.2%) belong to S/T and 12(27.9%) are in the General Caste Category.

Under the vested land distribution programme, 40 bighas have been distributed among the poor families under the supervision of local panchayat. 20(50.0%) bighas

distributed to the S/C communities, 9(22.5%) bighas distributed to the S/T families and rest 11(27.5%) bighas have been distributed to the General Caste category.

If we compare with the total number of beneficiaries and total vested land distribution it is seen that 48.9% S/C community holding 50.0% of land, 23.2% S/T community having 22.5% land and 27.9% General Caste community holding 27.5% of land under vested land programme.

Scheduled Caste families have been benefited more than other two categories and S/T families.

**(iv) Bargadars (sharecroppers) registration :**

Table –IV shows the number of recorded bargadars (sharecroppers) in the village of Shiromoni under the land reform programme with active control of local panchayat who owning 0-2 bighas.

**Table –IV**  
**Recording of Bargadars (sharecroppers)**

Name of the community	Number of recording bargadars (sharecroppers) in sex ratio		Total number of bargadars (sharecroppers) community wise recorded	Areas of lands recorded (in bighas)
	M	F		
S/C	17(42.5%)	2(50.0%)	19 (43.1%)	20 (50.0%)
S/T	11(27.5%)	1(25.0%)	12 (27.2%)	9 (22.5%)
General Caste	12(30.0%)	1(25.0%)	13 (29.5%)	11 (27.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>40(100%)</b>	<b>4(100%)</b>	<b>44 (100%)</b>	<b>40(100%)</b>

**Source : Field Survey & Local Panchayat**

The number of recorded bargadars represents 40 males and 4 females. Out of 40 males, 17(42.5%) belong to S/C, 11(27.5%) from S/T and 12(30.0%) belonging to General Caste community. On the other hand out of 04 females, 2(50.0%) are from S/C, 1(25.0%) belong to S/T and the rest 1(25.0%) is recorded as bargadar in the General Caste community.

The above table also shows the community-wise beneficiaries of bargadari (sharecropping) in this village. In case of SC community, 17 male and 12 female comprise a sum of 29 and percentage-wise 65.9% out of total 44 recorded bargadars. In the S/T Category, male 11 and female 1 were recorded representing 27.2% of total

bargadars. In General Caste community 12 male and 1 female persons totaling 13 were recorded as bargadars (29.5%). 40 bighas of land has registered as barga land (sharecropping). The SC community registered 21 bighas as bargadar (sharecroppers), which is 50.0% of total barga land. The S/T community gets 9 bigha (22.5%) and General Caste community allotted 11 bigha which is 27.5% out of total 40 bighas. In comparison between total bargadars and total barga land, it is observed that the S/C community comprises 43.1% holding 50.0% of total barga land. The S/T community represents 27.2% against 22.5% of barga land and the General Caste community, 29.5 % owning 27.5% out of total 40 bighas barga land under the land reform programme in this village.

This indicates that the S/T community is more deprived in comparison to others as they represent 27.2% beneficiaries holding only 22.5% barga land.

**(v) Owner cultivator-cum-share croppers :**

**Table-V**

**Owner cultivator –cum- share cropper**

No. of ST households share cropping land of the size of 1-2 bighas	No. of SC households share cropping land of the size of 1-2 bighas	No. of General Caste households share cropping land of the size of 1-2 bighas	Total no. of house holds
<b>3(20%)</b>	<b>5(33.3%)</b>	<b>7(46.7%)</b>	<b>Total=15(100%)</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

The Table -V shows the owner cultivator-cum-share-croppers in the Shiromoni village where cultivation of land owned by an owner cultivator and of other's land as a share cropper has involved 15 households which is needless to mention here that these categories are poor and marginal peasants trying to supplement the income from the cultivation of the land in their ownership with that from the tillage of other's soil as crop-sharers. The households are primarily owner-cultivators, share-cropping being their supplementary means of hard ship livelihood.

The above table also shows that 3(20%) households in the S/T community, 5(33.3%) households in S/C category and 7(46.7%) households in the General caste are as owner-cultivator-cum-sharecroppers with cropping land of 1-2 bighas distributed to 15 house holds in this village.



**(vi) Condition of the Agricultural Labourers :**

The agricultural labourers get hardly six months work in this village. Their daily wages are Rs.60/- and 1Kg. of rice per day. During the rest of the period these labourers visit to the other district especially to Hooghly district for agricultural and other works. The average monthly income of agricultural worker is Rs.1500/- and average monthly expenditure is Rs.1200/-, if husband and wife both work in the cultivation season. It may be mentioned that the wives of the most agricultural labourers works as daily wage basis. The economic conditions of these families/households are very grim. They can afford meal only once a day to their children in off season. These children hardly study up to the level of primary schools. They are unable continue their studies due to poverty. Most of the children of agricultural labourers are admitted to primary school for attraction of mid day meal.

**(vii) Landless Share-Cropper:**

Table-VI shows that the total landless share-cropper households, representing 4(44.4%) house holds in SC category, 3(33.3%) house holds in ST community and 2(22.3%) house holds in the General Caste out of 9 households who cultivate others' land as share croppers. The size of the land share-cropped by them is also shown in the same table.

**Table-VI**  
**Landless Share-Cropper**

Community	No. of households share cropping land of the size of		No. of house holds
	0-1 bighas	1-2 bighas	
SC	3(50%)	1(33.3%)	4(44.4%)
ST	2(33.3%)	1(33.3%)	3(33.3%)
General Caste	1(16.7%)	1(33.3%)	2(22.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>6(100%)</b>	<b>3(100%)</b>	<b>9(100%)</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

In all, 6 households and 3 households of the landless sharecroppers are share-cropping in 0-1 bighas and 1-2 bighas respectively in this village. In 0-1 bigha categories, 3(50%) households belong to S/C, 2(33.3%) are S/T and 1(16.7%) is in General Caste category. Likewise in 1-2 bigha category, 1(33.3%) belong to S/C, 1(33.3%) is from S/T and 1(33.3%) is in the General Caste category.

Being otherwise very poor, these landless households eke out their living as crop-shares to keep them alive. Born in the soil and wedded to it, they live to live on it, though the soil hardly returns them enough bounty. Some of the share-croppers of this village have failed to record their names as sharecroppers due to their ignorance about the procedure and formalities.

**(viii) Agricultural System :**

Some big farmers are using almost all the agricultural land with modern equipments like tractors, fertilizers, pesticides, shallow machines etc. But, by and large, ploughing is still done in the traditional way with a pair of bullocks and the traditional *langol* (a wooden plough with an iron spare). Spades (*Kodal*), small hooks (*nirani*) for the weeding and sickles (*kaste*) for harvesting in the agricultural cycle. The fertile land promotes multi-crop production. The existing canal helps in irrigation (as already mentioned). There are some personal and private shallows, tube-wells etc. and one government sponsored deep tube-well for irrigating agricultural land.

**(ix) Cultivation of Paddy :**

All the agriculturist households of the village grow paddy using implements like plough, harrow, sickle, tractor, spade, fertilizer and engaging agricultural labourer, etc. for the purpose. In monsoon when rain starts the season of agriculture begins in Bengal. But with the development of agricultural systems the season starts earlier. In the month of March-April the *boro* cultivation is initiated. In early June with the onset of monsoons, the *Aus* paddy cultivation starts after one or two heavy showers and at the end of August the peasants of the Shiromoni village prepares for *Aman* cultivation. After harvesting, as and when paddy is ripe, the stalks of ripe paddy are reaped in the middle with sickles or reaper machine. The paddy usually brought home either in bullock carts, tractors or by the cultivators themselves.

(x) *Harvesting Expenses* :

The harvesting expenses of Aman Paddy of this village is given below (Table-VII):

**Table-VII**  
**Harvesting Expenses of Aman Paddy per bigha**

Sl. No.	Harvesting Expenses		Amount (Rs.)
1	Tractor Expenses	@ Rs.150/- per hour x 2=30 hrs.	375=00
2	Agricultural Labour expenses :		
	(a) Resizing field	@ Rs.60/- x 1=	60=00
	(b) Paddy Plant (roya)	@ Rs.60/- x 6=	360=00
	(c) Weeding	@ Rs.60/- x 2=	120=00
3	Seeds cost	@ Rs.200 per bigha	200=00
4	Paddy Cutting, Bundles etc.	@ Rs.60/- x 3=	180=00
5	Carrying charges from field	@ Rs.60/- x 3=	180=00
6	Jharai	@ Rs.60/- x 3=	180=00
7	Fertilizers Charges	@ Rs.10/-x 20 bags	200=00
8	Pesticides Spray	@ Rs. 150/- per lit.	150=00
<b>Total Expenses :</b>			<b>2005=00</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

10 jute bags rice are obtained from 1 bigha of land (1 bag contains of 60 kg. of rice). These bags have been sold in the open market of this village at a average rate of Rs. 300/- per bag. Thus the total earning of a peasant amounted to Rs.300/- x 10= Rs.3000/-. And their expenses amounted to Rs.2005/-. The net income of a peasant is Rs.(3000-2005)=995/- per bigha. If a marginal peasant has 3 bighas of cultivation land, he can earn hardly Rs.995/- x 3= Rs.2885/- in a year through Aman cultivation. Including the earning from cultivation of aus, vegetables, etc., one can earn around Rs.4000/- per annum. The monthly average income of a marginal peasant owning 1-3 bighas of land is estimated at Rs.333=34 only.

**(xi) Monthly Income :**

It is very difficult to get a correct idea of the income of a household. Even then an attempt is made from field investigation in Table VIII, which shows the distribution of the households by income.

**Table-VIII**  
**Monthly Income & Occupation**

Occupation	Households with monthly income of					No. of households
	Less than Rs.1000/-	Rs.1001/- to Rs.2000/-	Rs.2001/- to Rs.3000/-	Rs.3001/- to Rs.4000/-	Rs.4000/- to Rs.5000/-	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultivation	14(93.3%)*	4(44.4%)	3(27.2%)	3(30.0%)	6(50.0%)**	30
Business	1(6.6%)	2(22.2%)	2(18.1%)	4(40.0%)	3(25.0%)	12
Other Services	-	3(33.3%)	6(54.6%)	4(40.4%)	3(25.0%)	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>15(100%)</b>	<b>9(100%)</b>	<b>11(100%)</b>	<b>10(100%)</b>	<b>12(100%)</b>	<b>58</b>

**Remarks :\*** cultivator category includes the Agricultural Labourer

**\*\*cultivator category includes the trade**

**Source : Field Sources**

The collected data of monthly income and occupation of Shiromoni villagers Reveals that 15 households have income are less than Rs.1000=00. Of these 14(93.3%) households are cultivators, including agricultural labourers and 1(6.6%) household in Business sector and none in other services.

In column 3, it is seen that 9 households whose monthly income is Rs.1000=00 to Rs.2000=00. Of these households, 4(44.4%) households are cultivator, 2(22.2%) households are in business sector and 3(33.3%) households engaged in other services.

In column no. 4 shows 11 households, whose monthly income is in between Rs.2001=00 to Rs.3000=00. Of these 3(27.2%) households belong to cultivators, 2(18.1%) households belong to business sector and 6(54.6%) households are in other services.

In column no. 5 represent 10 households, whose monthly income is Rs.3001=00 to Rs.4000=00. Amongst, 3(30.0%) households are engaged in cultivation, 4(40.0%) households are in business sector and other 4(40.0%) households are in other services.

In column no. 6 shows, there are only 12 households, whose monthly income is Rs.4001=00 to Rs.5000=00. Of these, 6(50.0%) households are engaged in cultivation, 3(25.0%) in business sector and other 3(25.0%) in other services.

It shows that the cultivator including agricultural labourers, whose monthly income is less than Rs.1000=00 are more numbers (93.3%) than other categories.

**(xii) Monthly Expenditure :**

It is also a very difficult task to ascertain its expenditure on different heads. Most of the households hand to mouth existence, with limited income and have professed their ignorance of the idea of budget.

**Table-IX**  
**Head wise monthly expenditure of rural poor households**

Occupation	Head			Total expenditure	No. of Households
	Food & Clothing	Misc. and Fuel	Children education and medical treatment		
Cultivation*	Rs.800/-	Rs.100/-	Rs.100/-	Rs.1000/-	25(45.5%)
Agricultural Labourer	Rs.500/-	Rs.50	Rs.50/-	Rs.600/-	15(27.2%)
Other Labourers	Rs.600/-	Rs.50/-	Rs.50/-	Rs.700/-	15(27.2%)
<b>Total</b>				Rs.2300/-	55(100%)**

**Remarks: \* Poor cultivators including sharecroppers whose land holding 1-2 bigha**

**\*\* Average of family members are 4 persons**

**Source : Field Survey**

Table-IX shows the average sample head wise monthly expenditure of the rural households in Shiromoni village. Out of the interviewed 55 households, whose family members are in average four persons. The cultivators are mainly poor and marginal peasants including sharecroppers who are holding land 1-2 bigha. Of these 25(45.5%) households have monthly expenditure less than Rs.1000/-, while 15(27.2%) households of agricultural labourers comprise monthly average expenditure less than Rs.600/- only. On the other hand, 15(27.2%) households engaged in other labourers jobs, have their monthly average expenditure less than Rs.700/-. Most of the poor and marginal peasants and agricultural labourers households are not in position to spend a penny on education

and treatment for their children. Naturally most of these categories are indebted in this village.

**(xiii) Indebtedness :**

The Shiromoni village where most of the households enjoy very little economic opportunities are in indebted position. The villagers mostly comprise of poor and marginal peasant and especially the agricultural workers are in very much economic crisis. As a result, they take loan to meet their means of livelihood with high interest. The Table-X shows the utilization of loans in different purposes.

**Table-X**  
**Purpose of Loans**

<b>Purposes of Loans</b>	<b>No. of households in debt</b>	<b>Percentage of Indebted households</b>	<b>Amount of Loan</b>	<b>Percentage to total loan</b>
Domestic needs	24	48%	Rs.20000	64.51%
Marriage Ceremony	8	16%	Rs.4000	12.90%
Sraddha Ceremony	3	6%	Rs.1000	3.23%
Worship of a deity	2	4%	Rs.500	1.61%
Cultivation of land	5	10%	Rs.2500	8.06%
Purchase of land	2	4%	Rs.1000	3.23%
Misc.	6	12%	Rs.2000	6.46%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Rs.31000</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

The investigation in 50 households reveals that most of the households i.e. 24 households or 48% of the total households incurred loan for domestic needs including medical treatment, followed by 8 households or 16% incurred 12.90%, 3 households or 6% took 3.23% of total loan respectively for marriage and sraddha ceremony purposes. Only 2(4%) households incurred 1.61% of loan for worship of a deity. In all, 5(10%) households incurred 8.06% loan for cultivation of land and 2 (4%) households taken 3.23% loan for purchase of agricultural land. The remaining 6 households or 12% of the total households incurred 6.46% misc. loan of the total loan of Rs.31000/-. Here it should be mentioned that most of the loan are taken from private sources and some from commercial banks.

Table XI shows an important survey based on above similar questionnaire conducted by the author in 120 households (covering about 400 people) of Shiromoni

village. The survey aims at the detecting changes in contemporary social – economic profile of the different classes of people of that village compared to 1978, 1996 and 2006.

This survey also noted changes in ownership pattern of land, the conditions of the rural poor, uses of modern equipments, distribution of institutional loans, resurgence of usury loans and participation of different classes in rural self-government (panchayat).

**Table – XI**

**Ownership of pattern and shifting of relative position**

Different Classes	Relative position of different classes						Total land holdings by different class categories (in bighas)				
	1978	1996	Shift	2006	Shift	Shift	1978	1996	Shift	2006	Shift
			1978-1996		1996-2006	1978-2006			1978-1996		1996-2006
Rich Peasant	22(18.33%)	17(14.16%)	-4.17%	25(20.83%)	+6.67%	+2.48%	65(37.14%)	58(33.14%)	-4.0%	63(36.0%)	+2.86%
Middle Peasant	42(35.0%)	35(29.16%)	-5.84%	47(39.16%)	+10.0%	+4.16%	43(24.57%)	45(25.71%)	-1.14%	49(28.0%)	+2.29%
Poor Peasant	48(40.0%)	35(29.16%)	-10.84%	39(32.5%)	+3.34%	-7.5%	48(27.42%)	50(28.57%)	+1.15%	46(26.28%)	-2.29%
Marginal Peasant & other toilers	20(16.66%)	13(10.83%)	-5.83%	17(14.16%)	+3.33%	-2.5%	19(10.85%)	22(12.57%)	+1.72%	17(9.71%)	-2.86%
<b>Total :</b>	<b>120 (house holds)</b>	<b>120 (house holds)</b>		<b>120 (house holds)</b>			<b>175(bi ghas)</b>	<b>175(bi ghas)</b>		<b>175(big has)</b>	

(Source : Field Data & Local Panchayat)

In comparison to 1978 situation in relation to position of different classes of Shiromoni village, only a nominal change in the ownership pattern is seen in 1996 and 2006. The shift of rich peasant declined by -4.17%, middle peasant shift by -5.84%, poor peasants declined by -10.84% and the marginal peasants and other toilers shift by -5.83%. On the other hand, in comparison to 1996 to 2006, it is seen that the rich peasants shift increase to +6.67%, the middle peasants shift +10.0%, the poor peasants increased to +3.34% and marginal and other toilers shift to +3.33%. If we look at the comparison between 1978 and 2006 i.e. the 29 years of Left rule socio-economic profile of that village, it is very much interesting to note that the rich peasants have increased to +2.48%, the middle peasants increased to +4.16%, poor peasants declined by -7.5% and marginal peasants and other toilers declined -2.5%. If we look at the upper layers of this village (the rich peasants + middle peasants) who have increased to +7.64% and the

lowest rungs are (poor + marginal peasants + other toilers including agricultural labourers) declined by –10.0%.

According to the position of land holdings between 1978 and 1996, the rich peasants who owns 15-30 bighas declined by -4.0% and middle peasants who own 5-10 bighas declined by -1.14% respectively but on the other hand the poor peasants land holdings 1-5 bighas increased to 1.15% and marginal peasants and other toilers including agricultural labourers land holding 0-1 bigha increased to 1.72%. But these features between 1996 and 2006 have completely changed. The rich peasants land holdings increased to +2.86% the middle peasants land holdings increased to +2.29% and on the other hand the poor peasants land holdings declined by -2.29% and the marginal and other toilers land holdings declined by -2.86% respectively.

The above data shows that the increasing of numbers of households and land holdings of both rich and middle peasants in this village and thus, a continuation of gradual strengthening of the position of the rural rich.

Now the sample of the expenditure on modern equipments in different categories of peasants in Shiromoni village is presented in Table-XII.

**Table –XII**  
**Modern Agricultural Equipment used by different categories of peasants**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Expenses for modern Agricultural equipment</b>	<b>Percentage of expenses</b>	<b>Total households with percentage</b>
Rich Peasants	Rs.1000/-	43.4%	5(20%)
Middle Peasants	Rs.800/-	34.7%	8(32%)
Poor & Marginal Peasants	Rs.500/-	21.7%	12(48%)
Total	Rs.2300(100)%	-	25(100%)

(Source : Field Data)

It is seen that 5(20%) households of rich peasants (who own 15-30 bighas) can bear the expenses more than 40% for modern agricultural-machinery alongwith fertilizers averaging Rs.1000/- which is 43.4% of total expenditure of Rs.2300/-, 8 (32%) households of middle peasants who own (5-15 bighas) borne the expenses of Rs.800/- (34.7%), while poor and marginal peasants (who own 1-5 bighas) consisting of 12(48%) households can only use an average of Rs.500/-for the modern equipments which is 21.7% of total expenditure of Rs.2300/-.



So, the poor and marginal peasants who are more in numbers than other categories can hardly afford more expenses for modern cultivation due to their poverty.

Table-XIII shows the usury loan, co-operative loan and bank loan of this village which taken by different classes in the financial year of 2005-06.

**Table –XIII**  
**Distribution of loans among different classes**  
**(Financial year 2005-2006)**

Class	No. of families	Total amount of usury loan (Rs.)	Takers of usury loan	Average amount per family (Rs.)	Total Co.op. loan (Rs)	Takers of Co.op. loan	Average amount per family (Rs)	Total amount of Bank loan (Rs)	Takers of Bank loan	Average amount per family (Rs)
Rich peasant	30	10,000	4(10.2%)	2,500	60000	6(28.5%)	10,000	25,000	5(50%)	5,000
Middle peasant	40	15,000	5(12.8%)	3,000	50000	10(47.6%)	5,000	20,000	4(40%)	5,000
Poor & marginal peasant	45	60,000	30(76.9%)	2,000	10000	5(23.8%)	2,000	1,000	1(10%)	1,000
Total	115	85000	39(100%)	7500	120000	21(100%)	17000	46000	10(100%)	11000

(Source : Field Data)

It is found that 4(10.2%) rich peasants have taken usury loan of Rs.10000/- (average Rs.2500/-) out of 30 households, 5 (12.8%) middle peasants took Rs.15000/- (average Rs.3000/-) out of 40 households and poor and marginal peasants of 30(76.9%) households out of total 45 households took Rs.60000/- (average Rs.2000/-) as usury loan. Likewise co-operative loan, 6(28.5%) rich peasant took Rs.60000/- (average Rs.10000/-). 10(47.6%) middle peasant took loan Rs.50000/- of an average Rs.5000/- and 5(23.8%) poor and marginal peasants took Rs.10000/- (average Rs.2000/-) as co-operative loan. Same as bank loan, 5(50%) rich peasant took loan Rs.25000/- (average Rs.5000), 4(40%) middle peasants took Rs.20000/- (average Rs.5000/-) and last of all only 1(10%) poor and marginal peasant took the bank loan of Rs.1000/- of an average Rs.1000/-.

From the above table it appears that cooperative has never challenged the existing marketing system by building up an alternative cooperative marketing mechanism. This system never succeeded in providing real relief to the poor. In the absence of a proper marketing mechanism, the small and poor peasants cannot make enough profit and as a result there has been default in timely repayment and once they default, they are naturally excluded from the ambit of the scheme. In this way the poorer sections are gradually being cast outside the domain of all institutional help and the richer ones are tightening

their grip over these institutions. It has been observed in some cases that influential persons in the cooperative bodies are drawing ‘loans’ indiscriminately to fund personal usury ‘business’ which is perhaps the most lucrative one in these days.

**(xiv) Role of Panchayat :** The name of *Gram Panchayat* (local government) of this village is *Abujhati-I* is governed by the Left Front from the very beginning when the Left Front Government came into the power in West Bengal. This *Gram Panchayat* undertook the land reform programme. The excess land was distributed to the needy peasants in 1980. They also allotted the legal rights on *pattas* (legal rights) of the lands. Panchayat also registered the names of sharecroppers as bargadars. This panchayat also undertook various programmes like, afforestation, road construction and other development plans (yoyana). Food for work has already been implemented and by this the agricultural labourers get few days work during the off-season. A total of 30 families have been enlisted in BPL (Below Poverty Line) list. The villagers have brought corruption charges against some of the present board members.

A sample survey of different class representative in the gram panchayat members from time to time is shown in table –XIV, which shows that the representations of rich and other middle class peasants have increased during the periods 1978 to 1996 and from 1996 to 2006.

In the categories of middle peasants as well as poor peasants and agricultural labourers, the representations decreased over the years out of total 15 members of Abujhati Gram Panchayat-I.

**Table – XIV**  
**Class-wise composition of panchayat member**

<b>Classes</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2006</b>
Rich Peasant	3(20%)	4(26.6%)	5(33.3%)
Other middle Class	4(26.6%)	5(33.3%)	6(40.0%)
Middle peasant	5(33.3%)	4(26.6%)	3(20.0%)
Poor Peasant & agricultural labourer	3(20.0%)	2(13.3%)	1(6.6%)
Total Nos.	15	15	15

(Source : Field Data)

Table above gives a sad picture belying all Left Front claims of participation of poor sections in the pachayats in West Bengal. The present report shows that in 1978 the members are 79.9% of rich, middle peasants and other rural middle class families (including school teachers, service holders etc. who are among the most well off sections

in the countryside now a days). The corresponding figures in 1996 and 2006 stand at 86.5% and 93.3% respectively.



#### **B : Field Survey Report of Berachampa Village**

There are three *mouzas*, namely, Berachampa, Deulia and Jadavpur-Bowaliya constituting the *Berchampa-2 Gram Panchayat*. Berachampa *mouza*, J.L. No.1152 is under *Deganga block of North 24 Parganas*. This place is famous for the Archeological sites known as “Khana Mihir Dhipi” and “Chandrketu Garh”. It is 35 km away from Barasat, the head quarters of North 24 Parganas. The population of this village is approx 762 with 250 households. About 75 per cent of the villagers directly or indirectly depend on agriculture and remaining engage themselves in small and cottage industries or in service sector. The land of this area is quite fertile, resulting in multi-crops productions. The main crops are paddy, jute and vegetables. Nearly 30 per cent of the agricultural land is irrigated by submersible, tube wells, etc., of this village and the rest of the land depends upon rain for irrigation. In Berachampa village there are 2 primary schools, 2 higher secondary schools, each for boys and girls, and a rural health centre located 5 km. away from the village. The socio-economic profile of the villagers (community wise) after the effect of land reform programme carried out by the local panchayat, is as follows:

(i) Age-sex compositions :

**Table-I**  
**Age-sex composition of Berachampa Village**

Name of the Community	Age group (yrs.)										Total population	
	0-4		5-14		15-44		45-59		60+		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
S/C	19 (34.5%)	17 (36.1%)	35 (33.9%)	31 (34.8%)	56 (37.1%)	45 (36.5%)	28 (35.8%)	27 (43.5%)	14 (41.1%)	09 (45%)	152	129
S/T	16 (29.1%)	11 (23.4%)	31 (30.1%)	27 (30.3%)	43 (28.4%)	37 (30.1%)	21 (26.9%)	14 (22.5%)	08 (23.5%)	03 (15%)	119	92
General	20 (36.3%)	19 (40.4%)	37 (35.9%)	31 (34.8%)	52 (34.4%)	41 (33.3%)	29 (37.1%)	21 (33.8%)	12 (25.2%)	08 (40%)	150	120
Total	55 (100%)	47 (100%)	103 (100%)	89 (100%)	151 (100%)	123 (100%)	78 (100%)	62 (100%)	34 (100%)	20 (100%)	421	341
											=762	

**Source : Field Survey & Local Panchayat**

**NB : S/C= Scheduled Caste, S/T=Scheduled Tribe, General= General Caste**

The above table-I shows the age-sex composition of the surveyed households community wise. In the case of SC there is 19(34.5%) males & 17(36.1%) females in the age group between 0-4 years followed by 16(29.1%) male and 11(23.4%) female persons in the case of S/T families and finally in the case of General Caste there are 20(36.3%) male and 19(40.4%) female persons. Within this age group there are total 55 male and 47 females.

Next under the age group of 5-14 years there are a total of 103 males. Of these, 35(30.1%) persons belong to S/C, 31(34.8%) persons are in S/T and rest 37(35.9%)

persons belong to General Castes. Likewise, in the case of 89 females, 31(34.8%) belong to S/C, 27(30.3%) are to S/T and others 31(34.8%) belong to the General Castes.

In the age group of 15-44 years, we find total 151 males. Of these, 56(37.1%) belong to S/C, 43(28.4%) are in S/T community and rest 52(34.4%) belong to General Caste. In case of female, 45(36.5%) belong to S/C community, 37(30.1%) are from S/T and 41(33.3%) belong to General Caste.

Under the age group of 45-59 years, there are 28(35.8%) male and 27(43.5%) females belonging to S/C community followed by 21(26.9%) male and 14(22.5%) female in the S/T community and 29(37.1%) male and 21(33.8%) female are in General Caste. The total numbers of 78 male and 62 female are in this group.

Finally in the age group of 60 years and above there are 14(41.1%) male and 9(45%) female in SC community followed by 8(23.5%) male and 3(15%) female in the S/T community, 12(25.2%) male with 8(40%) female represents in the General Caste category and the total is 34 male and 20 female respectively.

**(ii) Occupational distribution:**

The occupational pattern of the sample households of Berachampa village has given below Table-II :

**Table-II**  
**Occupational distribution of the sample house-holds**

Name of the community	Agricultural labourer		Cultivation		Petty Business		Animal husbandry		Service		Others		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
S/C	45 (49.4%)	31 (56.3%)	37 (50.6%)	23 (62.1%)	20 (52.6%)	05 (62.5%)	06 (31.5%)	02 (22.2%)	15 (41.6%)	03 (60.0%)	11 (52.3%)	03 (37.5%)	134	67
S/T	31 (34.1%)	19 (34.5%)	11 (15.1%)	07 (18.9%)	01 (2.6%)	-	05 (26.3%)	02 (22.2%)	01 (2.7%)	-	03 (14.2%)	01 (12.5%)	52	29
General Caste	15 (16.4%)	05 (9.1%)	25 (34.2%)	07 (18.9%)	17 (44.7%)	03 (37.5%)	08 (42.1%)	05 (55.5%)	20 (55.5%)	02 (40.0%)	07 (33.3%)	04 (50.0%)	92	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b> (100%)	<b>55</b> (100%)	<b>73</b> (100%)	<b>37</b> (100%)	<b>38</b> (100%)	<b>08</b> (100%)	<b>19</b> (100%)	<b>09</b> (100%)	<b>36</b> (100%)	<b>05</b> (100%)	<b>21</b> (100%)	<b>08</b> (100%)	<b>278</b>	<b>122</b>
													=400	

**Source : Field Survey**

Table above shows that in the category of agricultural labourers, 45(49.4%) male and 31(56.3%) females belonging to SC community. Likewise in the case of S/T community, we see 31(34.1%) male and 19(34.5%) female and in the General Caste category, there is 15(16.4%) male and 5(9.1%) female out of total 91 male and 55 female respectively in this village.

In the cultivator category, 37(50.6%) male and 23(62.1%) female belong to SC community. In S/T community, there are 11(15.1%) male and 7(18.9%) female and last General Caste category, 25(34.2%) male and 7(18.9%) female representing out of total 73 male and 37 female.

In the case of petty business, it is found 20(52.6%) male and 05(62.6%) female belonging to SC community, in the S/T community there is 1(2.6%) male and none female and in the General Caste Category, there is 17(44.7%) male and 3(37.5%) female out of total 73 male and 37 female respectively.

In case of animal husbandry, there are 19 males. Of these 6(31.5%) belong to S/C, 5(26.3%) in S/T and 8(42.1%) belong to General Castes. Likewise in female, it is found total 9 females. Of these 2(22.2%) in S/C, 2(22.2%) belong to S/T and rests 5(55.5%) are in General Castes.

In the service sector, the SC community, there are 15(41.6%) males and 3(60.0%) females. In the S/T community, there is 1(2.7%) male and none female and in the General Caste category there is 20(55.5%) male and 2(40.0%) female out of total 36 males and 5 females.

And in others it is seen that 11(52.3%) males and 3(37.5%) female belong to S/C community. In the ST community, there is 3(14.2%) male and 1(12.5%) female and in the General Caste category, 7(33.3%) male and 4(50.0%) female represents out of total 21 male and 8 female.

**(iii) Land Distribution :**

Table-III provides the average of land ceiling surplus and *patta* (legal rights) distribution organised by local panchayat under the land reform programme. Author himself on the basis of field survey and from local panchayat collected data on land titles distributed for the relevant village.

**Table-III  
Land Reforms Implemented : Sample Average**

Name of the community	Number of beneficiaries (persons in sex ratio) & patta (legal rights) holders				Total number of beneficiaries and percentage	Area of land distributed (in bigha)
	0-1 bigha		1-2 bigha			
	M	F	M	F		Total (%)
S/C	15 (46.8%)	5 (50.0%)	2 (40.0%)	1 (50.0%)	23 (46.9%)	24 (52.1%)
S/T	8 (25.0%)	2 (20.0%)	1 (20.0%)	1 (50.0%)	12 (24.4%)	10 (21.7%)
General Caste	9 (28.1%)	3 (30.0%)	2 (40.0%)	-	14 (28.5%)	12 (26.1%)
Total	32 (100.0%)	10 (100.0%)	5 (100.0%)	2 (100.0%)	49(100%)	46(100%)

**Source : Field Survey and Local Panchayat**

Above Table shows the numbers of beneficiaries with patta holders, total numbers of beneficiaries with percentage and area of land distributed in bighas among the beneficiaries.

In this category, we find that 32 males and 10 females have been given 0-1 bigha of land. Of the 32 males, 15(46.8%) belong to S/C, 8(25.0%) are from S/T and 9(28.1%) to General Castes. Of the 10 females, 5(50%) are from S/C, 2(20%) from S/T and 3(30%) belong to General Castes.

5 males and 2 females have been given 1-2 bighas of land. Amongst, 5 males, 2(40.0%) belong to S/C, 1(20.0%) from S/T and 2(40.0%) are belonging to General Castes. In the category of females, 1(50%) represent S/C, 1(50.0%) is found in the S/T and none to General Caste category out of total 2 females.

The total numbers of beneficiaries are 49. Out of them 23(46.9%) beneficiaries belong to S/C, 12(24.4%) represents to S/T and 14(28.5%) are in the General Caste Category.



Under the vested land distribution programme, 46 bighas have been distributed among the poor families. Amongst, 24(52.1%) bighas distributed to the S/C communities, 10(27.1%) bighas distributed to the S/T families and rest 12(26.1%) bighas have been distributed to the General Castes.

On the above table, it is seen that the 46.9% Scheduled Caste families holding 52.1% of land have been benefited more than other two categories and S/T communities who comprises 24.4% and holding 21.7% of total vested distributed land are the deprived one.

**(iv) Bargadars (sharecroppers) registration :**

Table –IV shows the number of recorded bargadars (sharecroppers) in the village of Berachampa under the land reform programme who are holding 0-2 bighas.

**Table –IV  
Recording of Bargadars (sharecroppers)**

Name of the community	Number of bargadars (sharecroppers) persons in sex ratio		Total number of bargadars (sharecroppers) recorded	Areas of lands recorded (in bighas)
	M	F	Total (%)	(Total %)
S/C	19(40.4%)	8(61.5%)	27 (45.0%)	29 (46.7%)
S/T	13(27.6%)	3(23.1%)	16 (26.6%)	15 (24.1%)
General Caste	15(31.9%)	2(15.3%)	17 (28.3%)	18 (29.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>60 (100%)</b>	<b>62(100%)</b>

**Source : Field Survey & Local Panchayat**

Above table shows the recorded bargadars (sharecroppers), which represents 47 males and 13 females. In case of SC community, there are 19(40.4%) males and 8(61.5%) females. In the S/T community, 13(27.6%) males and 3(23.1%) females and in General Caste community 15(31.9%) males and 2(15.3%) females were recorded as bargadars.

The above table also shows the community-wise beneficiaries. The S/C communities comprise 27(45%), S/T represents 16(26.6%) and the General Castes are 17(28.3%), out of total 60 beneficiaries.

60 beneficiaries were recorded as bargadars. 62 bighas were recorded as barga land. If we compare the total number of beneficiaries and total barga land, we see 45.0%

S/C community shares 46.7% of barga (recorded) land. 26.6% S/T community shares 24.1% land and 28.3% General Caste community holding 29.1% of total recorded (barga) land. So, it is seen that the S/C communities have been benefited on the basis of above data.

**(v) Owner cultivator-cum-share croppers :**

**Table-V**

**Owner cultivator –cum- share cropper**

No. of SC households share cropping land of the size of 1-2 bighas	No. of ST households share cropping land of the size of 1-2 bighas	No. of General Caste households share cropping land of the size of 1-2 bighas	Total no. of house holds
<b>11(55.0%)</b>	<b>6(30.0%)</b>	<b>3(15.0%)</b>	<b>Total=20</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

The Table-V shows the owner cultivator-cum-share-croppers of Berachampa village where a piece of cultivation land owned by an owner cultivator and of other's land as a share-cropper. The cultivators are mainly poor and marginal and 20 households involved in this village.

On the above table, we find that among those owning 1-2 of land, 11(55.0%) belong to S/C community, 6(30.0%) belong to S/T community and 3(15.0%) belonging to General Caste category.

**(vi) Condition of the Agricultural Labourers :**

The agricultural labourers get hardly six months work in this village and their daily wages average Rs.50/- and 1Kg. of rice per day during cultivation season. During the rest of the period these labourers visit urban areas especially, Kolkata or Barasat for various of works. Most of the wives of the agricultural labourers families works as daily wage basis. The economic condition of these families is very grim. They can afford meal only once a day to their children in off-season. Their children hardly continue their studies up to primary level due to poverty. Most of the children of agricultural labourers are admitted to primary school for the attraction of mid day meal. I have observed this in *Shiromoni village*. Some times, local panchayat tries to involve agricultural labourers in different types of rural programmes and training during the off-season.

**(vii) Landless Share-Cropper:**

The landless sharecropper households are very poor and maintain their existence in pitiable struggle to get some land for cultivation on crop-share to keep them alive.

Table-VI shows that the total landless share-cropper households, representing 11(44.0%) house holds in SC category, 6(24.0%) house holds in S/T community and 2(32.0%) house holds in the General Caste category out of total 25 households who cultivate others' land as share croppers. The size of the land share-cropped by them is shown below :

**Table-VI**  
**Landless Share-Cropper**

Community	No. of households share cropping land of the size of		No. of house holds
	0-1 bighas	1-2 bighas	
SC	8(42.1%)	3(50.0%)	11(44.0%)
ST	5(26.3%)	1(16.6%)	6(24.0%)
General Caste	6(31.5%)	2(33.3%)	8(32.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>19(100%)</b>	<b>6(100%)</b>	<b>25(100%)</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

In all, 19 households are share-cropping 0-1 bighas. 6 households sharecrop 1-2 bighas in this village. It shows 8(42.1%) households are S/C, 5(26.3%) are ST and 6(31.5%) belonging to General Caste category share cropping of the size of 0-1 bighas. In the size of 1-2 bigha category, 3(50.0%) belong to S/C, 1(16.6%) is S/T and 2(33.3%) are General Castes.

**(viii) Agricultural System :**

The cultivation land of this village is very fertile which promotes production of multi-crops. 40% of the agricultural land is irrigated by submersible, private tube wells etc. and rest of the land depends upon rain for irrigation. The cultivators are also using high yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers, bio-fertilizers, tractors etc. for modern cultivation.

**(ix) Cultivation of Paddy :**

Most of the cultivators of this village depend entirely on monsoon for their cultivation. All the agriculturist households of this village grow paddy in monsoon months (June-July) when rain starts in Bengal. But with the development of agricultural

systems the season starts earlier. In the month of March-April the *boro* cultivation is held. In early June with the onset of monsoons, after one or two heavy showers, the *Aus* paddy cultivation starts and at the end of August the peasants of the Berachampa village prepares for *Aman* cultivation. Harvesting usually commences on at the beginning of January. When the paddy is ripe it reaped in the middle with sickles or reaper machine. The paddy is usually brought home either in bullock carts, tractors or by the cultivators themselves as mentioned in Shiromoni village.

**(x) Harvesting Expenses :**

The harvesting expenses of *Aman* Paddy of this village is given below:

**Table-VII**  
**Harvesting Expenses of Aman Paddy per bigha**

Sl. No.	Harvesting Expenses		Amount (Rs.)
1	Tractor Expenses	@ Rs.160/- per hour x 2=00 hrs.	300=00
2	Agricultural Labour expenses :		
	(a) Resizing field	@ Rs.50/- x 2=	100=00
	(b) Paddy Plant (roya)	@ Rs.50/- x 4=	200=00
	(c) Weeding	@ Rs.50/- x 3=	150=00
3	Seeds (swarna, ranjit etc.) cost	@ Rs.150 per bigha	150=00
4	Paddy Cutting, Jharai, Bundles etc. as per contract	@ Rs.500=00	500=00
5	Carrying charges from field	@ Rs.60/- x 3=	180=00
6	Jharai	@ Rs.60/- x 3=	180=00
7	Fertilizers Charges	@ Rs.5/-x 20 kgs.	100=00
8	Pesticides Spray	@ Rs. 150/- per lit.	150=00
<b>Total Expenses :</b>			<b>2010=00</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

Ten jute bags of rice are obtained from 1 bigha of land, 1 bag consists of 60 kgs. rice. These bags have been sold in the open market of this village at an average rate of Rs. 300/- per bag. Thus the total earning of a peasant amounted to Rs.300/- x 10= Rs.3000/-. And their expenses amounted to Rs.2010/- or around Rs.2000/-. Thus the net income of a peasant is Rs.(3000-2000)= 1000/- per bigha. If a marginal peasant have 3 bighas of cultivation land then he can earn hardly Rs.1000/- x 3= Rs.3000/- in a year by

Aman cultivation. If the earning by other cultivation of Aus, vegetables etc. are included, he can earn around Rs.4000/- per annum. The monthly average income of a marginal peasant who owns 1-3 bighas of land is Rs.4000/12=Rs.334/- only.

**(xi) Monthly Income :**

Table VIII shows the distribution of the households by income of Berachampa village.

**Table-VIII  
Monthly Income & Occupation**

Occupation	Households with monthly income of					No. of households
	Less than Rs.1000/-	Rs.1001/- to Rs.2000/-	Rs.2001/- to Rs.3000/-	Rs.3001/- to Rs.4000/-	Rs.4000/- to Rs.5000/-	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultivation	15(83.3%)*	5(41.6%)	4(33.3%)	6(42.8%)	5(55.5%)**	35
Business	1(5.5%)	4(33.3%)	3(25.0%)	4(28.5%)	3(33.3%)	15
Other Services	2(11.1%)	3(25.0%)	5(41.6%)	4(28.5%)	1(11.1%)	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>18(100%)</b>	<b>12(100%)</b>	<b>12(100%)</b>	<b>14(100%)</b>	<b>9(100%)</b>	<b>65</b>

**Remarks : \* cultivator category includes the Agricultural Labourer**

**\*\*cultivator category includes the trade**

**Source : Field Sources**

The data of monthly income and occupation of the villagers of Berachampa Represent that 18 households' income are less than Rs.1000=00. Of these 15(83.3%) households are cultivators where the agricultural labourers included. 1(5.5%) household engaged in Business and 2(11.1%) are found in other services.

In column 3, we find that 12 households whose monthly income is Rs.1000=00 to Rs.2000=00. Of these, 5(41.6%) households are cultivator, 4(33.3%) households are engaged in business and 3(25.0%) households are in other services.

Column no. 4 shows 12 households whose monthly income varies between Rs.2001=00 to Rs.3000=00. Of these 4(33.3%) households belong to cultivators, 3(25.0%) households belong to business and 5(41.6%) households belong to other services.

In column no. 5, present 14 households whose monthly income is Rs.3001=00 to Rs.4000=00. Of these 6(42.8%) households are engaged in cultivation as cultivators,

4(28.5%) households in business and other 4(28.5%) households engaged in other services.

Column no. 6 shows 9 households with higher income of Rs.4001=00 to Rs.5000=00. Where 5(55.5%) households engaged in cultivation, 3(33.3%) households in business and rest 1(11.1%) household in other services.

It shows that the cultivator which includes agricultural labourers, whose monthly income is less than Rs.1000=00, are more in numbers (93.3%) than other categories and their economic condition is very poor which may be referred to BPL list.

**(xii) Monthly Expenditure :**

It is very difficult task to ascertain its expenditure on different heads. But we have tried here to put an idea by our field investigation.

**Table-IX**

**Head wise monthly expenditure of rural poor households**

Occupation	Head			Total expenditure	No. of Households
	Food & Clothing	Misc. and Fuel	Children education and medical treatment		
Cultivation*	Rs.1200/-	Rs.100/-	Rs.100/-	Rs.1400/-	20(50.0%)
Agricultural Labourer	Rs.800/-	Rs.50	Rs.50/-	Rs.900/-	10(25.0%)
Other Labourers	Rs.700/-	Rs.50/-	Rs.50/-	Rs.800/-	10(25.0%)
<b>Total</b>				Rs.3100/-	40(100%)**

**Remarks: \* Poor cultivators including sharecroppers whose land holding 1-2 bigha**

**\*\* Average of family members are 4 persons**

**Source : Field Survey**

Table-IX shows the average sample head-wise monthly expenditure of the rural poor households in Berachampa village. Out of 40 households, with family members averaging 4 persons, 20(50%) households comprised of poor and marginal peasants including sharecroppers holding 1-2 bigha of land having a monthly expenditure up to Rs.1400/-. 10(25.0%) households of agricultural labourers' having a monthly expenditure of Rs.900/- only and 10(25.0%) households of other labourers jobs, spend up to Rs.800/-. Naturally most of these households are debt. In this respect, the condition of these households resembles that of their counterparts in Shiromoni village.

**(xiii) Indebtedness :**

Table-X shows of indebtedness of villagers in Berachampa village. It is seen that most of the households i.e. 30 households (60%) incurred loan for domestic needs including medical treatment i.e. Rs.30000/- (78.9%) of the total loan of Rs.38000/-, 5 households (10%) incurred loan of Rs.2500/- (6.5%) for marriage ceremony and 2(4%) households took loan of Rs.300/- (0.7%) for sraddha ceremony, 2% or 1 household incurred of Rs.200/- (0.5%) of total loan for worship of a deity, 7.8% loan incurred by 7 households (14%) for cultivation of land and 3.9% or Rs.1500/- took loan by 3 households (6%) for purchase land and 2 households (4%) out of a total of 50 households incurred Rs.500/- (1.3%) for misc. purposes. Most of these loans are taken from the private sources and some from commercial bank.

**Table-X**

**Purpose of Loans**

<b>Purposes of Loans</b>	<b>No. of households in debt</b>	<b>Percentage of Indebted households</b>	<b>Amount of Loan</b>	<b>Percentage to total loan</b>
Domestic needs	30	60%	Rs.30000/-	78.9%
Marriage Ceremony	5	10%	Rs.2500/-	6.5%
Sraddha Ceremony	2	4%	Rs.300/-	0.7%
Worship of a deity	1	2%	Rs.200/-	0.5%
Cultivation of land	7	14%	Rs.3000/-	7.8%
Purchase of land	3	6%	Rs.1500/-	3.9%
Misc.	2	4%	Rs.500/-	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Rs.38000/-</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source : Field Survey**

Table XI shows the changes in ownership pattern of land, uses of modern equipments, distribution of institutional loans and resurgence of usury loans and participation of different classes in rural self-government (local panchayat) of Berachampa village during 1978 to 2006.

**Table – XI**  
**Ownership of pattern and shifting of relative position**

Different Classes	Relative position of different classes						Total land holdings by different class categories (in bighas)				
	1978	1996	Shift	2006	Shift	Shift	1978	1996	Shift	2006	Shift
			1978-1996		1996-2006	1978-2006			1978-1996		1996-2006
Rich Peasant	22(22.0%)	20(20.0%)	-2.0%	25(25.0%)	+5.0%	+3.0%	80(45.71%)	55(31.42%)	-14.29%	70(40.0%)	+8.58%
Middle Peasant	30(30.0%)	25(25.0%)	-5.0%	35(35.0%)	+10%	+5.0%	50(28.57%)	40(22.85%)	-5.72%	50(28.57%)	+5.72%
Poor Peasant	30(30.0%)	25(25.0%)	-5%	28(28.0%)	+3.0%	-2.0%	40(22.85%)	65(37.14%)	+14.2%	45(25.71%)	-11.43%
Marginal Peasant & other toilers	25(25.0%)	15(15.0%)	-10%	20(20.0%)	+5.0%	-5.0%	5(2.85%)	15(8.57%)	+5.72%	10(5.71%)	-2.86%
<b>Total :</b>	<b>100 (house holds)</b>	<b>100 (house holds)</b>		<b>100 (house holds)</b>			<b>175(bi ghas)</b>	<b>175(bi ghas)</b>		<b>175(big has)</b>	

(Source : Field Data and Local Panchayat)

In comparison with 1978 and 1996 the relative positions of different classes of Berachampa village, we see rich peasants decreased by -2.0%, middle peasant declined by -5.0%, poor peasants also declined by -5.0% and marginal peasants including other toilers decreased by -5.0%. On the other hand, in comparison to 1996 - 2006, it is seen that the rich peasants shift increased to +5.0%, the middle peasants shift +10.0%, the poor peasants increased to +3.0% and marginal with other toilers shift +5.0% respectively. If we look at the comparison between 1978 and 2006 in the 29 years of Left rule, we find that the rich peasants have increased to +3.0%, the middle peasants increased to +5.0%, poor peasants declined by -2.0% and marginal peasants including other toilers declined by -5.0%. If we look at the upper classes of this village (the rich peasants + middle peasants) who have increased to +8.0% and the lowest rungs (poor + marginal peasants + other toilers including agricultural labourers) declined by -7.0%.



According to the position of land holdings between 1978 and 1996, the rich peasants holding 15-30 bighas of land declined by -14.29% after the Left Front Government came to the power in West Bengal in 1977 and introduced land reform programme. The middle peasants who holding 5-10 bighas also came down by -5.72% and on the other hand the weaker sections like poor and marginal peasants who holdings 1-5 bighas are found increased to +14.29% and +5.72% respectively due to of land reform programme. But the reverse features are shown in comparison between 1996 and 2006, the investigation shows that the rich peasants increased to +8.58%. The middle peasants also increased +5.72%. The poor peasants (who owns 1-3 bighas) have heavily lost their land and declined by 11.43% and other toilers category (who owns 0.1<1 bighas) decreased by 2.86%.

The rich and middle peasant sections are increasing in 2006 compare to 1996 of this village and these sections are shaped by the constraints of production on the one hand and political allegiance on the other.

**Table -XII**  
**Modern Agricultural Equipment used by different categories of peasants**

Class	Expenses for modern Agricultural equipment	Percentage of expenses	Total households with percentage
Rich Peasants	Rs.1000/-	41.6%	10(27.1%)
Middle Peasants	Rs.800/-	33.3%	12(32.4%)
Poor & Marginal Peasants	Rs.600/-	25.0%	15(40.5%)
Total	Rs.2400(100)%	-	37(100%)

(Source : Field Data)

According to table-XII, on the sample of the expenditure on modern equipments in different categories of peasants in Berachampa village, it is seen in the above table that in 10 households, rich peasants (who own 15-30 bighas) represent 27.1% out of total 37 households, can bear the expenses more for modern agricultural-machinery along with fertilizers of an average of Rs.1000/- (41.6%) of total expenditure of Rs.2400/-, 12 (32.4%) households of middle peasants who own 5-15 bighas can bear expenses of Rs.800/- (33.3%) on modern cultivation while 15 (40.5%) households poor and marginal peasants (who own 1-5 bighas) can spend average of Rs.600/- (25.0%) for modern equipments. It is clearly seen that the poor and marginal peasants who consists are more

in numbers than other categories can not afford more expenses for modern cultivation due to their poverty.

Table -XIII shows the usury loan and bank loan of this village which have been taken by different classes in the financial year of 2005-06.

**Table –XIII**  
**Distribution of loans among different classes**  
**(Financial year 2005-2006)**

Class	No. of families	Total among of usury loan (Rs.)	Takers of usury loan	Average amount per family (Rs.)	Total amount of Bank loan (Rs.)	Takers of Bank loan	Average amount per family (Rs.)
Rich Peasant	20	10,000	4(15.3%)	2,500	30,000	10(22.2%)	3,000
Middle Peasant	30	15,000	3(11.5%)	5,000	40,000	15(33.3%)	2,667
Poor Peasant	40	30,000	15(57.6%)	2,000	5000	5(12.5%)	500
Marginal Peasant and Other Toilers	10	5,000	4(15.3%)	1,250	5000	10(22.2%)	500
<b>Total :</b>	100	60,000	26(100%)	10,750	80,000	40	6,667

(Source : Field Data & local bank)

It is seen that 4(15.3%) rich peasants have taken usury loan of Rs.10000/- and in average of Rs.2500/- out of 20 households, 3(11.5%) middle peasants took Rs.15000/- (average Rs.5000/-) out of 30 households, poor peasants 15(57.6%) households out of total 40 households took Rs.30000/- (average Rs.2000/-) and marginal peasants and other toilers 4(15.3%) households out of total 10 households took Rs.5000/-(average Rs.1250/-) as usury loan. Likewise bank loan is also reflected in the table. It is observed on the above table that the poorer sections are gradually being cast outside the domain of all institutional help and the richer are tightening their grip over these institutions during Left rule in rural Bengal.

**Role of Gram Panchayat :** The Berachampa No. 2 Gram Panchayat was formed after the elections in 1978 and took some remarkable steps for the improvement in the field of agriculture. These are : (i) recovery of vested land (ii) enrolment of share croppers (iii) providing proper wages to agricultural workers (iv) construction of rural roads (v) improvement of water & irrigation facilities (vi) improvement the rural health centre (vii) various self employment scheme (viii) providing loan at minimum interest etc.

Adopting these programmes, the panchayat has helped the villagers especially the small, marginal and Agricultural labourers. Under the self-employment scheme, many unemployed youths and small cottage industries have become established after obtaining the training provided by the Panchayat. The Panchayat also utilized the fund under the “*Jawhar Rojgar Yojana*” “*IRDP*”, etc. properly.

But in 90’s the work under these schemes declined because the fund provided to them had decreased to a very great extent. As per the allegations of the villagers, the corruption of some of the panchayat members was also one of the factors resulting in this decline. The agricultural workers and unemployed youths were much affected due to the stoppage of “food against work” Project. The repair and construction of the road and water and irrigation projects has come to a halt because of shortage of funds. The “*Antyodaya* and *Annapurna Yojana*” could not be implemented properly. There have been many allegations regarding the distribution of *BPL* (Below Poverty Line) cards. The villagers have accused the panchayat members of political favouritism. But it can not be denied that in spite of all these existing problems, there has been a remarkable improvement in the village benefiting all the villagers especially the poor, unemployed and landless labourers.

A sample survey of different class representative in the gram panchayat members from 1978-2006 in Berachampa Gram Panchayat-2 is shown in Table-XIV.

**Table – XIV**  
**Class-wise composition of panchayat member**

<b>Classes</b>	<b>1978</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2006</b>
Rich Peasant	4(26.6%)	5(33.3%)	6(40.0%)
Other middle Class	3(20.0%)	4(26.6%)	5(33.3%)
Middle peasant	5(33.3%)	4(26.6%)	3(20.0%)
Poor Peasant & agricultural labourer	3(20.0%)	2(13.3%)	1(6.6%)
Total Nos.	15	15	15

(Source : Field Data)

It is seen that the representation of rich and other middle class peasants have increased from 1978 to 1996 and from 1996 to 2006. In the categories of poor peasants and as well as agricultural labourers, the representations decreased over the years out of total 15 members.

It is revealed from the above table more than 12 members are representing from rich, middle peasants and other rural middle class families (including school teachers,

service holders etc. who are among the most well off sections in the countryside now a days). Only 3 members came from lower middle class, poor peasants and agricultural labourer families in 1978 out of total 15 members panchayat. The corresponding figures in 1996 and 2006 increased at 13 and 14 members respectively of rich, middle peasants and middle classes. On the other hand the rural sections stand at 1 and 2 member respectively of Berachampa gram panchayat –2 of Berachampa village (North 24-Parganas District).

The picture tells us that panchayat movement did a good deal of mass involvement in its early days but after 29 years of Left rule the rich people have strengthened their position in the institution of self-governance.

### **C. Effects of New Economic Policy on villagers**

Important changes in cultivation (e.g. multi-cropping, the shift from rain-fed to irrigation dependent farming in many areas) and a certain degree of development of productive forces (in inputs like HYV seeds, machinery, techniques, skills) over the past two decades have led to appreciable changes in inter-class and intra-class relations in the society of both villages.

Consequently, the cost of agricultural production has increased because the cost of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation which has increased many folds. The increases in price of agri-inputs are attributed to the implementation of *New Economic Policy*.

A growing diversification of the rural economy is manifested in the proliferation of off-farm employment and sideline occupations and a large number of small cultivators especially agricultural labourers shift from cultivation to “house hold industries, small rural industries, salaried jobs” etc. The workforce engaged in cultivation has come down due to decline in profits and the pressure of *Globalization*.

The fertility of land has decreased considerably due to use of high amount of pesticides, insecticides, chemicals etc. especially for the *boro paddy* cultivation and vegetables. For this modern cultivation a greater volume of groundwater is needed. Withdrawal of excessive ground water results in the receding of water table in both the villages. Shortage of drinking water occurs in the summer seasons.

During my survey I was surprised to find that most of the marginal and small peasants are not interested in the cultivation of *boro rice* production due to its heavy harvesting expenses. Only the middle class peasants are interested for cultivation *boro rice*. On the contrary, the bargadars (sharecroppers) including the poor and marginal peasants have contract with rich peasants for cultivation of *boro rice*.

In many cases, the small and marginal peasants' have been found to sell their piece of land in both the villages, which they have under by the *Land Reform Programme*.

To conclude, the agricultural labourers, especially, the landless agricultural labourers have increased tremendously and they have hardly managed six months job in the villages.

In both the villages viz-a-viz Shiromoni and Berachampa, it is found that most of the landless families are having only 1.55 kathas of homestead land. That the number and percentage of agricultural labourers and poor peasants having land up to 1 acre is extremely rare. However, the percentages of poor, marginal peasants and agricultural labourers have increased both in the villages during 1996-2006.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

During the two rounds of my fieldwork in Shiromoni and Berachampa village a total of 200 farmers were interviewed of which 105 owned all of the land they cultivated. They had acquired this land through purchase, inheritance or land reform. 4 farmers owned a portion of the land they farmed and were bargadars or tenants a portion of their total holding, 50 farmers were bargadars on all of the land they cultivated and 41 interviewees neither owned nor sharecropped land, but worked as landless agricultural labourers. The largest landowning farmer at Shiromoni village cultivates 31 bighas. The largest land owner cultivates 24 bighas at Berachampa village. However, the average holding size of owner-cum-bargadar and bargadars only were 2-5 bighas and 1-3 bighas respectively.

**Farmer-Interviewees by Village and Agricultural Landholding**

Village	Owners only	Owners/Bargadars	Bargadars only	Landless	Total
Shiromoni	50	1	30	19	100
Berachampa	55	3	20	22	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>200</b>

Source : field survey

Rice is the most commonly cultivated crop of the farmers. Some were able to plant two crops of paddy per year, but many stated that lack of access to water and high prices of inputs kept them from cultivating a second crop. A few farmers grew boro rice, jute, etc. as their second crop and a handful of farmers owned or leased mango gardens during mango season. Corn, pulses, potatoes and other vegetables fruits are grown as the Rabi season cultivation.

The present survey shows the community-wise age-sex ratio, occupational pattern, land distribution, recording of bargadars, landless sharecroppers, conditions of agricultural labourers etc. of both the villages. It is found that the land reform has had a significant impact on both the villages. Peasants reported that above-ceiling land had been redistributed to poor farmers in the villages. Most of this land had been allocated as agricultural land parcels, although some had been allocated as homestead plots. Those who received vested agricultural land received very small amounts, ranging from 0.1 to 2 bighas. Most interviewees reported that all or the great majority of those who received vested agricultural land in their villages had been poor, marginal, agricultural labourer or completely landless. Some peasants stated that not all households in their village had received vested agricultural land under land reform distribution programme. At least some peasants stated that households that were close to the party in power were more likely to receive benefits. One peasant of *Berachampa* village stated that most of the vested agricultural land was given to *bargadars* rather than those who had not access to land. Most interviewees who commented on the relative effectiveness of the land redistribution stated that those who had received agricultural land had realized significant livelihood improvements with some exceptions. After implementation of *new economic policy* in India when inputs of the cultivation has been raised much and the stagnation of land reform programme in rural Bengal, it was too much difficult for the peasants to continue cultivation. They are not getting proper price for their crops. Some peasants of

both the villages admitted that some of those beneficiaries had mortgaged their land away to big farmers. A farmer of the *Shiromoni* village who had received vested land reported that while the former owner had produced three crops per year, he was only able to produce two crops per year. At least some households in 5 of the two villages where above-ceiling land had been redistributed had received homestead plots in the land reform or other government schemes. The homestead plots allocated were extremely small, typically about 1700 square feet or less. Even on such tiny plots, these interviewees and other who had received tiny household plots were growing vegetables or hand planted fruit trees for household consumption. Agricultural labourers who lacked home plots told of the difficulties they faced. They often leased small shelters from larger farmers for whom they worked as labourers or *bargadars*. Those who sharecropped said they could not risk recording as a *bargadar* because they would be evicted from their home. Others also discussed the perils and powerlessness of being an at-will residential tenant in a shelter owned by their employer, suggesting that receiving even a small homestead plot could provide substantial social and economic benefits.

Regarding Operation *barga*, it is mentioned that it is widely evident, although not universally implemented. It appears, consistent with village-level studies that a minority of *bargadars* has chosen not to record their rights, usually because they wanted to maintain, or feared not maintaining a good relationship with the landowner. Recorded *bargadars* (and at least some unrecorded *bargadars*) have received significant benefits from the anti-eviction and rent control provisions in the law and as a result have been empowered in their relationships with landlords. The most significant finding concerning *bargadar* relationships, is that many recorded *bargadars* have made or are now making voluntary arrangements with their landowners in which they receive full ownership of a portion of the *barga* land in exchange for releasing their *barga* rights to the remaining land. It has also been observed that the S/T communities especially, the females of all communities are heavily deprived.

For share cropping arrangements the land reform act provides that the *bargadar* must turn over 50% of the crop if the landowner supplies the non-labour inputs and 25% of the crop if the *bargadar* provides such inputs. But I found different sharecropping arrangements between landowners and *bargadars* in both the villages. Some where

*bargadar* provides all inputs and receives 75% of crop, *bargadar* provides all inputs and receives 67% of crop, landowner provides cash inputs and crop split 50 : 50, *bargadar* provides all inputs and receives 75% of crop and *bargadar* receives 50% of crop if owner provides cash inputs and 75% of crop if *bargadar* provides all inputs. One recorded *bargadar*, I interviewed, who was paying more than the legal limit realized that he was legally entitled to keep a larger share but he gave three reasons for his decision to give the landowner more than legally required share : (1) the landowner was very poor (2) the *bargadar* had a close, trustful relationship with the landowner and (3) the landowner used the proceeds for betterment of the village. In other interview, 4 *bargadars* of these two villages informed that they had not recorded their rights due to some reasons. In 3 of the 4 cases the share arrangements were less favourable to the *bargadar* than those provided by *barga* law.

The agrarian structure of West Bengal before the reforms was characterized by both a relatively high incidence of landlessness and a relatively equal distribution of landholdings among those with land. It is estimated that the incidence of landlessness in pre-reform, rural West Bengal was at least one-third. Despite land reform successes in West Bengal, rural landlessness remains a significant problem in many localities. National Sample Survey data from 1996-1997 indicates that 9% of all agricultural rural households in West Bengal still owned absolutely no land at that time, slightly higher than the all-India figure of 8.1%. Another 44.5% are marginal landowners in West Bengal, owning less than 1 bigha. The corresponding all-India figure is 34.3%. My field work results are consistent with village-level data indicating that much of the landlessness in West Bengal is concentrated in “pockets”. 50 peasants of the *Shiromoni* village reported that at least half of the village households were landless and also fifty peasants of the *Berachampa* village stated that three-quarters of the households in the village were landless. While some landless households in villages I visited, were earning income from other sources, the great majority relied on agricultural labour as the primary source of household income. The wages of Agricultural labourers ranged from 50-60 rupees per day for males and 40-50 rupees for females with average of 1kg. rice in 2006. Interviews from both the villages reported that agricultural wages had increased over the past five years. The reported increases ranged from 60 to 100% over the ten-year period.



Earlier official data shows that real wages of agricultural labourers had already risen sharply in the 1980s, shadowing the trend in agricultural output during this period.

According to data furnished by the *Economic and Statistical Department, Govt. of West Bengal*, despite some amount of trimming of the big holdings, number of owners holding more than 10 acres of land remains the same in the 90s as in the pre-1978 period. The present investigation shows an increase in the number of both big landlords (*jotedars*) (who own 30 bighas of land or more) and rich peasants (who own 15-30 bighas) use more than 30% of modern agro-machinery. Thus, a gradual strengthening of the position of the rural rich is seen. As far as the lowest rungs are concerned, a slight decline in the landless and other toilers' category (who own 0.1-1 bighas) is evident. The poor peasants (who own 1-3 bighas, and are basically toilers too), if taken together, the rural poor constitute the largest cross-section of the rural population that has swelled up in the Left Front rule. The maximum differentiation and flux has been experienced by the middle peasants by about 14.8% (total of both villages), through an upward mobility. They have transformed themselves into rich peasants and 1.2% (total of both villages) raised into landlords (*jotedars*), while a big section has slipped into lower categories, 16% (total of both villages) to poor peasantry and 4% (total of both villages) to the landless.

The investigation shows an increase of the poor peasantry and agricultural labourers. It is found that a small piece of vested land received by an agricultural labourer may turn him into a poor peasant, as he immediately does not cease to be an agricultural labourer in a practical sense, for he has to earn livelihood for more than half the year by selling labour power in others' land. Viewed in this perspective, the actual increase in total member of toiling people in rural society, a resulting shrinkage of jobs and a stagnation of agricultural production after a certain degree of development, unveils the contemporary crisis-ridden picture of agriculture in West Bengal. Capital crunch is a constant problem for these weaker sections and further aggravated by the unprecedented rise in fertilizer and fuel prices. In recent years, government has taken decision to purchase barga land from the land owner and resale it to the bargadars (sharecroppers). As far as loan is concerned, a concentration of the same is seen in the hands of the creamy layers. After coming to the power the Left Front Government announced that

they would help with greater extent to the farmers in cultivation with co-operative loans. But till today the co-operative movement is not spread out so far to the expected extent. It could never succeed in providing real relief to the poor. In the absence of a proper Govt. help the small and poor peasants are gradually being cast outside the domain of all institutional help and are compelled to that loan from money lenders (*mahajans*).

The more interesting finding is that a large number of middle peasants take recourse to *mahajani* loans because what they get from the formal credit market does not suffice for modern cultivation. Usurious capital thus remains the main source of credit not only for the poor but also for the lower-middle peasants too.

The investigation relating to the panchayats, reveals a tightening grip of the rich at the expense of the poor. The *State Panchayat Insititute* (an organization of the state government), in a survey after the 1998 elections, had pointed out the predominance of rich peasants and businessmen in *panchayat samitis* and *zilla parishads* (the upper two tiers of the three tier system). The poorer sections controlled the lowest body i.e. the gram panchayat, according to them. But the present investigation, on the contrary, portrays a different scenario, one of increase in number of rich people at all three levels in these two villages.

In this survey it is also found that the rich and upper middle peasants have better access to capital-intensive technology, actually consolidated their relatively small (compared to the past and to certain other part of rural Bengal) advantage in land holding. They have also diversified into sundry agro-related business like mini rice mills, fertilizers and pesticides relating business, petty money lending and so on; but land till remains the base of their socio-economic prosperity and influence. They often appoint managers to supervise their sprawling operations, send their sons (rarely daughters too) for higher education in metropolitan centres and maintain close relations with dominant political parties. They wield the maximum social authority and control political power at local levels.

In the 1990s when the new economic policy was introduced in India and its impact immediate fell on Bengal's agricultural system immediately. Moreover, the Government of West Bengal had almost stopped their *Land Reform Programme* at that time. We find that the upper layers of these villages vis a vis *Shiromoni* and *Berachampa*

like all other villages in West Bengal has come back to the situation like that in early 1978.

## A P P E N D I X - I

### Questionnaire for field survey

Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_ Thana/Taluk \_\_\_\_\_  
Panchyat \_\_\_\_\_ Village \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Respondent information**

1. Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Community belong \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. Profession :  
Peasant \_\_\_\_\_ Landless Agricultural worker \_\_\_\_\_ Others \_\_\_\_\_
4. Farming experience:  
Agricultural farming experience: \_\_\_\_\_ years
5. Total cultivated land: \_\_\_\_\_ bigha  
Source of seeds: self / outside
6. Land tenure status  
Owner-operated: \_\_\_\_\_ bigha  
Rented in: \_\_\_\_\_ bigha  
Mortgage in: \_\_\_\_\_ bigha
7. Vested land distribution:  
Alloted \_\_\_\_\_ Beneficiary's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Barga registration (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ bigha  
patta holders \_\_\_\_\_
8. Labour force data:  
Age  
Below 14 years \_\_\_\_\_  
Between 15 to 59 years \_\_\_\_\_  
Above 59 years \_\_\_\_\_
9. Level of education:  
Primary \_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary \_\_\_\_\_  
College and above \_\_\_\_\_  
Illiterate \_\_\_\_\_
10. Are you a member of any farmers' organization? Yes / No  
If yes, which farmers' organizations are you a member of? ( )  
\_\_\_\_\_ Farmers' association \_\_\_\_\_ Village co-operative society  
\_\_\_\_\_ Marketing co-operative society \_\_\_\_\_ Milk co-operative society
11. Have you attended any training conducted by local panchayat? Yes / No  
If yes, what was the training about?

12. When did you take action to apply pesticides? ( )
- \_\_\_\_\_ After initial attack
- \_\_\_\_\_ Without observing any insect
- \_\_\_\_\_ As per government recommendations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule-based sprays
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all
13. List the number of times you applied pesticides at particular stage(s) of the crop. What chemicals did you apply during those stages?
14. How do you spray pesticide(s)? ( )
- \_\_\_\_\_ With sprayer machine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other means (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
15. Do you wash your hands after spraying? Yes / No
- If yes, with: water only / use soap / use soil
16. In the last cropping season did you borrow money for cultivation? Yes / No
- If yes, from which of these sources did you borrow money? ( )
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bank (government/private) at an interest rate of \_\_\_\_\_%
- \_\_\_\_\_ Co-operative society at an interest rate of \_\_\_\_\_%
- \_\_\_\_\_ Private source at an interest rate of \_\_\_\_\_%
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relative/friend at an interest rate of \_\_\_\_\_%
17. What was your rice/jute yield and market price for last season? \_\_\_\_\_ kg. per bigha, and sold at a price of \_\_\_\_\_ Taka or Rs./kg
18. How much money did you spend last season for cultivation? (Taka or Rs./bigha)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Human labor \_\_\_\_\_ Animal labor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Machine power \_\_\_\_\_ Sprayer machine
- \_\_\_\_\_ Seed \_\_\_\_\_ Cowdung /oil cake
- \_\_\_\_\_ Farmyard manure \_\_\_\_\_ Urea \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pesticides \_\_\_\_\_ Irrigation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rental value of land \_\_\_\_\_ Others (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
19. What was the net return from cultivation last year? \_\_\_\_\_ Taka/Rs./ha
20. How do you dispose of crop residue? ( )
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stack along bunds. If yes, for how long? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Use as fuel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Burn in field after drying
21. When do you plow the field after uprooting? ( )
- \_\_\_\_\_ Immediately
- \_\_\_\_\_ After one week
- \_\_\_\_\_ After one month
22. Do you provide advice to other farmers regarding cultivation? (Yes/No)
23. Do you grade the harvest (Yes / No)
24. Where do you sell your production? ( )
- \_\_\_\_\_ Farm sale
- \_\_\_\_\_ Local market sale
- \_\_\_\_\_ Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

25. Types of intermediaries to whom you sell your production:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Wholesaler
- \_\_\_\_\_ Retailer
- \_\_\_\_\_ Commission Agent
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consumer

26. Month wise sale of production (kg):

- \_\_\_\_\_ January \_\_\_\_\_ February \_\_\_\_\_ March
- \_\_\_\_\_ April \_\_\_\_\_ May \_\_\_\_\_ June
- \_\_\_\_\_ July \_\_\_\_\_ August \_\_\_\_\_ September
- \_\_\_\_\_ October \_\_\_\_\_ November \_\_\_\_\_ December

27. Did you change your cropping pattern during the last 2–3 years? (Yes / No)

Reason for your action (changing or not changing):

28. Please complete:

Pattern and land area (bigha)

Kharif \_\_\_\_\_

Rabi \_\_\_\_\_

29. Month wise income :

January to December \_\_\_\_\_

30. Utilization of loans:

Head wise \_\_\_\_\_

31. Fertility of land after using fertilizers :

Yes/No \_\_\_\_\_ your experience \_\_\_\_\_

32. Reverse tenancy :

Yes/No \_\_\_\_\_

33. Choose to other profession:

Yes/No \_\_\_\_\_ if yes why \_\_\_\_\_