

*For Limited circulation*

# Other India

Newsletter of the Rural Action Project



A Reprint

For limited circulation

OTHER INDIA

A news letter of the  
Rural Action Project  
No. 1, 1977

National Institute of Bank Management  
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Bombay - 6

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This news-letter contains reports from some of your colleagues in the Spearhead Team elsewhere. May be your own report is in it. We are sending them together so that you will get to know what is being done by other teams. We are sending you only a few reports because there are too many and you won't find time to read them all. We have chosen the reports for three reasons.

1. They have been nicely written.
2. They have information which would be of your interest.
3. They have description of interesting and important work.

We will send you such reports often because we believe in learning from each other. These reports will also give you a picture of what is happening in other areas and teams.

We have included a few more items such as life story of villagers. These are interesting and useful because we meet such people often but do not analyse them. It is good to analyse such people so that we learn to judge people.

We have also included a few poems. These are written by traditional poets in villages and have social significance. In many parts of India such poems are written by village poets. If you find any such poem or song we can publish them in future. Unfortunately we cannot publish poems written by you. The poems and songs that you collect should have social context in it. We are not interested in publishing poems and song of religious nature. I am sure you will go through the news-letter carefully. If you want to know more from any group about what they have done, write to them directly. All recent addresses are given at the back. In every issue we will notify any change in address of any group.

If you have something important to tell to everybody you may send a letter for publication in the news-letter. On top of the letter please write, "For publication in OTHER INDIA". In future we hope to publish other informative papers on technical topics also. But primarily the news-letter is to publish what you write. Now a few lines on the name of this news-letter. We are working for the benefit of the poorest people of the country. This half of the population do not know how to read. They also do not know how to write therefore their problems are not heard by others. Our reports will contain their problems, their hopes and aspiration and in this way put a voice to them that is why we have called our news-letter "OTHER INDIA".

If you have any ideas to improve the news-letter please write and tell us. We want to improve the news-letter.

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STUDIES

## ACTION AND INTERACTION AT BASOL CHAK

Purnonanda Mukhopadhyaya

Rabinarayan Dash      Sankarsana Hota

Raghunath Behera      Ashraf Mohammad

Basol Chak is only a 20 paisa bus ride from Kaggari on way to Jhargram. The village we usually refer to as Basol is quite a distance, away from the bus stop. It is about half an hour's walk from the bus stop to the north east over the fields. The main Baso is inhabited by the Lodha and Mahato communities. The bus stop which we use is actually in Bandhdanga and Bankati Moza. Some years ago there probably were no habitation here where the bus stop is. But due to the Bombay road some people have shifted here from the old Basol village. Couple of tea shops have come to be. Even though people may have been attracted to this spot by the Bombay road and in lure of urbanisation - main reason for shifting from old Basol was lack of drinking water.

About 30 years ago there were no wells in old Basol nor were there any big tanks. People were unable to dig wells because the water level is low and in a chalky layer. Villagers did not have the money to put cement rings to protect the well walls. But on the roadside the water level is higher. People make their own Chua<sup>1</sup> and do not have to go to Januir for water as old Basol villagers have to do and walk half a mile.

Those who have shifted to the roadside are better off people of Mahato community. But the poorer Mahato and Lodhas have not been able to shift here.

### MAHATOS :

Let us now discuss who are Mahatos. Mahatos are in between Santhals and caste hindus in social status. They may have originated from the Santhal but are now hinduised by the influence of the caste hindus. They have adopted social customs and behaviour

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<sup>1</sup> Chua - a small pond

patterns of the caste hindus. However on the surface they still display great courage and unbending attitudes so characteristic of tribal community. However it is a matter of regret that as a result of the fact that they own land and are able to employ labour their capacity to do hard work has been reduced in comparison to other tribal communities. Even though they seem to be a community which has lost it's moorings they deliberately try to be away from tribal communities in an effort to forget their tribal origin. In the process, superstitions of caste system and consequently of untouchability has crept in between the two communities. Now a days no Santhal women would visit a Mahato home nor a Mahato barber would service a Santhal.

The Mahatos seem to have adopted these caste rules as a means of establishing themselves as caste hindus and there by gain social status. It has influenced even their language. They tend to pronounce words as the caste Hindus do even though it is easy to decipher Santhali tones when they speak.

LODHAS :

This village has a few Lodha famalies. Lodhas are generally found in Orissa, Bihar and in West Bengal. They are ex-criminal tribe. They still indulge in robbery, stealing, wagon breaking and other illegal activities. They are in a way still nomadic.

Lodhas of this area believe that they were forest guards and Lathiwals (guards who fought with big stielos) of the Raja of Chilkigarh and of Zamindars of Salgram. They fled in to this area for fear of British reppression.

Origin of the word 'Lodha' is not clear and the word does not have any meaning. These people were originally known as sabar's and were referred to as 'Sabar Thakur'. Lodha is a derogatory name given to them by the educated and well off people. They do not like to be referred to as Lodhas and sharply react when so done. They are happier if they are addressed as 'Sabar Thakur' or 'Sabar Bhai'.

The particular group of Lodhas that we are discussing habitually live near the forest, even so they do not steal or do other such activities. They have been influenced by the Mahatos by living with them in close proximity.

They go out to work in the morning. Whole day they work in stone breaking, earth cutting and other such hard work. In the evening they come back with their baskets and spade, after a meal they go to bed. Early in the morning they are looking for jobs again.

How they are reformed into hard working law abiding citizens calls for much discussion and will be discussed elsewhere.

We will now describe a few persons of Basol who are relevant to our discussion.

BARI MAHATO :

Amongst the Mahatos there is an intelligent well of person. He is Sri Bari Mahato. Sri Mahato is the president of the grampanchayat and a dealer in the partial rationing system. Three times he tried to start a co-operative society and in the process has made quite a bit of money and has collected a lot of rice. Much of which he has spent on his mistress. He is also the ex-secretary of the Rin Dan Sombaya Samity. The society is now functioning.

Sri Mahato has lost seven Bighas of land as a result of a defalcation of funds of this society. He leads neighbouring Lodhas to robbery but has a sweet manner and speech. We came to realise his true character only during the third and fourth field visits.

RAGHU MAHATO :

Raghu Mahato comes from a well known family even though he is not very well off now. He is enthusiastic, hardworking and is a good organiser.

GANANATH MAHATO :

Gananath Mahato failed the Higher Secondary Examination. He has a cycle repair shop at Basol. He claims much knowledge of machinery perhaps much more than he actually knows. Between jobs (usually repair of tube leaks) he sits with an English to Bengali dictionary, and uses a few incorrect English words with the villagers who understand no English. When a villager gets flustered with his English he feels happy and proud.

We will now tell you where these characters fit into our narration and what relation developed between them and us through a process of interactions and conflicts.

During our second field visit we had an idea of building a Krishi Seva Samity in five villages of Basol, Sagram, Joi Bandh, Malatora and Nabera. Even though we had the idea of starting a society we had no time bound programme. We did not feel that immediate formation of the society was of vital importance. Our objective was to unify various groups (who do same kind of work and are bound by some other common interest) together and then create larger unified groups out of these groups. Our objective was to see that all these people working in various activities work together as a unified force.

We therefore used to go round these five villages during the day collecting data and talking to individuals to create unity amongst them. During the evenings we used to organise meetings in these villages.

During these meetings we tried to study those who dominated the meetings in suppression of others. We used to observe how they were trying to maintain leadership and domination and what sort of people they were. During the next day we would meet those who were suppressed and silent, and individually ask them why they were silent in the meeting.

After this we would hold a small meeting of these silent people. In these meetings we asked them only one question and that was whether they would benefit more by working together or otherwise, and if they worked individually what would they do in contrast to the work they would do if they worked together.

We sought reply to this question in a meeting after a few days and not immediately. They used to explain to us which work will help them and how. However we used to help them to think about usefulness of joint working as this was our main objective. Some times we explained our point of view directly about the usefulness of working together. We can not say that they followed us fully.

We came across villages in which people were individualistic and full of selfish motives. One such village is Bonber. It is a muslim village. All villagers spring from a single ancestor Sheikh Ozman. Because of close blood relations jealousies, family feuds and selfishness is eating into the social life of the village : Quarrels have reached a climax. At the smallest provocation they get their sticks out for a fight.

During the day they work as petty businessmen in village markets and in the evening they spend their time in theiving, robbery etc, and they are well known for such activities. We stopped working in this village during our third field visit because we found it to be too difficult a village to make any dent. Instead of Bonber we included few other nearby villages in our operation. They were Bankati, Bandhdanga Sahati, Gopalpur, Bankukur and Malatora. Even though we included these villages for our study we mainly concentrated on Sagram, Basol and Bapukur. Other villages received our secondary interest.

During the third field visit some of us fell ill even so we kept working with much zeal amongst the Lodhas who are one of the most difficult tribes to work with : we got specially attached to Lodha villages such as Sagram and the criminal infested villages of Bapukur. Apart from these we worked with much concentration in Basol, Malatora, Bankati and Bandhdanga villages.

However, when we started going to the secret places of the Lodhas in late nights and started singing and joining in their drunken dances Bari babu did not like it. Even though he would not say anything directly he started plotting on the side. We got an inkling of this during our fourth visit.

While working in Basol we had to confront the ration card problem. Bari babu suddenly told the people of Basol that all their ration cards are lost and that they have to pay Rs. 5 each for a new ration card. It was a practice of the Villagers to leave their ration cards with the ration dealer (Bari babu). But Lodhas never knew that they had any ration cards at all.

When people wanted to form a society we had told them that forming a society is not easy and that they should test their capacity to work together. We also impressed upon them that it is only during work that real friends can be found out. The villagers started well digging and cultivation work to test their own capacity to work together.

It is at this point that Bari babu announced the loss of ration cards. He also told them that without ration cards they will not get any kerosene or sugar. The villagers were very surprised why all of a sudden Bari babu would stop selling them small quantities of kerosene or sugar that they always bought from him.

For some reason Bari babu had a problem with his own clerk Ram Jana. We made friends with Sri Jana and came to know that Bari babu is holding twice as many ration cards as there are people in the village. Apart from this we learnt that books too are highly irregular. After securing all the information from Sri Jana we discussed the problem in a village meeting.

People were rather excited over the issue. Some of them even wanted to beat up Bari babu. However, they generally said that they had paid Re. 1/- for (buying) the ration card and now Bari babu is asking for Rs. 5/- someday he may ask for Rs. 100/-. The villagers became determined to solve the issue and decided not to pay any money to Bari babu ( The ration dealer).

We in an effort to intervene on behalf of the villagers went to the nearest town and met the food inspector. We never know that a government officer could be in a drunken state during office hours in his office as this man was.

He told us plainly that there is no point in an inspection, specially since he has not been given a transport he cannot go for inspection. But we pressed him further he avoided the issue by long talks. We therefore went to the SDO.

After this Bari babu became softer towards us and used to offer us tea and snacks at the tea shop and be nice to us. However on the sly he started instigating some Lodhas Loyal to him against us. He also registered a case of theft of all his papers at the local police station. The ration card problem was being solved by the SDO therefore we did not have to do anything more to solve it. But Bari babu kept on with his scheming against us with more zeal. However there was no expression or apparent result of these schemes.

By this time the people of Basol village had started their experimental joint activities like building of society building, digging of wells etc. At first a lot of people came to donate their labour, but at the instigation of Bari babu some people stopped coming. Raghu babu's leadership qualities and his effort got them back to work, and work progressed satisfactorily.

At this time a new problem had to be faced. The society building (a one room mud house) was being constructed on government land, with the permission of the Junior Land revenue officer who had recorded the land in favour of the society when it is formed. But as soon as the building had come up to some extent the local Tahasildar started going to Bari babu and plotting. He started putting forward Bari babu's point of view. He said that the construction of the building was illegal and further work should be stopped straightaway. He also threatened to lodge a complaint with the higher authorities. However the work progressed unhindered, and the tahasildar also stopped coming.

The Tahasildar lived in a far off village and could not be bothered to walk the distance time and again just to help Bari babu.

We had two objectives in undertaking the project these were :

1. To help people select the managing committee from amongst the workers by observing them at work.
2. To develop share capital from the labour contributed to the project.

For the purpose of raising share capital an account of time contributed by the workers were being maintained, by the members. We were trying to avoid raising cash contributions from their meagre resource. All the work was being done during the idle or spare time of the workers, mostly during the evenings after they had full days work. We were also holding regular meetings with the would be members, to form rules and bye-laws and also to hold adult education classes. It was apparent that the villagers were very enthusiastic from the fact that they were not only putting in hard work but were also attending meetings quite regularly. We had another objective and that was to find out who were the enemies of the society, how to contain them and what were their strengths and weaknesses.

During all this time Bari babu used to maintain contact with us and exchange pleasantries. He kept up his effort in dissuading us from doing any work with the Lodhas. He used to say that Lodhas are good for nothing, government had given them many things and still are giving them but they are incapable of holding them. We always give him a patient hearing but continued our work. This used to frustrate Bari babu and he sometimes used to say there is no point in talking to us.

During this phase we came to know Gananath Mahato. He is a dominating and power loving young man. At the beginning of our action programme he did not join it. But later he joined it; people also accepted him, they thought an educated unemployed youth would be of some help to them. We were apprehensive of his usefulness and of his real motive from the very beginning. Whenever we discussed about the Lodhas he used to say that they were good for nothing and that however much we try we cannot get mango fruit out of Amra tree. Or sometimes he would make such remarks that the people attending the meeting would sometimes be quite upset. One evening people became rather angry with him and gave vent to their feelings. After that incident he remained quiet for a few days. But later he again tried to dominate in meetings. He expected everybody to act as his puppet.

We analysed a few of his statements to expose his motives, instead of directly attacking him. In a few consecutive meetings we found people were becoming conscious of him and they started discussing his behaviour in his presence. Sometimes we used to play some games in these meetings. One day we heard that the Lodhas had decided not to work together with the Mahatos. We knew through a meeting with the Lodhas why they did not want to work with the Mahatos. That day we got the group to sit very close to each other and one of us went out of the group and requested Raghu babu to get him in to the group by persuasion. Two of us took the role of villagers with negative opinion to bring him in. The first person who took the role of a Lodha expressed that Lodhas had to say about the Mahatos. Raghu babu tried to pacify him to get him into the group. That day Raghu babu realised how Lodhas can be brought in to joint work.

By this time Lodhas and Sagram had started working with great zeal, some were digging wells others were digging ponds. During this time we arranged a film show to make people aware

about problems and characteristics of Tuberculosis and Leprosy both of which are rampant in these villages. We also arranged a film on agriculture. Unfortunately the publicity people arrived without any health film. But the film on agriculture had a good effect on the viewers and it was apparent from their interest. However in the process of these activities we became close to Bari babu's associates amongst the Lodhas and came to know about many of his illegal activities. This made him furious and he tried to throw us out of the school where we were staying. He was the president of the school committee. During the third field visit he told us that next time we would not be able to use the school for our residence. But we became friendly with the secretary of the school committee and therefore we were able to stay on at the school.

During the fourth field visit we wanted to complete some of the unfinished work of the third visit. However this was the wrong time for this type of work as it was the harvest time and every body was busy. Many of the Lodhas had left the village in search of jobs elsewhere.

During winter months Lodhas go away in search of work. The houses remain empty and there is nobody to look after these houses. Consequently neighbours take away the straw from the roofs and use them as fuel. We wanted to stop this movement of people by generating employment. But unfortunately we were late and by the time we arrived many of them had already left.

But we started working with those who were there. We developed two schemes one of making a road from the Basol bus stop to the society premises. The other scheme was of rope making from Sawai grass. Purpose of the second scheme was to develop some savings which would provide them with initial share capital required by them.

Around this time to our dismay we found that Gananath babu had maneuvered himself to be elected as the manager of the society. We were aware that if Gananath babu becomes the manager, the society will not be successful. We therefore thought that the manager should be a paid post and secretary should hold real power. We discussed the issue with all the members individually. By this process members became conscious of the role that was being played by Gananath babu and started challenging him in meetings, which alienated him from us.

About this time we organised a cultural function. Our objective was to integrate various groups that had developed in Basol, Sagram and Amlatora. It meant getting different villages and communities on common platform. Such functions had never been organised before. It is usually for each community to have their own function in which outsiders are not generally welcome.

Bari babu didn't even like this and became active again to spoil the function. Even though he had a fever he was moving about and meeting all the people who did not favour us. One day before the function we heard that tribals won't do their language dance. They have been told by Bari babu that it won't be safe for the girls to dance in the function because we will be drinking on that day. But the tribals kept their promise and the girls did dance on the stage. But just before the function we found the Lodha dancers from Bapukur quite drunk in the shop owned by Bari babu's nephew. But the Lodhas of Sagram gave a good performance of their Danri dance.

Next morning Bari babu met one of us and said that since we have come on Bank business we should lend money and go away and not organise Lodha and Adibasi girls dance. He also told us this is no way to do Banks business. Finally he said that next

time we were seen in Bapukur and talk to Lodhas we would be killed.

The same evening Bari babu's nephew told us that Lodhas have told him that they will come and kill us in the night. During the evening we heard much rumours from other sources.

Same evening we held a special meeting of the Basol Srama Kalyan Samity, where we started a game. We gave each member a slip of paper and asked them to write on it what work he would do supposing he was given an individual loan. It was seen that except for two people i.e. Gananath babu and Julu babu all others want to do same work. These two people wanted to do something totally unconnected with society's objectives such as cycle repair shop and restaurant. Our purpose in playing this game was to expose these two people who were over anxious to register the society, and were trying to influence other members. We then pointed out the disparity of these two people with the others and asked the chairman and the members whether such loans should be sanctioned. These two people became very angry at being exposed and other members started reacting. After much argument they were thrown out of the managing committee, but were allowed to remain members. They were thrown out of the managing committee because they had displayed their self interest as being more dominant than the group interest. But their membership was maintained because they had worked together with others.

They further decided that each person will have a share of Rs. 5/- and deposit of Rs. 2/- as Rs. 7/- were calculated to be wage earned by contribution of labour.

The members got divided into two groups on these issues and much confusion prevailed. Ultimately the society broke up but the chairman Raghu babu was requested to form a new society and start some productive activities. However Gananath babu and Julu

babu declared that they will not allow a new society to be formed, but others accepted their challenge.

Next day Gananath babu and Julu babu started telling us without mincing words that we are wasting government money and doing no work. We listened to them quitely. They further said that water has been found in Basol well and ploughing has started even though co-operative farming has not.

Let us now analyse why Bari babu and his friends in main Basol were so much against us. Mainly the problem was between main Basol and Basol village i.e. the roadside settlement and the old village. Those who live on the roadside are better educated than the inhabitants of old Basol village. Most of the government officers such as V.L.W. or sanitary Inspector do not take the trouble of visiting old Basol since it involves a difficult walk. Most of them cover the village by sitting at the tea shop. These are not merely villagers complaints but evidence can be seen in absence of N.M.E.P. table in Basol village. Further when we called the sanitary Inspector to take Malaria slide because people were suffering from Malaria we found many children up to the age of three have not had their primary vaccination.

The people of old Basol do not get any sugar but the tea shops on the roadside get all the sugar they need. Bari babu the ration dealer is said to get free tea at these shops. Further the Lodhas steal from the old Basol and at the behest of roadside dwellers stock and sell their stolen paddy at Samir Mahato's shop.

All these were the complaints that old Basol people had about the roadside dwellers. Therefore when they became united they did not hesitate to protest.

On the other hand when the roadside dwellers saw that old Basol people were united they saw this as a blow to their empire and this is how the conflict started.

Some of the roadside houses also run illicit liquor shops. Once we took a count and twenty five out of thirty one Lodhas of Sagram were in these shops. One may ask why don't the Lodhas disturb these people? It is true that they do not hesitate to rob the money lenders but they usually do not rob the very poor. The particular question needs much discussion but these small roadside houses contain strong machineries of exploitation.

At Malatora however we did not encounter the kind of opposition we encountered at Basol. When the Malatora village people heard of our work at Basol they on their own held meetings and eleven of them got together and started a piggery. Each of them contributed a piglet to the society. They also took the following decision :

1. Who will look after the pigs.
2. When, how and how much will he be paid.
3. Meat will be owned by the reorganised  
Liota Gossia in Gaonta Club.

The members of the club would look after the enterprise. They will also collect all the paddy of the club lying in deposit with the members.

First when we heard of this development we were pleasantly surprised. We later realised how the whole thing started. When we used to discuss matters pertaining to the formation of the society with Gananath babu, there used to be a man sitting there who worked on a sewing machine. He is Sarash Mandi. He is an author of many tribal dramas. It was

this man who organised the piggery. It is difficult to say how ideas affect people. Gananath babu on whom we spent a lot of time came to the society with private motive and we could not influence his behaviour. But where the interest was genuine very little effort was needed to start activities on the right lines.

The Malatora club has further decided that they will collect 10 quintals of paddy and will construct a room and buy a sewing machine to start a sewing class for tribal women. Malatora tribal society is well on its way with eleven piglets and 10 quintals of paddy.

ABUJMARH

Debendra Nath Das\*

We returned safely from Bastar and joined in time. What the paper said about Abujmarh is not totally true. Actually there is a lot of emotional statements in the paper. Primitive Communism is not at all existing there. Lands are not allotted according to the size of the family. Land is in plenty, and one can cultivate as much land as he can. But since they depend upon their own physical labour they cannot cultivate much. Yet there is gradation of wealth in accordance to the working members of a family. This was clear to see the condition of their houses. Some houses are good and some comparatively bad. Besides, in winter some use more clothes than others.

The paper says, property concept has as not yet touched the Abujmarh. But we saw certain cases from which it was clear that property concept had touched their life deeply. We had visited the most backward area Handabeda. There, eight days earlier a theft had been committed. How did it happen? Besides the Gayanta of Handabeda sold a tree to one outsider. Lastly for any fault they are punished and have to give a bullock or some kgs. of rice etc. If the property concept is not there then how is it that a property fine is accepted as a punishment?

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\* Debendra Das and Kalyani Kandar both of Spearhead Team went during their holiday to Abujmarh. Which is one of the most backward pockets of the country. They had to walk many miles and do much hardside. Debendra is referring to a newspaper report which they studied during the training programme -  
S Dasgupta

However I liked the system of their administration very much. The village leader is called Patel.

He has great control over the village. People obey him too. Over four to five villages there is another leader who is called Charpanch. And over 8 to 9 villages the leader is called Majhi. But Majhi and Charpanch have no control over the village people. One village is divided into certain Paras. In each Para there is one Gayanta who is in-charge of land. The interesting thing is **that these post holders have no power.** The Patel who is obeyed most can never punish a person. In case of punishing a person all the villagers sit in a group and decide the case. Gayanta though in charge of the land yet he has no power to deny a person of any land. He only keep information about which land is allotted to whom. Otherwise for one land there is every possibility of a conflict. So formally everybody takes the permission of the Gayanta to cultivate any new land. If the land has been allotted to someone else before, the Gayanta refuses. The duty of the Patel is to see to the good of the village, to treat outsiders and to execute all village functions. Actually his functions can more correctly be said as management rather than administration. As he has no power everyone has to bear that responsibility. For that he enjoys great prestige. Customarily no one disobeys the Patel. Usually the son of a Patel becomes a Patel. But if the people feel the son of a Patel, unfit, they can select another Patel. Here the group decision is regarded as most supreme. Yet there is corruption in certain villages. Inside the big group there are smaller groups. Four or five persons make a group and support each other even if one of them is wrong.

Hence in case of a judgement or any discussion whatever this small group says to the other individuals has to be obeyed and he cannot stand against their views. So the wish of this small group in many cases stands supreme even though it goes against the interest of the big group.

There is no big gap in their economic condition mainly due to two reasons. Firstly they depend upon their own physical labour. So there is a definite limit to cultivating a quantity of land. If any technical method can be introduced by which one can cultivate more land then suddenly this balance will break down and wide economical gaps will be created. Secondly if the land will not be in plenty there is possibility of such a gap. One will acquire more land than his need and thus can create some landless. These helpless persons without any source of living will be bound to work at his field, and that person without any labour can live a comfortable living. These persons are not also free from the mentality of comfortable living. But as the land is in plenty no one can make anyone landless even if one tries his level best. So a natural balance has been maintained in their economical life. The reporter of the article I read on Abujmarh has become more emotional in saying that all the people at Abujmarh are good and innocent. They are human beings. They also possess the same tendencies as other humans possess. There are also good and bad elements in their society. So I cannot appreciate his request to the government, not to disturb their present life by bring any change or to extend any road in Abujmarh or to execute the general revenue law there.

Their population is increasing day by day. Also the fertility of land is decreasing day by day. And also outsiders are going there to settle down. They cannot be checked. So within 50 years it is sure that there will be shortage of land and most of these people will be appointed as landless labourers. So now there

is still time to make them conscious and to let them learn the modern way of agriculture and how to manage with a little quantity of land. They should have their legal rights over the land. They should not rest on the sympathy of the government not to pay the revenue and to enjoy the vast forest property like anything.

One very interesting and pleasant thing is that they are very conscious of self dependent. Only for salt and cloth they depend upon outsiders. Even today they do not use a match box for fire. They rub two bamboo sticks and produce fire out of that. We questioned them regarding education. They flatly denied. But when we asked about such type of education by which they can produce more food in a small quantity of land or how to knit their own cloth by looms they agreed. So I think they can be interested in education through the hope of fulfillment of their local needs.

Their self dependent attitude is a very good sign for quick progress. Now the outsiders are beginning to settle there. Very soon their consciousness of self dependency may vanish.

OTHER  
INDIANS

RABINDRA SHABAR<sup>1</sup>

Ashraf Mohammad

When homosapiens came into being in the premeaval part, they were free in nature, free to enjoy its bounties. Man was free from retrictions which moulded his mind into one, that was simple, free and pure. Gradually his mind became darker and darker due to introduction of private property. It is private property which created inequality and men learn to exploit other men. And today industrialisation and urbanisation have destroyed that original simple mind quite completely.

We were working in a few villages in Jhargram subdivision of Midnapore district in West Bengal. We have noticed that many pure hearts which has been destroyed due to various reasons such as pressure of the state, pressure of life or pressure of the society. These wounded lives are lost to us for ever.

We met a gifted man who is lost to-day to the society due to its own pressure and pressure of a rude life cycle. Perhaps this man could have flowered and could proved his gifts to the gentle society.

This man is Rabindra Shabar and lives in Sagram. Age forty-five has wife, two daughters and a son. Instead of describing him I would like to look at some of his qualities.

He is technically not a landless person but owns 10 decimal land. Due to lack of irrigation he cannot even cultivate this bit of land properly. With a lot of labour he has dug a well which dries up soon after rains.

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<sup>1</sup> Shabars are an ex-criminal tribe popularly refered to as Lodhas. They are found in Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar. They are also regarded as a very backward and lower community.

He knows a number of old sayings which he learnt from his father and grand father and often teaches others through these sayings. We ourselves have learnt much from him.

He teaches his children not to be lazy. In a meeting he told children of his neighbours a saying which meant 'Don't feed anyone who does not want it, Don't wear fopich clothes'.

We used to ask his opinion on how the condition of Shabar's could be improved. He told us that his parents had given him some good advice. When we wanted to know what these advise were, he told us his fathers' saying, 'Drink water from centre of the pond, have a market in the house and eat a fish head in every mouthful'. Then he explained that it means 'Dig well in the house grow vegetables around the house and small fishes'.

Rabindra Babu has a clear vision and a sharp eye. He can judge people quickly. Whether a person is good or not as what his motive is become crystal clear to him. I still remember his searching look when we first went to see him.

He is a courageous and outspoken person and is not afraid of speaking up to 'gentlemen'. He can clearly express truth without fear. When we arranged a cultural show he participated without any fear or inhibition even though many people of his caste and status were reluctant. On the other hand he persuaded others to participate in the programme. He is not afraid of so called gentlemen nor does he feel small in their well dressed presence. Because his value does not permit him to wear fancy clothes. On the day of the cultural function some of our Shabar friends told us, 'Babus many gentlemen will come to your function. They will throw us out because of our poor dress or they would insult us, would you be able to take care of us?' Our friend Rabindra told them 'Who is strong enough to throw us out. What do we care if our clothes are poor and dirty. Let us go and see?'

'But Babu if we are insulted we will hold you responsible'.

Even though this statement expresses his concern for respect and courage it also betrays a little fear that is in him. But I would say our social system is responsible for it. This statement shows as I have stated earlier that this gifted man is already much spoiled under the pressure of our social system.

He is fond of singing. In spite of his very poor condition he loves to sing songs which shows his good taste. Apart from Krishna kirtan that he loves to sing all his other songs express pathos of the life of his community. Even though he is 45 he laughs and sings with the young. We have witnessed his love of singing in our late night meetings and in the cultural function.

But this is not all he is our excellent organiser. But it is a shame of the society that all these qualities are now being used to lead a gang of thieves. But he now wants to get out and grow but he cannot.

As nothing is all good so is Rabindra Shabar. He has his dark spots.

But I hold so called 'gentle' society largely responsible for these faults even though he himself is responsible to a large extent. He does not practice his precepts sufficiently and accepts traditional ways uncritically. He agrees to do many things but often does not keep his word. When he meets a new corner he is so gentle nobody would dream that he is the leader of a gang of thieves.

During the day he is very gentle but in the night even at his age he is a highly skilled and agile thief.

But he does not rule the poor.

MUSAFIR HUSSAIN

Lallan Ojha

We were transferred to the Kaggari Group, which was working in the village Betagari. We travelled to the village and on reaching our destination, realised that we have lost our belongings. Any way we had with us the necessary things and with these set out on our job.

The first day the villages stared at us and mocked us. We met a certain Shri Musafir Hussain who became our friend, a student of Seva Bharati College. His examinations were starting on 19th of November.

Musafir's father is a teacher in a primary school. There are eight members in his family and hence they do not have enough land for agriculture. Musafir's father Suleman, a politician is well up with the time. Musafir is also a well read person. He liked to work with us and helps us a lot.

During the meetings he used to speak highly about his organization and how it worked for the people. We also thought, that his organization really works for the people and the people respect him. But after a few days we came to know through some Muslims that Musafir was lying.

Once we had arranged a meeting of all the Hindus, Muslims and the leader in Betagari, Shri Dasgupta was to address the meeting. Musafir handed in a letter saying that not a single Muslim would be able to attend this meeting. We were confused, as people from outside were to attend this meeting. Our group decided to visit all the Muslim houses, and request them to attend the meeting. We were surprised to hear from the Muslims in the village that whatever Musafir had said or given in writing were lies, and that everyone would like to attend the meeting. Everyone

from the village finally attended the meeting and it was a great success. Had we relied upon Musafir's word the meeting would have been a failure. We were able to grasp the reality by our personal visit to every Muslim individual.

Musafir had told one of his Hindu friends that he was very friendly with us, and with this influence over us he could easily manage to help his Hindu friend to get his work done. Musafir came to us and told us, that his friend needed help. Since we could not do the work and he had told him that he could get any work done from us, he had come for our help. We were annoyed by his talk and asked him to get out and never come back again. In every village there are people like Musafir who by their lies try to spoil our work. We must be careful and wary of such kind of people. Whenever we used to pass, he used to get furious and rave and rant at us.

KRISHNA MAHALI

Raj Kumar Roy

We have visited a number of villages stayed and worked there for a long time. We have met a number of people in these villages. Here I would like to mention one person. Krishna Mahali belongs to Gadi village, and is a Mahali tribesman. He has got 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land, of which 4 acres are dry land. On a  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre plot stands his house and only 2 acres is left, which he uses for cultivation. There are only 2 members in his family. His main occupation is making cane articles like stools, corner stands etc. He is skilled in handicrafts, and would like to expand his business. When we met him, he told us that the Mahali tribes were unable to do any sort of work as they did not have enough money to purchase the raw materials. If the Mahalis were to form a society and funds were also made easily available through banks, They could effect some progress. He gave us the names of some other persons who would be interested in this project. But all of them were not ready to join this project as they did not have even Rs. 5/- to open an account at the bank.

Krishna used to meet us regularly. We took him to the bank manager where the two of them had a lot of discussions, after which he opened an account by paying a sum of Rs. 5/-. He then took a loan from the bank and is trying to expand his business. We feel, he can fulfill his great hopes and aspirations of progressing on a cooperative basis as he has made efforts in that direction. Also being only two members in the family he is happy with his income and busies himself with his work. As far as farming is concerned conditions are not good. He has only 2 acres of cultivable land entirely dependent on rain water. This is the traditional system of agriculture. If irrigation facility and seeds are provided they can have crops all the year round. Cane articles being their main occupation the Mahalis are not keen on farming.

He has an ox and four pigs. The ox he uses in his farm and earns a little here and there from his pigs.

From the above case we see that this husband and wife pair earn a sufficient amount to maintain their house. This leads to his good naturedness and concern for other villagers.

Whenever we visit the village he meets us and we discuss about the progress and development, his village and tribe are making. He was very considerate about our well being as he knew we would help him in his development projects. Being poor he could not give us food or shelter. But he always gave us his physical help whenever he could. Once when asked about the 4 acres of wasteland he said it was barren land and it would take a long time before that land could be used for agriculture. At present he manages with whatever he has.

From his talk, we felt that the Mahali's were afraid of the Santhal tribes and they never did or said anything against the Santhals. From the talks with Krishna Mahali we concluded that the Mahalis are aware of all the developments taking place in the country. They are willing to do all kinds of jobs on a co-operative basis, provided the banks were willing to give them a loan. They are eager and willing to share their burden of work in the country's progress and expand their art and business in cane articles.

SARALA

Tripti Bhowmik

Kesuli was our base camp. Two communities live in this village, Santhals and Adivasis. Santhals of this village are educated and have progressed much more than Santhals of nearby villages. Most of them have land while most of the Mahalis are landless. While most of the Santhals are reasonably off, all the Mahalis are very poor. Babulal Hembram the Anchal panchayat Pradhan lives in this village. He is rich and weilds a lot of influence in the village. Villagers do many things even against their own will to please him.

We learn't that there was a Mahila Samity (Gaoilies Club) in the village. With a previous appointment we went to see it. There we met Sarala Hansada for the first time and learnt that she came to this village after her marriage to a peon Ramlal Hansada who works in a government office as a peon. We came quite close to Sarala while working for the Mahila Samity. It is when we came close to her that we got to know of her independent views as to how she would like to organise the Samity. We asked her "Don't you like the way you work in the Samity?" She said she would like greater freedom.

One day Sarala came to our room and we spent about two hours talking with her and learnt about her background. She was born in Bihar. Her father had many children. Even though she wanted to study her father could not meet the cost. When she was a little older she studied upto 9th class on her own initiative. Sarala is of Santhal community, aged about forty. At that time for a Santhal girl this much of education was considered quite high. Therefore many opporutnities were opened for her. One of which was training in 'Adult education'. She also had a course on Bible because her father was a Christian.

She had been doing social work from that time and she enjoys doing it. During her social work she met Ramlal and later they got married. According to Sarala this marriage has been her biggest mistake because Ramlal is the nephew of Babulal and is a tool in his hand. Ramlal has no will of his own and Babulal directs him. Ramlal does whatever Babulal tells him to do and Sarala has to do whatever Ramlal tells her to do.

There are no Mahali women in the Samity. Babulal does not want them in the society because he does not want them to learn anything and be enlightened. All this bothers Sarala.

She told us that she would like to be independent as we were but that she was completely shackled. She said she was also a tool of her husband. We come to know from her that she was afraid that if she does not do as the husband tells her to do he may marry again. Polygamy is quite frequent amongst tribals and she is not a good looking woman. Therefore she feels obliged to do whatever Ramlal wants her to do. For instance, the Mahila Samity hardly does any work but they have got a sewing machine and some money by giving false reports.

We felt that women of her type are so unhappy because they are unaware of their own independent views and are unable to protest against injustice even when they are aware. Because they would have to tolerate their husbands' wrath. Further, if they are driven out of home they would have no means of livelihood. All adivasi women, for that matter, many uneducated village women are afraid of this.

Sarala used to say, "If I were as educated and courageous as you are I would have left this place and would have worked according to the dictates of my conscience".

When we asked her about the Mahali women, she said, How can they participate in Mahila Samity ? They are a unhappy lot. Any spare time they get they make baskets to make both ends meet. Please do something for them".

In the village there are many such women, who due to lack of education, have to depend on others and spend their lives pleasing others. Therefore through our work we will continue to educate them as we are doing.

PURI TEAM REPORT

From January 19 to February 2, 1977

Rabinarayan Dash

Haldar Samal

Kalandi Charan Nayak

Devendra Das

Farmer Service Society a general view :-

Saraspur F.S.S.

Names : Saraspur

Malina

Jaspur

Head Officer : Satkha a centre place of the  
area of operation.

Branch Officer : 1) Saraspur

2) Malina

3) Jaspur

Population : 13,393

Members : 1) Past :- 839

2) Present :- 1094

Area of operation :- 65 Square Kilometres.

Approximate Percentage of farmers : -

1) Small 40%

2) Marginal 40%

3) Middle Class 15%

4) Landless 5%

BRIEF HISTORY :

Jaspur and Saraspur Society were established in 1956 and 1957 respectively. Saraspur Co-operative Society was the best society in 1972 in Orissa. It was divided into two parts :-

- 1) Nalina society and
- 2) Saraspur society.

This place is famous for potato cultivation.

A potato case was very interesting. At the time of potato cultivation, while the people were in great need of potato seeds and facing much trouble, they were bringing those seeds from the society. But it hampered the work of the businessmen who were bringing potato seeds in plenty but were creating an artificial scarcity by hoarding and selling at a high rate. So the Society took the initiative to bring potato seeds from Simla and sold it at the correct rate. So the businessmen could not get any profit. They bribed the railway departments and were able to send those wagons to Hyderabad, etc. So the farmer could not get seeds in time and they became angry with the society. Again the wagons were coming to the said station after a long time in a rotten condition. Since they were hard pressed by time they were bound to procure the seeds from the businessmen.

At the same time there was a system of co-operative "Unlimited liability" prevailing. Twelve members of a village called "Chanhara" had taken loan from the society on the basis of group loan. Nine of them had paid but three could not repay. So the society auctioned all the properties of those 12 persons. Till now in that village as well as nearby areas there is a great fear of the society. So the team is facing difficulty in rooting out fear in the mind of these people. However Saraspur Co-operative Society has not faced those sort of difficulties and had progressed a lot. On 14th October, 1976 the three societies merged into Farmer Service Society. And now it has the name Saraspur F.S.S.

OTHER INSTITUTIONS :

There is a cold storage at Satkha, O.U.A.T. has appointed Mr. Asheshwar Mahapatra as Agriculture Field Agent to accelerate modern techniques in agriculture. Some Agriculture research fellows, with the collaboration of the Gramya Bank, will cultivate about fifty acres of high yielding variety paddy with the help of nearly 50 small farmers. So work will be started after a meeting which is going to held on 11th February '77 with the attendance of the Chairman of the Gramya Bank and other agriculturists. Here people are not idle. As they are busy in harvesting different crops from their lands. By the way their standard of living is increasing by the help of the new FSS. People are trying to get more and more from their lands.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE VILLAGES :

In Saraspur, people are conscious of the function of the Society. They are taking loan and utilising it in a proper manner.

In Nalina, and Jaspur people are not so conscious of the society but are afraid of it, whether it will be like the previous society as they have heard. Upto the present moment, we have finished the preliminary survey of 26 Hamlets i.e. 14 villages of Saraspur G.P. Now we are surveying the Jaspur G.P.

MEETING :

After a preliminary survey of those villages our team has a clear cut idea about those villages. Then the team decided in which villages the meeting should be taken first. Taking the following aspects into consideration the team suggested village Balapur.

WHY WE SELECT ?

- 1) More backward
- 2) Pessimistic

The question may arise why pessimistic ?

When we contacted them most of the villagers said these things cannot be done and also that it was not possible there. In addition to it they are more fatalistic. Because people say if God will not give then there is nobody to give. We saw, though the villagers are living beside the road, they are living like frogs in the well. This village near the roadside, according to our team should have been enlightened as it is by the roadside. But it is not so. The next point is that the Sarpanch, the Secretary and other officials like V.L.W. have tried to explain to them how to live a better life, but they failed. So, for the above reasons we selected this village first.

HOW WE CONDUCT :

Before conducting the meeting our team decided how to go about it, because this is the first meeting in that area. The team decided that we should have to leave it to the people, they will discuss the matter but we should only guide them. This is what was decided by our team. Evening came. Our team went to that place. But it is a matter of great regret that there was nobody. Going into depth in this matter, we came to know there were strained relations among the villagers. Still we were able to organize a meeting in that village. People came. At first we had a homely talk with them. Then we came to the cause of their previous quarrel.

CAUSE :

Two years ago there was a village common fund feast named "Astam Prahari". But when they were taking their meals together a dog passed through them. A man was in charge of not allowing the dogs to enter. But there was some defects in performing the duty. So the dog entered. That man with a stick in his hand followed the dog. But a young man in order to check the dog offered his meal so as to not disturb the others. Some people left their place by saying, "Dog is taking meal with us? What do you think? What have you done? Whether it is a way of association or what? These words lead to a conflict among them. Then there was quarreling and threats of beating from both sides. However, after sometime the situation became cool. Then the Grama Seva was summoned to the said dispute. Some of the people were penalized from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 300/-. But one of them i.e. Shri Krishna Mudul disobeyed them because he was not given justice.

When we sat together this discussion was going on. We had a fine conversation with them. How charming and beautiful the discussions were. Lastly the villagers agreed to decide their case. They first tried their best to settle the dispute again, but no one was agreeable. Finally the villagers left the case of that man to decide. Before deciding the case K Mudul asked the question **in order to get the truth from the people**. His question was "Did I or Devkanth Muduli first raise the stick to beat"? Answering his question one of the villager said that, "Not Devkanth, you raised the stick first", then that man stood up and said that after two years he got the truth. "So long you were telling lies. Now I request all of you to take me to your lap" People agreed. The dispute was solved and we were happy. In this context we feel that sometimes the individual is right and group is wrong. That day people requested us to have a meeting with them on the next day. Then having a "Kirtan" with them we finished the meeting. The "Kirtan" was stopped two years ago due to this conflict.

The next day we went to conduct the meeting, since our main object was not fulfilled in the first meetings, and the people had requested us to conduct another meeting. This time we had taken the secretary of the FSS with us. We questioned them "What do you understand about the society"? After much discussion among themselves we got the feeling that by society they meant a loan giving institution. So meanwhile they were becoming impatient to find out how they can get loans. However, we did not tell them first how they can get loans. We again gave them some guide line to think about what they understand about society. But they were hesitating too much to think anything. They even told us, "You tell what you want to tell". We did not tell anything, but we were patient and tried to extract the meaning of the society from them. Lastly they said that if they are united they can also form a society. They realized that the society is not a big Mahajan only giving loans and taking interest. It is like their Kothoghara, which more or less acts like a society. Then they gave their consent to be the members of the new FSS and asked us the process by which they could become members. We told them, and they gave us a date on which they will register their names as members.

The next day we had a meeting in village Grampur. The same village where in the past 12 members had taken loan from the Co-operative Society and whose properties had been sold by auction. In this village at 3 O'clock on 31st January 1977 we told them to sit in the meeting. Two or three young boys advised us to shift the meeting to some other day as they were going to attend the Astam Prahari in Jaspur Panchayat. But we told them that at night we would sit with the aged persons and they agreed. But when in the evening we went there we found

that they were not ready to sit in the meeting. The fact was that there also was a conflict and the villagers had been divided into two groups. So they did not want to sit together. After much insistence we were able to call meeting with thirteen villagers whereas the houses are twenty-eight. In the meeting we had decided not to go through their conflicts so soon. So we discussed other things. Here we marked that the people were very proud and also rigid with their own views. We even marked a person dominating us while he was talking. He did not give us a chance to talk. He is the leader in one group, and involved in politics as he was ex-ward member of his area. However, after two hours we finished the meeting, asked them whether we would have another meeting. They suggested that we must come after 8 days.



For the meeting the subject matter was :

- a) Present financial condition of society.
- b) How to improve society in future.

The society consists of 61 members. There is a pond whose area is 64 acres. And its name is Gusana. In the rainy season a large amount of water enters the pond. Some small fishes also enters this. The fishermen's society catches fish throughout the year and sells it in the local market. By doing this they maintain their family with great difficulty. They said, if the government will improve this pond, and cultivate fishes scientifically through the society, they would be happy. The third meeting was at Larpara. But the villagers informed us, that the meeting would not be possible due to a marriage festival.

For the fourth meeting in Golpara there were maximum people, most of them rich. So the discussion was in different way. They said all the problem will be solved if we arrange deep tube well or cluster shallow.

## 2. PROBLEMS IN VILLAGE :

### About the pond :-

Balpur fisherman Co-operative Society consists of sixty two members. One night they called a meeting in our presence.

From their discussion, we came to know about the pond. Its area is about 64 acres.

Local Raj Kishan Babu and a Muslim of Bangladesh occupied it. The Muslim occupies 17 acres and the other part is occupied by Raj Kishan babu. But in 1971, in Julka front period, the pond was declared as vested, and Balpur FCS began to use it without any rent.

Next day, we went to Puraba Malikapur village which is situated just on the eastern side of that pond. Year ago, fifty families of that village would catch fish from that pond and sell it in the market. By doing that, they maintained their family. But after formation of LFCS, they do not get a chance to catch fish for sale. Sometimes, they get the chance to catch fish only for eating purposes. There was a fight between LFCS and Malikapur villagers to possess the pond. But till now LFCS possesses it.

Puraba Malikapur told us this, and want to join the LFCS, because they are poor and this is an earning for them. I asked them to think of other alternative by which they could maintain their family. But the question is - what work can they do ? We told them to think it over.

But we clearly know, that if it is possible to improve the pond all the fisherman both Balpur and Malikapur will easily maintain their families.

### 3. WHAT HAPPENED IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES

20th January to 7th February, we visited the villages. The team had decided to go to the BDO and JLRO.

At the BDO Office our questions were :

- 1) Sanction scheme of cluster shallow.
- 2) Resinking and repairing of tube-well and ring well.
- 3) To introduce the productive method in the Salkaspur Adult Mahila Education Centre
- 4) Marketing society and Co-operative Store.
- 5) Tank development scheme and fishery scheme.

He answered us one by one. There are two shallow well sanction in Numsira Anchal. But the work was not possible in Ladana Anchal due to shortage of fund. Due to shortage of fund, there is not possibility of quick resinking.

Depending upon the amount of sanction money, some work has been done in every Anchal. Repairing of tube wells and ring wells have been done in the Anchal office. It has been repaired from BDO office also. BDO was interested to use the productive method of Salkaspur Mahila education centre.

He says that you do something specially, I will see. About Marketing he says here is a marketing society in this Block but they do not deal with other things except paddy and jute. He has given a surety that if they make anything, he would try to see about the marketing.

We told that we will give him a list from among them, then all of us will think about the problem of Marketing. About fishery scheme and tank development scheme, he says that JLRO can help more than him.

According to his knowledge, he says that one tank development sanction comes in a year at the Block and it is utilised as if according to the advantage.

There is no government rule on vested pond lease for more than five years period. Fisherman society get preference but now the vested pond is cultivated by the government and also public. We went to the JLRO to know about some information. On 8th February, 1977, that is about :

- 1) Vested lands and ponds.
- 2) Distribution lands and lease method.
- 3) Total irrigated lands.
- 4) Mausacuri lands.
- 5) Total number of BFSF and MF.
- 6) What type of action can be taken from JLRO in which field he can take step.

KAPGARI TEAM REPORT

February 2, 1977

Kalyani Kandar

Ashraf Mohammad

Madan Chandra Khan

Gopal Gangopadhya

Swetashree Mukherjee

NAME OF THE VILLAGES :

Alaspur : Small and Marginal farmers and Agricultural landless labourers arranged a meeting. They are interested to form a society (Joint Farming). But their land has not yet been allocated to them. So they are not able to start their work. We met the JLRO and he told us that the land will be demarcated next week.

Banasur : Villagers are eager to dig a channel from the Kankabati project. They are also eager to form a society (Joint Farming) and a Mahila Samiti.

Berapur : Hindu and Muslim people have agreed to sit together with a view to solving their problems.

Barole : We arranged one meeting but we failed because of the "Jatta". They want to form a society.

Chanpara : The villagers have agreed to Co-operate with Beguri for a tube well. But Babu who is the leader of Beguri does not like this.

Kensuli : They have applied for vested land. Bara Dada who is the Anchal Pradhan, is behaving well with us and with the villagers. Their Bidi making and basket making are going on.

Kukuri : We shall have to re-organise it.

Ramgram : The Sabar (Lodha) people, who are known as criminal tribes of our so called modern society, want to do some thing. But their economic condition is in Zero position.

We are trying to introduce joint farming almost in all places.

February 16, 1977

1) Alaspur : At the 10.2.77 meeting the 9 landless persons agreed to form a society. That day it was also decided that they will collect one Rupee from each person and will start "BABUIROPE" making, And they would also divide their work according to their abilities, on paper. But at the end of the meeting we saw that Bijoy and some other persons have ill feelings on Lalaram because he applied for a cultivable vested land (it is not sure) leaving the other, who are now going to form the society.

So some persons are also afraid that Lalaram may betray them. Last of all we made them understand that they would start work on 15th February, but on 15th February we saw that they are not working.

2) Kensuli : Working well. They have tendency to depend on others, and are very weak in management. We are going to stay there for some days.

3) Banpur : On 8th February in Banpur, in the evening people were out of scence by drinking. We had to face a very difficult time and were anxious for our safety.

4) Ramgram : Pronoy Pal (PAD) visited Ramgram and agreed to reconstruct one well with a view to start his experiment for the LODHA people.

BOLANGIR TEAM REPORT

February 15, 1977

Rabindra Kumar Ray

Rama Chandra Dash

Sankarsana Hota

Jayanta Singh

We are covering the area under three Gram Panchayats from where we are starting work in a few villages. Mainly, we have selected eight villages for starting the work as these villages consist many artisans like weavers, pot makers, oilmen, bamboo works-man and small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The number of members we expect will be about one hundred. Afterwards we will expand it which will cover all the villages of the above mentioned Gram Panchayats.

APPROACH TO THE PROGRAMME :

BDO Koral helped us a lot in collection of necessary data relating to the society and the people and in selecting the place for us to stay. We also have approached the concerned primary society for collection of data regarding members and defaulters from each place covered by the society.

The society people respond with full sincerity as they have been instructed by the ARCS. We already mentioned about how we selected the place. Regarding the visit to the SDO. The reason we met him was to get permission to stay in the 'Revenue Rest Shed' but since it is given for use to the dept. people, we had to leave this place soon and to stay in the society building as per our discussions with the society president. The SDO though he was interested in this programme was fully in the dark about it.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE VILLAGES :

With the necessary data we started the work in the adjacent area covering eight villages. As formerly stated, the people of this area are mainly dependent on business other than agriculture as this area usually suffers from scanty rainfall and drought. Other kinds of livelihood depends on the collection of forest products like, 'Mahul' (Raw material for wine), Tamrin, 'Tola' (oilseed), fir and Timber wood. Mainly agricultural labourers are busy with the above work. Still from July to November they maintain a hard life during that period they get wages from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 2.00 which is also uncertain.

Those who are landowners produce two to three crops a year and get benefitted by the dug well, finance from the RRB and other commercial Banks. Paddy, Rashi (oil seed), mustard and grams are the main crops produced. Some families are more advanced in agriculture and they grow vegetables and tobacco in the kitchen garden.

There is an accountable difference between two kinds of families. Rich (Gontia) village leaders, socially belong to the richer section, Marwadis and Gujaratis, (the businessmen) and the poor, (S/C, S/T and OBC) more or less, nature is sustaining the later.

The villages are scattered here and there and rather isolated in the midst of forest and mountains.

DISCUSSIONS WITH INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND METHODS APPLIED FOR IT :

First we started work by meeting individuals in different villages and kept ourselves informed about the odds and evens of the villages. This also helped us to know the different working groups whom we wished to meet and talk in groups,

and in combining individual views to get a general view on the village and on groups.

Similarly we located the right person of the group and assigned him with the task of organising group meetings among the people of equal interest i.e. the group to which he belongs. It became a successful process of receiving quick response and as per instance, for most of the group meetings we had to attend them on people's call. So actually acute need has motivated them to take such an immediate step as this. Practically we have avoided sitting with the groups having diversified interests in the beginning. From that we have experienced we save a lot of time and feeling of making individual group convinced about certain point. So we are sitting with them separately. Some times the meeting becomes an automatic gathering of persons from different groups and we tackle them likewise.

Mostly we are convincing the landless and marginal farmers to work Co-operatively and they seem to accept it. Another encouraging factor is that the 'Zagir land owners' have got their land in one place and it is easy for them to organise together for joint farming. They understand it.

#### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS :

In all the villages inclination towards the programme is fair. As it is seen more needy people inquire more about the scheme. Persons from rich families are not interested in this programme as they notice we are always mixing with poorer section. So this system is quite favourable for us to work.

Though the programme is a new one and the people are just being convinced about it, they bestow full faith on us. Hence they need the immediate operation of the scheme. They are free and fearless which is due to their naivety and real understanding of their need. It is reported that they are of such nature not only before us but also with other government officials. In spite of being poor, they are very bold towards the persons who are rearily exploiting them in the form of receipt of more interest on loan, dictating the price both for wages and for procurement of forest products. They can even oppose society defaulters and disturbing elements from coming into the FSS as members.

Here in the villages, local self government functions, the system of single leadership still prevails though not so strongly. The leader in 'GAANTIA' who is a leader by and from the period of RAJA and MAHAJAN's and still enjoying honour from generation to generation.

Marwadis and Gujaraties, so called 'MAHAJANS' are staying in central villages and controlling the rural credit system and the whole business system, procurement and sales.

The credit system of the primary society of this area supports the upper class people as 75% of the members are more from this group. So this is also an interesting reason in our attempt, participation of poor people will be more as they do not belong to the defaulter's group.

Concerning the reasons why the society has more defaulters. The following trends are not worthy.

- 1) Rich people are members of the society do not pay voluntarily.
- 2) Some follow the others (If some persons do not pay others don't)
- 3) Some pay late intentionally for they collect the information about the societies collection if it meets the targets without his payment.
- 4) Some of them also do not pay as they know the collection amount is not fair to receive further loan from the DCB
- 5) Some members who misutilised money do not generate any source of repayment.
- 6) Sometimes it is seen that the concerned credit sources like primary societies and RRB show their slackness in collection of dues. So the people who after waiting for the day fixed for collection spend away that amount and can not pay when they are aksed. For example, the weavers of 'Lula Sanga' were given a date for payment of instalments. They waited for the day and nobody turned up. When after a week the RRB men came and asked for the instalment 50% of the loanees could not pay as they had already spent that amount.

Here the unauthorised credit system of the village is very unfair where the people take loan @ 12% but it is more where kind is given as loan.

DIFFICULTIES :

The first difficulty is the coverage of area is not quick and upto the mark due to lack of communication facilities for villages are normally four to five kilometres distance from one another. All the way and time we have to contact different places on foot which is practically time consuming.

As per the choice of the landless persons goatery should be a subsidiary business for them and we find, it is a beneficial business in this area. But one problem is about the purchase of goats there is no private body within this area. So RRB finance for individual goat now stopped. So for this we can not assure the people unless we get confirmation about that.

BOLANGIR REPORT

Ashok Kumar Maiti

Our Spearhead Team consisting of Sankarsana Hota, Rama Chandra Das, Jayanta Kumar Singh and Rabindra Kumar Roy are working in the area of the RRB. Being advised by the Chairman of the bank, our team came to Koral branch area. The BDO, Koral block suggested that the team should work with a cluster of villages combining Singpur village (Singpur Gram Panchayat). They came to Singpur on 23.1.77.

Koral block has a population 62,907 and our team is operating with 29 villages of three Gram Panchayats and a population of 12,206. Of this 12,206 the tribal population is 4074 and S/C people are 1401 in number.

Of 8 villages surveyed upto now, the number of small farmer families in 169 (below 2 Hectares and more than one Hectare) and marginal farmer families are 183 (below one Hectare). About 50% are landless families who are either artisan or agri-labourers.

The quality of land possessed by these farmers is bad. Low (good variety) lands are owned by big farmers. Although the land ceiling is 10 standard acres for families with dependents between 10 to 18, the persons possessing 5 acres are to go without food for 6 months. (The BDO told me that the average production of paddy per acre is 5 to 8 quintals in the block). These are mostly single crop paddy fields and grams are produced in low land after harvesting paddy. There is scanty rainfall in the area with no viable irrigation project (only two blocks of Bolangir District get Hirakud Dam water supply). I visited the team on 17th, 18th, and 19th February, 1977.

At Lula Sanga village the population is 1200. The weavers constitute 50 families and potters 10 families. 23 small farmers, 31 marginal farmers and 60 agriculture labourers are also there. Our team stays here.

Our team's area of operation for the present is, Juria, Singpur Badal, Gaonpur, Gaulipur, Gurapara of Lula Sanga Panchayat, Hiri from Bagpur G.P. and Damipal from Damipal Panchayat.

The team organised 2 to 3 group meetings a day.

There are 7 Service Cooperative Societies (SCSs) in the block, of which one is at Lula Sanga. Here the SCSs have been defunct for years together.

The people's attitude :-

This is the most encouraging feature here. They are very free, frank and innocent. Theft and cheating is less frequent here. They understand their problem and are inclined to opt for our programme. The idea of Cooperation and mutual help is also there, as a skilled weaver without having a weaving machine is working with a neighbour who keeps a little margin after payment of wages to the skilled weaver. But most of the families have weaving machines and the number of machines may be 100.

The people intend to remain credit-worthy although they are sometimes led to be defaulters due to the Calloumen of the government offices or the bankers who do not collect the repayment in time.

The inaccessability of the area is another reason for their being less, aware of bank or any other institution-credit. Our team which works in 8 villages has to cover an area with a radius of 5 kms. It is a hilly area and there are fair-weather roads only.

The main problem with the weavers is that they do not get thread at a reasonable price and are dependent on Mahajans (Sahukars) to whom they are forced to sell the saris they weave - their main produce at a comparatively low price. As there is no spinning centre they do not produce thread either nor grow cotton. So the most efficient skilled weavers family earn Rs. 10/- a day except in the rainy days.

A potter's family earns Rs. 12/- a day when the weather is fair. The urge of cooperation is absent among potters. I think if any enthusiast amongst them be provided with a machine wheel for better production, his success-demand ratio may educate the rest. Some of them possess the skill of artisans, so they may be helped to be artisans.

The agricultural labourers get Rs. 1.50 or Rs. 2.00 when they get work. They collect Mahua-flowers and wood from the forest. Most of them, talk of having goateries and small business. They are willing to join the FSS and they can improve their lot if they are financed for their goatery or business. But goats are from outside and are not available here. These can be procured.

The problem of cultivation can be successfully dealt with if the water supply is there. Marginal farmers may be helped by more dug-wells as the level of water is satisfactory.

Those who were allotted Jagirs (cultivable land distributed to landless people) may be brought under a cooperative production system as seven or eight people got land in one spot.

There are mustard, toto(Mahua), rashi(Til), ground-nut and neem and a few other oilseeds grown here. Mahajans take the toto and mustard. If oil is produced here with least possible investments, the collectors and producers of these seeds are not available here. This also should be taken note of.

After the campaign started about 100 persons from seven villages approached our team for membership of FSS. The team is trying to develop a local leadership to organise the people.

The FSS may be started now and our team proposes to enquire into the formalities of registering the FSS in the first week of March '77. The government officials, ARCS, RRB and Handicraft Board will be approached for this.

Our team is happy with its work and the team spirit is also alive.

The team contacted the bamboo-workers of Damipali and those workers can come to the FSS. The procurement of bamboo from the bamboo shrubs based near the paper mills is made by them by stealing. They want a licence to get bamboos and the officials may be approached to find out if this is possible.

Persons who cultivate rented land for a year also want that the FSS should give them loan to rent some land. But I think that may not be possible under the existing landlaws.

BIHAR TEAM REPORT

February 16, 1977

Narendra Kumar Mishra

Shyamananda Jha

Lallan Ojha

Raj Kumar Roy

Braj Kishore Bimal

The place we are working in is a flood-hit area. The flood starts rising from June itself. Hence we must form FSS before this, otherwise communications will be broken and it would be difficult to work.

First of all we tried to collect all the information regarding this area. We tried to see what the picture of the society is like after reorganisation. The Bihar government has merged societies and formed one society. The new society will cover a population of 10,000 persons and crop area of 2 thousand hectares. The area of operation of the FSS is also similar to this. We have taken this restructured area and started work.

Regarding our work we met the P.O. and C.O. and explained our work to them. We have taken this Block's map from the C.O. and also asked him about the 'Halka' and panchayat.

We have noticed that there are 10 halkas in this block. In each halka there are 2 panchayats. At the moment there are 24 MPCs but after reorganisation there will be only 9 MPCs whose area of operation will have 10 thousand to 12 thousand population and 2 thousand hectares crop area.

After collecting all such information we have decided to work halka-wise, i.e. work in the area of operation of the new society. We tried to find out which halkas are suitable to start FSS in. For this we visited and studied some 8 halkas out of which 3 halkas are most suitable for FSS. Out of these 3 we find that halka No. 8 is most suitable so we have given it first

priority. In this halka there are 2 panchayats - Madhupur and Rajapur. The population is 9226 and crop area 1759 hectares. There are mostly small people in this area. Small and marginal farmers and landless labourers are in large number in this area.

After doing all this we met the Chairman to discuss with him our findings after which we arrived at the decision that we should start work in this area.

We are now trying to hold meetings with the people.

JAIPUR TEAM REPORT\*

17.2.77 to 4.3.77.

Kamlesh Yadav

Shyam Narain Khichi

Yagnadata Sharma

Rameshwarlal Verma

17.2.77

Today we sent one of our team members to the Chitapur Co-operative Society to call the Manager so that Banaskantha Society (which is not functioning since 1969 and at present which has been merged with the Chitapur Society) records may be obtained. The other three members went to Banaskantha; they met the Sarpanch and requested him to arrange a general meeting, which he ignored. Until 8 p.m. no arrangement was made. At 9 p.m. we requested 4-5 villagers, "Would you please manage to provide light in the hall so that we can have a meeting?" They made complete arrangements. The meeting started at 9.30 and continued for an hour. The main purpose of the meeting was to know about the merger of the Banaskantha Co-operative Society in Chitapur Co-operative Society and what they want to do about it. Every one with one voice objected to the merger of five villages in Banaskantha with Chitapur Co-operative Society which is far away and not convenient for them. But we asked them "Anyway, all the papers for merging the society with Chitapur are ready as per government order; instead of asking for a separate society, why cannot we be together with Chitapur and hand over all the present records to Chitapur Co-operative Society as early as possible so that we can start our work?" So they agreed to handover the papers. The meeting was attended by 50 people, in which 15 marginal farmers and small farmers were included. After the meeting we paid money to the Shop-keeper and arranged for dinner. We stayed with an educated teacher that night. The Sarpanch did not make any arrangement and he remained

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\* Prof B M Ghiara's comments to the group are given in brackets in this report.

absent from the meeting. Afterwards we came to know that the complete records of the Co-operative Society are with him and he is reluctant to give those records and that is why he was avoiding us.

18.2.77

In the morning we went to the Sarpanch and requested him to give the records but for two hours he was avoiding it and troubling us. The Manager of Chitapur Society lost hopes but we were firm on our views. At last by about 10 a.m. after utilising all the tactics we could, we were successful in getting the old records and handed them over to the Manager. We returned to Mainpur by the 11:00 noon bus. We finished our lunch and by that time, one of our Bombay colleagues visited us along with the RRB Chairman. From evening until 2 a.m. in the night we were discussing about the past work done and the future work to be taken, planning, etc. with Ghiara. Then it was decided that instead of moving about in other villages, we should take up the work in those villages, which are adopted by the banks and further we must encourage the banks to adopt more villages.

(When I was with you on 18th February, we discussed about your experience in Banaskantha. Our conclusion was this: your only goal was to see that records of the old society were handed over to Chitapur Society's Secretary. In this process, you made the local people angry.

How do you expect them to help you or take interest in you? They feel that you only came to take away the records! To them, taking away the records of the old society means the final seal on the chance of having their own society. What lessons do we learn from this? The group should think about this and send us a note.

- 1) What was your goal ? Was it a correct goal ?
- 2) Did you listen to all that people had to say ?
- 3) Why **did** you expect the Sarpanch to arrange the meeting ?
- 4) Why did the people not take interest in you ?
- 5) This was an old society closed in 1969. Don't you think that you went more like government inspectors to take charge of record ? Did you meet the really poor and small people, listen to them and give them any hope ?
- 6) Will you please the Bank or government officials at the cost of getting completely misunderstood by and getting out of from the people ?
- 7) Did you check whether this society falls in Amer Block where the government wants to give societies to the RRB ?

Do not send your answers point by point. The points are only examples. Sit together for 2 days, think carefully : what was the experience ?

Why had you gone ?

What did you plan ?

and what do you and all the teams learn from this. Search your hearts : what is really important to us ? Officials, papers or people that we are to serve.

- What do the people need ?
- What can they do about it together : how to create their desire ?
- How can they get extra help from the Bank or Society to make them **stranger** as a group ? )

19.2.77

Today we revised the data and the list of the villages adopted by the banks which we had with us. And we discussed our future programmes amongst our team members.

20.2.77

Today being Sunday we took a holiday.

21.2.77

Our team met the branch manager of the Bank and discussed about the adopted villages and got detailed information fixed deposit etc. and what the interest would be at different times and on different amounts.

We decided to visit some villages along with the bankers and planned the future weekly programmes accordingly.

22.2.77

We visited Chitapur village along with the bankers for follow-up work. We saw how people utilised their loans for the work they had promised, such as, tea stall, barber's shop, sweetmeat shop, grocery, cloth shop etc. small shops were given the bank's name plate as they were given loan by bank and they were given demand notices for the instalments and overdue instalment. Nearly 19 people were issued demand notices.

One case was as follows : The person got a loan to buy a buffalo. The buffalo's calf died so he sold the buffalo and uptill now he has not purchased another buffalo. We told him that he should buy the buffalo or deposit the money in the bank.

We went on cycle from Chitapur to Shalपुरa, Tajपुरa on the above said work. Till 6 p.m. in the evening we were working in the Shalपुरa area. We have noticed that the people who already possess one or two buffalos have taken loan for purchasing buffalos and that there are some people who are well to do and have still taken a loan. In this village and Isfara and Ranjpur villages of Jalpur, people got loans through the leaders of these villages who got bank loans. At 7 we got a truck which was going to Chitapur we reached Mainpur by 8.30 p.m.

(Regarding 22.2.77 : Be clear why we go with Branch Manager, We are not going as his assistants. We want to tell people that here is the RRB, with duty to serve the small people. We want to know who has got money and how they are using it. Why do we want to know this ? Because, this helps us to know in detail people's needs, fears, weaknesses and strengths. Then, around each activity we try to build up groups of poor people who will help and control each other. Once again, loan is a 'Sadhan'. It helps to start new activity. But many new activities can be started without loan. But side by side, we have to help people.

to remove feeling of hopelessness,  
to think of their problems and reasons  
to decide what they should do together  
and on what things they will get help from  
bank and government).

At 9 p.m. we attended "Navayuvak Mangal Dal" which was fixed on 18.2.77. In this meeting they decided that on 24.2.77 a meeting will be conducted to select the working committee members of Navayuvak Mangal Dal. And it was decided that Navayuvak Mangal Dal will require some funds initially which will be collected from

the individual members. The main work of this organisation will be the progress of the villagers. Progress means social and economic growth. Health of the villagers.

(Be careful. They have started worrying about money. Some will lose interest because they will have to pay something. Some will never come because they have no money. You do not want a Srimant Yuvak Mandal. First try to build up a strong programme of work - what they can do and what the village and yuvaks need. Discuss - do not only give your views. Make them think. Then talk of things that they need - also, if money is not there, let us see how we can get things. The danger is this :

They will say money first then Phavra and Ghamela for cleaning street - or volley ball for playing or Newspaper and Books.

We will say, let us decide and start :

Get Ghamela from home, play Kabbadi, exchange or read together newspaper/old books.

Then 'Sadhan' will come.)

23.2.77

As per schedule we passed through Kandar while going to attend the village meeting at Sirohai. But when we reached Sirohai area which is divided into 7 divisions after crossing 3-4 mountain ranges up and down we came to know that there was no meeting. The meeting which was supposed to be held there was a political one and that too was cancelled and it was held at Jaipur. The social worker at our place informed us that there is a meeting at Sirohai. We thought since this village is adopted by the bank we should take the advantage of this meeting. We had the list of small and marginal farmers of this area. On this basis we went in twos and started meeting people in group of 6-7. We took their advice on forming the society again. We came to know that there are only 2-3 members of the

old society. In this village they have a programme for compost fertilizer. People are not aware of utilizing the developed fertilizer. This area is surrounded by mountains and the soil is very good for farming and that is why they get crops without using fertilizer.

At 5 we returned to Kandara. There one Shri Suresh had opened a recurring deposit scheme. The Sarpanch had gone to Jaipur for elections. Therefore the social worker and villagers said, "You arrange a meeting only on the 25.2.77". We also thought that it is not good to stay in the village at night and returned to Mainpur by 7. Today two active members of Yuva Mangal Dal opened their account under small savings scheme in the bank.

(You will have to go and stay there 5 to 7 days every month - first for knowing the people, their strong points and their needs. Then their problems. Then making them work on one or two most urgent problems. Do not be happy by opening a few accounts).

24.2.77

Today we prepared a group report. In the morning we met in small groups the small farmers of Mainpur to prepare a credit plan. We had a talk with the social worker for the demonstration of the new crop. We had a talk with the farmers for testing the soil. In this respect we had a discussion with the Manager. He was also of the same opinion. He told us that if 100 to 150 people are willing to get their field soil tested we can make arrangement to get the mobile soil testing van to the village. At present we have selected Mainpur and Kandara for our project. Kampura, Chandal and Chitapur regarding these three village we have changed our mind.

Do your best to get the mobile ( कलता फिस्ता ) van.  
After the test, make sure that each farmer understands how much  
of which fertilizer when.

We are proud of your hard work. But more thinking  
and discussion is necessary in the group:

What to do ?

and after doing, what are we achieving ?

Every item/trip is to be tested.

Are people coming together regularly ?

Are people feeling less helpless ?

Are people learning and trying out new things ?

Are we helping the poor or the rich - the people  
or the RRB only ? )

25.2.77

This morning we reached Kandar village and attended the  
Panchayat meeting about which we had prior information. The meeting  
was attended not only by the villagers but also by the people from  
nearby villages. We explained about agriculture, and Co-operative  
societies. We formed groups of five-five people and held discussions.  
On the same day we had a talk about small savings scheme and some  
of them even opened their accounts. A total of Rs. 75/- was collected  
in the Small Savings Scheme. Apart from this we prepared a list of  
members from the Co-operative Society's register and we got "no due"  
certificate ready from the Sarpanch and Gramsevak respectively for  
2 small farmers.

26.2.77

Today we opened a bank account with the collected money at Kandar Bank and got the pass books. After this we four divided into 2 teams and visited Sthahim village to meet Beggars and Harijans and we explained to them about the bank's organization and it's work in detail. Beggars are the people who mostly take loans. We personally saw that the raw material was purchased with the loan money. Here another group in Mainpur visited Sher Sinha's well and his field and saw how the modern system operates. Shet Sinha is planning to put a water pipe line on his land. Since this was a new job undertaken by the farmer we took interest and started enquiring about his plan. We came to know that his land is sandy and because of it wastage of water was more and therefore the pipe was a necessity.

We are thinking of helping Sher Sinha to get the bank loan to put the pipe line, which can be extended to the nearby fields which belong to Harijans. These Harijans own 2 or 3 acres of land but they do not have the equipment for irrigation. But the well has got enough water and therefore it will be easy to supply water through a pipe.

27.2.77

Today is Sunday. We prepared the data of Mainpur. The first copy of the data was a rough work; we made a fair copy. Then we persuaded the people from Mainpur to open an account in the bank.

28.2.77

Today we went to Jaipur. There, we first met the RRB Chairman. We took all the information about the new rules and regulations about the RRB from him. We requested him to finance Kandar and Chitapur Society. He told us, "At present we will finance Amer Block but we can not take any concrete step at the moment. Therefore we will write to the Assistant Registrar and Registrar, respectively. We can think about financing after receiving a letter from him. Because if we finance immediately what about overdues and bad debts? If the RRB starts working at a loss in the initial stage itself what will be the fate of RRB at the end? Therefore after discussing at both ends can I tell you?" He also told us that he will write to the Senior Officer (Cooperative) saying that at present Kandar and Chitapur Society should be financed fully so that FSS can be financed indirectly.

(Why have we taken up work of opening new accounts of RRB or work of new loans from RRB to small people? We are not extra staff of RRB. We have taken this work, to know and meet the people and their village. We want the poor to get together for joint activity to improve their income and employment. We do not want to help them individually. We want Bank and Society to encourage group activity. People are not just 'deposit accounts' or 'borrowers'. We want people to learn how to work together and improve their condition. So, helping RRB to get new accounts or give new loans is our means ('Sadhan'), not our goal. We do this, because we want poor people to get together for useful purposes, to earn more, get work and to reduce their poverty by working jointly. For this purpose, we want Bank, Co-operative Department etc. to help the people in groups. If we only go on giving individual loans and opening individual accounts, no problem will be solved. That is why the rural poor have to be helped to decide what to produce, how

can they reduce cost by helping each other, how can they earn more by selling things jointly).

The same day at approximately 12 O'clock we went out in batches of two. Ham Sathi went to the Government press and Ham Samuha went to the head Officer. We did not get the map and census book in the government press. We told that the road map of Jaipur is available in the PWD. In the PWD we get the Chief Engineer, who had already given instructions to get the map. However we did not get the map as they were not readily available, but Chief Engineer issued instructions to prepare one which they told us would be available the next day between 10-12 a.m. After this we all assembled at the place of the General Manager, District Central Co-operative Bank. There we had a discussion about the FSS and Co-operative Society. When we asked about data he told us that since the elections we are on, the managers and other were busy with other work, so it would be difficult to get the data on the Co-operative society. Therefore, after March it would be possible to start our work smoothly. He promised us that he would send one Loan Inspector to Mainpur from Amer Block, to get all the details. On the 2-3-77 evening, at 6 p.m. the Loan Inspector reached Mainpur. We spent the night in Jaipur. Kamlesh fell sick that night and had temperature and a headache so in the morning at 9 a.m. we returned to Mainpur by 12 a.m.

1-3-77

One of our colleagues, Shri Varmaji, went to the PWD, Jaipur to collect the map and returned at 3 p.m. After returning to we made arrangements for Kamlesh's treatment but she became more ill. We had a discussion on crop loan with the Branch Manager and came to a conclusion that the work can be started from 16.4.77. Two accounts were opened. We had a 3 hour talk with the social worker. We spoke about the weather and about the

inspection of the soil of small farmers field etc. and decided the job may be started by April. We have not yet decided about crop loan for that we have to get all the details from the farmers.

### 2.3.77

Today the Loan Inspector was to visit as per the promise given by the General Manager. The Inspector came late in the evening at about 5.15. While waiting for the Loan Inspector we discussed about a meeting of Yuva Vikas Dal which is to be held on the 3.3.77. Yuva Vikas Dal is already organised. On the 3.3.77 all working committee members were to be detailed about the important topics. From 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. we had that night talk with the Loan Inspector. Kalesh is still not well. There is a little improvement but we have not given her any food. In the night at the meeting with the Loan Inspector we have decided that tomorrow i.e. the 3-3-77 morning we would go to village Kandar which is 3 km. from here by walk and get the information about the Kandar Society records from the secretary and then by 10'clock return and again to take a bus at 2.45 to go to Chitapur and meet the secretary to get all the information about that society.

### 3.3.77

Today we got up early and by 8.30 we asked our colleague Sharma to take care of Kamlesh and two of us went to Kandar along with the Loan Inspector. We reached Kandar by 9.15. One of the Janta Party candidates was to address the meeting. A huge crowd had gathered together but the topic was only election. At about 10 a.m. the Janta Party candidate arrived. His meeting got over at 11 a.m. and only after that could we talk about our work, and also distributed the 7 pass books. The secretary of the society met us but with lot of difficulty. We could not get the papers as they

were kept with other ministers and members of the society. We requested him to get the papers by 9.3.77. The Loan Inspector asked us to come to Kandar on 9.3.77. At about 12 noon we returned to our camp. After eating our lunch we started to Chitapur by 2.45 p.m. bus. There we met social worker Shri Hari Sinha and we had a talk on many subjects. We discussed in detail with the 10 farmers (land owners) regarding the reviving of the society. Important topics will be discussed on 11.3.77 at Amer BDO's office since all the social workers, secretaries, loan inspectors etc. will be attending this meeting. Today Kamlesh is better. She is improving. She is taking Ayurvedic medicine. Today from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. a Yuvak Vikas Dal meeting was organised. We could not discuss much in this meeting as all the members were not present.

#### 4.3.77

Today in the presence of all the members of the group the "Group Report" was written and the village Harijans and Beggars of the wards were informed about the Yuvak Vikas Dal. Nearly 10 people wished success to Y.V.D. Today Kamlesh is alright but she is still on diet.

In the evening we had a meeting of Yuva Vikas Dal and we decided that if the obstruction which is in the middle of the road is not removed by 7.3.77 Yuvak Vikas Dal will do that job by arranging sharm dan.

HOSHANGABAD TEAM REPORT\*

Munnalal Ahirwar                  Jambu Kumar Jain  
Pushpanchala Ahriwar          Harlal Meena

We are trying to form four groups, one each of rope makers, growers of water melon, growers of betle leaf and artisans making wooden furniture.

I ROPE MAKERS

We have made a group of four landless labourers in Koprokher for rope making. Each of them has got a loan of Rs. 200/- from the Regional Rural Bank; they are to repay the loans in 10 monthly instalments. The first instalment was due on 18th February and it has been repaid. The economics works out as follows :

<u>Item</u>	<u>Price</u>
i) Raw material - 1 cart load (2500 pulas) of munj grass	Rs. 250.00
ii) Hire charges for bullock cart	Rs. 20.00
iii) Despatch of bullock cart and tax	Rs. 20.00
iv) Loading & unloading	Rs. 5.00
v) Other expenses	Rs. 5.00
vi) Labour charge 50 man - days @ Rs. 4.00	Rs. 200.00
	<hr/>
	Rs. 500.00

Therefore with ten bundles "पुले" of raw material make 1 bundle of rope. 2500 pulas of raw material total production will be 250 bundles of rope. Each bundle has 150 feet of rope and is sold at Rs. 3/-.

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\* Prof. Ghiara's comments to the team are given in brackets in this report

Total production 250 bundles of rope at Rs. 3/- given an income of Rs. 750/-. The cost is Rs. 500/- including labour. The net surplus is Rs. 250/-.

(a. Four people - good to start with, No result unless it is a bigger group - 10-15-20-25 ?

b. Change the scheme : Money taken for purchase of materials should be repaid when 50 day's production is sold. Then they can borrow again. Fixing instalments for 10 months : no - in some months, they will produce or sell very little quantity. The scheme of repayment should suit borrowers' paying capacity (how much money he will have when).

c. Check all your calculations regarding costs of raw material, bullock cart charge, खानगी etc. once again. Also selling price. Do not go by flat rough figures. Season-wise, how cost of कुंज and selling price of rope changes (keep that range in mind). 50 days are required for production of rope from 2500 pulas. But a couple of days may be needed for getting raw material and then some days for selling the final product i.e. ropes. Complete cycle - from raw material to getting money for rope - 9 weeks. Then try to build up this picture : will they not sell week by week ?)

## II CULTIVATION OF WATER MELONS IN DANGRAVADI

We have organized a group of 10 people which includes small and marginal farmers and landless labourers, for cultivation of water melon on river banks. This is in village Marka, which is about 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> km. from Koprakher. The revenue department gives the permission to use the land in the dried up river bank, from December to February. Each of them has about 100 beds of water melon. They have taken a loan of Rs. 200/- each from the RRB which

they have to repay between April and June. This loan supplements their own resources. The economics are as follows :

i) Land permit fee	Rs. 10.00
ii) Natural fertilizer 50 cart loads	Rs. 500.00
iii) Chemical fertilizer 75 kg.	Rs. 150.00
iv) Insecticide	Rs. 40.00
v) He-buffalo for cartage	Rs. 250.00
Total	<u>Rs. 950.00</u>

Income : approximately 25 cartloads at Rs. 100/- per cart load :	Rs. 2,500.00
Resale of he-buffalo	Rs. 250.00
Total	<u>Rs. 2,750.00</u>

Net Profit :	Rs. 2,750.00
	<u>Rs. 950.00</u>
	<u>Rs. 1,800.00</u>

(Recheck costs and decide that Rs. 1,800/- surplus is for how many days work for how many people. We have to separate wages from profits. Clarify item regarding purchase and resale of he-buffalo. How many melons is one cart load ? Who buys them, where do they sell them ? How does the price change during the season ? Do you know details of the individuals who are in the group ? What is the scope for adding members to the group in the next season ? Can this be done in other villages. It is not enough that they get the loan. We need to know whether there is any scope for reducing costs, increasing production and increasing sales income by better selling arrangements. We also want to know whether poorer people can take up this scheme in the same or another area.

### III GROWERS OF BETEL LEAF

This is a group of 10 people at Udarpur which is 10 km. from Koprakher. Each of them have 20 beds of betel leaf. They have drawn a loan of Rs. 500/- each for cultivation expenses against a sanction of Rs. 1,000/- each from the bank. They have to repay the loan by monthly instalments between May and December. Formerly they used to borrow from Sowkars. They have long experience in growing betel leaf.

### IV FURNITURE MAKERS

This is a small group of 3 Harijans and a Rajput from village Bijambara. They have drawn a loan of Rs. 250/- each from the bank which they will repay in monthly instalments of Rs. 25/-.

### DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS

Within 6 weeks we have opened 112 deposit accounts in 15 villages, for the RRB. We have also helped 25 small people to getting loans from the RRB. We are now concentrating on intensive study of 3 villages as there is a concentration of artisans and labourers in this area. One of these villages will have a Regional Rural Bank Branch by the end of March. The opening date of the FSS is uncertain at the moment because the appointment of the Sanchalak is still to be done. We have also taken the list of defaulters of old societies in the same area and we want to see how they could be helped to be regular members of FSS. We are walking about 14 kms. everyday to keep in regular touch with the villages that are to be included in the FSS.

A BRIEF REPORT ON THE SPEARHEAD TEAM WORK  
DONE DURING THE FIELD TRAINING IN ASSAM  
TILL 30.1.1977

1. MORIGAON GROUP

We reached this place on 3rd October evening and spent the night at the Inspection Bungalow. Next day we went to the United Bank to which the Gaon Panchayat Samavay Samities (Cooperative Societies) where we would be working are attached, and introduced ourselves. From there we went to the villages and tried to introduce ourselves to the villagers as well as the officials connected with the Cooperative Societies. Though the villagers were pleased with the idea that somebody has come to help them, the officials of the Cooperative Society did not believe us. They told us that they had not received any official communication regarding our posting in the villages.

We explained to the villagers the aims and objectives of the Spearhead Team work. They thought that we had come to the villages with a bag full of money for distributing. When we clarified our position in this regard, most of them were disappointed and started saying that they do not need our help. Well, we were, to some extent, discouraged when we got this reaction. But we were happy that quite a few of them showed their willingness to work in a group to realize some socio-economic benefits.

In our area, some of the cooperative societies were not having the secretaries. In these societies the Chairman was acting as secretary-cum-Chairman. Further the managing committee consisted of only 6 elected members. Because of these reasons, the societies could not function properly and hence they were not in a position to help the villagers. It is only when the Cooperative department nominated the remaining 6 members, the society

started functioning (but still without the secretary). From whatever training we got, we could make out that these societies were not maintaining their books (such as land record register, membership books, etc) properly. When we tried to explain to them the correct method of maintaining the books, they did not like to get "training" from the "trainees". We had to swallow our pride, because we were thinking that people would accept good suggestions and ideas without any hesitation.

In our group there are two girls. When they expressed their desire to stay in the villages, the villagers (especially the womenfolk) discouraged them by saying that it would be dangerous to stay alone in the villages after sun set. Further some of our friends in the bank also said that they would not advise the girls to stay alone in the villages, at least in the initial stage. When the girls asked the villagers whether they have no girls living in the villages, they said that girls of the village staying in the villages alone with their parents and family was quite different from two girls of some other places staying in the villages without any other guardian. Now we are happy to say that the villagers, no more, resist the idea of the girls staying in their villages.

In one village we found that the government had distributed surplus land to the landless (one bigha each). We discussed with these farmers about starting some scheme for their economic uplift. This group of villagers are now working on their small dairy farm. We are regularly visiting this group to see how the group is progressing in their effort of running a farm. In another village we mobilized the local people to start a Gram Unnayan Samity (Village Uplift Society). This

Samity, after discussions among themselves, they started working on the construction of a village road and a school building in the village. Earlier, the boys and girls of this village were going to another village for their primary education. The school building and the road have made the villagers feel that they have accomplished something. In this village sometime back a house was burnt because of accidental fire. We posed the villager the problem of the poor victim. Now they have agreed to help him in the construction of new house. We are really happy to say that they have already constructed a new house.

In another neighbouring village, there existed a milk cooperative society. But because of lack of sufficient funds, it was not functioning properly. When we went to the village we came to know that a middleman was supplying the funds to this society. In a group meeting the villagers expressed their desire to get out of the clutches of the middleman; but were not knowing how. We proposed the idea of bank finance. Now the group is approaching the bank for funds (we are happy to say that the bank has agreed to help this scheme with working funds). After hearing from other villagers that we have come to the villages to help the downtrodden, a group of villagers came to us requesting to help them to get back their land which was mortgaged to the village Mahajan. In the group discussion we asked the villagers whether they are willing to fight for their rights. Since they were afraid of the Mahajan, they first refused to assert their rights on the land. But after some time they realized that they have to stand up against the Mahajan, if, they want the land back. After this we helped the group in approaching the sub-Deputy Collector to get back the land.

Yet in another village, villagers were perturbed about the delay in getting the agricultural credit from the cooperative society. The society started supplying the inputs after the season was almost over. Since the farmers had earlier applied for the loan, the society was compelling the farmers to lift the input, though the season was over. The villagers were wondering what to do in this situation. We suggested that they call a group meeting and discuss the issue. In the meeting they decided to refuse to take the inputs since the season was over and the inputs would not serve their interest any more. Some of them realized that through group discussion they could take a decision which individually they would have been afraid to take.

We also came across societies which were not operating because of default of old loans repayment. We arranged the group meetings which were attended by the villagers as well as the persons connected with the cooperative society. Though the group realized during the discussions that it is in their hand to revive the society, the group did not do anything to put the society back in operation. In this village we came across another problem. A few groups prepared some schemes and submitted to the bank, but the bank did not show any enthusiasm to consider the schemes. This dampened both our as well as the village groups' enthusiasm. (The villagers started telling us that banks are not interested in helping the real poor).

As you may be aware from your own experiences, because of our work in the villages we have incurred the wrath of the local moneylenders and other vested interests. But what hurt us more was the attitude of some of the secretaries of the cooperative societies. Some of them threatened us, saying that we would not be

going back from the villages safely ; some of them tried to tarnish our image among the farmers who were not benefited by our group action. The secretaries of the Cooperative Societies asked them (villagers) to complain to the government for not doing the work (i.e. for not helping the poor). On their part, they became non-cooperative with us. Secondly, since some of the managing committee members were not well informed about their duties and responsibilities, and objectives of cooperative movement philosophy, the managing committee of the societies also tried to non-cooperate with us.

## 2. NALBARI GROUP

The first disappointment, when we reached here, was that the State Bank of India refused to give any cooperation saying that they do not know anything about the spearhead team and they have nothing to do with it. Here we were supposed to work with the SBI and the above attitude of the bank unnerved us. When we went to the villages we had another shock waiting us. In the villages we came to know that the place was once known as hotbed of Naxalite movement. So, people were more concerned about the material help than any other type of help from us. In most of the group meetings, people told us that if we were going to give them some monetary benefits (loans, grants, etc.), then they would listen to us; otherwise they have nothing to do with out "pep" talk. Though we were shaken by this attitude we were not completely crushed. We talked to the poor (who were willing to listen to the group activity) and succeeded in bringing them together for some group action. Formerly the same people were feeling that nothing could be done; now they feel that something could be done.

We also encountered the so-called revolutionary youth of the village. These young men started telling the villagers that Spearhead Team does not have any ideological theories. Once we were compelled to answer to these gentlemen. We asked the youth in which way their "ideology" has removed the poverty of the villagers. We also asked them what is the use of mere talking of theories if they cannot do anything concrete to improve the conditions of the poor. We had a heated discussion with the youth. Ultimately they came down to say that they would see how our "actions" would reduce the poverty of the villagers. We told them that we are not magicians to remove the poverty of all the people in the village within a period of 6 months, but we would certainly show the way to remove poverty of at least a few of them with the cooperation of the financing banks, other governmental agencies and the people themselves. After this encounter the so-called revolutionary youth of the village were somewhat mellowed down. The ideology of these youth (as well as some influential members in the village such as school head master and Panchayat President) was that the government should provide all the monetary benefits to the villagers without expecting anything back from the villagers. The material benefits should be in the form of grants and not loans. Why should we repay the loans, was the question they asked us.

From our village visits, we came to know that the vested interests were trying to prevent some of the poor from coming to us for discussion. First, we tried to collect the information regarding the people who were exploiting the poor. After that in one group meeting we discussed these aspects with the villagers. At that time they (poor) were convinced about the bad intentions of the vested interests. But after few days, when we went to the villages, we found that these poor were once again under the influence of the

vested interests. The poor were going to the same people seeking their advice and opinion. Then, as a group, we thought that we would meet and discuss with the vested interests. But as soon as they came to know that Spearhead Team wanted to meet them and discuss with them, they avoided us. They never gave us an opportunity to meet them. So once again we are thinking of regrouping the village poor to come out of the influence of the vested powers.

Villagers feel that the people in the cooperative society are corrupt. Most of the societies are defaulters. (Whether it was because of corruption or because of the wrong dose of ideology, we could not clearly find out). We tried to discuss the various aspects of making the cooperative society operational in a group meeting. In the meeting people seem to agree that they are responsible for the whole state of affairs, but are not willing to take any action to rectify.

How the bank avoided the task of providing credit to the poor can be illustrated from the following narration. First of all the branch manager asked us to collect certain data which we did and supplied to him. Then he wanted our observations. Third time he told us that since loans will be given only through the societies, the societies should be in a working order. Next time he told us that unless he meets and discusses with the borrowers he cannot give any loans. After that he informed us that unless the villagers supply the scheme under which they wanted to be helped he could not give any credit. Afterwards he said that unless he visits the village for an on-the-spot study he cannot give any loan. With all this, finally, the farmers did not get any loans from the bank.

We thought it would be better if we bring together the children of the village. So we organized 'Moina Parjat' (Children's welfare groups). The children met every Sunday for games, music and to increase their general knowledge. We also organized the women through Mahila Samity (Women's organisations) for educating the women in family planning, kitchen garden, hygiene, etc. We have organised a 'charcha mandal' (discussion group) in the village. This group has agreed to work on a collective basis on a piece of land on an experimental basis (i.e. to share the work and the production equally).

We also organized a cultural function, in which the villagers presented a one-act play along with other entertainments. The name of the drama was "Sagarar Mohonat". The central theme of this drama is the conflict between the various classes of the society. The society was symbolized by a boat. The owner of the boat represents the ruling class. There are six boatmen rowing it, representing the working class. There is also a navigator in the boat, representing scientific knowledge (or intellectual class). In the boat, among the passengers, there is one astrologer representing old beliefs (or traditionalism or reactionary). Among the boatmen (i.e. workers) one is old representing lack of dynamism but full of experience; one is young representing adventure and dynamism but no experience. This young boatman tries to open the eyes of the other boatmen by telling them that the owner supplies the liquor to them not out of love, but because of his self-interest. First they do not agree to his way of looking at the things. Then slowly they realize this aspect and agree to put up a fight against the owner. But this decision was conveyed to the owner by the astrologer. The owner of the boat kills the old boatman and the young boatman, after getting the information that they were the original conspirators. This opens the eyes of the remaining

boatmen and they become united and successfully get their demands agreed to by the owner.

We would like to narrate another incident in the village. There were two girls, in this village, who were very friendly. But one day they quarreled among themselves on a very sensitive issue (this we came to know only after wards) and wounded each other with the sikles. The villagers were not in a position to do anything. They were dazed by the event and sent for us. We formed a small group to inquire into the incident and take decision. First the girls refused to talk. Then one of us talked to the girls separately and the whole issue was settled in the group discussions. The whole village became happy because the issue was settled within the village itself. This added a feather in our cap. Our efforts have won the hearts of some youth of the village. Now they have decided to start a rural magazine to disseminate the idea of rural reconstruction. They have now started the magazine under the name of "Nava Jyoti Semonia Chara" through which they want to serve the rural people.

In one village we found that few of the villagers who were unemployed were spending their time in a village hotel gossiping. We tried to reason out with them to use the spare time in a productive way. Somehow we could not succeed. Then we approached the wives of these villagers and talked to them. They were convinced and promised us that they would stop their husbands from this habit. After few days we could not see them any more in the hotels. So, pretending ignorance about the whole affair, we met them and asked how is it that they were not seen at the hotels. They told us that their womenfolk were angry and that they wanted us to spend the time gainfully. Thereafter we decided to start an adult education class.

### 3. Rupshi Group

When we went to the villages we found that out of five cooperative societies, two were linked with the Union Bank. But the Branch Manager of the Union Bank refused to finance one society on the plea that the society was more than 15 miles away from the financing branch. Since the societies were supposed to be linked with the State Bank of India in the near future, we approached the branch manager of State Bank of India and persuaded him to finance the society. He also, at first, refused to finance. But when the local people pressed for this issue, he told the villagers that he is awaiting instructions from the regional office at Shillong regarding financing the society.

In another village we came to know that villagers have been contributing weekly to a religious organization. At first people were unwilling to discuss with us about this organization and contributions. Slowly they opened up and started telling there was no proper check on the money thus collected. It seems they were spending the money on religious purposes. After some spadework we organized a group meeting. In this group we asked the villagers why can't they make use of the fund to protect the poor from the clutches of moneylenders who were exploiting them. We also raised the aspects of maintaining proper books of account for the money collected and disbursed. We also linked their problem of poverty to the lack of adoption of improved method of cultivation. We succeeded in forming a committee to supervise the funds and also for maintenance of proper books and making use of the fund for the poor to prevent exploitation. They also agreed to adopt improved methods of cultivation.

In one village we came to know the village elders used to distribute the surplus land (belonging to panchayat for cultivation to the highest bidders. We discussed the matter with them and they agreed what they have been doing was a sort of exploitation and secondly, the land used to go to the somewhat better off farmers. After our discussion the villagers agreed that hereafter they would distribute the surplus lands for cultivation to the poor farmers (i.e. needy farmers) on a payment of  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the gross produce. There is also a private run dispensary (of unani medicine). Villagers want to convert it into a state-run dispensary and they are collecting funds from the villagers to achieve this objective.

In another village we were told that money lenders were very active. During scarcity period the village poor used to sell their household utensils to the mahajan at throwaway prices. We organized group meetings of the villagers and discussed about the methods to prevent this exploitation. After this, the villagers agreed to form a "grain bank" from which they would lend to those poor who need grain during the lean period. Grain will be loaned to the needy on the basis of mortgaging the utensils to the village "grain bank". They also agreed to charge only a nominal interest on the grain.

In one village the rich farmers used to keep the "Chakars" (equivalent to bonded labour) to do the cultivation on their land. These Chakars were paid Rs. one hundred only per year. We tried to convince the landlords the necessity of paying more to these workers. At first, they refused to talk with us. After some time, some of them agreed to pay a little higher wages (later on, the workers said to us that their landlords would give them Rs. 110 a year) while others refused to do anything in this regard. Now we are thinking of organizing these "Chakars" without jeopardising their

present livelihood. (We do not want to free them from this bonded labour with the help of government law without considering the possibility of an alternative livelihood for them).

Another peculiarity of this area is that it is a milk producing region. Since the farmers are not organized (or well informed) the milk prices are very low. We organized a group meeting to sort out this problem without putting hardship to the consumer as well as to the farmers. The group agreed that if they establish contacts with the government dairy, they can get a fair price for their milk. So we are now trying to achieve this objective.

In one of the villages during a group discussion there was a heated debate about the cost of cultivation and the yield. After the debate some of the farmers (who were little educated) came forward to maintain the cost of cultivation in a more detailed manner. They were eager to show that what the Agricultural University people say is not correct about agriculture. We hope by the end of the season there would be interesting figures regarding the cost of operation of not only of agriculture but also of other related agro-based activities and the production data.

In another village we found a person who possesses 7 bighas of land (3 bighas equal 10 1 acre), but who has neglected his cultivation and depended mainly on "theft" (he steals agricultural produce from neighbours' fields or from other villages and sells in the market). He has stopped his son from attending the school. We wanted to "reform" this farmer. First we tried to contact him, but he avoided us. Then we tried to contact him through his family, but his wife told us that he would not listen to her, also. Anyway we persisted in contacting him and talking to him. We could only succeed in sending the boy to the school and

making the father to work in his field, but we could not stop him, so far, from stealing things from others' fields. We hope, sooner or later, we would make this farmer to pay more attention on his field rather than on others' fields.

Finally we are happy to say that one of the educated youth from a village is actively working with us without any remuneration. Of course he was also an applicant for the Spearhead Team work. For some reason he could not be selected. But when we came to the village he wanted to work with us. At that time his intention was to get at least a certificate for NIBM for the work he would be doing with us. But after his meeting with the Professor from NIBM, he gave up this idea of obtaining a certificate and now he works whole heartedly with us, without any expectation from NIBM. We only hope that if we get such young people willing to work in rural areas, the problems of the villages can be solved to a great extent. (Later on we came to know from Nalbari group that there was also a young man in their area who was studying in his B.A. class, but after meeting our Spearhead Team Members at Nalbari, he wanted to give up his studies and work with the group.)

#### 4. Dotma Group

When we came here the local people suspected us to be agents of government who had come here to collect information regarding the activities of Plains Tribal Conference Movement. (PTC was demanding a separate state for the tribals residing on the plains of Assam). Villagers were not willing to give shelter to us. The northern part of this area touches the border of Bhutan. One can see Bhutanese coins circulating in these villages. This is a forest area and we see many santhals in these villages along with other tribals. Here money lenders-cum-traders are very active. Since this area is mainly a commodity exchange economy,

the traders are fully exploiting these tribals. The extent and nature of exploitation could be seen from the following examples. A simple loin cloth is got in exchange of one maund of paddy (one maund of paddy cost about Rs. 30/-). The trader would take 5 to 7 maunds of paddy for an umbrella. If the tribal wants a woollen blanket, he has to part to the trader 10 to 15 maunds of paddy. Another avenue of exploitation is through moneylending. Thus, three years' back one santhal wanted Rs. 60/-. He had to mortgage his 22 bighas of land. The landlord (Mahajan) was enjoying the fruits of the land for the last 3 years and the santhal is still indebted to the moneylender. When we went to the villages, we came across many such cases.

We decided to do something to redress the injustice with the help of tribals; slowly we started talking individually with them. Afterwards, we arranged a group discussion. In this group the villagers started showing interest to do something to end the exploitation. Some of them pledged that they would not borrow from the moneylenders, even if it means some days' starvation and eating wild bitter potatoes. Others wanted to take back their lands but were afraid of the moneylenders. Since we were not doing any underground activity, the vested interests came to know about our activities. Few of them threatened us. They also threatened the farmers. We explained the farmers that what they (villagers) are doing is not illegal; what they are asking is what the government had promised them. So we tried to remove the fear from the minds of the villagers. The confrontation between the vested interests and the poor came to a fore when the government revenue officials came to the village on one of the weekly 'bazaar' day to explain the government policy regarding old debts, land mortgage etc. After this meeting the villagers were convinced about what we have been saying and were happy that we were helping them. But the vested interest

adopted another method to prevent the villagers getting back their fields or produce from the fields. They brought the police force to the village. When the villagers saw the police, they were afraid and ran away from the villages. Once again we tried to meet the villagers and talk to them. We asked them why they were afraid of police when the collector (who is higher than police) has said that what they (villagers) were asking is legitimate. Once again the villagers regrouped and started harvesting the crops. When the vested interest failed to browbeat the villagers with the presence of police, they adopted a different strategy. They started lodging false complaints that we along with the villagers are threatening their life.

In the meantime, the villagers decided in a group meeting to start a grain bank to help the needy during difficult period. The vested interest started spreading rumours that the grain bank was a subtle way of cornering the grain by the Spearhead Team. Since the grain was kept in the village itself, the farmers did not believe these rumours. But the vested interest started giving once again false complaint to the police that Spearhead Team is taking bribes from the tribal. With all these obstacles the villagers pursued the matter of obtaining land back through the help of revenue official. Here also, the vested interest acted and the result was that the old official was transferred and a new person was posted. The new person avoided the issue by saying that he was a new person to this place and he has to study the problem. This led to a dangerous situation. On the one hand, the expectations of the villagers were roused because of the government's promise to redress the injustice; on the other hand the new official started avoiding the task thus, frustrating the people's aspirations. We are trying to solve the problem without any untoward incident. Let us see how far we would succeed. (Incidentally when we went to meet the revenue official he did not allow us to sit

on a bench which was kept in his room nor did he allow us to occupy the chairs in front of his table; he asked us to sit on the floor, probably, because we were wearing simple dress and were looking like the village simpletons).

In another tribal village people said that they were isolated from other villages. There were not many occasions on which different villager come together. We discussed about this in one of the group meetings. They came out with a solution : to hold a football competition. By this media, the villagers would keep in touch with other villages. We are happy to note that nearly 20 teams from different villages participated in this match. The village has instituted a trophy for this competition. Villagers are finding that now there is something 'exciting' in their villages.

We could also motivate the villagers to construct village road voluntarily, start Mahila Samities, and mutual aid groups. The villagers were also interested in adult education.

##### 5. Gauripur Group

One of the GPSSs (equivalent to cooperative societies) where some of us are working covers hilly region. In this area, we took the help of the Gram Sevak (Village Level Worker) to motivate the farmers in adopting modern or improved agricultural methods. But unfortunately the Secretary of the GPSS did not attend the office the whole of October and part of November month. Time was of crucial significance in disbursing the loan to the motivated farmers. We discussed this aspect with the Vice-Chairman of the Society and some other members of the Managing Committee and members of the Society. The Vice-Chairman did not show much enthusiasm in this exercise. Still we persuaded the Secretary to

come for this meeting. The result of the meeting is that the Secretary assured the public that hence-forward he would come to the office regularly and attend to their needs of agricultural credit.

In another village, we persuaded the President of the Gaon Panchayat to call the meeting of the villagers. In this meeting we also requested the Sub-Divisional Officer and other officials to explain to the general public the various procedures by the government departments. We wanted that a group of villagers should come forward to do some experiments in wheat cultivation in a compact area, but in this effort we could not succeed, as the farmers were reluctant to undertake this experiment. (They were afraid of the consequences in case the experiment failed). In another tribal area also we could not succeed in making them to see our point. In this area the financial institution came forward to finance some of the poor. All the beneficiaries of this area wanted to buy bullock carts. We tried to reason out with the villagers that if everybody went for bullock carts, repayment would be a problem (since every one of them would be competing with each other for hiring the carts). The tribals said that what we are saying may be true but since they are getting at least something out of this cart business, it is certainly better than nothing. They felt that if they do not go for this scheme, they may not get anything else. Since there were no viable alternative schemes that we could see, we had to accept what the tribals said. So they were given help in acquiring bullock carts.

We came to know in the villages, that people were drinking liquor regularly. Actually these families are poor and the family members were angry that the menfolk were wasting the meagre income on alcohol. We tried to form a Mahila Samity and the members of the Samity visited every village and appealed to the members not to

prepare liquor in their houses. This worked in some cases. In few other cases, they did not listen. But the Mahila Samity had a direct contact with the police officials (at a higher level). In these cases the Mahila Samity adopted coercive methods. Through appeals and coercive methods the Mahila Samity has been able to stop completely the habit of drinking liquor except on festive or religious occasions. We are, with the help of educated youth, trying to convey the messages of exploitation, injustices etc., through the medium of drama and music.

In another village, we have developed the **theft** habit among the poor (of course, this **theft** habit is connected with a slight gambling instinct). Weekly the villagers are selling 100 tickets of denomination of 10 paise each. Thus, they collect Rs. 10 per week. From this, Rs. 5 is set apart as a prize. The person who possesses the lucky number, would get the prize. (The lucky number is decided by lottery). The remaining money is kept in saving to be utilized for the needy poor to improve his earning capacity. The needy person who borrows has to repay the loan within six months along with a nominal interest of one rupee. The villagers have already helped two families of poor farmers from this fund. After seeing the working of this group, a Mahila Samity has also started similar drive among the women in the village.

Another interesting, yet strange, aspect of one of the villages here is that people could not believe until they saw that there was so much water underground in the Brahmaputra valley. Until shallow tube wells were installed and operated, the villagers refused to believe that there would be enough water underground to irrigate Rabi crops. When they saw a shallow tube well throwing water at such a force, they were so surprised that they almost started saying it is a miracle. Brahmaputra river, it is affected

by malaria. We thought the villagers need the knowledge of malaria eradication and we are working towards this.

We feel that it will not be out of place to narrate another interesting experience with the villagers. In this village the problem was of committing nuisances on the sides of village road by the population during the night time. Because of this, the village road used to stink. After our arrival to this village, we organised a group meeting and discussed this aspect. Even after repeated discussion nothing happened. People still continued to commit unisances. Then one day we came across a poem by a great poet of Assam. In this piece of poetry the poet had said that the best way to communicate a message to people is to do the things ourselves. So next day, we decided to do something to stop this practice. We took one battery torch, one iron basket and a shovel and stood near the village road. In the night, as usual, one by one started coming to the road. As soon as the person started leaving the place we started collecting the night soil. First one or two persons could not make out what we are doing. But when they came to know what we are doing, they were embarased and begged us not to do such things. Further, they promised us there and then, that they will not commit any nuisance on the roads. The very next day morning the villagers started constructing temporary lavatory (latrine). We are happy to say that after this, nobody is using the village road for this purpose.

Apart from these, we have organised groups to construct a village road, and also to build a bamboo bridge over a nalla. Further, in other villages, we succeeded in persuading the people to go for wheat cultivation on a large scale. We may not be branded as immedest, if we say that the village is considered to be the model village for wheat cultivation by the agricultural department of the Assam government. The villagers are happy that they could

get this credit (certificate) from the agriculture department because of our arrival in the villages.

#### 6. Barpathar Group

When we came here, we could not meet the farmers in the villages as they had gone to the farms which were situated near the forests of Mikir hills and Nagaland hills. These forests were infested with wild elephants from destroying the crops. When we showed our interest to go to those places, the villagers (some of them who were staying in the villages) discouraged us from doing it.

In one of the villages, farmers were agitated about the frequent thefts that have been taking place. We called the group meeting and in the meeting they decided to have a village defence force (VDF). The youths of the village organized a group to keep watch on their fields (especially during the night time). After this experiment villagers realised that they can achieve something with group activity. This experience further inspired them to start a mutual aid club. Here they collected donations from the villagers and started a duckery on collective basis. Since these villages are inhabited by various types of tribals and others (such as Shoms, Nepali, Christians, etc.) there is an under current of dislike of each other. In one of the group discussions the topic of tribal harmony came. Now we are working, along with the help of local enlightened people to bring about inter-tribal harmony.

One of the GPSS had stored potato seeds. But because of delay and other factors the GPSS could not sell the potato seeds to the farmers. When we went to the society the whole area was stinking because of rotting potato seeds. The Secretary of the society, as well as the other personnel of the Society were not bothered about this. Then we decided, along with few farmers, to salvage whatever

we could save from these seeds. So we picked and sorted out the good seed and packed them separately. When we were doing this everybody was laughing at us. We are happy to say that because of this effort we could save nearly  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the seeds and requested the Secretary to return the seed to the seeds Corporation. Once again this showed to the people that if they want the Society to run smoothly, they have to do something and cannot completely rely upon the paid personnel of the Society.

In one of the villages the farmers avoided us. They told us that they did not require our help, as they thought that we were from the financial institutions. Later we came to know that they refused our help because in the next village, the authorities had to use coercive methods to realise the old debts and these farmers also thought coercive measures would be used against them, in case they failed to repay the loans. In the village the poor farmers were getting very low wages from the landlords because of their obligation to the rich, as they had borrowed from these rich farmers. The poor were knowing this exploitation but could not do anything. We arranged a group meeting of these farmers and discussed the ways and means to prevent this. Though the group could not solve the problem, they realised that by coming together and working together, they could solve some of their problems. Before our entry in this village, most of them took individualistic attitude and could not solve any of the problems, if not, all the problems. Also the farmers realised that group formation creates some different kinds of problems (adjustment).

Apart from this, we could organise Mahila Samities, and voluntary groups to construct village roads and primary school building. Also we were rather surprised to hear from the well-off farmers that they would also help us in giving assistance to the

poor farmers. They said that those poor farmers who do not own **bullocks** could use their power tiller to plough their lands. Now this change of heart occurred, we do not know and whether they would really help the poor or not, could be seen only during the Kharif season.

A BHADU\* SONG FROM BIRBHUM

Bhadu has come in Bhadra-month  
All the poor are sitting and thinking  
There is nothing for Bhadu to eat,

Rice is three rupees a kilo  
Oh Bhadu ! how do we pass our day  
That also is mixed with broken rice and sand

The flour I took made me sippy  
I have night blindness from toxin  
they mix tamarind seed powder

Mustard oil has become expensive  
What adulterants are mixed  
We make Bhajias with it.

Wonder what they put in the oil  
My stomach is swollen  
Have to visit the dispensary

Cloth has become expensive  
Even rich wear torn clothes  
But they want to save money

Ahibhusan lives in darkness  
no kerosene in the market to light up  
Oh Bhadu mosquitos would eat me up

But when we put vermilion on Bhadu's feet  
it seems like diamond shine  
beauty lights up our lives

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\* Bharu puja is held in Bhadra month in most part of Bengal but is mainly confined to schedule castes specially Bauris, Bagadis and Lodhas. Every year songs are written and sung, many of which are topical and of interest of the people for whom they are sung. These songs reflect the concern of the people.

1. Branch Manager  
Farrukhabad Gramin Bank  
Vill & P O - Rajepur  
Dist - Farrukhabad  
UTTAR PRADESH
2. Branch Manager  
Munda Pande Prathma Bank  
P O - Munda Pande  
Dist - Moradabad  
UTTAR PRADESH
3. Rae Bareli Kshetriya Gramin Bank  
Kacheri Road  
Rae Bareli - 229 001  
UTTAR PRADESH
4. Shri Radha Krishna  
Vill - Belaisa (Near the Shiv Temple)  
P O - Sadar  
Azamgarh - 276 001  
UTTAR PRADESH
5. Branch Manager  
Jaipur - Nagaur Anchalik Gramin Bank  
Manpura - Macheri  
Via - Chomu - Samod  
Dist - Jaipur - 302 001  
RAJASTHAN
6. Branch Manager  
Gurgaon Gramin Bank  
Vill & P O - Sidhrauli  
Dist & Teh - Gurgaon  
HARYANA
7. Shiv Bhavan  
Sandiya Road  
Pipatiya - 461 775  
MADHYA PRADESH

8. Seva Bharati  
P O - Kapgari  
Dist - Midnapore  
WEST BENGAL
9. Branch Manager  
Gaur Gramin Bank  
Trimohini Branch  
Via - Hilly  
Dist - West Dinajpur 733 126  
WEST BENGAL
10. Branch Manager  
Mayurakshi Gramin Bank  
At/P O - Khairasole  
Dist - Birbhum - 731 125  
WEST BENGAL
11. Branch Manager  
Champaran Kshetriya Gramin Bank  
At/P O - Chiraya  
Dist - East Champaran  
BIHAR
12. Branch Manager  
Bolangir Anchalik Gramya Bank  
At/P O - Khaprakhol - 767 028  
Bolangir  
ORISSA
13. Branch Manager  
Koraput Panchabati Gramin Bank  
At/P O - Mathili - 764 044  
Koraput  
ORISSA
14. Branch Manager  
Puri Gramya Bank  
'Sadhana Pitha'  
Vill & P O - Satsankha  
Dist - Puri - 752 104  
ORISSA

15. Branch Manager  
United Bank of India  
P O - Barpathar  
Dist - Sibsagar  
ASSAM
16. Branch Manager  
United Bank of India  
P O - Morigaon  
Dist - Nowgong  
ASSAM
17. Block Development Office  
Paschim Nalbari Development Block  
P O - Chamata  
Dist - Kamrup  
ASSAM
18. Block Development Office  
Rupshi Development Block  
P O - Kalgachia  
Dist - Kamrup  
ASSAM
19. Branch Manager  
United Commercial Bank  
P O - Dotma  
Dist - Goalpara  
ASSAM
20. Branch Manager  
United Commercial Bank  
P O - Gauripur  
Dist - Goalpara  
ASSAM

