

Dalits in Bangladesh

A Study on Deprivation

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Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Concepts and theories on Dalits:

The Dalits are the deprived peoples in Bangladesh as elsewhere. This deprivation is closely related to the ascribed identity they are born with. It is formed within the fold of religion underpinned by the principle of caste system in which the low castes/outcasts are treated marginal compared to the upper ones. Although the issue of caste differentiation is addressed in different studies particularly its origin and social implication, this study focuses on the condition of the Dalits in Bangladesh. It will report the findings of a household survey and qualitative exercises carried out on the selected Dalit population.

The issue of the Dalit cannot be properly comprehended without the understanding of caste issue. Caste is a broad issue, for its understanding what is done here are the following, briefly treating the issue of origin, and its different implications. Afterwards specific attention is given to Dalit and untouchability, beside the condition of them in Bengal.

How caste system, which existed more than 3000 years, originated is hard to ascertain in precise terms however, there are different theories accounting for its emergence and development. From the discussion on these theories it will be found that religion and society intermingled to shape its form and structure.

i. Racial purity: One set of theory argue that the Aryans adopted this system to prevent the racial mixing with the original inhabitants in India, in other words, the Aryans who came from outside wanted to preserve their racial distinction and introduced caste system to draw a line between them and the locals in which they defined themselves as the superior one. Herbert Risley (Risley 1908) was one of the principle proponents of this theory.

ii. Occupational guild: As opposed to the above, Denzil Ibbetson, J.C. Nesfield and recently Harold A. Goneel (Basu 1989: 59-60; Chatterjee 1993: 26) proposed that caste system had its origin in occupational structure; it evolved from the practice of occupational guilds existed prior to the advent of the Aryans among the original dwellers to take the form of exclusive and stratified system of castes.

iii. Synthesis: There are others such as Emile Senart, who preferred a middle course taking both the Aryan and pre-Aryan origins of caste into consideration, to come up with a synthesized theory. It means Aryans came from outside, labeled themselves superior castes while the local and their occupations both were labeled inferior (Basu 1989: 60).

iv. Brahminical superiority: Scholars like Ghurye (1969), Dubbis, however, see caste as the clever priestly manipulation by the Brahmins to ensure their domination by dividing and subjugating the masses in the name of racial or group purity, while Hocourt emphasizes entirely on the ritualistic origin of the system (Chatterjee 1993: 25).

v. Class: Economic interpretation of caste has gained particular importance in D. D. Kosambi's works (1981) and found supports from other contemporary writers (Basu

1989; Chakraborty 1989; Chatterjee 2004; Omvedt 1978; Sinha 1978). According to the above the class division of the ancient Indian society got shrouded by the system of caste. In other words class differentiation was concealed under caste differentiation lending different kind of legitimacy. Whether it can be interpreted as class exploitation is a debated issue as class in its classical definition based on economic relations was yet to be fully formed at that time. However, when feudalism was at its early formative stage, what India was at that time, caste— a product of economic, social, religious and cultural factors— appears to be an institution for exploiting surplus labor and production of the peasants, artisans and the other downtrodden groups. The situation prompted noted Indian historian Kosambi (1981: 50) to contend, 'caste is a class on a primitive level of production.' It is usually the case that upper castes had more resources and were well off and powerful than the lower castes.

Predominance of the notion of Aryan superiority: Despite different theories of origin, the thesis of Aryan suzerainty on the locals and the subsequent encapsulation gave rise to caste system gained wider currency later on. In historical terms it is believed to have originated during the period of Aryan influx into the region. and grew out of a process of conflict and interaction between the Aryans and the earlier non-Aryan peoples of the land. The untouchables supposedly came from the group of non-Aryan peoples who resisted the imposition of the Aryan suzerainty and refused to accept their cultural and religious rites and ideologies. In the process the Aryan conquerors forced them to a servile status as somewhat lesser human beings and segregated as untouchables with restricted life-style, living condition and livelihood option. Also, the victors' desire to restructure the socio-economic relations of the society in a manner convenient to them determined the outcome of the conflicting process. Above evolution tempts the comparison of caste system was the system of class being moulded by the power politics of the time. In addition the viewpoint that caste was a creation of the clever priesthood, i.e. the Brahmins, to make sure their domination as mentioned complies with this proposition.

Broader implication and historical time of emergence: Whatever debates are there as to the origin of caste system there was no doubt it had significant implications for the society particularly in creating tension, determining social mobility and others. There is a need for cursory attention to this as it will help understand the reasons of backwardness of the low castes including the untouchables of Bengal. It has an inherent economic dimension. The occupational grouping of caste is based on the system of division of labor that privileges certain castes over the others. Since its inception, the most rewarding jobs were controlled by the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. The means of production, education, the religious and political authority were controlled by a small but socially dominant group which included priests, religious teachers (*guru*) and statesmen or administrators. They did not have any productive roles, rather prospered on expropriating the surplus produced by the low caste people. The Shudras and untouchables were the sources of surplus labor who were to serve the upper castes by performing all sorts of manual and menial jobs, but without any reward. Their mere survival depended on the mercy of the upper castes. They were not entitled to acquire wealth and learn Vedas or the art of warfare. Religious dictum was used and propagated to maintain the status- quo and thwart any aspirations of the lower castes to break the

chain. Differences in status are traditionally justified by the religious doctrine of *karma*, a belief that one's place in life is determined by one's deeds in previous lifetimes. The belief in reincarnation further explicates that a lower caste person may attain higher status after rebirth if they properly serve the upper castes especially the Brahmins educated in Vedas as per their religious duty. These beliefs made lower castes internalize their works and status as inferior and accept their positions as ordained by the 'God'. As opposed to this, priestly authority was equated with divine right by giving legitimacy to dominance of the Brahmins, while the king or the ruling caste, i.e. the Kshatriyas were entrusted with maintaining the right order of the society. It was thus a coalition of ritual authority (Brahmanical) and state power (of Kshatriyas) ensured their continued dominations and subordination of a great majority of the people belonging to the lower castes. Thus the ruling class's coalition ensured over the years the existence of a cheap large labor force that would conform to the system of their own exploitation in the name of religion.

It is also claimed that the crystallization of the caste system in its stricter form occurred, regardless of the exact time of origin, during the period when nomadic pastoral Aryan society got transformed into settled cultivators, paving the way for agricultural economy and requiring specialization of labor. This new organization of the Aryan society brought changes in the productive relations: a group began to control the means of production and management of the production process and thereby lived on the surplus produced by the other servile groups. On the other hand, the groups produced surpluses had to live merely on subsistence as their surplus production were being appropriated by the privileged groups.

Integration with Hinduism: Present discussion will remain incomplete unless exactly we know how it integrated with Hinduism. A central feature of Hinduism, caste encompasses a complex ordering of social groups on the basis of occupation and ritual purity. According to this system, people are divided into four groups called *varnas* or castes i.e. the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras on the basis of division of labor. The Brahmins are the highest *varna* and are the priests and arbiters of what is right and wrong in matters of religion and society. Below them are the Kshatriyas, who served traditionally as soldiers, rulers and administrators. The Vaisyas are the merchant and traders, while the Sudras are the peasants and the supportive workers serving the three upper castes. The system was given religious sanction by propounding that people belong to the four *varnas* are in fact created from the different parts of the body of the Creator (the Brahma or the Purusha): Brahmin from his mouth, Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaisyas from his thigh and Sudras from his feet. In reality, however, there exist numerous sub-castes or *jatis* within a particular caste. A fifth category falls outside the four main castes are consisted of those known as untouchables—the principle focus of the present study. This group is often assigned menial tasks considered ritually too polluting to be included even in the lowest caste and therefore regarded as outcastes. A person is considered a member of the caste into which he or she is born and remains within that caste until death.

Caste system and the politics of the rulers: It was convenient for the rulers of all era, even the Muslims and the British, patronized the caste system to keep the primary producer at work without much application of force. With the intrusion of colonial capitalism, the distinctions between class and caste gradually became more evident in the Indian social context. Yet, power, position and economic resources are still generally the preserve of upper castes, while the lower caste and the outcastes, untouchables constitute the majority toiling masses. It is the general feature of Indian history of all time that the landlords, big businessmen, industrialists, wholesale traders, moneylenders and so on belong to the upper caste, while the marginal peasants, landless laborers belong overwhelmingly to the lower castes.

1.2 Dalits, untouchables and historical background:

The untouchables are known in different names in different parts of the Indian subcontinent i.e. Outcasts, Pariahs, Atishudras, Avarnas, Antyajas, Namashudras, Scheduled Castes, Harijans, Backward Classes, Depressed Classes and Dalits. Dalit is the latest and most acceptable term to the members of the group. The terms Outcasts, Pariahs, Atishudras, Avarnas, Antyajas, Namashudras, untouchables have negative connotations as they specifically indicate 'low-born' origin and status of this peoples. The British administration used 'Depressed Classes' in 1919 to identify all the varied groups of outcaste peoples together. Later on, in 1935 the British government defined them as the 'Scheduled Castes.' Mahatma Gandhi coined the term 'Harijan' instead of untouchables, which means children of God (Hari is another name for the god Vishnu). The term was considered patronizing, and not acceptable to B. R. Ambedkar, and his followers. Instead, Ambedkar preferred the term 'Dalit' to designate the former untouchables. The word Dalit is originated from Sanskrit, meaning grounded, broken or crushed and is used proudly by the group itself. None of the other words have the same political connotation as the word Dalit has. It implies those who have been broken, crushed or grounded down by those above them in a deliberative and active way. As such, the word itself indicates a system of repression and contains the denial of pollution, *karma* and caste hierarchy. According to founder-editor of *Asmitadarsh* (mirror of identity), the chief organ of Dalit literature: "Dalit is not a caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of this country. ... Dalit is symbol of change and revolution" (Zelliot 1996: 268). The key here is a radical rejection of the religious legitimization of poverty and untouchability. It was during the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra in the 1970s, the term Dalit became popular and is now used most frequently. It is to be noted that historically there have been no clear demarcation between Dalits and Shudra castes. None of these two groups, however, are homogenous. Both are divided in various sub-castes or *jatis*.

In the context of traditional Hindu society, untouchable/Dalit status has often been historically associated with occupations regarded ritually impure, such as any occupation involving killing, handling of animal corpses or night soil (human feces) (*chandal/dome*), scavenging, leather works (*munchi*), clothes washing (*dhobi*), fishing (*jele*), cleaning latrines and sewers (*methor*) by hand and so on. Engaging in these activities is considered to be polluting and this pollution is considered to be 'contagious.' Therefore, Dalits are commonly banned and segregated from full participation in social life. In

former times, the restrictions were much harsher and stricter— to the point that their touch, shadow and even voice were deemed polluting by the caste Hindus. They were forbidden to keep certain domestic animals, to use certain metals for ornaments and were obliged to wear particular type of dress, footwear, to eat a particular type of food, and were forced to occupy the dirty, dingy and unhygienic outskirts of villages and towns for habitation. However, due to socio-economic changes, caste system has undergone changes. The extent of segregation may not have remained the same in social life. Still, discrimination does exist, rampantly in rural areas, mostly in matters such as access to eating places, water sources, temples and schools. They may not cross the line dividing their part of the village, enter the temple premises or tea stalls with the others, and use the same wells, tube wells or ponds; Dalit children are frequently made to sit separately at the back of the classrooms. Entire villages in some Indian states are completely segregated by caste. This is what is called India's 'hidden apartheid'.

The total number of untouchables/Dalits in India varied from 160 to 200 million people, majority of who live in extreme poverty, segregation and experience violence, murder, rape and atrocities to the scale of 110,000 registered cases a year according to 2005 statistics. No one believes these numbers are anywhere close to the reality of crimes committed against Dalits. Most crimes go unreported and few registered cases ever get to trial. Although the Indian Constitution of 1950 disbanded the practice of untouchability and guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms for all Indians, significant economic and educational disparities exist between lower and higher castes communities.

While there are a substantial number of academic and non-academic works available on the situation of the Dalits in India, information regarding them in other South Asian countries is quite scanty despite the fact that the caste based discrimination in varied forms does exist in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh and among the South Asian Diaspora in the overseas. Specifically with regard to Bangladesh, written materials on the Dalits or casteism in general are extremely limited. One of the reasons perhaps is that most of the Dalits in Bangladesh belong to the minority Hindu community, whose issues are generally neglected in a majority Muslim dominated society. Moreover, the Dalits in Bangladesh are marginalized to such a great extent, both economically and socially, that their voices have remained silenced. Also, they do not have any organized platform as Dalits to expose their plights and put forward their demands. However, it is generally known that Dalits in Bangladesh, many of who originally migrated from India during British rule and remained after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, work principally as municipal cleaners, cobblers, fishermen, and other lowly jobs that are shunned by the country's majority Muslim population. In Dhaka, for instance, Dalits make up the majority of cleaners (around 5,500) working for Dhaka City Corporation. They live in small, squalid quarters provided by the City Corporation without any gas or electric facility and get paid very less.

The advent of commercial and industrial capitals impacted in both positive and negative ways the lives of the Dalit people. It on the one hand lessened caste rigidity especially in the urban areas by initiating increasing occupational mobility. Inter-dining, fission and fusion in a crowded city life with modern transport and flow of cash economy have relaxed social rules of hierarchical isolation of different groups. On the other hand, industrial production has in many instances destroyed the crafts of many professional

and artisan castes, forcing many to give up their traditional occupation without any viable alternatives. In the face of new competitions at times their traditional means and sources are proving futile, while taking up new professions are becoming difficult without necessary resources and efficiency. The situations of the weavers (jhola, tanti) and cobblers (munchi) in Bangladesh are illuminating examples in this regard. Their traditional professions are in threat due to arrival of new technologies as well as globalize free market economy. Dalits in Bangladesh engaged in cleaning works are facing competition from the majority mainstream community because of the growing pressure of population. Furthermore, despite some sign of waning, the basic ideology and economics of caste has remained intact.

1.2.1 Pressure of change:

The question now arises— has this repressive system gone unchallenged over the years? Certainly not! Buddha himself first attacked the system and initiated many lower castes into his religion. Some reform movements in Hinduism have welcomed Dalits into their fold, the earliest being the Bhakti movements of the medieval period. In the 19th century, the socio-religious movement inaugurated by Ram Mohan Roy and the Brahma Samaj actively campaigned against untouchability. Ramkrishna Mission founded by Sri Ramkrishna also renounced discrimination against the Dalits and participated in uplifting their condition. During this period, a series of other social movements were launched against untouchability that include Satnami movement, Temple-entry movement etc. The name of Mahatma Phoolley of Maharashtra is noteworthy in this respect, who established the first school for the untouchables in Poona in 1848. However, the politicization of the Dalit question and a concerted effort of resistance started through the initiatives of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Ambedkar hailed from a Mahar family of Maharashtra. As being an untouchable, he was wholly aware of their plights and provided a deeper insight to the problem and entailed a vision of total rejection of the Hindu caste philosophy altogether as a solution to the problems of the Dalits. In this respect he differed substantially with Gandhi – the another key figure who actively advocated against untouchability within the fold of nationalist politics. Gandhi established Pradeshi Harijan Shevak Sangha, aiming at working on the uplifting the untouchables and undertook Harijan Yatra to spread his cause. He, however, did not attack the discriminatory caste structure in any meaningful way possibly because of his principle of non-violence that was in favor of social harmony and cohesion without provoking conflicts and antagonism. Many have seen this as too lenient, insufficient and impractical. On the other hand, Ambedkar attempted to address the issue both from socio-religious and political platforms. His dispute with Gandhi became most prominent when his proposal for separate or joint electorates with reserved seats for the Dalits in 1932 was opposed by Gandhi. Despite failure, he continued his political struggle and it is believed that the safeguards that the Indian constitution today has for the Dalits is primarily the work of Ambedkar. Nonetheless, his program of mass conversion to Buddhism with a large number of followers in 1956 in rejection of cast system is sometimes criticized as a lack workable political strategy and failure of his life-long political endeavor to challenge the system. Most importantly, the conversion as a means of escaping casteism has failed to do so as it remains in full force among the converted Buddhist (and Christians as well) even after the conversion.

In India, under the pressure of various anti-caste and Dalit rights movements, the government has taken a number protective measures and reservation policy to safeguard Dalit interests. Apart from the Constitutional ban imposed on the practice of untouchability, the Untouchability Offences Act was passed in 1955 to reinforce the constitutional provision. Subsequently in 1976 it was amended and renamed as the Protection of Civil Rights Acts. The Constitution also listed a group of people of the depressed section of the society as 'Scheduled Castes' in order extend some special rights to them. Accordingly, reservations in employment, education and legislature were ensued. 22.5% federal government jobs, seats in state legislatures, the lower house of parliament, and educational institutions has been reserved for Scheduled castes. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 was enacted to provide stiffer punishments for abuses and atrocities against members of Scheduled Caste and tribes when committed by the members of non-scheduled caste or tribe. Indian laws and regulations also prohibit alienation of Dalit lands, or allocate surplus government lands to Scheduled castes and tribes. Despite such measures, the government of India has failed to arrest violence against the lower castes and Dalits. Non-compliance and non-observation of the laws by the upper-castes, administration, judiciary and law enforcing agencies are rampant. The National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have repeatedly complained and decried the prevalence of atrocities and violation of laws. In addition, the policy and laws relating to it are not being fully implemented. In contrast to India, laws and regulations protecting rights of the Dalits in Bangladesh is virtually absent. Neither are there any sincere attempts on the part of the government or Non-government bodies to alleviate their social and cultural positions and reduce their poverty, nor are their any program to raise consciousness of the majority people to eradicate caste based discrimination and superstition. In fact, breaking the caste stranglehold as well as improving the condition of the Dalits requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that should address the economy, politics and culture of casteism simultaneously.

1.3 Composition of Dalit society in Bangladesh, local and formal account of their background:

In Bangladesh, the Dalits are categorized in terms of their work, religion and ethnicity. Above varieties include Bagdi, Bajander, Beyara, Dai, Dhopa, Dome, Chondal, Hajam, Jele, Nikari, Maimol, Kapali, Kaora, Methor, Namashudra, Pondo Khaitria, Robidas, Rishi, Shikari, Napit, Vogobone, Shahji etc. These groups are identified as *untouchables*. The present study has focused on selected communities of the Dalit population and a brief idea is given below what the members of the selected Dalit communities (Robidas, Jalodas, Nomosudra, Horijan, Dhopa, Bormon, Bagdi and Kaiputra) thought about their nature of origin in the context of Bangladesh

The Robidas claimed they are indigenous people. Compared to other Dalit communities studied in this report, the Robidas were found to have their own distinct language and culture. Now they are scattered in different districts and on the basis of necessity migrated from one place to another. In this study it is found that some families moved around within Bogra district to seek their fortune. For example, Sri Nandalal Robidas,

who was born before 1947 used to reside in Goshaibari, Bogra during the British period and moved to Doriapara union under Sariakandi Upazila during Pakistan period. In 1965, a soldier named Azhar Mondol, settled them on the present land near the village market place with the intention that they will clean the market place and work as cobblers as well. Azhar Mondol gave them 16.5 decimal land to settle upon.

Internal migration is also found among the Jalodas. Some Jalodas members who were intensively interviewed were found to migrate from one place to another owing to river bank erosion. For example Monoranjan Jalodas (80) of Guliakhali village said, the Jalodas have been dwelling in Guliakhali from the pre-British period. Their forefathers came here from Swandip when the riverbanks started to erode. They also said that Jalodas are the 'Children of Ganga' and, as such, the right of authority and control over river waters is only theirs." However some of them claimed themselves to be of high caste Hindu and are descendants of Bash Muni's Generation. Bash Muni was the best among the Muni's and was the son of Mathshan Gondha and hence the Jalodashes claim themselves to be of Muni generation. The Jalodashes also call themselves Ganga Putra and so have control over river water.

The Nomosudras are a Hindu caste found sporadically in many parts of Bangladesh. Previously the Nomosudras constituted the largest agrarian caste in Eastern Bengal. Previously they were also known as *Chandals* (a term derived from the Sanskrit *chandala*, a representative term for the untouchables).¹ Brindaban Biswas of Magura said that the history of Namshudra is very old, for example in Magura district they have living for more than 400 years as a clan and primarily agrarian. In some districts some have been converted to Christianity as in Faridpur and Bakerganj¹

The case study among the Harijan in Dinajpur showed that during the British Period, in the year 1858, when the Dinajpur municipality was established, King Girjanath Rai Bahadur settled 5 Harijan families on 17 bighas of land at Moddho Balubari, Dinajpur Sadar – mainly to clean the palace. The families were brought from Allahabad. Since there was a rail link between Allahabad-Dinajpur-Parbatipur, many relatives of these 5 families from Balughat and Motihar region of Allahabad also arrived for jobs and by 1900 there were 50-60 families.

Case study showed that Dhopas are also known as *rajaks* in the past, a lower caste of the Hindu occupational group, some of them claimed that Dhopas have descended from *Neta Muni* or *Neta Dhopani*, who washed the clothes of Brahma. Owing to universal custom, which forbade a Hindu to wash, the Dhopa caste was very widely distributed and had been broken into an unusually large number of sub-castes in Bengal. Two of the prominent subdivisions in Bengal were the *Ramer dhopa*, and *Sitar dhopa*, the former claiming to descended from the washerman of Ram, and the later from that of Sita. Members of these two groups eat and drink together, but never intermarry.² The *Ramdas* were of higher class and were well off. They only washed the clothes of the

¹ Banglapedia website

² Defined by Banglapedia

people in the higher society while the *Sitadas* were comparatively poorer. They cleaned garbage and the dirty clothes of various clinics.

The case study among the Bormon in Jagannathpur of Sunamganj district showed that a person named Jogonnath came and built houses and settled here. Gradually other people came and settled here as a community. But the locality had no name. The community decided in a meeting that Jogonnath was the first to live on this land, so it should be named after him. Since then it is known as Jogonnathpur. Nikunja Borman, in a particular case study reported that not only he, but also his forefathers were born here. In 1947, there were about 65-70 Jele families and they were all Hindus. During that period, everyone had owned land. No Muslim families dwelled here.

The Bagdis considered themselves as indigenous as the government had called them so since the Judhisto period. The Bagdis believed that they were the descendants of King Poncho Pandob. According to the case study they probably belonged to the Kshaitrya tribe and were born when King Poncho Pandob came to live as exiled in a jungle. During that period they were nomadic in nature and spent their lives in the woods. They drifted from one jungle to another spending their lives in cleaning the woods for development. However, some Bagdis, reported that their claim to be indigenous was to get financial help. Fanindra Nath Sarkar aged 75, said that the British brought the Bagdis from Indian cities of Bakura, Bordhoman, Birbhum, Jharkand, etc. for indigo cultivation and other works related to indigo production. They were initially settled in a jungle, which they cut, hewed and cleaned to make it suitable for human dwelling. Some were also employed at the railways and as domestic helps at British residences. About 150-200 families of 400-500 people came here and occupied 3 localities.³ In those days a Bagdi's physique was larger and the police were also afraid to enter a Bagdi area. According to Shekhar Chakraborty, Chairman, Bhojanipur Commissioner Panel, the Bagdi history could be 100 years old. He added that for various reasons, including hardship, the Bagdis had strayed away in various directions. Most migrated within Bangladesh as they did not have the courage or the fund to go to India. They were timid and weak in nature and many had sold off their properties and settled along the railway tract.

Kaiputra are an ethnic group, the Kaiputras have been living in Dhakuria (the case study area) for the last 300 years. Though they are also known as Kawra, they do not like it. They prefer to call themselves Kaiputras.

³ According to the Bagdis, in the past other communities such as Mali, Bhumij and Ghashi also lived in Danga Hati Mohon village in Rajbari, but they were now extinct.

Chapter Two Methodology

Since the study required an in-depth investigation to explore and analyze the underlying causes of poverty situation, both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied during data/information collection. The quantitative method was applied during household survey while the qualitative method included FGD, Interviews and various PRA tools and techniques. Data was collected both from primary and secondary sources.

a. Quantitative Method:

- i) Questionnaire Survey: The household survey was conducted by using a questionnaire composed of variables that was measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures. The survey findings provided a comprehensive picture of their existing situation through a regular quantitative concept.

b. Qualitative Method:

- i) Focus Group Discussion (FGD): Focus group discussion was held among male and female at a suitable venue where the research team only facilitated the process by providing relevant information and to help raise issues and questions. Social and livelihood problems and challenges, coping capacity, the migration dynamics and internal displacements due to helplessness / disaster / poverty; solutions and future course of actions were identified through FGD.
- ii) Interview: Interview was conducted with key people within the Dalit communities to collect in-depth information on the community's socio-economic condition. The interviews focused on their views regarding factors responsible such as political influence, job opportunity, social discrimination etc.
- iii) Document Review: Secondary information was collected from reviewing the existing documents and literatures on the Dalits. The secondary information mainly focused on background history of the Dalits.
- iv) Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) Tools
 - Transect Walk: Transect walk was conducted in the community for rapport building and exchanging experiences with the community people to identify problems and possibilities through direct observation.
 - Resource Mapping: Sketching a resource map to get a view of the available resources in the locality and assessing access of the untouchables.

- Well-being Analysis / Participatory Poverty Assessment: A participatory assessment on their poverty/wellbeing was measured in terms of the ailing factors, root causes, the nexus between income & opportunities, living standard & dignity.
- Time Line: This method was applied in order to collect information on the communities' background history, such as how they inhabited the area, present situation and factors related to migration and internal displacements.
- Daily Activity Chart: To understand their life pattern, how their livelihood influences their day to day activities, the extent of male and female work load and scopes for additional income generating activities.
- Mobility Chart: To understand the nature of movement and causes of movement, distances, means of movement of the community people for different causes.
- Seasonal Calendar: To understand health problems, employment opportunity, livelihood pattern and income according to seasonal variations.

Study Area:

The study intervened among 8 Untouchable/ Dalit communities at 8 locations that included periphery and remote area as well. The study area was selected covering 6 zones based on the geographic concentration (area specific) and availability of different Dalit communities. Apart from the 8 selected Dalit communities, additional 6 Dalit communities were explored within the study areas. However, these 6 communities were not intervened in an extensive way as in the case of the selected 8 communities. Only FGD and in some cases interviews were conducted. For the selected 8 communities both quantitative and qualitative methodologies including the PRA tools were applied.

The following table shows communities and intervention areas

SI #	Selected Dalit Communities	Zone					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
		North West	North East	Central Part	South Central	South West	South East
1.	Harijan (Dom/ Methor)	Dinajpur					
2.	Bormaon (Jele)		Sunamganj				
3.	Dhopa			Dhaka			
4.	Bagdi				Rajbari		

5.	Nama-Shudra					Magura	
6.	Kaiputra					Jessore	
7.	Robidas						Bogra
8.	Jalodas						Sitakunda
Additional Communities							
1.	Kornidas						Bogra
2.	Malo	Dinajpur					
3.	Maimol		Sunamganj				
4.	Bahera					Jessore	
5.	Rajbongshi					Jessore	
6.	Rishi					Satkhira	

Chapter Three

Socio-economic condition & underlying processes

3.1 Demographic distribution of the Dalit population:

As mentioned above the survey covered 8 communities in detail and 6 communities on a limited scale, of the Dalit community. In the following table (1) the age distribution of the household members has been briefly reviewed which show a number of features. Firstly they are divided into different age groups as many as thirteen, which include children, teen, young, adult and old. In terms of specific age group, the one which ranges from 5-9 years is the most populated one among the nine surveyed communities (Robidas - 17.3%, Jolodas-15.1%, Nomoshudra -13.8% Bormon-14.4%, Kaiputra-19.5%) except Horijan(14.2%) Bagdi (8.6%) and Dhopa (9%). One may ascertain a pattern regarding the age distribution of the household members among the surveyed communities which consist of the following features: the children and the young are demographically the predominant segment. So it naturally implies that old people is low among all subgroups. This pattern of age distribution is not unique with the Dalit because the national trend will also reflect the same.

Table 1: Age-wise population distribution of all Dalits under study

AGE	Name of Community															
	Robidas		Jalodas		Namashudra		Horijan		Dhopa		Bormon		Bagdi		Kaiputra	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0-4	14	9.0	28	11.7	29	8.7	19	6.4	15	7.1	30	12.0	20	11.5	18	9.7
5-9	27	17.3	36	15.1	46	13.8	42	14.2	19	9.0	36	14.4	15	8.6	36	19.5
10-14	14	9.0	34	14.2	36	10.8	44	14.9	17	8.1	31	12.4	16	9.2	15	8.1
15-19	12	7.7	27	11.3	34	10.2	48	16.3	20	9.5	21	8.4	15	8.6	16	8.6
20-24	13	8.3	22	9.2	30	9.0	29	9.8	17	8.1	19	7.6	18	10.3	11	5.9
25-29	19	12.2	20	8.4	23	6.9	26	8.8	30	14.2	16	6.4	16	9.2	19	10.3
30-34	18	11.5	11	4.6	30	9.0	18	6.1	23	10.9	14	5.6	11	6.3	12	6.5
35-39	16	10.3	18	7.5	28	8.4	13	4.4	24	11.4	22	8.8	14	8.0	17	9.2
40-44	10	6.4	13	5.4	29	8.7	20	6.8	10	4.7	15	6.0	4	2.3	7	3.8
45-49	3	1.9	5	2.1	16	4.8	14	4.7	14	6.6	10	4.0	13	7.5	12	6.5
50-54	3	1.9	7	2.9	14	4.2	8	2.7	6	2.8	9	3.6	8	4.6	8	4.3
55-59	1	0.6	0	0.0	7	2.1	5	1.7	8	3.8	5	2.0	6	3.4	3	1.6
60-64	2	1.3	4	1.7	5	1.5	3	1.0	1	0.5	9	3.6	7	4.0	3	1.6
65+	4	2.6	14	5.9	7	2.1	6	2.0	7	3.3	13	5.2	11	6.3	8	4.3
Total	156	100.0	239	100.0	334	100.0	295	100.0	211	100.0	250	100.0	174	100.0	185	100.0

3.1.1 Average household size:

As a further illustration of the demographic pattern of the Dalit the average household size is estimated here. The average household size is 4.89, there is difference between the communities. The largest households size is found among the Jolodas which is 5.97 and the smallest one is among the Nomoshudra which is 4.17. So the pattern of households size found among the indigenous community is comparable with the national one.

Table 2: Average household size of different Dalit communities

Name of Community	Average Household Size
1. Robidas	4
2. Jalodas	5.97
3. Namashudra	4.17
4. Horijan	5.9
5. Dhopa	4.69
6. Bormon (Jele)	5.55
7. Bagdi	4.24
8. Kaiputra	4.62
Grand average	4.89

3.2 Education,

Educational backwardness of the Dalit population is historical and socially designed. It was supported by the myth that the being of Dalit and education are not compatible. Not unexpectedly literacy rate is low among the studied Dalit communities compared with the national level. On the other hand those who are literate among the Dalits, mostly ended their education before the completion of the primary level.

3.2.1 Literacy rate and the drive for education

Average literacy rate is found 30.96% among the eight Dalit communities; however, it is not uniform across them briefly elaborated below.

Table 3: Literacy rate (age 6+)

Community	male		female		total	Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Robidas	42	29.57%	33	23.24%	75	28
Jalodas	63	29.85%	57	27.01%	120	29.17
Namashudra	86	28.19%	82	26.88%	168	28.57
Horijan	88	31.88%	68	24.63%	155	29.49
Dhopa	80	40.81%	73	37.24%	153	39.87
Bormon	81	36.81%	79	35.90%	160	36.88
Bagdi	16	10.40%	25	16.23%	41	17.07
Kaiputra	31	18.56%	36	21.55%	67	20.90
	Total average					30.96

For example, among the Dhopa community the literacy rate is 39.87% which is 40.81% among the male and 37.24% among the female. Many of them are now educated with a few completing post-graduate level. Both the boys and girls are also found to continue their study even after high school. Many have passed SSC and HSC while a few are graduates and masters degree holders. There is also MBBS doctor among the Dhopa. Attendance of the children in the school among the Dhopa was found high with positive attitude to education. The situation related to education has also improved when compared with the past. As a result, the rate of higher education has also increased gradually.

The second highest community in terms of literacy rate is the Bormon, their literacy rate is 36.88%, with the male having 36.81% and the female with 35.90%. There are many boys and girls who completed primary schools indicating their inclination for education. The advent of the NGO has inspired them for education. As a reflection of their desire to improve their position in society many of the young children are trying hard to attain higher education, for example a number of them has already passed SSC examination even living in a distant village. Even if the school is not located nearby it does not reduce their interest for education. It also indicates that they want to move out of their traditional occupation of fishing. But there is an alarming feature that the drop out rate among the girls is high in a comparative sense implying negligible progress in terms of gender parity.

Among the Harijan also the literacy rate was found 29.49% comparable with a few other communities. Among the Harijan the improvement in literacy rate is a recent phenomenon. Different educational programs inspired them for education. While there are many families hardly taking interest in education, not a very small number took it seriously. Such surge of interest in education has perhaps made possible witness in this case that the children not only completed primary education but also college.

Among the Jaladash the average literacy rate is 29%, which is slightly higher among the male (29.85%) and slightly lower among the female (21.01%). The trend of attending primary school is good among the children although the girls are lagging behind the boys. Although there are different types of problems ranging from economic to others but that can hardly prevent them to pursue education. For example some girls recently completed HSC degree. There are other examples of failure where the Jaladash children dropped out from the school owing to economic problem and got engaged in fishing and rickshaw riding to earn income and the girls finally destined into household chores.

Among the Namasudra literacy rate is found 28.57%, with the male 28.19% and female with 26.88%. Many Namasudra families are found much interested in education. Perhaps for the presence of such families it was found that many of them have passed SSC or HSC examinations, even Master degree holder was found among them. In the language of Mukul Sarker who is a village leader among the Namasudra – lower caste has come out of the old cultural inhibitions to shy away from education. At the same time disinterested families were also there regarding education as observed by Brindabon – a local school teacher. Future challenge lies in motivating the above families about education. Among the Namasudra also gender discrimination is noticeable as many girls were found in the case study victims of early marriage, even the stipend program could not hold them back in the school.

Literacy rate among the Robidas community is 28%, with the male 29.57% and female 23.24%. Many of them have passed school final examination and the others are now attending high school. There are many young children who are completely isolated from the schools. In the opinion of the elders of the community different factors are responsible why still many children are not interested in education. The perpetuation of the traditional caste feeling (arising from the occupation of cobbler) has largely

dissuaded them from embracing education, because they thought occupational mobility through education will be very difficult. Elders ascribed poverty as a factor that has increased high rate of drop out among the boys in the high school. The engagement of the young boys in work to earn income has also increased drop out rate in the high school.

As we know the Dalits are backward in terms of education while the Kaiputra are further backward than the other communities. The survey results show that the average literacy rate among the Kaiputra is 20.90%, with male 18.56% and female 21.55%. It is notable that the survey shows higher literacy rate among the female compare to the male in the case of Kaiputra, later it will be found that among the Bagdis also female literacy rate is higher, however it can not be treated as a common feature unless further study is conducted on this issue. Like other communities the Kaiputras are also pressed by poverty which many a time leads to dropping out of the children from school, rendering difficult the payment of tuition fees or buying books particularly at the high school level. The traditional occupation of the Kaiputra is raising pigs which stigmatize their identity in the society, creating distance from the others and pushing them off from the school. However, those Kaiputras who want to come out of their traditional occupation see in education the means for change.

Among the eight communities the lowest literacy rate is found among the Bagdi which is only 17.07%, among the male it is 10.40% and female 16.23%. As noticeable here that the literacy rate is higher among the female, as we observed earlier that further study may be needed to assess how much generalized the above feature is. Intensive interactions with the Bagdi showed their strong inclination for earning income from the very childhood, which perhaps is a reason why the literacy rate is very low among them. Above scenario has been further complicated by poverty, distancing them further from education. It is also gathered that the language barrier also hindered their study since text books are written in Bengali, whereas their mother tongue is different.

This study also covered six other untouchable communities in a limited scale. Relevant information on these communities was gathered through FGD which shed light on their socioeconomic conditions to a certain extent. Above mentioned communities include Kornidas, Malo Maimol Bahera Rajbanshi and Rishi. Although among most of them literacy rate is low but the interest for education has increased in some communities in the recent time. For example, the Maimol expressed interest in education. While poverty determines their choices in many occasions, it also makes their normal life difficult particularly the pursuit of education. Alongside engaging the children in income based occupation also create a distance between them and the school. One might like to draw attention to the issue of mind set or attitude in this regard.

3.2.2 Education level

Mere literacy rate is not enough to completely understand the spread of education among the dalits. Such needs require detailing of the educational level attended by the members of different communities.

The phenomenon of low literacy rate among the Dalits is logically accompanied by the predominance of low educational level. As a result the preponderance of primary level and below is notable.

Following table shows education level among the 8 communities. On average 32.4% have received education at least below primary level, only 10.8% have passed primary level education, 7.8% passed junior secondary education (Class VIII), 2.9% passed SSC, and only 0.76% passed HSC. 3% have received non-formal education. The study reveals that education after high school is more prevalent among the Dhopas with highest number of SSC pass i.e. 4.4%, HSC pass 4.3%, BA/BSc and MA/MSc 2.1% and 1.6% respectively (Fig 2.1)

Table 4: Education Level (age 6+)

Education Level	Robidas		Jalodas		Namashudra		Horijan		Dhopa		Bormon		Bagdi		Kaiputra		Average %
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
Below Primary Education	37	26.0	81	38	97	31.8	114	41.3	31	15.8	102	46.4	20	13	50	29.9	32.4 %
Primary Education passed (V)	14	9.9	26	13.3	23	7.5	15	5.4	30	15.3	35	15.9	16	10.4	10	6	10.8 %
Junior Secondary Edu. passed (VIII)	6	4.2	10	4.7	32	10.5	8	2.9	50	25.5	11	5	3	1.9	7	4.2	7.8 %
SSC Passed	5	3.5	2	.9	11	3.6	0	0	27	13.8	1	.5	0		0	0.0	2.9 %
HSC Passed	1	.7	0	0	3	1	0	0	8	4.1	0		0		0.0	0.0	0.76 %
BA / BSC passed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	2.0	0		0		0	0.0	0.27 %
MA / MSC passed	0	0			1	.3	0	0	3	1.5	0		0		0	0.0	0.29 %
Non-formal Education	12	8.5	1	.5	1	.3	18	6.5			11	5	2	1.3	0	0.0	3 %

3.2.3 Causes of low literacy rate:

A very pertinent question in this regard is why the literacy level is still so low among the Dalit community. In the discussion made above focusing literacy rate of different communities indications were given about the probable factors that may have lowered the education level of the Dalit community, however, in the following it has been summarized in more specific terms. One may identify from the relevant analysis four major factors that lowered literacy rate among the Dalits:

- i) Poverty;
- ii) Communication and Transportation problem;
- iii) Social Discrimination for being a member of the low caste and
- iv) Parents' distrust in education as a means for change.

Poverty means the lack of economic capacity. When the Dalits get submerged in poverty it becomes difficult for them to buy books, pay tuition fees or the likes. Such failures

often result in frequent drop out from the schools while sometimes push into taking up occupations to earn income.

Although primary schools are quite common at the village level in rural Bangladesh the high schools are not. Often a high school serves a number of villages as its catchments area while river, canals or the lack of paved roads make easy access difficult. If the distance from the school turns out to be a few kilometers complexity on access increases on equal proportion, which is the case form nay dalits in this study.

Another major factor that discouraged Dalit children to continue study is the social discrimination meted to them by their class mates from higher castes or other religion. It got expressed being called by names and not being allowed to sit with them.

Finally, there is the factor of parental distrust on education as a means of change. Several Dalit parents feel that education to their children may not help to bring them out of the fold of traditional occupation. Those who were fishermen will remain fishermen no matter educated or not, similarly cobbler will also remain same even after being educated.

3.2.4: Educational institution & access to education:

Although the Dalits are educationally background from historical time now such isolation has started to melt down which has contributed to the increase of literacy rate among them. In this process the dalits children have attended both governmental and non-governmental schools. However, the role of government school is significant in this regard because majority of those who attended schools had been the government ones both at the primary and secondary levels. But in the context of two communities namely Namashudra and Horijan above trend was slightly different because they attended non-government private schools and NGO schools in a greater proportions. For example 62.6% among the Namashudra non-government private schools while 71.9% among the Horijan attended NGO schools. Among the NGO schools the program of the BRAC is quite extensive in geographical terms as they are present now in many parts of the country. Another category of the school where the Dalit children attended are Missionary schools and temples, particularly among the Robidas Namashudra and Bagdi. Despite the fact that poverty and illiteracy are major problems of Bangladesh but the expansion of the government schools mainly at the primary level is an evidence of significant development.

Table 5: Access to Education Institution

Communities	Government		Non-Government Private		NGO		Others	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1. Robidas	37	52.1	19	26.8	13	18.3	2	2.8
2. Jalodas	81	74.3	21	19.3	7	6.4		
3. Namashudra	41	29.5	87	62.6	10	7.2	1	0.7
4. Horijan	20	14.4	19	13.7	100	71.9		
5. Dhopa	64	54.7	42	36.7	10	8.5		

6. Bormon (Jele)	73	46.5	64	40.8	20	12.7		
7. Bagdi	34	63.0	10	18.5	9	16.7	1	1.9
8. Kaiputra	46	78.0	13	22.0				

3.2.5 Subsidy and expense for education:

The education subsidy and expenses are categorized under four headings, namely, free education, half subsidy, stipend and full tuition fees. The stipends are applicable only for the girls. Though most of the children of the Dalit community get free education, there are some who has to pay full tuition. The Kaiputras has got the highest proportion (87.5%) who received free education implying none of them paid any fees. It is notable that majority of the children who attended schools received free education. Only among the Dhopa this trend is slightly different among whom the respective percentage is 47.4%. Certain proportion among the communities received half free education and some girls received stipend.

Table 6: Subsidy and expense for children's education

Community	Free		Half Free		Female Stipend		Full tuition fee	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Robidas	16	76.2	1	4.8	2	9.5	2	9.5
2. Jalodas	26	81.3	1	3.1	2	6.3	1	3.1
3. Namashudra	38	73.1	4	7.7	2	3.8	6	11.5
4. Horijan	29	82.9	3	8.6		0.0	3	8.6
5. Dhopa	18	47.4	4	10.5	2	5.3	13	34.2
6. Bormon (Jele)	32	84.2	2	5.3	2	5.3	1	2.6
7. Bagdi	11	73.3	2	13.3	1	6.7	1	6.7
8. Kaiputra	21	87.5	3	12.5		0.0		0.0

3.3 Occupation and its mobility:

3.3.1 Occupational profile: past and present:

Traditionally the Robidas are cobblers. In the past, they were the only ones to skin the dead animals, make and mend shoes. But at present as the Muslims have become involved in this occupation the Robidas were deprived of their income. Even though this community was never sound economically, in the early days, they were at least able to earn enough to lead a moderate life. During that time the Robidas were in great demand as their occupation was useful to others. However, due to industrialization and modernization, their income had deteriorated to a great extent leading them to extreme poverty. To earn their daily living the Robidas usually sat with their equipment in public places such as in markets and bazaars or went door to door for prospective customers. The occupation of the Robidas has been considered impure because it is linked with animal skin calling them untouchable and their occupation degrading. They are generally called "Muchi" meaning cobbler or shoemaker, as their traditional occupation is making and mending shoes

The Jalodases are traditionally fishermen fishing in river, canal and sea. Because they are mainly confined to fishing their skill in other trades is almost minimum, depending on manual labor to supplement income. They have to harmonize with seasonal variation to maximize the fishing while Srabon, Bhadra, and Ashwin are the months with highest level of catch. In the lean months they supplement their income working as day laborers, earth excavators, and rickshaw and van pullers. The women folks knit and repair nets, or work as domestic help in other's houses.

Majority of the Nomosudras were cultivators with or without occupancy rights. A few were also sharecroppers or *bargadars*.. However, a small group of Nomosudras were benefited from the process of land reclamation that took place in different areas. In this regard some Nomosudras were so much benefited that they became large peasants, some others took up money lending and trade and somewhat later to education and various professions. Despite the economic prosperity that a few Nomosudras reaped from the changed agricultural process it could not help them earned the status of elite in the society. Our case study has also shown that some Nomosudras were also traditional fishermen. At present the Nomosudras are involved in earth excavation living hand to mouth. Many of them people are also engaged in farming. Many others had acquired education, left their traditional jobs and has taken up new profession as teachers, service holders, NGO workers, traders etc., as it is no longer possible to survive solely on fishing. However, above proportion of the Namashudra who are engaged in non-traditional occupation will not be very large.

The Harijan's are traditionally cleaners. They sweep and clean various public and private offices, hospitals, clinics, educational institutes, and the bathrooms therein. They also work privately in various houses. Since the Harijan can not do any other work their livelihood opportunities have become very limited. They are still discriminated to such an extent that most of them are not even allowed to take up other occupation. Other communities such as Bangali or the Muslims compete with them to get the job of cleaning in different offices and institutions. Apart from cleaning they are also engaged in pig rearing and disposing of dead bodies (Dome) in the hospitals. However, pig rearing has become difficult at present because of the land, money and antagonistic attitude of the neighbors.

The traditional occupation of Dhopa was washing clothes. In the past only the rich people used to get their clothes washed by Dhopa, at present it is a common practice among other social groups. Traditionally they visit the homes of the peoples to collect clothes for washing.

Traditionally Bormons were fishermen and cultivators both. At present some have distanced from fishing as it is no longer viable as a livelihood. In the changed economic circumstances some had to choose wage work, some picked up boat riding, while a few ended up as rickshaw/van pullers. Because of the squeezing of the livelihood

opportunity some of the Bormon had to land up in dry fishing. Some Bormon told us that the enemy property law has increased their miseries as they had to lose land.

The traditional occupational profile of the Bagdi was multifarious even in the past. For a long time during the colonial period they were indigo cultivators, which discontinued later on. Some of them picked up fishing while others wood cutting, even as unique as the palanquin carrying featured the occupational profile of the Bagdi. Hunting was also picked up by some Bagdis such as they hunted pigs and caught tortoises or iguanas eel. As the numbers of the swamps, canals or forests denuded in course of time they faced difficulty in continuing with their traditional hunting.

Occupational profile of the Bagdi women had some interesting features as they used to collect paddy from the rat holes, and gathered those strewn on the fields after harvesting. Those who were lucky could even gather sack full of paddy. Still its remnant will be found in rural areas. At present most of the Bagdis worked as day labourers, agro-labourers, earth excavators, rickshaw and van pullers, gathered sea-shells or any other petty jobs that came in their way, to earn their living. Many male Bagdis also worked in barbershops, with gold smiths, at tea stalls, in workshops, ice cream and toy factories etc. The Bagdi women were also involved as day labourers and agro labourers. But they were preferred in roof compacting, as assistants to masons, road paving and as domestic helps.

The traditional occupation of the Kaiputras is pig rearing. For the grazing of the pigs Kaiputra males travel around with the hordes of pigs for a few months. But many of them at present also work as day labourers and rickshaw van pullers besides raising pigs. The traditional occupation of Karanidash is trading on bamboo and rattan products. Some, however, at present also work as agricultural workers. Malo are traditionally mainly fishermen but many have now got involved in service, farming and rickshaw/van pulling. The Maimols are traditionally fisherman. They are involved in fishing, dry fish processing and fish trading. The Baheras are traditionally involved in palanquin bearers. But since palanquins are almost extinct due to the introduction of modern and faster transports, the baheras are now involved in various odd jobs like rickshaw pulling, as day labourers, etc. The traditional occupations of the Rajbangshi are fishing and cultivation. As we described earlier the fishing opportunities have reduced because of changed geographical condition. As a consequence many Rajbangshi have now ceased to work as fisherman, instead they work as agricultural workers and rickshaw/van pullers. Rajbangshi women are also found to work as agricultural workers. Some of them are also engaged in earthwork. Rishis are traditionally cobblers as well as also involved in dealing in animal skins and hides. They collect hides of the cattles from different places for marketing. As cobblers they mend and shine shoes. Some of them are found to pick up new occupation such as producing handicrafts. With the advent of urbanization and industrialization the traditional job of cobbler has become less lucrative now pushing them to new occupations.

3.3.2 Occupational mobility and change:

While traditional occupation characterizes the identity of the Dalits, social changes in broad terms infused new set of dynamics in their occupational condition. Change in demographic structure (for example population pressure has resulted in landlessness or because of the Muslim majority of the society the demand for pork has significantly reduced), environment (for example denuding of water bodies fishing has become difficult similarly the reduction of forest areas has receded the opportunity for hunting), urbanization (for example, opportunity for salaried jobs was created in offices), industrialization (for example, new technology has rendered the job of the cobbler, laundry man or sweepers redundant in many places) as well as expansion in educational facilities set the tone of the emerging dynamics that caused changes in traditional occupational structure of the Dalits. More interestingly Muslims are also competing with the Dalits for their traditional jobs owing to increased unemployment in the recent time. Similarly to get rid of the stigma of untouchability many Dalits discontinue with their traditional occupations. In the above discussion we have cast light on the evidences of changes in occupation now we will pay attention to empirical facts.

In this table we have focused on the statistical distribution of traditional and new occupation pursued by the Dalits population covered by the survey. In the second column of this table the name of the traditional occupations is described. Fourth column shows what percentages of different communities are engaged in traditional occupations. If we review the findings of this column it will be found that five communities among the eight are engaged in traditional occupation in substantial magnitude (more than 80%). These five communities are mainly Robidas, Jalodas, Horijan, Bormon and Kaiputra. The most remarkable magnitude of change is seen among the Bagdi of whom more than 95% are now pursuing now non-traditional new jobs. Among the Dhopa also such major evidence of change is seen which is 70.40%. In the context of Namashudras relevant change is moderate because 34.3% reported such change.

Table 7: Traditional occupation and occupation change.

Community	Traditional Occupation			Non-traditional New occupation		Total
	Occupation Name	#	%	#	%	#
1. Robidas	Cobbler	31	88.6	4	11.4	35
2. Jalodas	Fisherman	42	87.5	6	12.5	48
3. Namashudra	Farmer	46	65.7	24	34.3	70
4. Horijan	Sweeper	37	80.4	9	19.6	46
5. Dhopa	Laundry man	16	29.6	38	70.4	54
6. Bormon	Fisherman	46	90.2	5	9.8	51
7. Bagdi	Hunter	2	4.9	39	95.1	41
8. Kaiputra	Pig rearer	29	80.6	7	19.4	36

3.3.3 Trend in occupation change from grandfather – father to respondent:

The issue of occupational change has been further explored to capture this process in intergenerational terms. To illustrate intergenerational change we have compared three generations which include grandfathers, fathers and respondents. The nature of the

query was what proportion of the three generations as mentioned above were/are involved in traditional occupations. Through out this report a particular point has been brought in home that traditional occupation is a major facet of the identity of the Dalits, therefore the table has registered the names of the traditional occupations in the first column.

This table is about the intergenerational change of traditional occupations among the Dalits. Third column incorporate the percentages of grandfathers who are engaged in traditional occupations, similarly fifth column has got the proportions of father engaged in traditional occupations and the last column records the proportions of respondents engaged in traditional occupations. The conditions of the grandfathers show that except the Bagdi it was high among all communities. It was as high as 100% among the Jalodas and Bormon while 90% or more than that among the Robidas, Namashudra, Horijan and Kaiputra. In the context of Bagdi an exceptional situation was found because only 43.9% of their grandfathers were engaged in traditional occupation indication how much early the process of occupational change set in among them. With the Dhopa the grandfather's involvement in traditional occupations was also high because it was 80%. In the generation of the fathers involvement in traditional occupation was almost similar to the generation of the grandfather. It very much implies that occupational mobility was not a case for the previous two generation representing more or less the scenario of stagnancy. So whatever change is noticed regarding occupational status has actually happened in the generation of respondents implying that the dynamics of change has gained the real momentum only in the recent period. More or less among all communities change is noticeable but there are a few who experience the most in this regard. Dhopa and Namashudra will be most pertinent example of what we have said above. Among the Bagdi the pace of change has continued unabated. The respective proportions show that only 7.3% among the Bagdi are at present engaged in traditional occupations. In Dhopa community only 42.5% are engaged in traditional occupation indicating the process of occupational change. In the context of Namashudra 53.8% are engaged in traditional occupation of cultivation. In a relative sense the pace of intergenerational change is lowest among the Horijan because 82% of present generation is still engaged in traditional occupation of cleaning. Nearly 25% to 30% change is noticed among the four other communities namely Robidas, Jalodas, Bormon and Kaiputra.

Table 8: Traditional occupation of respondent, father and grandfather

Community wise Traditional Occupation	Grandfather		Father		Respondent	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1. Robidas - Cobbler	37	94.9	36	92.3	29	74.4
2. Jalodas - Fisherman	40	100	40	100	31	77.5
3. Namashudra – Farmer	73	91.3	75	93.8	43	53.8
4. Horijan - Sweeper	48	96	49	98	41	82
5. Dhopa – Laundry man	32	80	33	82.5	17	42.5
6. Bormon- Fisherman	45	100	45	100	35	77.8
7. Bagdi – Hunting	18	43.9	17	41.5	3	7.3

8. Kaiputra) - Pig rear	36	90	35	87.5	28	70
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3.4 Housing condition:

If we want to understand the conditions of the Dalits from different angles housing condition could be one such. There is a close relation between economic and housing condition. Those who are better off can afford a house built of concrete while the poor can not do so. Now the question is how the housing condition will be defined. In this section we have chosen a number of features to define housing condition which include physical structure of a house, nature of ventilation, level of dryness and types of light used.

3.4.1 Physical structure of the house:

The housing structure comprises of 6 categories. Thatched means the walls are made of bamboo fence and the roof is made of straw. Mud means the wall are made of mud and the roof is either made of straw or tin. Tin shade means the entire house is built with tin. Adha paka means the walls are made of bricks and the roof is made of tin. Paka means entire house is built with brick. Other indicates structure with mixed housing materials such as a combination of thatched, tin shed and adha paka.

If the paka house represents the best housing structure then the Dhopa community is ahead of the rests because 47.5% of them dwelt in such house. There are 8% among the Horijan who also dwelt in paka house while 2.6% among the Rabidas was having such attribute. It means there are five other communities do not dwell in paka house. If tin shed is the symbol of moderate housing structure then it is the representative type among eight communities except the Horijan. Instead the Horijan exemplifies a special condition with extreme polarity, it means there are many among them who live in thatched or mud made house. In a sense Kaiputra community's lives in the houses with poorly made structure of thatch and mud in a greater magnitude compared to the rest and interestingly Dhopa made themselves distinct from others with the majority living in tin shed and paka houses. There is a substantial proportion among all communities except Dhopa community who lived in thatched house.

Table 9: Structure of main house among different communities

Name of Community	Structure of Main House					
	Thatched	Mud	Tin shed	Adha paka	Paka	Other
	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %
1. Robidas	30.8	5.1	59.0		2.6	2.6
2. Jalodas		25.0	50.0			25.0
3. Namashudra	21.3	8.8	70.0			
4. Horijan	28.0	8.0	4.0	38.0	8.0	14.0
5. Dhopa	2.5		45.0	5.0	47.5	
6. Bormon (Jele)	33.3	15.6	51.1			
7. Bagdi	39.0	2.4	48.8			9.8
8. Kaiputra	32.5	22.5	22.5	2.5		20.0

3.4.2 Household ventilation and dryness

Since we are discussing the condition of the houses where the Dalit community lives, looking into the condition of the rooms of the houses will be a fruitful exercise. Except the Namashudra most communities live in a condition not so well in terms of ventilation and dryness of the floor. More than 38% of the Nmashudra lived in open and airy houses and 27.4% lived in the houses with the floor being dry. Among the Bormon more than 24% lived in open and airy houses. A very large percentage among the Bagdi, Kaiputra and Jalodas lived in the houses with damp floor while among the Rabidas, Bormon and Horijan it is more than half. However a substantial percentage (42%) of the Harijan lived in the houses with dry floor indicating relatively good living condition.

Table 10: Household environment among different communities

Name of Community	Household Environment			
	Damp floor	Dry Floor	Dark and closed	Open and airy
	%	%	%	%
1. Robidas	55.6	28.9	15.6	0.0
2. Jalodas	70.9	1.8	27.3	0.0
3. Namashudra	7.1	27.4	27.4	38.1
4. Horijan	54.0	42.0	4.0	0
5. Dhopa	7.8	37.3	37.3	17.6
6. Bormon (Jele)	58.5	0.0	17.0	24.5
7. Bagdi	78.0	2.4	17.1	2.4
8. Kaiputra	85.0	15.0		

3.4.3 Types of Lights

The types of light used by the Dalits are also linked with the standard of living maintained by them. Electricity is expensive compare to the other two types of light described in the table. More then 87% of the Dhopa use electricity whereas more than 71% of the Bormon use so. Lowest use of electricity is found among the Jalodas which is only 2.5%. It is also very low among the Bagdi which is 7.3%, relatively better among the Horijan which is 52%. The worst is noticed among the Kaiputra without any electricity. A kind of mixed situation is found among the Dalit communities regarding the use of electricity.

There is a correspondence between the magnitude of the use of electricity and other types of light namely hurican/lamp and burner/koopi, it means if the use of one type is low then it will be logically high in the cases of other types . As a reflection the use of hurricane is found highest among the Kaiputra, 82.5%, in the same manner 77.5% of the Jalodas use koopi. Since the use of electricity is high among the Bormon thus the use of hurrican or koopi is low with them.

Table 11: Type of Light used by different communities

Community	Electricity	Hurrican / lamp	Burner / Koopi	Other
	%	%	%	%

1. Robidas	10.3	30.8	56.4	2.6
2. Jalodas	2.5	17.5	77.5	2.5
3. Namashudra	28.8	57.5	13.8	
4. Horijan	52.0	4.0	44.0	
5. Dhopa	87.5	10.0		2.5
6. Bormon	71.1	15.6	11.1	2.2
7. Bagdi	7.3	68.3	22.0	2.4
8. Kaiputra		82.5	17.5	

3.6 Ownership of asset:

3.6.1 Ownership of homestead land:

Following table shows the ownership of homestead land. It is classified as own land, parent's land and khas land. The category which did not match with the above three categories is clubbed as other. The community Jalodas has got the highest proportion who own the land homestead is located. There are two communities namely, Horijan and Bormon without a single person whose homestead was located on own land or father's land. Their homesteads are located in different categories of land. For example, the land of the Bormon is classified as 'vested property' which is the legacy of the law called 'enemy property'. The homestead land of all the Harijans 100% is owned by the Municipality. A substantial proportion of the Bagdi's 56.1% live on railway land.

Table 12: Ownership of Homestead Land

Name of Community	Type of Homestead land							
	Own Land		Father's Land		Khash land		Other	
	HH	%	HH	%	HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	8	21.1	5	13.2	15	39.5	10	26.3
2. Jalodas	29	72.5	7	17.5	0		4	10.0
3. Namashudra	50	62.5	24	30.0	0		6	7.5
4. Horijan	0		0		0		50	100.0
5. Dhopa	9	22.5	21	52.5	0		10	25.0
6. Bormon	0		0		0		45	100.0
7. Bagdi	11	26.8	7	17.1	0		21	56.1
8. Kaiputra	15	37.5	5	12.5	6	15.0	14	35.0

3.6.2 Average household assets:

As we know asset ownership is another indicator of economic condition like the physical structure of the house and it may be divided into different types. In this section it is divided as productive and consumer durable assets. The productive assets includes the items necessary to carry out livelihood such as land, livestock, poultry or occupational equipment while the consumer durable assets includes like housing materials, furniture, clothes, household items, vehicles etc. In the respective table asset value has been presented in Taka as reported by the respondents. The study findings suggest that the Dhopa community has the highest amount of productive and consumer durable assets among the eight communities (Tk.1,96,800 and Tk.98,130) In terms of productive asset next comes the Jalodas who reported Tk.82646 as productive asset.

Regarding productive assets the Kaiputras are the lowest and second lowest are the Horijans. It is also seen that the amount of productive asset is more than the consumer durable asset among the Robidas, Jalodas, Nomoshudra and the Bagdis, while for the rest of the four communities it is the opposite.

Table 13: Average house hold assets among different community

Community	Average Productive Assets (TK)	Average Consumer Durable Assets (TK)
Robidas	27808.5	19194.4
Jalodas	82646.3	22539.8
Namashudra	63885.0	25817.0
Horijan	16723.5	21405.4
Dhopa	98130.0	196800.8
Bormon	24400.7	25787.2
Bagdi	44240.9	28343.0
Kaiputra	8529.3	26965.7

3.6 Economic condition and composition of asset:

Prevalence of marginal economic condition is observed among the Robidas community with many of them living hand to mouth barely enabled to support the entire family. Traditional occupation of cobbler is still common among them, at present the daily average income of the Robidas is Taka 50 – 80/- that fluctuates seasonally. During winter and religious festival (Eid and Puja), they could earn up to Taka 150-200/- daily, while during the monsoon season, due to transportation problem, their daily income plummets down to Taka 30-40/- and sometimes nil. The following observation by a Robidas member is illuminating, *“Mass production of footwear in various factories has lead to affordable price of regular footwear. Most people opt for buying a new pair rather than getting the old pair repaired, thus depriving us Muchis of our regular source of income.”* For survival a few changed occupation but these were not lucrative because of poor educational background. The job of rickshaw pulling or cycle mechanic was those. At times they had to starve if they failed to earn any income which means their earning varied season to season. During lean seasons they had to take loan for survival. Many households were found to live on khasland. Those very, few who owned the land or inherited from their father, were at threat from the land grabbers who were local political and influential groups. For example Sri Ruplal Chandra Robidas from Dewria village was given 50 decimal of cultivable land by the government. Even though he had valid land documents, he was not able to get possession of that land as it was occupied by some Muslims.

Many Jalodases were found in acute financial state. In the past the Jalodases were financially well off when fishes were available in plenty. Many of them had cultivable lands. But at present most of them had sold off their lands due to economic hardship. Some have migrated to other places of Bangladesh and India when faced extreme

poverty. They used to sell fish door to door which has become difficult now. Many Jalodases owned their homestead land inherited from their father and some still lived in their father's land. Only a few lived in others land. They had also minimum household assets. Among the productive assets, the most valuable were the fishing equipment. They are also dependent on moneylenders as they had very few alternative sources of income. About TK. 50,000-60,000 are needed to buy boats and nets for fishing which hardly they could afford pushing them into the fold of the moneylenders. The moneylenders eagerly lend the money on condition that the fishermen will sell their catch only to the moneylenders and no one else. The moneylenders await the arrival of the boats from the fishing grounds. They buy all the fish at half the market price, and do not allow the fishermen to take home a single fish for their own consumption. There have been many instances that if the money lender came to know that they brought any fish for their family, they (moneylenders) would immediately take away that fish from their home telling them (fishermen) that they could always have fish the next day. *The practice of money lending in this condition is locally known as "Dadon."* They also reported that, if they do not take Dadon from the *local moneylenders then their* boats, nets or even boat engines get 'mysteriously' lost implying foul play by the money lenders. If their present level of vulnerability continues then they will not be freed from the clutch of the moneylenders. The control of the money lenders is so vast that they could even grab their boats and nets in the sea at the time of fishing, if the Jalodas do not comply with the undue pressures of the money lenders.

What is interesting to note that the process of change has crept into the life of the Jalodas community also, there are many who do not need to Dadon" from the local moneylenders. Instead they seek loan from various NGOs. They are independent fish catchers and sellers and are not under anyone's control. However, due to difficult transportation they cannot sell the fish outside. The only transport to the main land is the trawler which is not cost effective if the fish is marketed in the main land. As a consequence marketing fish in the island is a compulsion for the Jalodas at present. To whom they sell they are the whole sellers hailed from the main land. They also reported that sometimes the local Muslims rob them of their catch while they return from the sea. The actual fishing season is only for three months (Asar, Srabon and Bhadro). During this period they can catch plenty of Hilsa fish and therefore can earn the most. The rest of the nine months they earn comparatively less. But during Poush, Magh and Boishak, Joishtha their income is the least due to drop in catch. Local explanation says that availability of fish in the sea is closely related to the variation in the salinity level.

The proportion of poor and landless among the Namoshudra is no less. Of the total population, only a small number had cultivable lands while the others were landless and even homeless. Some are engaged in agriculture cultivating paddy, jute, onion, bitter gourd, okra, watermelon, pumpkin are the common produces. It is also found that modern variety of paddy is extensively cultivated in this village with good facilities for irrigation and crop storage. Some of them also own machines to thresh paddy.

Most of the poor Nomoshudros earn their living as day labors. Their daily income varies seasonally which ranges from Tk 50 to Tk 120 depending on the seasons. Because of

gender discrimination women receive less than that. When the wage level rises high workers come here as far as from Jhenidah and Kushtia for harvesting and threshing of paddy. During Falgun, Chaitra, Agrahon and Poush when the local employment opportunity slumps down people from this area travel to other districts as earth workers. But the Boishakh month offers many jobs due to the Boro harvesting and the remuneration is also high. According to the account of Brindaban, a local Namoshudra water logging during the monsoon makes their movement difficult to get jobs.

In the course of case study we met a few Namoshudra (Brindaban and Mukul) who had their own ideas about the nature and magnitude of the local problems and the possible ways out. Glimpses of those are furnished below. Brindaban said, "*We are an illiterate minority. People of other communities despise us because we are fishermen. We are called untouchables. We are poor thus we are illiterate.*"

The case study among the Harijan revealed some special aspects. Their socio-economic condition was found very bad. Almost all of them are municipal cleaners, their working hours is limited from 6 to 8 am, monthly remuneration ranges from Tk.300 to Tk. 375. Those who work in private establishments earn more than above. To compensate their inadequate income they need to work in more than one place. At present Municipal Corporation pay them festival bonus as well as advance in the month of Chaitra (March-April). Case study on Harijan also showed that none of them owned any land for their houses, earlier it is described that most of them lived on municipal lands.

In course of case study it is also found that among the Harijan there is also further subdivision namely Busfores and Hela who are also unequal in terms of socioeconomic condition. In this case the condition of the Hela is better than the Busfores in respect of economy, social life, education, health and environment. It is because the Hela group is educated, do better jobs and thrifty. The other group is backward which is further worsened by their alcoholism. Rather they have become indebted now. There are a number of important factors that has slowed down/stagnated change in their overall condition which include continuity with the traditional occupation and competition from the locals for the job of cleaners. However a number of NGOs are now serving the Harijans to improve the latter's socio-economic condition. Community Development Foundation (CDF) and Pollisree are a few important roles in this regard.

The case study among the Dhopa has shown that their economic condition is now closely related to what is now taking place regarding their change of traditional occupation. Many of them felt that continuing with their traditional occupation has become difficult because of decrease of washing space, water and drying space compared to the past. Open space and ponds which were abundant in the past has now squeezed due to population pressure and urbanization. Above factors have been coupled with the establishment of commercial laundry that has attracted the washing clothes by the people. Although a few tried to cope with the changed situation by using supply water but could not continue it for long time because of prohibition by WASA. Occurrence of diseases such as Asthma, TB and others due to use of bleaching powder and other chemicals at the time of washing discouraged many to discontinue their

traditional occupation. Lack of social respect towards their occupation also influenced a few to change it. On average a Dhopa can earn around Tk 3000 in a month which more or less remain same through out the year although at present newly established garments' factories place order for washing to them. In the urban areas personal washing is relatively lesser than those by the institutions like hotels, clinics, hospitals, decorators and others.

In the case study among the Bormon revealed the presence of poverty by and large. Their poverty should be understood in terms of the occupation of fishing that they pursue now. Although they are traditional fisherman very few Jeles have their own fishing boat and nets indicating the effect of poverty. It is so difficult to exclusively depend on fishing that many of them supplement their income by working as day labors or assistant in others boats. Those who rent boat and fishing net from the rich people have to pay a large amount of interest as high as 70% of the catch sometimes. In the case study areas fishermen used to catch fish in Surma river and the adjoining haor due to change of river use policy they lagged behind the rich people to pay a large amount of money as lease value being deprived of fishing opportunities. Their predicament has been further worsened as the new people have started fishing who are not traditional fishermen. As the number of traditional and non-traditional fishermen increased to a large extent that the available fishing places are not sufficient for fishing. The income of the traditional fishermen has dropped as a result.

The peak season of fishing is only 4 months (Shrabon, Bhadro, Ashshin and Kartik⁴) ranging from mid July to mid November. During peak season average daily income may go up to taka 300 or more. However, this is only possible for the Jeles who own boats and nets, but those who fish on share or work as day labor in other boats may earn up to Tk.100 -120 a day. During lean season daily income may come down to less than taka 50 and sometimes none.

It is further found that except for a very few, most of the families survive on loans during lean season, and are deeply immersed in loan. They have taken several loans from different NGOs. Sometimes they failed to repay installment from normal income and cut households expenditure to repay the loan leading to starvation. Some of them observed that if they are given flexibility in loan repayment they could avoid hardship.

Case study among the Bagdi has also shown that the prevalence of extreme poverty except a few. Majority did not have regular income living from hand to mouth. Many of them could not afford three a meal a day always. In the case study area most of the Bagdis live in the Railway lands. Some said that splitting of land among the inheritors led to the creation of near landless situation.

At the most they worked for 4 or 5 days at a stretch, and then had to sit idle at home for 15-20 days in a month because of lack of employment opportunities. In the dry season

⁴ Months in Bangla calendar: Shrabon (Julu-Aug), Bhadro (Aug-Sept), Ashshin (Sept-Oct), Kartik (Oct-Nov)

employment opportunity is relatively better particularly in the construction sites. At the time of harvesting opportunity for agricultural work increases. Those who are not comfortable with sitting idle owing to lack of employment opportunities travelled to different parts of the country (Dhaka, Ishwardi, Syedpur, Shariatpur, Madaripur, Faridpur) to find job.

Bagdi women are also the victims of wage discrimination. The women who work as agricultural workers received only TK 60-TK 70 compared to TK 100-TK120 by the male apart from three meals. In the construction sites Bagdi women workers were victims of the exploitation of the middle men locally known as *sardar*. They take a commission from the wages of the women workers. At the time of unemployment in the village some Bagdi men also work as rickshaw pullers which ensure sometimes reasonable income (TK180 each day).

As other Dalit communities Bagdis are also linked with NGO program at present by taking micro-credit. In the case study area the local NGO called Jonosheba Kalyan Somity has now become popular among the Bagdis.

The main source of income of the Kaiputras of the village Dhakuria is pig rearing as revealed in the case study. There was the practice of pig renting among them providing livelihood of the poor members. By raising neighbor's pigs one could earn a monthly salary of Tk. 500 to 1000, although very difficult to run a family with this petty amount. So they fell back on taking loans from different sources. Sometimes extra income could be earned from tending pig when the pig owner gifts the baby pigs / piglets as gift after one year of rearing. Those who work in agriculture faced seasonal fluctuations in wage level, for example, at the harvesting, the remuneration is Tk. 120 while only Tk. 50 in other season.

Half of the Bagdis in the case did not have own homesteads and live on other's land. Most sold their properties due to poverty or other reasons. According to them, in the past many Kaiputras were well off when they had cultivable lands and were engaged in cultivation. At present, households who have own land or inherited land from their father has only one or two kathas left for homestead. As said above the rest either lives on others land or khash land.

Kaiputras are looked down upon by the local well off Muslims, never they were invited on a social occasion, but called upon when needed for agricultural work. On the other hand Kaiputra women suffered from wage discrimination.

In the case study among the Korninidas it was found that they were no less poor. As many of them are engaged as artisans their daily remuneration was found to range from Tk50 to Tk125 not enough to meet consumption expenditures. Among them who are agricultural workers earned Tk 40 to Tk 150 in a day. They faced hardship more during the Ashwin and Kartik because of lean season. Boishak and Joystha months bring them solvency because it is the time of harvesting. But even in these months they have to face hardship because their expenditure exceeds the income.

Besides pig rearing and agricultural work Korninidases were also involved in other occupations. For example some of them were bamboo tip makers, municipal sweepers and others .

There was a time when all the Kornidases had at least some land, but now only 7 or 8 families own land. The others had to sell their land to overcome hardship.

In the case study Malo were found very poor. They said that it was better in the past and gradually deteriorated. Similar situation was also found among the Maimol. Previously they were very well off. Around 1971, they had to pay Tk.500 as annual tax and could catch as much fish as they could throughout the year. The introduction of improved fishing attracted the non-traditional fishermen in fishing, setting in competition for the same amount of or decreased amount of fish. All such developments worsened the economic condition of the Maimol. In the past earning TK500 to TK1000 daily from catching fish was not very difficult this has now dropped to mere TK100 to TK200. To cope with the hardship the Maimol are now largely dependent on the borrowing from micro-finance institution.

More than two third of the Baheras are very poor even failing to ensure three square meals a day, the case study revealed. They work as labor in different seasons and earn Tk. 70 per day on average. They also travel outside the villages for jobs. Often their search for does not result in positive result. Nor do they receive any help from the government. The case study among the Baheras disclosed further plight among the women. Many of them are now abandoned by husbands sitting idle at home, undergoing penury. However, almost everyone live in the ancestral homestead.

As fishing is passing through different difficulties as livelihood, the Rajbongshi are also embroiled in different problems since they are traditionally fishermen. The problems like decreasing water bodies is also affecting them as the case study among them revealed it. They are relatively fortunate because many were found to live in ancestral homesteads as many of them had also cultivable land, indicating a better past. Now differentiation has set in among them with a number of landless Rajbongshi who depend on weaving fishing net apart from wage work. A few has also started raising poultry birds. Like other communities the Rajbongshi women also reported of wage discrimination.

Severe poverty has also engulfed the Rishi, traditionally cobbler. As a cobbler their earning does not cross TK40 or TK50 in a day even at the time of festival when people dress up nicely. It forced many of them to earn by working as manual laborer while they can higher. Lack of sustainability in terms of income is a significant source of vulnerability among the Rishi.

Homestead land is common among all eight communities. Livestock and poultry are also common indicating the importance of own initiative to mange subsistence. Agricultural

land is not among all, again it is related to the main occupation of each community. Similarly some have got fishing equipment.

Table 14: Composition of productive assets among different communities

Productive Assets	Rabidas	Jalodas	Namashudra	Harijan	Dhopa	Bormon	Bagdi	Kaiputra
Homestead (Boshot Bari – Land)								
Agricultural land								
Orchard								
Live stock (cow, goat, pigs etc.)								
Poultry (Chickens / Ducks)								
Occupational/ agricultural equipment								
Others (specify)								
Pond								
Fishing equipment								

Common pattern is observed in the context of consumer durables among eight communities.

Table 15: Composition of consumer durables among different communities

Consumer Durable Assets	Rabidas	Jalodas	Namashudra	Harijan	Dhopa	Bormon	Bagdi	Kaiputra
House materials								
Furniture								
Cooking utensils croceries								
Watch / clock								
Fan / light								
Garments/Clothing								
Mattress/pillow/ blanket								
Radio								
Cycle								
Rickshaw								
Boat								
Van								
Sewing machine								

3.7 Income & expenditure:

In the review of socioeconomic condition attention has also been given to the issue of income and expenditure in a systematic manner. Respondents were asked about their

all types of income and expenditure based on their experience. A particular point that strikes out is the fact that they earn less than what they need to spend. Certainly such gap is one of the main causes of poor socio-economic condition of the Dalits. As the relevant table shows income and expenditure both are highest among the Dhopa community while income is the lowest among the Robidas and Bagdi. But the expenditure of the Bagdi is higher than the Robidas. The difference between income and expenditure is comparatively less among the Nomoshudras and the Horijans. Among the Jalodas and Bormon, the difference between income and expenditure is almost 50% while among the Bagdis it is more than 50%.

Food is the essential component of expenditure, how much proportion is spent on it also determines the extent of non-food expenditure. In other words, if the respective margin is small, non-food expenditure which may include the items like education, health or housing will receive equally small amount. It is seen that maximum amount of money is usually spent on food. On average 77.64% of the total expenditure is spent on food. The highest expenditure on food is made by the Harijans which is 88.1% followed by the Bormons, 86.6%. Comparatively the Dhopas spend much less proportion of the total expenditure on food, 60.2%. Fig 8 shows income and expenditure and Fig 9 shows amount spent on food compared to total expenditure.

Table 16: Income and expenditure

Community	Income	Total Expenditure	Food Expenses	
	in Taka	in Taka	Cost in Taka	% of total expenditure
Robidas	14327.37	21669.4	15658.08	72.3
Jalodas	22257.69	43753.5	34170	78
Namashudra	21182.35	24821.3	19594.94	78.9
Horijan	27997.65	33414.3	29453.9	88.1
Dhopa	65707.34	82471.4	49671.3	60.2
Bormon	23152.94	40002.7	34642.67	86.6
Bagdi	14793.92	47287	36984.27	78.2
Kaiputra	17004.14	29669.7	23367.5	78.8
Average Expenditure		37677.61	30442.83	77.64

Chapter Four Health

Health is a broad issue and an important component in the context of socio-economic condition. It embraces several aspects like morbidity, hygiene, health seeking behavior and the likes. In this section selected aspects are taken into consideration which would sensitize on the respective condition among the Dalits.

4.1 Source of drinking water and ownership of source of water:

Main source of drinking water for all communities is tube well, It is 100% or nearly so for all groups. There are two specific factors helped raising the above proportion so high. The Department of Public Health Engineering or DPHE extended different types of support to increase the use of hand tube well and secondly, privately owned hand tube well is used by the neighbor by virtue of neighborhood principle. However, sometimes owners of such hand tube well limit its use by the neighbor to control its wear and tear.

Table 17: Source of drinking water among different communities

Community	Tube well	Pond	River	Well	Other
	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %
1. Robidas	100.0		2.5		
2. Jalodas	100.0	2.5			
3. Namashudra	98.8	6.25	1.25	1.25	
4. Horijan	100.0				
5. Dhopa	92.5			2.5	7.5
6. Bormon	100.0				
7. Bagdi	100.0				
8. Kaiputra	100.0	5			

In the next table empirical support will be found for the observation made above that private ownership does not prevent the use of hand tube well by the neighbors for drinking water. It is because of the fact that in the above table it is found that almost all groups in a very large proportion reported the use of drinking water from tube well. In the subsequent table only Dhopa reported to have privately owned hand tube well by 86.5%, others in a lesser proportion. For example, the Horijan is in second position with 50% household followed by Bagdi (34.1%) and Robidas (30.8%). The Bormons and Jalodas do not privately own hand tube well shared. Among the Kaiputras only 10% own tube well.

Table 18: Ownership of sources of water

	Tube well	Pond	Well
1. Robidas	30.8		
2. Jalodas			
3. Namashudra	29.1	20	
4. Horijan	50.0		
5. Dhopa	86.5		100
6. Bormon	0.0		
7. Bagdi	34.1		
8. Kaiputra	10.0		

4.1.1 Other use of water:

The issue of drinking water is touched upon above. However there are other uses of water as we commonly know – washing, cleaning bathing and others. Through case study we gathered information on this issue described below. **Most of the** Jalodas bathe in the ponds within the neighborhood. It is hand tube well and pond that are used by the Namshudra for other purposes of water. The use of hand tube well for the purpose of cleaning or bathing is widespread among a section of the Horijan chosen for case study and the CARE Bangladesh was the provider of tube well for many among the Horijan. The Dhopa community chosen for case study also use hand tube well for the purpose of washing or bathing. The Barman of the case study was found to carry out bathing and cleaning in the adjoining river Surma. The Bagdi of the case study was found to have used pond for bathing and cleaning. The Kaiputra of the case also used pond for the other purposes of water.

4.2 Sanitary Latrines

Sanitation or the use of latrine is and important of health. Causation of disease is largely dependent on the use of latrine. Following table shows use of type of latrines by the households. 100% Dhopa HHs and 74 % Horijan HHs use sanitary latrine. 45% Jalodas HHs, 43% Nomoshudra HHs and 31% Bormon HHs use Slab latrines. Use of pit latrine is seen among the Jalodas. Kacha temporary is more prevalent among the Bagdi, Kaiputra and the Bormons. A good number of Robidas 25.6% and 17.4% Kaiputra still use open field and bushes for defecating.

Table 19: Type of latrine used by different communities

Community	Sanitary latrine	Slab latrine	Pit latrine	Kacha (permanent)	Kacha (temporary)	Open field / bushes	Other
	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %	HH %
1. Robidas	2.6	15.4	2.6	20.5	33.3	25.6	
2. Jalodas	5.0	45.0	27.5	2.5	15.0	5.0	
3. Namashudra	3.8	43.0	1.3	30.4	8.9	11.4	1.3
4. Horijan	74.0		6.0	4.0	12.0	4.0	
5. Dhopa	100.0						
6. Bormon (Jele)	17.8	31.1		15.6	31.1	4.4	
7. Bagdi	9.8	19.5	2.4		61.0	7.3	
8. Kaiputra	5.0	15.0		7.5	55.0	17.5	

4.3 Morbidity and health seeking behavior:

A number of diseases were reported by the Rabidas to have afflicted them which include chicken pox, jaundice during summer. At the time of monsoon they suffered from fever, diarrhea, boils and skin disease. The children suffered the most during monsoon season. Findings from the case study suggested prevalence of gastric and physical weaknesses among men and women while leucorrhoea and menstrual problems among the women. There were also some cases of tuberculosis.

For common health problem Rabidas usually sought health service from the local village doctor, but during severe type of illness they went to Dhunot Upazila Health Complex that was 15 kms away as the case study showed. Most of them preferred allopathic medicine. Very few had faith on herbal medicine. They also managed diarrhea with oral saline. When they were unable to avail health service, they usually bought medicine from the local pharmacy, which was prescribed to them by the doctor during their earlier visit.

Jalodash community is deprived of proper health service according to the case study. They usually cannot avail quality health care due to financial hardship. For minor ailments, they seek treatment from village paramedics and at times seek service from the Union Health Complex. For major illness they go to Sadar Hospitals at district level. In case of serious illness and complicated cases they usually go to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. Common diseases prevailing are diarrhea, fever, cold, jaundice, skin disease etc.

Namashudra reported in the case study limited incidences of illness. Fever and cold are more prevalent in the winter. Fever is also experienced in summer.. There are six physically handicapped among them. In case of illness the Namshudra laborers seek treatment from the village doctors. Now the health service of NGO is sometimes sought by them apart from the community clinic or Upazilla hospital particularly at the time of critical illness. In addition, there is also the Family Planning Centre, which particularly provides family planning services, iron tablets, antenatal care and advice.

The Harijan children mostly suffer from water borne diseases and the adults from tuberculosis, arthritis, skin infection, jaundice and typhoid. Excessive intoxication (women also take alcohol) also hampers their health. For health service they usually preferred to visit an MBBS doctor in his private chamber and sometimes availed of treatment from the Sadar Hospital. A few went to the medicine shops and took the advice of the shopkeeper and bought medicine.

The Bormon reported the incidence of water-borne diseases, jaundice, fever, cough and diarrhea during monsoon and late monsoon. The children suffered the most during this period. During winter the old people as well as children suffered from pneumonia and chicken pox. Findings from the household survey suggested prevalence of gastric and physical weaknesses among men and women while leucorrhoea and menstrual problems among the women. There were also some cases of tuberculosis.- same as robidas?

For health service they usually visit Government Sadar Hospital and Government Upazila Health Complex. They trust allopathic medicine more than other ones. Sometimes they needed to borrow money to purchase necessary medicines. When they were unable to avail health service, they usually bought medicine from the local pharmacy that was prescribed to them by the doctor during their earlier visit. Nowadays NGOs also provide health services (we have to check later on in external linkage) . They gained awareness on various health matters like child vaccination, vaccination for pregnant mothers, vitamin-fortified food, child delivery by trained birth assistants, to transfer risky pregnancy case to hospitals quickly, to heed doctor's advice, primary treatment for diarrhea, to seek advice from health workers.

Bagdi community of the case study suffered most during monsoon with diarrhea, and during summer with measles and chicken pox. They said that they often eat panta bhat or watered rice kept overnight which might have caused disease. The prevalence of diseases is less in the winter as they said. They reported the unavailability of doctors nearby. The nearest Family Planning clinic was about two kilometers away and do not remain open always. The poor among them suffer more due to inadequate health services. In case of serious illness they visit the Government Upazila Health Complex and Sadar Hospital. Buying medicines sometimes become difficult. They felt that they were not attended properly in the health centers.

Kornidas of the case study often depend on paramedic for treatment. However in the case serious illness they travel far for a better treatment. The Maimol in the case study reported of diarrhea and malaria in the village. The adults suffered mostly from fever and diarrhea, while the children, pneumonia and jaundice. They also travel far to get better treatment. Bahera like others take treatment from Upazilla health complex. The Rishis reported of their serious problems in receiving treatment. They are poor and in case of illness they either bear the pain in silence or seek the services of village medics or herbalists.

4.4 Hand washing and hygiene

Personal hygiene was also included in the review. Rabidas was less aware of hygiene issues. For example most of them washed their hands before eating only with water, except a few who used soap. After defecating most of them washed their hands only with water, some used soap while others used ash or soil.

Similar situation was found among the Jalodas regarding hygiene awareness and practices. Use of soap for hand before eating or after defecation is not common. They are not much aware of the bad effect of using soil to wash hand. The pattern what is found among the Jalodas is also comparable in the case of Namashudra. However use of soap in washing hands is slightly higher among the Harijan – 56.3% before eating and 72.3% after defecation. Among the Bormon the use of soap is not common before eating to clean hand while slightly higher in the case of defecation. It is still worse among the Bagdi before eating while better than this after defecation.

Dhopa: Interestingly, compared to the other communities' hand washing practice with soap is higher among the Harijans. 56.3% washes hand with soap before eating and 72.3% washes hands with soap after defecating. A few others used ash or soil

Bormon: Every one practiced hand washing before eating only with water, except a few who used soap. After defecating however they washed their hands either with soap, ash or soil.

Bagdi: They did not practice hygiene and cleanliness. Most of them washed their hands before eating only with water, except a few who used soap. After defecating nearly half of the Bagdi population used soap for hand washing, while others used ash or soil, and some with only water.

Table 20: Hand wash before eating

	Rabidas	Jalodas	Namashudra	Harijan	Dhopa	Bormon	Bagdi	Kaiputra
Only water	92.3	95.0	92.4	72.9	50.0	93.3	95.1	100.0
With soap	15.4	7.5	6.3	56.3	52.5	15.6	7.3	-
With ash	-	-	1.3	-	-	-	-	-
With soil	-	-	1.27	-	-	-	-	-
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 21: Hand wash after defecation

	Rabidas	Jalodas	Namashudra	Harijan	Dhopa	Bormon	Bagdi	Kaiputra
Only water	43.6	52.5	16.7	46.8	10.0	42.2	14.6	15.0
With soap	41.0	32.5	14.1	72.3	97.5	62.2	48.8	42.5
With ash	38.5	45.0	38.5	27.7		57.8	17.1	30.0
With soil	35.9	25.0	41.0	10.6		24.4	19.5	12.5
Total								

Chapter Five Food

It is hardly needed to underline the significance of food; its timely and adequate availability is a matter of great importance with a wider implication. Making food available in a market situation is a mark of economic soundness in the sense it presupposes one's adequate income. Discussion of the following section will show how significantly the Dalits are dependent on market for food as they hardly command own source of subsistence, implying in turn their dependence on income to ensure food. In theoretical terms food availability is an important indicator of poverty status of a household or population.

5.1 Food Security:

The food security status was classified into three categories:

- i. Always in short supply;
- ii. Sometimes in short supply;
- iii. Just enough.

All the different Dalit communities reported the shortage of food supply almost always. The Robidas suffered the most the shortage of food supply. As many as 84.6% always are in short supply of food, 12.8% some time run short of food while 2.6% has just enough. On the other hand, the Dhopas are the least to suffer from food shortage, about 50% of them said that they have barely enough. Only 25% of Dhopas, always have shortage of food stock and 30% face the problem sometime. Jalodas and Harijan also reported the problem of regular short supply of food on a high proportion, 77.5% and 72%. Among the Bormon and Kaiputra also more than 50% reported so.

Table 22: Food security status

Communities	Always shortage		Sometimes shortage		Just enough	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Robidas	33	84.6	5	12.8	1	2.6
2. Jalodas	31	77.5	9	22.5	0	
3. Namashudra	30	37.5	47	58.8	3	3.8
4. Horijan	36	72.0	12	24.0	2	4.0
5. Dhopa	10	25.0	12	30.0	17	42.5
6. Bormon	29	64.4	16	35.6	0	
7. Bagdi	18	43.9	21	51.2	2	4.9
8. Kaiputra	23	57.5	17	42.5	0	

5.2 Number of meals taken

Findings reveal that the **Jalodas?**, Nomoshudra and the Dhopa are in a better condition in terms of how many meals in a day one can ensure, as more than 90% can ensure three meals per day. Second in place are the Bormons and Bagdis, while the Robidas are in the most difficult condition as more than 50% reported their inability to ensure

three meals a day. There are a few Robidas and Horijan households who can ensure one meal each day, implying the severity of poverty. In a nutshell five of the eight communities covered in the questionnaire survey are still immersed in food poverty to a significant extent to the level of hardcore poverty as they are unable to ensure two meals a day.

Table 23: Number of meals per day

Name of Community	Intake of Meals per Day (%)							
	One time		Two times		Three times		Four times	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Robidas	1	2.6	21	53.8	17	43.6	0	
2. Jalodas	0		3	7.5	37	92.5	0	
3. Namashudra	0		1	1.3	79	98.8	0	
4. Horijan	1	2.0	17	34.0	31	62.0	1	2.0
5. Dhopa	0		1	2.5	39	97.5	0	
6. Bormon (Jele)	0		12	26.7	33	73.3	0	
7. Bagdi	0		9	22.0	32	78.0	0	
8. Kaiputra	0		15	37.5	25	62.5	0	

5.4 Average quantity of rice consumed per capita

Following table 15 shows the average quantity of rice consumed each day on average among eight communities. Although how much rice is consumed is a part of poverty assessment, it is not possible to assess precisely in this table because the quantities of other food consumed is not known. However, according to a framework on the quantity of balanced food rice need to need to consumed minim 397 grams each day per person along with wheat, pulse, milk, oil, meat, fish, leafy and non-leafy vegetables, fruits and sugar (BRAC----). Findings suggest that on average a Nomoshudra adult person consume the most 59 0gram while the Dhopa and Harijan adult consume less than 400 gram of rice. Others hover in between 400 to 500 gram.

Table 24: Average amount of rice consumed per adult per day

Community	Total (KG)	Average(kg) (par head)
Robidas	67.5	0.43
Jalodas	107	0.45
Namashudra	198.5	0.59
Horijan	116	0.39
Dhopa	72	0.34
Bormon	117.65	0.47
Bagdi	77	0.44
Kaiputra	101.5	0.55

5.4 Source of Staple Food (Rice):

The sources of staple food have been classified into three categories:

- i. From own food production;

- ii. From market;
- iii. From other sources.

Above other sources may include food for work, or the employers of household maid/agricultural farm/hospital and others. However, rice is mostly purchased from the market. Only the Namasudras (38.8%) were the highest among those who produce own staple food, the Harijans were the highest in terms of procuring food from other sources. For the Dhopas and the Bormons the market is the only source. The Dalit communities and their respective sources of rice procurement are presented in the following table.

Table 25: Community-wise Source of Staple Food (Rice)

Communities	Own Production		Purchase from market		Others	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Robidas	1	2.6	37	94.9	8	20.5
2. Jalodas	0	-	39	97.5	5	12.5
3. Namashudra	31	38.8	62	77.5	3	3.8
4. Horijan	-	-	46	92.0	10	20.0
5. Dhopa	-	-	40	100.0	-	-
6. Bormon (Jele)	-	-	45	100.0	-	-
7. Bagdi	1	2.4	39	95.1	2	4.9
8. Kaiputra	1	2.5	40	100.0	-	-

5.5 Food practice and meal pattern:

“Panta”⁵ is popular for breakfast among the Rabidas while rice, dal and vegetables at lunch and dinner. They could not afford meat or fish except only on special occasions. At the time of festival (seasonal or religious) snacks mixed with puffed rice (chira/moori) and molasses are also adored. Sometimes sweets and fruits also dot the list. The popularity of panta at the time of breakfast is also reported by the Jalodas while a few prefer bread and tea. At lunch and dinner they usually take rice, dal and vegetables. However occasionally small fish or dried fish also dot their menu, no matter they are fishermen by occupation. Their festival food resembles the one said by the Rabidas (snacks with puffed rice and molasses). Those, who can afford also like sweets, yogurt and fruits, Among the Namashudra difference is not noticed regarding food types but the menu is slightly different. For example flour bread is popular at breakfast although rice and vegetable are also preferred. Among the Namashudra those who cannot afford rice at breakfast take panta. The foods at the time of festivals are similar to the ones preferred by the Rabidas or Jalodas. The food pattern of other communities such as Harijan, Dhopa, Bormon, Bagdi and Kaiputra are distinctly similar to the other communities. As a matter of fact the food like pork was not reported by any community as a preferred one.

⁵ “Panta” is stale rice. Usually boiled rice is kept overnight in water, and eaten the next day. Most common food among the poor in Bangladesh.

Chapter Six Vulnerability and Insecurity

Vulnerability and insecurity may originate from different social factors. For example livelihood failure is an important one. In this section the focus has been laid on the problems the Dalit communities faced in the context of education, working with other communities, types of natural disaster faced, problems encountered in accessing relief/shelter, legal aid, health service, social discrimination

6.1 Problems faced in children's education:

Children's education is an important matter in general, no need to mention how much important literacy is to acquire marketable skill. Following table reports on the simple magnitude in getting access or continuing education of the children. The highest is reported by the Kaiputras (95.8%), followed by the Jalodas (93.3%), Robidas (81%) and Bagdi (80%). who answered in affirmative, and the Bormons (67.6%) who answered in negative.

Table 26: Reporting the presence of problems in receiving children's education

Community	Yes	No
Robidas	81.0	19.0
Jalodas	93.3	6.6
Namashudra	68.0	32.0
Horijan	54.3	45.7
Dhopa	56.8	43.2
Bormon	32.4	67.6
Bagdi	80.0	20.0
Kaiputra	95.8	4.2

The later findings will also suggest that compared to social discrimination and lack of security, financial hardship is the major problem that affects access to education. Bormon reported by 100% that owing to poverty or the lack of money it become so difficult to continue the education of the children. Similar intensity of the problem of poverty in the context of pursuing children's education is also reported by Kaiputra and Harijan. Actually more than three fourths from other communities reported the significance of poverty. Only four communities accounted social discrimination affecting children's education.

Table 27: Type of problem faced in receiving education

Community	Poverty	Discrimination	Lack of security
Robidas	82.4	35.3	5.9
Jalodas	78.6		
Namashudra	79.4		
Horijan	94.7	36.8	5.3
Dhopa	76.2		16.7
Bormon	100.0		
Bagdi	75.0	41.7	
Kaiputra	95.7	8.7	4.3

6.2 Problem in working with other communities:

At the societal level interacting with the people from other religion and communities are necessary to carry out any type of occupational activities. It does not confine to between employer and employees by both in the office and farm colleagues and co-workers may belong to other religion. Since untouchability is an important feature of the Dalit attention to such problem will be worthy one in the context of their social and occupational life.

More than 55% of the Harijan reported to have encountered problem in working with others. It is 2.7% among the Dhopas. Five other communities reported to have faced problem to work with others with varying proportions. It is completely nil among the Bormon.

Table 28: Opinion regarding problem in working with other communities

Community	Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%
Robidas	3	8.6	32	91.4
Jalodas	7	18.4	31	81.6
Namashudra	17	22.7	58	77.3
Horijan	27	55.1	22	44.9
Dhopa	1	2.7	36	97.3
Bormon	0	0.0	45	100.0
Bagdi	2	5.1	37	94.9
Kaiputra	5	13.2	33	86.8

Those who reported problems were asked about types. Primarily four set of problems were recorded – poverty, discrimination as a Dalit, lack of information and transportation. Dhopa, Bagdi and Kaiputra pointed to social discrimination as a Dalit that affect working with others. Horijan also emphasized it much. Actually all communities felt it as a problem although there is variation in terms of proportion.

Table 29: Problem faced working in other communities

Community	Poverty		Discrimination for being a Dalit		Lack of information		Communication problem	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Robidas	1	33.3	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
Jalodas	1	14.3	3	42.9	1	16.7	3	50.0
Namashudra	0	0.0	10	58.8	6	35.3	1	5.9
Horijan	1	3.7	23	85.2	1	3.7	9	33.3
Dhopa	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Bagdi	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Kaiputra	0	0.0	5	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

6.3 Natural disaster encountered

Vulnerability also results from natural disaster when it destroys houses, cattles and human lives. The account of last five years was recorded. Major disasters reported for the last five years are floods, cyclones, flood and cyclone together and others. Flood

was encountered by six communities more than cyclone. Among Harijan and Bormon, 85.2% and 57.1% reported to have encountered cyclone than flood.

Table 30: Household response about types of natural disaster

Type of Natural Disaster	Name of Community															
	Robidas		Jalodas		Nama-shudra		Horijan		Dhopa		Bormon (Jele)		Bagdi		Kaiputra	
	Tota l	%	Tota l	%	Tota l	%	Tota l	%	Tota l	%	Tota l	%	Tota l	%	Tota l	%
1. Flood	17	51.5	14	45.2	34	63.0	2	7.4	21	53.8	3	42.9	8	47.1	17	51.5
2. Cyclone	10	30.3	0		17	31.5	23	85.2	11	28.2	4	57.1	7	41.2	10	30.3
3. Others	0		0		0		0		0		0		2	11.8	0	
4. Flood & Cyclone	6	18.2	17	54.8	3	5.6	2	7.4	7	17.9	0		0		6	18.2

6.4 Access to relief following natural disaster:

Destruction wrought by natural disaster is compensated to some extent by the relief provided by the government, NGOs and individuals. While many have reported such relief, many said the opposite, not received For example, the highest positive response of 59% came from the Robidases, while the highest negative response of 100% was from the Dhopas. Answers of other communities are tabulated below.

Table 31: Opinion regarding receiving relief following natural disaster

Name of Community	Total HH	Yes		No	
		HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	39	23	59.0	16	41.0
2. Jalodas	40	5	12.5	35	87.5
3. Namashudra	80	20	25.0	52	75.0
4. Horijan	50	2	4.0	48	96.0
5. Dhopa	40	0		40	100.0
6. Bormon (Jele)	45	17	37.8	28	62.2
7. Bagdi	40	6	15.0	34	85.0
8. Kaiputra	39	2	5.12	37	94.8

6.5 Problem faced in getting relief:

Ordeals at the time of receiving relief are old issues in our country. It includes factional favoritism, class biasness, kinship or religiosity. Both primordial and structural factors in sociological terms come to affect the distribution of relief.

While some reported of the problems in getting relief, majority said no as reflected in the data of this table. For example, 26.25% of the Nomosudras, or 20.5% of the Kaiputra reported to have faced problems. Respective proportion of the Jalodas 42.5% is the highest. Other communities reported in different proportions.

Table 32: Problem faced in getting relief

Name of Community	Total HH	Yes		No	
		HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	39	15	38.5	24	61.5
2. Jalodas	40	17	42.5	23	57.5
3. Namashudra	80	21	26.25	59	73.75
4. Horijan	50	15	30.0	35	70.0
5. Dhopa	40	9	22.5	31	77.5
6. Bormon (Jele)	45	0		40	100
7. Bagdi	40	10	25.0	30	75.0
8. Kaiputra	39	8	20.5	31	79.5

6.6 Access to public disaster shelter:

At the time of both cyclone and flood the need for safe shelter increases. For some reasons the extent of access was not large enough as reported by the eight communities. For example, 28% of Harijan received access to public shelter at the time of cyclone or flood. This is the highest positive response. The highest negative response 96.25% is found among the Namasudras.

Table 33: Access to public disaster shelter

Name of Community	Total HH	Yes		No	
		HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	39	4	10.25	35	89.75
2. Jalodas	40	5	12.5	35	87.5
3. Namashudra	80	3	2.75	77	96.25
4. Horijan	50	14	28.0	36	72.0
5. Dhopa	40	0		40	100
6. Bormon (Jele)	45	2	4.5	43	95.5
7. Bagdi	40	3	7.5	37	92.5
8. Kaiputra	39	1	2.56	38	97.44

6.9 Conflicts and violence

In consideration of the vulnerability of the Dalit peoples as a backward section of the society the issues of conflict and violence have been examined. Family feud is the most common problem among the Rabidas and Horijan, domestic violence accounts for the highest among the Nomoshudra and Kaiputra, social violence and neighbor dispute is mostly prevalent in Jalodas, Harijon, Nomoshudra and Bormon. Money laundering featured very high among the Jalodas and Dhopa while theft and robbery featured high among the Dhopa. The Nomoshudros suffered most with land dispute. Following table provides a description of problems faced by communities that require legal aid service

Table 34: Conflict and violence

Community	Family Feud		Domestic violence		Social violence		Neighbor dispute		Land dispute		Money laundering		Theft / robbery		Others	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Robidas	25	64.1	18	46.2	20	51.3	26	66.7	8	20.5	1	2.6	1	2.6	2	5.1
Jalodas	17	44.7	15	39.5	33	86.8	38	100.0	0		17	44.7	11	28.9	0	
Namashudra	40	54.8	51	69.9	47	64.4	56	76.7	42	57.5	21	28.8	17	23.3	0	

Horijan	31	62.0	29	58.0	36	72.0	34	68.0	0		13	26.0	10	20.0	0	
Dhopa	6	16.7	6	16.7	7	19.4	21	58.3	13	36.1	17	47.2	14	38.9	11	30.6
Bormon	26	57.8	18	40.0	27	60.0	39	86.7	8	17.8	6	13.3	3	6.7	0	
Bagdi	6	22.2	8	29.6	10	37.0	20	74.1	5	18.5	7	25.9	5	18.5	1	3.7
Kaiputra	13	33.3	27	69.2	16	41.0	24	61.5	12	30.8	8	20.5	2	5.1	0	

6.10 Opinion regarding problems face in accessing health service

In the section on health, the lack of ability of different Dalit communities in seeking treatment from allopathic doctor was pointed out. In such a situation health services from hospitals and clinic will be very helpful for the Dalits. In consideration of these issues they were asked, hospital and clinics were discussed. Against this background the problems in accessing medical services were reviewed with the following results.

Study revealed that the Robidas (97.4%), Jalodas (92.5%) and the Kaiputras (83.3%) faced the problem most to avail health services from government as well as the private sectors. The Harijon (74.0%), Bagdi (71.4%) and Nomoshudra (66.3%) followed by the Bormons (63.6%) also answered in affirmative. Among the Dhopa 41% answered in affirmative.

Table 35: Distribution of household by their opinion regarding problem at health centers

Name of Community	Yes	
1. Robidas	97.4	2.6
2. Jalodas	92.5	7.5
3. Namashudra	66.3	33.8
4. Horijan	74.0	26.0
5. Dhopa	41.0	59.0
6. Bormon (Jele)	63.6	36.4
7. Bagdi	71.4	28.6
8. Kaiputra	83.3	16.7

Why there was problem? The answer revealed a particular trend. It was poverty and the resultant economic limitation that posed the problem. With increasing market based institutionalization of health service, one's financial capacity plays the main role in easing access. How strikingly economic capacity featured as the most important parameter in determining access to health service is crystal clear in the respective table, only the Harijan added the issue of discrimination.

Table 36: Access to Health Service

Community	Poverty		Discrimination		Communication	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Robidas	37	97.4	3	7.9	2	5.3
Jalodas	37	100.0	1	2.7	0	0.0
Namashudra	52	98.1	1	1.9	0	0.0
Horijan	37	100.0	19	51.4	0	0.0
Dhopa	16	100.0	1	6.3	0	0.0
Bormon	28	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Bagdi	23	92.0	3	12.0	0	0.0
Kaiputra	28	93.3	1	3.3	1	3.3

Chapter Seven

Social discrimination

Untouchability and social discrimination are interrelated. The former is historical in the case of Dalits. In real life still they are discrimination, because they are low. Those who discriminate do not belong to a particular religion. In the following discussion how different communities feel it is described.

Rabidas:In the past the Robidas were frequently subject to social discrimination which is still there, despite their increased interaction with other communities. It is remarked by them, *“Even ten/twelve years ago, we and the Bangalis could not bathe in the same pond. We were prohibited from eating in public places with Bangalis. The situation has changed now.”* But still they cannot mingle normally, mainly for being a low caste/Dalit and poor. The Bangalis do not eat food prepared by a Robidas For instance, when a Bangali is invited to a Robidas wedding ceremony, the Bangali eats food only when prepared by a Bangali. In schools, their children are often taunted and called Muchir Cheley (Cobblers son). It is aggravated by the existence of poverty. Their social network is weak. Except a very few, most of the Robidas did not have any rich, influential or well to do friends or relatives, from whom they could seek assistance in time of need. Even if a few did have, at the most they could seek for advice from those friends/relatives. But none received any financial assistance. There were no instances that, social relations within themselves or outside their community worked to help one another.

Jolodas:The social status of the Jalodas is somewhat better, not as confined as before. They can mingle with everyone including other high caste Hindus, and have no problem in doing so. Previously, other groups of people used to discriminate because they were involved in fishing, their body reeked of fish. They perform pujas at the same place along side Hindus of higher caste and eat at the same sitting. However, the Jalodases expressed a negative attitude towards the Muslims. They reported that the Muslims misbehave with them, and snatch away the fish that they bring home for their own consumption.

Namashudra: Earlier the Nomosudras were poor and illiterate and were suppressed by the upper class. There were many clashes with the Brahmin and Muslims. There was a time when the Brahmins refused to drink with the same glass, eat food together or even sit in the same row as the Nomosudros. If any Nomoshudra ate any food at a Brahmin’s house, he had to wash the plate.

Discrimination is now no more prevalent to such an extreme extent. Moreover, at present their social status is better because they (Nomosudras) have made progress in terms of education and other fields. Due to this progress, they have gained appreciation from the upper castes and other communities. However, neglect in the attitude of the upper caste is still evident. The Brahmins still consider the Nomosudras as a lower class, for instance, the Brahmins still do not eat openly at a Nomosudra’s house. However the young people from the upper caste do not care much about caste difference.

Horijan: Apart from the work of cleaning they do for others the Harijans do not have any other social relation with the mainstream people. They are subject to tremendous discrimination. They are not served tea or snacks at tea-stalls, nor are they allowed to have a hair cut at the saloon. Such social discrimination has been intensified by their poverty and illiteracy. Occasional unemployment worsens the discrimination further as they get impoverished further.

Dhopa: The job of Dhopa is not a respected one. A person from a Dhopa community who is no longer engaged in traditional occupation and better off disclosed his/her identity. There is a tendency among them to hide their past. Following case study says that, "Shima Rani Das, an assistant of Medical Hospital, said that she felt ashamed to think that she was from a Dhopa family, because that occupation did not bring adequate money or food. She never disclosed her true identity at her workplace. Even though it was hard to afford the family with the salary she got, she still considered her job at the medical was respectable than the Dhopa. In another case study it is found that Rasmony Das although live on this occupation but reluctant to admit. Such attitude of hiding identity reflects on the issue of discrimination the Dhopa faced in the community.

Bormon: The Bormons do not face discrimination as reported. They live with Muslims and Hindus freely. But sometimes problems arise in the river with the non-traditional fisherman during fishing. It is less to do with the issue of caste discrimination than occupational rivalry. However unemployment is there among the young people in this community which may affect their economic situation and lead to discrimination which they do not face at present.

Bagdi: Many Bagdi are still hesitant to disclose their caste identity. Poverty is there among many of them but they hide it. For example the actual food they eat won't be disclosed if it is cheap ones. The rich people do not mix with the Bagdi at the social level, but the people of similar do not do the same, on festivals they are invited. Caste discrimination is there but on a limited extent. For example, Bagdi women could work at Hindu upper class houses, but were not allowed to cook, as the upper caste Hindus traditionally did not consume food cooked by lower caste. The situation was the same while working in the Muslim houses

Kaiputra: The Kaiputras are considered very low class and are victims of various types of discriminations. They cannot mix easily with the others. The cups at the tea stall are kept separate for their use. Sometimes they are also refused haircut at the saloon. People of other communities refrain from taking food or water at their houses. Even four years before, they were served food on banana leaves. It was a practice among the other Hindu communities when the Kaiputras left their place after eating the place was washed with cow dung to remove pollution. Sometimes in the past they were refused entry into temple and school. At present it is not so open but present in attitude and behavior. For example upper caste does not invite them at the death ritual. Similarly the invitation by the Kaiputra to the upper caste at the time of wedding is not acknowledged. However the intensity of discrimination has reduced because in the past the touch of

clothes used to be considered pollution. New elements of changes have now moulded the culture of discrimination, for example, electoral politics and close interaction through it or the attitude of the younger generation, no so caste feeling ridden.

Kornidas: This group still faces discrimination which discourages children to attend schools. Not sitting in the same table by the children of other communities in school is a mark of discrimination, as exemplified.

Malo: Social discrimination prevails for them and observed by the mainstream people. For example, they are not received well in restaurants and tea stalls, cups are separate for them. Malo women do not food in other people's plates.

Maimol: Social change has impacted the issue of discrimination with the Maimol. In the past they could not get their children married to other sects in the past. However, at present, they are able to do so because of progress of education.

Bahera: Being Muslims even though the Baheras can say their prayers with other Muslims in the same Mosque they do not get much respect from other Muslims. The other Muslims consider them to be of low class and hate and discriminate them. As their ancestors were Baheras, the prejudice is still there. People call them 'Kohara' to rebuke them; others mistreat them and the Baheras also have to endure reprimands.

Rajbangshi: Except the Brahmins, the Rajbangshi are in good terms with other castes and communities. They can freely move around. The Brahmins exhibit hostile attitude towards them even does not even drink a glass of water at the Rajbangshi's house. However such problems do not arise when they work at other's houses. They are very fond of cultural activities, engaged in singing, and jattras, entertained people from other communities. Rajbangshi do not face problems to observe their ritual and perform puja freely as any other people. Sometimes the festivals are held combined with other Hindu caste. The Rajbangshi normally marry among themselves but now intercaste marriage is possible.

Rishi: The social status of the Rishis is still very low. They are victims of discrimination at every stage of their lives. They are not encouraged by the Muslims to visit their houses, the rich Muslims serve them food on banana leaves. Their children are not encouraged to mingle with the children of the mainstream people. At restaurants they find separate cups and utensils for them.

Chapter Eight Gender

As we know that patriarchy is a dominating ideology in the context of men women relationship and in the determination of the position of the women. In the opinion of many people patriarchy is an exploitative ideology and over the years has been responsible for the destitution of the women in our society. These points are also relevant for the Dalits women who are doubly exploited, one is caste and the other patriarchy. Such factors necessitate attention to the Dalit women in terms of different aspects.

8.1 Occupation among married women:

Patriarchal ideology normally confines the women in household engaging them in households chores only. Unfortunately it does not give them any income because it is not permitted by the culture. On the other hand these women are not allowed to work outside to earn income. Therefore we have looked into their occupation in this table.

While all of them are engaged in household chores some are engaged in different jobs outside. In this regard the Horijan women are found to be engaged on job outside to the highest proportion, 55.3%, second in position are the Bagdi women with 40.4%, third are the Dhopa women i.e. 21.3%. The lowest are the Jalodas and Kaiputra women followed by the Bormons, Robidas and Nomoshudras. The Horijan and Dhopa women are mostly involved in traditional occupation except a few who are engaged in other jobs. The Bagdi women are mostly day labourers at construction sites while the Namashudra women are agricultural labourers. Some work as domestic maid, and a few who are educated are employed in government, private offices and also in NGOs.

Table 37: Occupation among Married Women

Community	Married Women engaged in Occupation	
	#	%
Robidas	6	13.6
Jalodas	3	5.8
Namshudras	13	12.7
Horijan	42	55.3
Dhopa	13	21.3
Bormon	5	7.7
Bagdi	21	40.4
Kaiputra	3	5.8

8.2 Prevalence of early marriage and marital practices

There are different consequences of women's backwardness, early marriage is one of them. There are different implications of early marriage, for example study will be discontinued, and early pregnancy might affect the health. In this context the Kaiputras surpassed the others because 69.2% among them reported early marriage. The high prevalence was also found among the Bagdi, Robidas, Jalodas and the Dhopa

communities. There are a few among whom the practice is very limited, for example the Nomashudra.

Table 38: Opinion regarding prevalence of early marriage

Name of Community	Total HH	Yes		No	
		HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	39	12	30.76	27	69.24
2. Jalodas	40	15	37.5	25	62.5
3. Namashudra	80	11	13.8	69	86.3
4. Horijan	50	7	14.0	43	86.0
5. Dhopa	40	12	30.0	28	70.0
6. Bormon (Jele)	45	7	15.6	38	84.4
7. Bagdi	40	20	50.0	20	50.0
8. Kaiputra	39	27	69.2	12	30.8

While we have focused on the practice of early marriage above attention is also given to the practice of marriage in general to have a elaborate idea about this institution.

The Robidas is found to confine the marriage within own caste in general, except few instances. Endogamy is also practiced by the Jalodas. Both groups are less familiar with multiple marriages. Namasudra are also endogamous except those while the bride and groom arranged it themselves. The Bagdis are strictly endogamous even marriage does not take place between the sub-sects – Hela and Busfore. Relatively the Dhopa has been liberalized paving the marriage between the sub sects within them - Ramdas and a Sitadas. Intercaste marriage is also seen among the Dhopa, such as marriage with the Kormokar. Although the Bormons try to practice endogamy, changes in the practical condition bring deviation to some extent. For example marriage now takes place with Shahas, Kundus, Kormokars, Jeles and others. Sometimes delay of marriage of the grown up girls also push them to the fold of other castes. Multiple marriage is also discouraged by the Bormon. Evidence of conservatism is also found among the Kaiputra with regard t the practice of endogamy. If they are sometimes forced to intermarriage because of practical reasons they would definitely exclude the rishi who work with cows hides.

8.3 Prevalence of dowry practice

The practice of dowry system is very much a part of culture among all the Dalits surveyed. However, there are families in the same clans who do not indulge in the dowry system. Thirty-eight (95%) Bagdi HHs responded in favour of dowry while 2 HHs (5%) did not do so. On the other hand, the clan who practice dowry the least number is the Namasudras, of who 42 HHs (52.5%) favoured dowry system while 38 HHs (47.5%) did not. The other clans were in between the e examples cited. The table below gives a detailed picture of dowry practice among the Dalits. Many respondents said that the amount of demanded dowry depended upon the physical state of the girl. The darker the complexion and the more the age, the more was the dowry.

Table 39: Prevalence of dowry practice

Name of Community	Total HH	Yes		No	
		HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	39	34	87.2	5	12.8
2. Jalodas	40	37	92.5	3	7.5
3. Namashudra	80	42	52.5	38	47.5
4. Harijan	50	32	64.0	18	36.0
5. Dhopa	40	37	92.5	3	7.5
6. Bormon (Jele)	45	35	77.7	10	22.3
7. Bagdi	40	38	95.0	2	5.0
8. Kaiputra	39	34	87.2	5	12.8

Among the Rabidas the bride's father pay cash money and give gold, radio, cycle and others. Cash money is most popular as dowry while wedding festival expenditure is also borne by bride's father. Dowry is a big source of pain among the Jalodas. It is almost mandatory at present and sometimes it creates impasse if one cannot make the payment. There are other complexities in relation to dowry for example some families collect it from one source to provide to the other, hardcore poor are forced to sell off assets like fishing nets to organize dowry money. Apart from cash money the Namashudra give other valuables like gold, radio, cycle as dowry. If a girl is of so called dark complexion dowry value increases. Harijans pay cash as dowry. However jewellery is also demanded as dowry sometimes. In some cases wrist watch is asked for.

Bormons mostly pay cash money as dowry but golden jewellery also demanded. It is so mandatory that sometimes the bride family is forced to take loan from NGO or money lender if failed to provide from income and sources. The bride's father is also responsible to pay for the wedding festival. Bagdi parents are expected to spend a large amount of money for the marriage festival apart from the payment of dowry. When the young couples arrange marriage by themselves, the expenditure decreases. Cash money is more popular as dowry among the Kaiputra. It does not matter whether the parents have got the capacity to make the payment for dowry. If necessary one has to take loan from different sources or sell cattles. The articles like ring, watch, cycle or TV also gets preference. .

Table 40: Range of dowry paid by different

Range of money	Communities
Upto 20,000	Rabisa, Bormon, Kaiputra
Upto 30,000	Namashudra, Bagdi
More than 50000	Jalodas, Harijan, Dhopa

8.4 Women status, tradition and culture:

Rabidas: As the Robidas community is patriarchal in nature the women are treated subordinate at the family and community level. Women's role is believed to be taking

care of the family and children thus most of them are housewives. Only a few were found engaged in income generating activities such as raising cows and chickens on sharing contract. Robidas women expressed their neglected condition in the following words, “ *We do not have any scopes for earning neither do we have any education or skills needed for a job. We are also discriminated as caste women thus the Bangalis do not eat food cooked by us, therefore we are not hired as a maid for cooking in Bangali families.*” Since they are dependent on their husbands they are obliged to carry out their orders. Often the women are subject to verbal and at times physical abuse by their husbands as a result of conjugal conflicts. In the past, the restriction on women’s movement was far stricter which has been eased now. One can not call their condition absolutely free. Even if the women make some earning without husband’s consent they can not spend it freely. As a further illustration of women’s backwardness it is found that the sons are preferred to the daughters.

Jalodas: The Jalodas women work hard through out the whole day which include regular household chores such as cooking or caring of their children even they assist their husband in cleaning and washing the huge fishing nets at least once a day which increases during the period of fishing. Those who have cows, it is the women’s duty milk the cow, to feed and care for it. Many Jalodas women also add to the family income by husking paddy during the harvest season. They also weave and repair nets, or work as domestic help in other’s houses. Even though many Jalodas women contribute to the family income, it could hardly change the existing system of decision making at the household where the husband plays the key role. If the women take part in decision making at all it is related to the issue like children marriage. Like the Rabidas son preference is also present among the Jalodas.

Nomoshudra: In a relative sense Nomoshudra women are in a better position in terms of socioeconomic parameters, because a large part of the Nomoshudra women are able to read and write. Similarly the girls are not lagging behind the boys in terms of attending schools. Girl’s education is very much encouraged among the Nomoshudras. From among the Nomoshudra women there are many school teachers also. They also work in various NGOs. Hence the working Namashudra women make contribution to the family income. The women toil more than the males. Besides domestic chores at the time of harvest, they also thresh, winnow, boil and dry the paddy. Some of them also assist the males in the cultivation. Ironically woman’s wage is less than a male’s. Earlier, women never ventured outside their houses and had to purchase their necessities from hawkers at door step. Because of change they now go out for shopping to the local markets. Because of increased mobility among them they even visit the capital for different purposes. Political empowerment has also taken place among them and as a consequence some Nomashudra women could become the councilors at the Union Parishad and attend the Upazila Porishod meeting. Those who are enterprising among them make quilt and body scrubber to increase the family income. Despite the progress made by the Namoshudra women they are also at times subject to domestic violence which climaxed in sometimes severe form of physical abuse. *An example is the merciless violence against one Khukumoni. She was married to a man who already had a wife. During her pregnancy, she was tortured brutally and she lost her sense. Thinking*

her to be dead, the husband took her out and abandoned her on a field. She gave birth to a son while still in a serious condition. Her husband deserted her and escaped to India. That Khukumoni is now living happily with her son.

Horijan: A complex situation is now prevailing among the Horijan women because of their unique traditional culture. Alongside their husbands they also work as a cleaner and complement families' income. Therefore the result is double engagement of the Horijan women – household and outside. It requires them completing households chores as well as work as cleaners. Despite their income for the family they are not above gender discrimination, abuses like scolding, beating often affect them. Hardly the Horijan women play any role any decision making in the family. Crude gender discrimination is also face by them when they paid less than the male for the same work.

Bormon: Conventional role model of the women as prescribed by the patriarchal culture is strongly present among the Bormon community. Except very few most women among them are confined with in the household to complete the households chores. However evidence of change have also surfaced among them as some Bormon women observed that had they been allowed to work outside they could add to the family income to avert the routine economic hardship out of male's limited fishing opportunities. Many women felt that the extreme hardship like starvation would not have affected them were they allowed extend their periphery of work. Since the husbands are the main earning member, thus they the ultimate decision maker. However, the husband discussed with his wife at times especially if it was related to their children before taking any decision. If change is expected in the gender structure among them it must also touch upon the prevailing son preference and considering the girl as burden.

Bagdi: Bagdi women are economically quite active as they work as agricultural and non-agricultural labour. They have also earned fame as roof construction workers in the urban areas. However their engagement in hard work to earn income could not change the gender discrimination the other Dalit women are subject to. They are also not ultimate decision maker in the family despite their contribution to the family income. It is also found that the grip of the patriarchy is still strong because without the permission of the husband married Bagdi women can not work outside households. The scenario of the urban Bagdi women is slightly different because they have somehow been empowered more than the rural counterpart.

Kaiputra: Kaiputra women are also by and large primarily engaged in households chores with very little opportunity to work outside. When there was enough land the Kaiputra women could raise pigs or nurse kitchen garden to increase family income which has now significantly reduced. Those Kaiputra women who work outside are mainly engaged as agricultural workers thus naturally they have very little alternative skill to extend their income opportunities. Bagdi women are also the victims of wage discrimination. Among them there are few more unfortunate who can not even access the NGO loans because of their poor economic status. There are some Kaiputra women who want to work in a larger perspective beyond the confines of their households. Regarding their status as

decision makers the Kaiputra women are still the tail ender with a very limited role in the family or the village arbitration.

Chapter Nine External linkages

As a part of social engineering both the governmental and non-governmental organizations designed different programs to improve the health, education, economic condition and other important aspects. These programs are also directed to the goals of poverty reduction in the country. Since these programs are spread all over the country Dalits are also related to such programs as seen in the discussions made above. Nature of participation and the forms of linkages with the NGOs and other organizations are briefly traced in the discussion of this section. However attention is also given to other aspects

9.1 Accessed micro-finance institutions for credit

The NGOs providing micro credits in the areas where the study was conducted included Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA, Proshika and others. Though every HH do not take credit, but the number of the Dalit households who took such loans is a large one. Moreover, the cases of multiple credits from multiple NGOs are also many. Survey findings in Table --- shows that a total of 192 or more than 52% HHs took credit from local NGOs. Households from all communities took credit, but the number of Jalodas, Namashudra and Bormon surpassed the other communities. Grameen Bank, BRAC and ASA are the national level micro-finance institutions with coverage all over the countries. As far as micro-credit is concerned Dalits are widely related which included national, regional as well as local micro-finance institutions. For example, the borrowers among the Robidas accessed the Grameen Bank and BRAC more than the other micro-finance organizations, while the Namashudras access other micro-finance institutions in a larger proportion. Whatever the pattern emerges in this respect it does not follow any particular logic.

Table 41: Community wise involvement in Micro-credit program by NGOs

Communities	Grameen Bank		BRAC		ASA		Proshika		Other local NGOs	
	HH	%	HH	%	HH	%	HH	%	HH	%
1. Robidas	5	27.8	7	38.9	0		0		6	33.3
2. Jalodas	8	15.1	16	30.2	1	1.9	0		28	52.8
3. Namashudra	4	12.9	1	3.2	1	3.2	0		25	80.6
4. Horijan	0		1	14.3	1	14.3	0		5	71.4
5. Dhopa	0		5	62.5	2	25.0	0		1	12.5
6. Bormon	20	52.6	0		9	23.7	1	2.6	8	21.1
7. Bagdi	4	14.3	8	28.6	12	42.9	1	3.6	3	10.7
8. Kaiputra	0		1	7.7	1	7.7	0		11	84.6
Total Households	41		39		27		2		87	196

9.4 Amount of loan taken from NGOs

Loans were taken in different volume. However, most took small loan if we range it upto TK10,000. Size of the loan depends on different factors which may include specific need of the borrowers as well as credit worthiness. As we understood that most loans were spent to support household consumption. If we call the loan upto TK20,000 a moderate

one then the names of the Jalodas, Horijon and Dhopa would feature more starkly than other communities. Comparatively the Dhopa are large borrowers than other communities.

Table 42: Amount of loan taken from NGOs

Amount of Loan from NGOs (Taka)	Name of Community								
	Robidas	Jalodas	Nama-shudra	Horijan	Dhopa	Bormon (Jele)	Bagdi	Kaiputra	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total
0 –4999	8	47.1			9	29.0	1	14.3	
5000 – 9999	7	41.2	18	34.0	16	51.6	3	42.9	
10000 – 19999	1	5.9	24	45.3	6	19.4	3	42.9	
20000 – 29999	1	5.9	8	15.1					
30000 – 39999									
40000 – 49999			3	5.7					
50000 – 59999									
70000 – 79999									
80000 +									

9.5 Opinion regarding benefit of NGO credit

To the question did the loan benefit their families, a large number of the respondents replied in the negative. However, it was slightly different with the Robidas and Bormon as the larger parts reported to have received benefit. Among other communities about three fourth did not receive any benefit as reported.

Table 43: Opinion regarding Benefit from NGO credit

Community	Yes	No
Robidas	60.0	40.0
Jalodas	19.4	80.6
Namashudra	27.0	73.0
Horijan	20.0	80.0
Dhopa	30.4	69.6
Bormon	62.5	37.5
Bagdi	28.6	71.4
Kaiputra	23.1	76.9

9.4 Reasons for micro-credit to be non-beneficial

It is commonly understood that micro-credit will be profitable when used in some lucrative business. Carrying out such business is also difficult unless there is necessary experience for that or adequate capital and others. However, there may be other reasons for not considering micro-credit as profitable by the borrowers. Such few reasons are reported in the following table. Three particular reasons emerged as significant in the consideration of the borrowers when they found it not profitable. Weekly

payment of the instalment is identified as a factor that made micro-credit not profitable, rather it is a burden for them. The rate of interest charged on micro-credit is also seen as a reason that affected making profit from micro-credit. Not being able to make any income from micro-credit is also included among the factors that diminished its benefit.

Table 44: Reasons for micro-credit to be non-beneficial

Community	Weekly installments burdensome		High interest		High installment rate		No income		Others		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Robidas	3	50.0	0		0		3	50.0	0		6	100.0
Jalodas	7	38.9	5	27.8	0		0		6	33.3	18	100.0
Namashudra	1	25.0	2	50.0	0		1	25.0	0		4	100.0
Horijan	1	11.1	0		0		6	66.7	2	22.2	9	100.0
Dhopa	0		3	100.0	0		0		0		3	100.0
Bormon	5	41.7	0		1	8.3	5	41.7	1	8.3	12	100.0
Bagdi	2	33.3	3	50.0	0		0		1	16.7	6	100.0
Kaiputra	0		1	25.0	0		1	25.0	2	50.0	4	100.0

9.5 Other support from NGO

Apart from micro-credit other types of supports were also received by the Dalits from different NGOs.

9.5.1 Access to Legal Aid Services

Since the Dalits are traditionally backward they are also vulnerable in various ways, particularly those who are very poor among them become the victims of eviction or dispossession of land, and sometimes Dalit women become the victim of physical or verbal abuse. In such situations there is a need for support particularly for justice. From whom or where the Dalits sought support when faced such situations? Following table addressed this question. Findings suggest that mostly they sought justice from Gramma Shalish⁶ (village court) for the problem like dispute with the neighbor. Secondly they sought justice from the Union Parishad Chairman. Apart from the above they took recourse to social organization. Where necessary they went to police station as well as court for the redress.

⁶ Grammo Shalish is the most popular and widely accepted grass root level arbitrator system implemented all over rural Bangladesh

Table 45: Access to legal aid services

Community	Village Court (Gramma Shalish)		Union Parishad Chairman		Police Station		Court		Social organization		Others	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Robidas	36	92.3	24	61.54	13	33.3	7	18	8	20.5	6	15.4
Jalodas	37	97.4	37	97.37	17	44.7	9	24	0		1	2.6
Namashudra	62	86.1	67	93.06	27	37.5	29	40	16	22.2	1	1.4
Horijan	37	74	28	56	20	40	15	30	13	26.0	4	8.0
Dhopa	12	32.4	17	45.95	21	56.8	20	54	13	35.1	11	29.7
Bormon	42	93.3	37	82.22	9	20	6	13	19	42.2	5	11.1
Bagdi	22	78.6	15	53.57	12	42.9	8	29	4	14.3	3	10.7
Kaiputra	31	79.5	36	92.31	8	20.5	9	23	0		2	5.1

Chapter Ten

Deprivation Analysis

10.1 Socio-Economic Aspects:

Findings from the qualitative study and the household survey indicate four vital factors that are responsible for the poor socio-economic condition among the Dalits in Bangladesh.

- i) Insecure Livelihood:** Each Dalit group has their specific traditional occupation on which their livelihood solely or partially depends, but scope for adequate income is reducing day by day for various reasons. Such as:
 - Due to rapid industrialization and modern technology, demand for their services is gradually diminishing.
 - Infiltration of people from other communities (in this case the Bangali Muslims) deprives them of their income.
 - Lack of access to natural resources (Land and water bodies)
 - Lack of other job skill
 - Less job opportunity
 - Low daily wages
 - Gender discrimination

- ii) Lack of Education:** Overall literacy rate among the Dalits is very low. Though at present the Dalit children are attending school, in most cases they usually dropout after primary education due to the following reasons:
 - Unable to provide necessary financial support
 - Lack of awareness and access to government facility (female stipend)
 - Communication problem (high school far from community)
 - Financial hardship leading to child labor for additional income
 - Social discrimination in educational institutions by main stream society

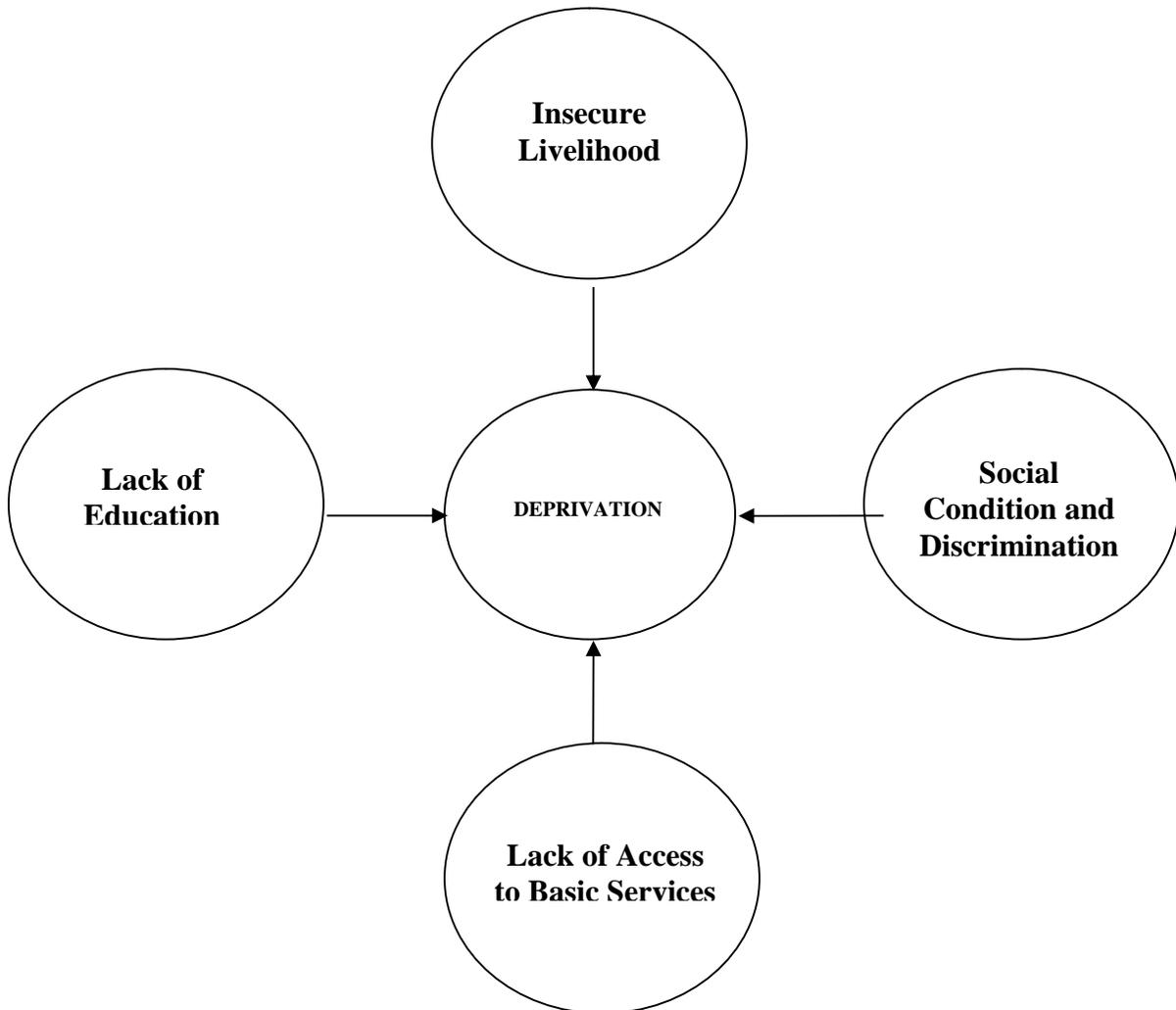
- iii) Social Condition and Discrimination:** Existing social condition in many ways is responsible for the prevailing poverty situation among the Dalits. Such as:
 - Traditional custom of dowry practice further deteriorates their economic condition because in most cases financial hardship compels them to take loans from various sources to meet the dowry demand.
 - Early marriage system in many Dalit communities is a hindrance to female education
 - Dalit women positioned at the bottom of caste, class and gender hierarchies reduces self confidence and leads to social exploitation
 - Traditional custom of drinking liquor leads to health problem, domestic violence
 - Existing social discrimination induces human rights violation
 - Subject to frequent social discrimination reduces self-esteem and causes frustration

- Social segregation is an impediment in terms of equal participation and rights

iv) Lack of Access to Basic Services: Dalits are more often deprived of their right to access to basic services and entitlements such as health service, legal aid, social security, recreation facility etc. Factors responsible are:

- Ignorant regarding existing services due to lack of proper information
- Communication / transportation problem
- Financial hardship
- Apathy by main stream society discourages to avail of required services
- Lack of knowledge regarding government policy

Factors Responsible for Deprivation among Dalits



10.2 NGO Programs:

Study findings revealed that NGO programs within the study population are not at all community need-based. Major national NGO such as Grameen Bank, BRAC, ASA and Proshika including many local NGOs operating within the Dalit communities is mainly focused on micro-credit programs. Though micro-credit programs are generally designed with the provision of training for skill development and fund utilization and management, in reality none of NGOs provide the necessary training to their beneficiaries. Education program is being undertaken by some local NGOs and few BRAC schools, but these are irregular and the quality of education provided is also very poor. Except a very few local NGOs, none of the major national NGOs are implementing any programs on service delivery and capacity development which is very much required by these communities. Only some NGOs are undertaking awareness raising program but in a very small scale. Therefore, NGOs working for the socio-economic development also need to focus on service delivery, massive public awareness program and most importantly in skill development and fund utilization and management training. Water and Sanitation programs have mostly been implemented by CARE.

10.3 Political Aspects:

The Dalits are confused regarding the present political situation in the country. According to them, no matter which political group they support, in fact they have never been benefited from any political group. Politically they are also subjected to discrimination. They don't get any aid from the government. Most of the Dalit communities reported that they did not get any help during flood or other natural calamities. Their prayers to the chairmen and members are given no importance. According to them no one enquires about them except during the election. When Election is there, their importance is enhanced. But once the election is over, no one looks up to them. They are ignored and deprived from all aspects.

Moreover, the Dalits often become victims of exploitation and torture during the election period. At times they are also subjected to physical violence and threatening by local group of major political parties (BNP, AL and Jamaat). The Nomoshudras reported that during election many bombs were exploded at the voting centers to hinder their vote casting and many unpleasant events occurred regarding election. Unpopular candidates who have no chance of winning, try to win by resorting to threat, torment, and torture and bomb explosion. All minority people want the election to be held peacefully. But according to them fair election never takes place in rural areas. Therefore, most of the minority groups such as Dalits and indigenous people have lost interest to vote.

They feel that they are deprived of their right to an improved socio-economic condition only because they are the minority group. Neither the government nor any political group had taken any measures to protect and improve their traditional livelihood.

Among the study group, only contribution made by any political group or individual can be attributed to the establishment of a school in Boroichara village of Magura District. According to the people of Nomoshudra community, a politician, Mr Abdul Haque, with

the help of other influential people of the locality has established a school here for diffusing education. Other people involved were Hemanta Sarkar and Mr Taha of Communist Party.

Chapter Eleven

Suggestions by Dalit communities for Remedial The Program Approach

Suggested Remedial

- For the socio-economic development and equal opportunities and rights of the Dalits in Bangladesh, the following recommendations have been made by the various Dalit communities:
- Mass awareness growth and various developments are required to abolish the problems of the Dalits in Bangladesh. Partiality and nepotism must also be abolished. Every one has to work together for the development.
- To abolish this discrimination from the society, the Dalit need to be educated. Particular effort should be made towards women education, so that they become more eager for education, because, without education, no development is possible.
- To encourage enrollment, school teachers need to be oriented. Provision for better seating arrangement for Dalit children in schools need to be ensured.
- The government should intervene to preserve the tradition of Dhopa Para. Amiable people of the society should come forward to help the Dhopas. The rule of penalizing imposed on the Dhopas by WASA for excess use of water need to be withdrawn. Immediate action should be taken to arrange for sufficient water supply, places to dry clothes and for social security.
- Construction of mills and factories and the scope to work therein will vastly improve the destitute condition. Women could also be recruited in those mills and factories. This will provide the scope for a regular monthly income would help to run the household smoothly.
- Alternative livelihoods should be arranged – even for women so that they can do some work from home. Arrangement could be made for women to learn sewing and other handicrafts. They could then display their works in a big showroom for marketing.
- Employment opportunity especially for the youth group to prevent them from indulging in any kind of unsocial activities
- In micro-credit programs NGOs need to provide training regard proper utilization and management of loan.
- NGOs should have provision for health service at community level

The Program Approach

11.1 Rights-based Approach:

A Rights-based approach may be applied that will be in line to the international human rights norms, standards and principles contained in the wealth of international treaties and declarations to address issues to reduce poverty among the Dalit communities. It will provide a more authoritative basis for advocacy and for claims on resources and national commitments. Manusher Jonno Foundation may emphasize on the following five elements of the rights-based approach:

- a) **Non-discrimination and attention to Scheduled Castes:** The human rights imperative of such approaches means that particular attention is given to discrimination, equality, equity and vulnerable groups. Furthermore, all development decisions, policies and initiatives, while seeking to empower local participants, are also particularly required to guard against simply reinforcing existing power imbalances between privileged and vulnerable groups - such as women and men, landowners and peasants, and workers and employers. In this respect MJF needs to incorporate specific safeguards in all its development programs especially targeted to protect the rights and well-being of the Dalit communities. Such safe guards should emphasize non-discrimination, equality and equity with regard to income opportunity, wages, and education, access to services and access to information with regard to scheduled casts, gender and other beneficiaries.
- b) **Empowerment:** Rights-based approaches also give preference to empowerment of the community rather than charitable responses. They focus on beneficiaries as the owners of rights and the directors of development, and emphasize the human person as the centre of the development process (directly, through their advocates and through organizations of civil society. The goal is to give people the power, capacities, capabilities and access needed to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies. In order to reach this goal it is important to develop leadership skills and build confidence among the community people so that they can achieve what they are entitled to.

For empowerment, MJF should focus on raising awareness and sensitizing the community people on their basic human rights, develop their leadership quality through relevant training programs, mobilize community leaders to take initiative and participate in community activities during national programs such as various national events and special day observation. This initiative will help to build up the confidence among the Dalits of Bangladesh to take the lead for availing their rights and entitlements where MJF would play the role of a facilitator and advisor.

- c) **Participation:** Rights-based approaches require a high degree of participation from communities, civil society, minorities, scheduled castes, women and others. Rights-based approaches give due attention to issues of accessibility, including

access to development processes, institutions, information and redress or complaints mechanisms. This also means situating development project mechanisms in proximity to partners and beneficiaries.

MJF's approach should be to involve its beneficiaries during the entire process of planning, development and implementation of program activities. This will help communities to get organized effectively, to participate and contribute in community based projects. The beneficiaries' active participation and contribution in community based projects will create a sense of ownership among them. And when the project will phase out the community people will own the project and will be motivated to carry on for their own development.

- d) Express linkage to rights:** A comprehensive rights-based approach requires to take into account the full range of indivisible, interdependent and interrelated rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social. This calls for a development frame work with public and private entities that reflect basic human rights i.e. right to health, education, housing, justice administration, personal security and political participation. Such as:
- Establish linkages with organizations at the national and local levels committed to Dalits causes (eg. Nomoshudro Odhikar Andolan).
 - Establish linkages so that they have access to the delivery of government services such as health, agriculture, livestock and fisheries.
 - Establish linkages to concerned authorities to ensure social security provisions provided by the state. Such as Elderly Allowance, VGF cards, girl's stipend given at schools, relief after being affected by any natural disaster (flood, cyclone, draught etc.)
- e) Accountability:** Rights-based approaches focus on raising levels of accountability in the development process by identifying claim-holders and their entitlements and corresponding duty-holders and their obligations. In this regard the claim-holders are the beneficiaries of MJF and the duty-holders are MJF and all other relevant actors / stakeholders. Taking into account both the positive obligations i.e. *to protect, promote and provide* and negative obligations i.e. *to abstain from discrimination and human rights violations*, MJF needs to develop a policy to provide adequate administrative procedures and practices, and mechanisms of redress and accountability that can deliver on entitlements, respond to denial / violations, and ensure accountability.

11.2. Steps for deprivation reduction:

Based on the findings of the study the following steps need to be taken into account for poverty alleviation of the Dalits

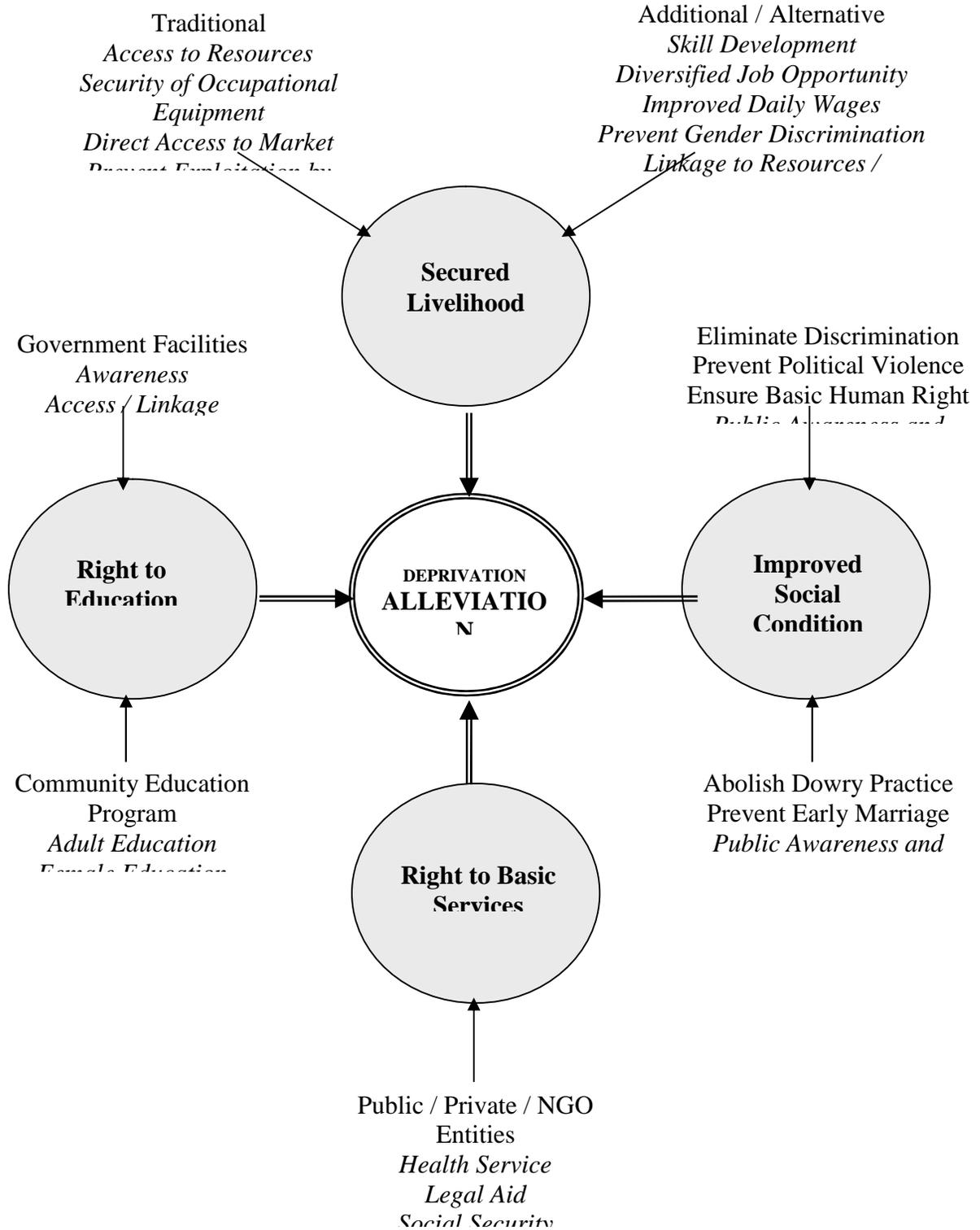
- Improved Livelihood situation in terms of scopes for diversification, skilled training, job opportunity, better wages including women employment and income opportunity.
- Raise their awareness on their rights to equal opportunity and prevention against social discrimination.
- Education opportunity especially after high school.
- Prevention programs against social exploitation in terms of livelihood and wages
- Create linkage to ensure access to basic rights and services
- Access to NGO service delivery program (health, education, legal aid, skill development, marketing etc.)

11.3 Scopes for Manusher Jonno Foundation

Manusher Jonno Foundation may undertake the following measures:

- Advocacy program to ensure equal opportunity for the Dalits in terms of employment, education and health.
- Advocacy program to voice the Dalits requirement
- Extensive public awareness program at community level to stop social discrimination
- Skilled training program for Dalit women and men for alternative or additional income
- Need Assessment for livelihood diversification among the Dalits considering its access and utilization of resources
- Strategic planning for partner NGOs for providing alternative or additional income generating activities
- Strategic planning for partner NGOs for providing financial support to additional income generating activities
- Study to explore how the traditional profession/skill may be used for better income opportunity

Deprivation Reduction At a Glance



Chapter Twelve Conclusion

Dalits are generally poor, deprived and socially backward. Their most basic needs of food, shelter and safety are not fulfilled. Their access to education, employment, political participation and other resources are severely restricted. The systematic denial of their basic human rights results in a lack of education, food, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Since the low caste occupations are related to most menial and manual tasks, payment/remuneration is very poor for these works. Even switching over to jobs other than their traditional one has not been able to upgrade their fortune. Since they do not have any other skills other than their traditional skill, at the most they can earn money as day laborers. Financial hardship compels them to take loans either from the moneylender or the NGOs. They take a loan from one NGO to repay the loan taken earlier from another one, a devil's circle ! So they have no means of upgrading their economic status and they remain in the vicious cycle of poverty. The Dalits are mostly immersed in deep loans. Sometimes the situation forces many of them to work as bonded labor to pay off the debts. Another most important factor is lack of access to land that makes these people economically vulnerable and forces them to work below the minimum wage level. The Dalits have been subject to human rights violations by the more privileged communities especially in terms of their livelihood security. Among the studied population the Jalodas of Sitakunda are the worst victims. Sometimes the Dalits get threatened during election, face eviction and acts of retaliatory violence when land related dispute arises.

Many Dalit children are deprived of their basic child rights. At the age, at which he or she should be going to school and play around, be happy, is usually spent in being involved in laborious work. Many Dalit children work in the fields with their parents.

Low literacy rate, high dropout and less life expectancy are quite prevalent among these groups. However, high dropout and low literacy rates among lower caste populations cannot be explained only by low family wages. It is also attributable to the discriminatory and abusive treatment of the teachers and fellow students towards the low caste children who attempt to attend the school. In fact, socially they are still despised, discriminated and deprived. Exclusion from the mainstream society has made many of them to convert away from Hinduism into Christianity and Buddhism in an attempt to eradicate the prejudice they face. But after conversion, they rarely found justice in other communities.

Dalit women positioned at the bottom of caste, class and gender hierarchies, invariably bear the brunt of exploitation, discrimination. They also disproportionately suffer in terms of access to health care, education and low wages.

At present due to socio-economic changes, caste system has undergone changes. The extent of segregation may not have remained the same as in the past. Still, discrimination does exist, rampantly in rural areas, mostly in matters such as access to

eating places, water sources, temples and schools. However, in terms of access to public services, they face discrimination only due to poverty not for being a Dalit.

However, the studied Dalit group lacked all the basic amenities in every stages of life. In the past they had received no adequate aids or help from the government to improve their status. In view of their current status, the Dalit were being gradually obliterated from Bangladesh. Their situation is so grave that many had no hesitation to earn a livelihood by any means.