

Provisional Community Profile
SHANTIPUR

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I INTRODUCTION

Shantipur is a village that encompasses a lot of diversity: diversity in people and their lifestyles. Situated not very far from a big town like Dinajpur, the village is quite busy with commercial activities. More than the village is known the market place named Shidkarhat.

Physical Overview

Location

The village Shantipur constitute Ward no. 5 of the Auliapur Union under Dinajpur Sadar Upazila. The surrounding villages are Mashimpur to the north, Mohabbatpur and Jugibari to the south, Horiharpur and Ramnagar to the east and Ulipur to the west. The village is located at a distance of 4.5 km from the Dinajpur district town and within one km from the local Union Parishad (UP). The village is divided into two parts (east and west) by a paved road that connects the district town (to the north) and the UP (to the south). Spreading along these two sides of the roads are the *paras* which are as many as 13 in numbers. While most of these *paras* tend to cluster around Sikdarhat, a large and busy market place concentrated at the two sides of the road almost at the middle of the village, few *paras* are located at quite some distance from it. However, the ones located near the Sikdarhat are large and densely populated.

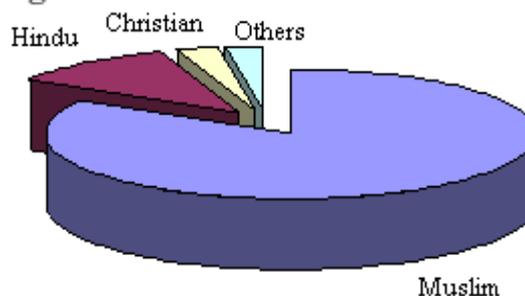
Village: Shantipur
Ward No. 5
Union: Fazilpur
Upazila: Dinajpur Sadar
District: Dinajpur

Infrastructure

Apart from the main road that connects the village simultaneously with the district town and the UP, another road, which is partly paved, curves from the main road at the south-end of the village and goes westwards. Three small *paras* at the south-west corner of the village mainly inhabited by the religious and ethnic minorities are connected to the market place and the UP by this road. However, people tend to use shortcuts through other *paras* while they move on foot. Like these ones, some other *paras* are directly connected by mud roads to the paved one. Few *paras* are connected through other *paras*, and the closest *paras* need only a bit of space to connect to the paved road and the market place. These clustering *paras* are in fact very much adjacent to the market place. Bicycles are overwhelmingly used by the villagers for movement within and outside the village. Rickshaws and van are the other major transports particularly used for going to the district town. A bus service runs from the town to Khanpur through the village.

Except only two *paras*, the remaining 11 are covered by electricity provided by the Rural Electrification Board (REB). However, not all the households in those *paras* have electricity. The supply of electricity is far less than the required level. The continuous lack of supply of electricity (usually at a very low voltage) hampers not only the daily life activities of the villagers but is a major source of concern for the cultivators who need power supply for irrigation.

Ditribution in Shantipur by Religion



Note: Distribution refers to percentage of HH.

People

The total population of the village is 3181 distributed among 750 households in total (WeD Census, May 2004). The average household size is 4.24. Muslim households count for 83.5% of the total followed by the Hindus (11.3%), and Christians (2.8%). *Shawtals* households, the ethnic group, count for around 5% of the population.

History

The history of Shantipur has to be considered with that of the Dinajpur town, as it was one of the oldest towns in Bengal. Its *Rajbri* shows its *Mughal* past. Its origin may be traced back to *Gaur*, one of the ancient empires that Bengal was divided in. Dinajpur was a central town of Colonial India. The Dinajpur Municipality was established in 1869. From pre-colonial period throughout colonial period, people have come from various places from in and outside Bengal and gathered here. During the British rule, the prominence of Hindu *zamindars* via the Maharaja was obvious although a few Muslim *zamindars* prevailed.

The Indo-Pak partition initiated the process of reversal. The religion based partition made Pakistan (and hence East Pakistan) not friendly towards the Hindus. The partition knife cut Dinajpur into two parts. So started a continuous out-migration of the Hindus to the other part of Dinajpur or to any part of India. This process of migration was further aggravated due to the following factors:

- Abolition of *zamindari* system in 1952.
- Riots occurring at different times starting just before partition and continuing on.
- The Islamic identity of the state imposing a minority feeling among the Hindus.

The out migration did not stop even after the Independence of Bangladesh in 1947. A further division of Dinajpur in three separate districts lessened the importance of Dinajpur as a town.

Shantipur has been a close witness of all these events staying only about 4 km away from the district headquarters. In fact, the village itself was a part of all these.

II MATERIAL RESOURCES

Diverse economic activities characterise Shantipur. The traditional importance of agriculture is gradually decreasing as other occupations are emerging and getting priority. Presence of a huge market place in the village is sponsoring the emerging diversity in economic activities.

Occupation and Employment

The location of Shantipur village is an important determiner of the occupations of the villagers. The fact that the village is located near the Dinajpur town is sufficiently reflected in the wide range of economic activities that the villagers are involved in. Another factor that seems to influence occupations of the villagers is the presence of a very well-developed and large *bazaar* or *hat* (market place) within the area of the village. In fact, this market place is at the heart of all economic activities of the villagers. These two factors (location and presence of *bazar*) have resulted in a considerable occupational diversity in the village. Easy and quick communication with the town makes it possible for the villagers to commute regularly and to become involved in occupations which are urban in nature. A simultaneous flourishing of trade-type occupations is obvious. Presence of mills (particularly the rice-mills) at and around the *bazar* also draws a considerable number of people (especially the poor in-migrants looking for work) including women to work at those mills. Still agriculture is the prominent economic activity for the villagers.

People involved in some sorts of agricultural occupations count for about 35% of the total population of the village. The majority among these people of course are the agricultural labourers. *Adhiars* (sharecroppers by main occupation) also constitute a substantial proportion. Genuine farmers (who cultivate their own land) are not that many in number. Non-agricultural labourers constitute quite a sizable occupational group. Another important occupation that clearly manifests the influence of the *bazar* in the village is petty trading. These traders include a wide variety e.g. tea sellers, mobile vegetable sellers, petty grocers etc. These labourers include transport workers, mill workers, manual labourers, construction workers etc. Female labourers work at the rice (husking) mills. However, most of these women belong to the families who migrated in from other northern districts in search of livelihood. In fact, most of the husking mill labourers (male and female) are those in-migrants.

Employment and Income across Occupations

Occupation	Employment Status	Expected Income
Farmers	Self employed all the year.	Depends on yield of crop: price of paddy varies between 200 and 300 <i>taka</i> per mound for the major two crops. On average, one acre of land yields a net income of around 8000 <i>taka</i> per year.
Sharecroppers	Employed twice a year during the crop cycles covering maximum time of the year.	Half of the crop (amount subject to yield) after bearing the expenditures for inputs. In cases of contract, the rate is around 5000 <i>taka</i> per acre. Whatever is surplus on that is the income of the contract sharecropper.
Agricultural labourers	Employed during cultivating and harvesting times for the two crops of the year. Almost completely	Daily wage for a male labourer is between 50 and 60 <i>taka</i> and for a female labourer between 35 and 40 <i>taka</i> . Rate of wage

	unemployed two times a year spreading over a period of about four months in total: mid-October to end-November and mid-March to end-May.	varies across seasons of the year and reaches the peak during harvesting time when it is as much as 80 to 100 <i>taka</i> .
Mill workers	Rice mill workers do not have permanent employment; they are hired two times a year: December to March and May to July: 7 months in total.	Weekly wage for the rice mill workers in around 180 to 200 <i>taka</i> . In addition, for carrying load, the payment is 1 <i>taka</i> per bundle of goods (<i>basta</i>).
Transport workers	Employed all the year round usually with their own rickshaws/rickshaw-vans. Cannot usually work everyday. On an average, around 20 days in a month is the standard.	Widely varies depending on the hard work one can afford. Daily income seldom crosses 100 <i>taka</i> .
Petty traders	Self employed with own investments, however little that might be. Usually engaged round the year.	Widely varies depending on the type and size of trade, and seasons in the year.

Agriculture

Nature of agriculture in Shantipur depends on the range of land ownership and the crops that are cultivated. Large landowners are almost non-existent in the village. This combined with other factors mentioned earlier results in emergence of such an agro-economic system that implies gradually decreasing dominance of agriculture in the life of the villagers. Despite the fact that the majority of the population are not involved in agricultural occupations, cultivation is still the single largest economic activity in the village. While paddy of different variety is the main crop, wheat and winter vegetables are also cultivated.

Aman, the native and traditional variety of paddy is cultivated during the wet season.

Cultivation starts in July-August and harvesting takes place in November. Traditional festivities (*nabanna*¹ festival) are involved with this harvest. Cultivation of *aman* does not require any irrigation and rainwater serves the purpose. Yield of this paddy per acre is around 30-40 mounds² and price per mound fluctuates around 350 *taka*.

Cultivation of this paddy has been declining gradually in the village over the last few years.

IRRI, the high yielding variety is cultivated during the dry season starting in February-March and being harvested in May.

Irrigation is crucial for this paddy as the season is almost rainless. Groundwater irrigation through deep and shallow tube-wells has to be arranged and is available payment. Chemical fertilizers and pesticides are

The Bi-Products

With the paddy, the bi-products also have commercial value. There are three major bi-products, which are usually taken by the landowner.

Bran: Derived from husking rice in automatic rice mills and sold to be used in making biscuits and fodder.

Straw: Generally used as fodder and fuel and sold if the quantity is huge.

Husk: Sold to mills and used in making charcoal.

¹ The word 'nabanna' can be translated as new rice.

² Although officially 1 mound = 37.5 kg, in most cases it is calculated as 40 kg.

extensively used. This has now become the major crop as it is commercially more benefiting. Yield per acre usually varies between 40 and 60 mounds and in some cases reaches even up to 80 mounds. Price per mound averages around 300 *taka*.

Late IRRI is cultivated by most of the farmers of this village and the surrounding area (in fact, the whole union) immediately after harvesting the first IRRI. Thus, cultivation of three crops a year is possible because of the topographic feature of this area. Land here is a bit high compared to most of the other areas of the district. However, cultivation of late IRRI is not that much rewarding. The harvest is roughly half the early paddy (30 mounds per acre) although costs are more or less the same. And the price, of course, hardly crosses 300 *taka* per mound. This lower return discourages many farmers (particularly the sharecroppers) in cultivating this late variety of IRRI. Thus, both in terms of quantity of land cultivated and in terms of yield or quantity of harvest, this IRRI variety is not nearly significant as the early IRRI. The late IRRI does not usually require irrigation as the early rain already appears at the time when cultivation starts. Starting at around early June, it is harvested in late August. Those who do cultivate late IRRI, starts their *aman* season a bit later.

Katharibhog, the special local variety producing fine and flavoured rice, is cultivated during the *aman* season. Although the entire Dinajpur district has a fame for producing this paddy, the region where this village is situated, is said to produce the best quality of it. Yield per acre is around 20-24 mounds and price per mound is around 900 *taka* (fluctuating between 500 and 1,000 *taka* across seasons). During the *aman* season *katharibhog* is actually the dominant variety as the return is higher in it.

Potato is also cultivated in substantial quantity in Shantipur during the winter. The cold storage situated adjacent to the village encourages the villagers of Shantipur to produce it. Potatoes produced here are supplied to distant places including Dhaka.

Farmers of the Shantipur village have been cultivating **wheat** for the last 4-5 years only. The crop is yet to get considerable attention of the farmers as yields have not been so far very attractive compared to paddy. This keeps the cultivation of wheat within a limited extent.

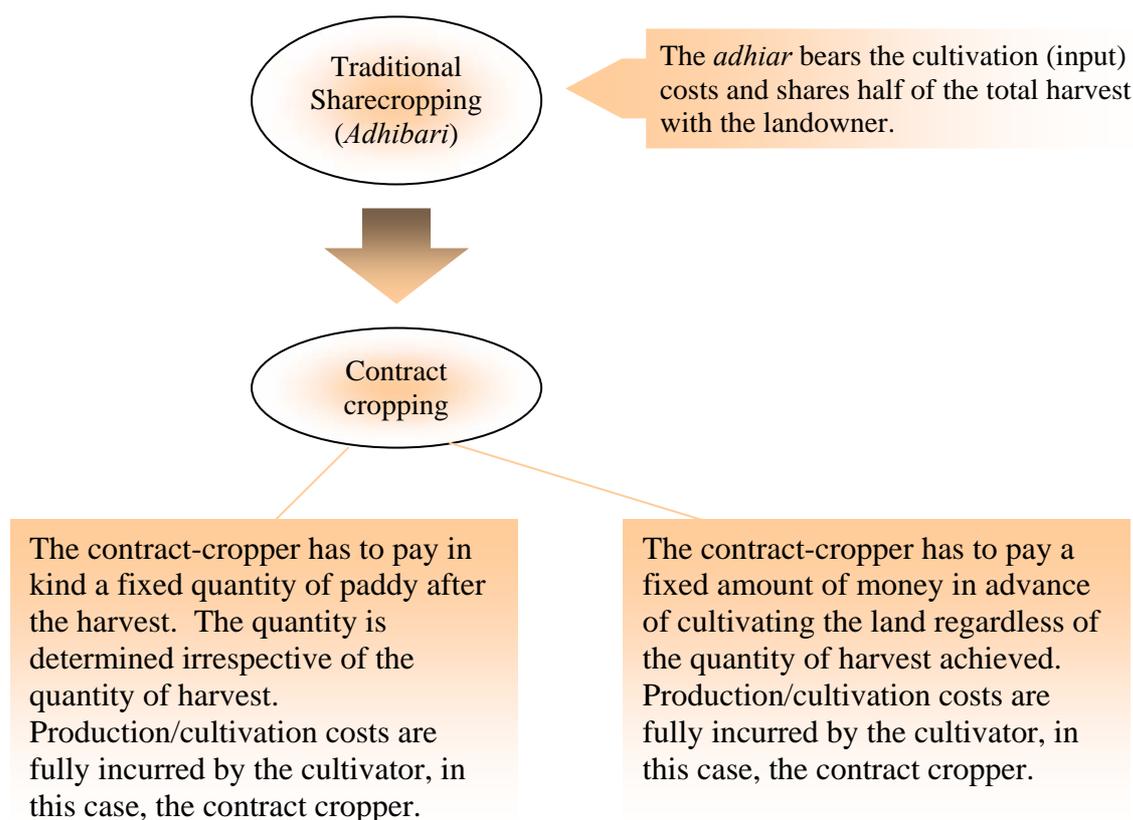
Dinajpur has fame for producing the very top quality **litchi**. Quite a few fruit gardens mostly producing litchis are seen in the village. The fact that the adjacent Mashimpur village is known to be the producer of the best quality of litchi in the country encourages the Shantipur people to produce it although the quantity they produce is not any near to the quantity produced in Mashimpur. Shantipur has a few **mango** gardens too.

Agricultural Relationships

Agricultural relationships in Shantipur have been changing over time while the village itself has been shifting from its traditional nature to a more market oriented modern one. The traditional form of sharecropping (locally termed as *adhibari*) that implies sharing of the harvest between the landlord and the *adhiar* in equal proportion is increasingly being replaced by a modern mode that can be termed as 'contract cropping'. The latter mode implies that a plot of land is leased on payment of a fixed amount in advance of cultivation. Alternatively, a fixed quantity of paddy is given to the landowner after harvesting.

The other significant agricultural relationship is that between a farmer and the agricultural day labourer. The basis of this relationship is wage. The wage labourers are hired by the farmers (those who cultivate own lands and the sharecroppers) on a daily basis. The hired labourers are usually those poor people living around or having acquaintance with the farmer.

CHANGING PATTERN OF SHARECROPPING



Market

Situated within the boundaries of Shantipur village, Shikdarhat is quite a huge and old market place (*bazar*). Existence of this *bazar* can be traced back in the British records of 1937-45. It is also assumed that the name 'Shikdarhat' might have come from the system of 'shikdar' (the official in charge of the administration of agricultural taxation) back in the regime of Sher Shah during the Mughal period. Although Pulhat, one of the most famous market place in the whole region, is situated within 2 km, Shikdarhat serves as an independent market place for quite a number of villages: Jugibari, Mohabbatpur, Khanpur, Ghughudanga, Mashimpur, Ulipur, Hariharpur and other surrounding villages.

Major Sales and Purchases

Villagers of Shantipur purchase most of their necessities from Shikdarhat. These include construction materials (e.g. rod, cement, corrugated iron sheet), raw materials for production (e.g. seed), agricultural inputs (e.g. fertiliser, pesticides), fuel (e.g. Mobil, diesel), light food items, poultry, fish, goat, garments, furniture, household and daily necessities etc. The farmers sell paddy to the rice-mills situated at and around Shikdarhat. The rice goes to

Shops and Services at Shikdarhat

<u>Type of Shops</u>	<u>Number</u>
Fertiliser	11
Fuel (diesel, Mobil)	5-7
Food items	10-15
Rice	20-25
Medicine	5-7
Garment	5-7
Mobile phone service	5
Saw-mills	3
Rice mills	12
Rickshaw repair workshops	2
Machinery repair workshops	2
Herbal treatment and medicine	2
Bank	1

Dhaka via Pulhat. During November-December, huge quantity of potato and onion is sent to Dhaka and Chittagong and all over Bangladesh from this *bazar*. Hundred to two hundred trucks (lorries) each day carry potato and onion. Maximum purchases and sales take place on Sunday and Thursday, the days of weekly *hat*.

Major Assets in the Community

Land

Despite the fact that land is considered to be a very important asset in the village, a gradually changing attitude towards not considering land as the single most important resource is apparent. This is happening because of two trends: (one) diversification of occupations and (two) the notion that land is losing fertility. Land in this village and the surrounding locality has a tradition of being considered to be very special for producing good quality paddy. Agricultural land ownership ranges between zero and 10 acres and not very much skewed as not many people tend to own huge quantities of it. Almost all of the original inhabitants in the village own their homestead plots. However, the in-migrants live on other people's land with their own houses.

Livestock

Cattle and goats are very common. Few *shantal* households at the Adibashi Para have pigs. Chickens are possessed by almost every household, and few possess ducks too.

Plantation

A number of fruit-yards (especially those of litchi and mango) are owned by some of the relatively well off villagers. A few of these owners lease the fruit-yards out to the villagers and to the people of neighbouring villages.

Water pumps

Of the two deep tube-wells in the village, one is not functioning. However, most of the farmers depend on shallow tube-wells running with electricity (locally known as 'current motor'). There are at least 20 such current motors in the village. These household-owned motors are crucial assets as the cultivation of IRRI heavily depends on irrigation. Even the *adhians* try to have their own motors. Tube-wells for household use (e.g. drinking water) are available at almost every household.

Vehicles

Many households have bicycles which they always need to travel to the town and to the adjacent areas (especially market places). Most of the rickshaw (van) pullers own the vehicles. Few motorbikes are also owned by a few rich villagers.

Shops

Most of the shops at Shikdarhat are owned by the villagers. However, not all of those are used by them. Few shops are rented to businessmen from neighbouring villages.

Houses

Houses are of many different types in Shantipur varying between the original villagers and the settlers, and among different socio-economic groups living in the village. However, the dominant type is that of a clay wall with tin shades. Quality (reflected in thickness and building materials) of the wall varies according to economic condition of the households. Quite a notable number of villagers do have brick-built houses (mostly with tin shades). Most of these brick houses, however, are concentrated in the well off *paras*: few poor *paras*

have no such brick house at all. The houses that the in-migrants (the *Rangpuriyas*) live in do not look like any permanent house; rather most of these are like huts made of bamboo fences and tin shades. Hardly any of these settlers have their houses on their own land.

Mills

Few of the rice mills at and around Shikdarhat are owned by the Shantipur villagers. Few other however are owned by outsiders.

Other assets

Apart from the assets mentioned above, there are two individual-owned tractors in the village. Five mobile phones at the Shikdarhat provide commercial telephone service to the villagers. At least two licensed gun are owned by two prominent persons in the village.

Savings and Credit

Most of the villagers are served by the NGO-run savings and credit activities. Along with at least seven NGOs, one of the major commercial banks of the country also runs micro-credit activities among the villagers. The NGOs operating with micro-credit are: TMSS, ASA, MBSK, BSDA, ECO, BRAC and ASCOP (a union-based NGO). Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited also provides micro-credit in this village. The bank does not have any branch here. However, it operates through its branch in Dinajpur town. Beside these, a few locally organised *samitees* (in the form of co-operatives) have savings and credit activities.

The mode of operation is more or less similar across NGOs. The delivery model is the group based one targeting women only and savings are required as precondition for credit. Rate of interest, amount of credit against savings, size of group etc vary across NGOs although not that much. Major features of credit activities of one of the operating NGOs are presented below just to provide an example.

TMSS

Thengamara Mohila Sabuj Sangha (TMSS) is a regional NGO based in Bogra, a neighbouring district of Dinajpur, and operating all over the northern region of Bangladesh. It was not too long ago that TMSS started its activities in Shantipur. They organised the first group in February 2000. Since then the organisation has made notable expansion here.

Savings and Credit Groups of TMSS:

<u>Name of Para</u>	<u>Date of group formation</u>	<u>Total number of members</u>
Dabor Para	5 February 2000	20
Molla Para	6 February 2002	20
Panua Para	19 January 2003	8
Haji Para	21 January 2003	21

Criteria for being selected as group member:

- Already involved in some income generating work.
- Not likely to shift residence from this village.
- Likely to be able to use the loan effectively.
- Not involved in illegal business/trade.

Range of loan amount: Tk. 1,000 – Tk. 20,000.

Total amount of disbursement so far: Tk. 250,000.

It is obvious from the approach of TMSS and other operating NGOs that the poorest are remaining outside these savings and credit activities as they do not usually fulfil the criteria for being included in the group. It is also clear that in most cases the ultimate user of loan is not the receiver (usually a woman).

Community Incomes and Expenditures

In Shantipur, community based incomes and expenditures are not that much significant as most of the activities are now carried out on individual accounts. However, the community based activities that relate some expenditures and incomes are mainly religious ones. These are managed within smaller communities (*samaj*) in the village. Among the Muslims, Eid³ prayer is separate for the Hanafis and Mohammadis. To maintain the *eidgah*⁴ some expenditures are required. This is managed by mobilising subscription from the community people. The management of such expenditures and incomes are conducted by committees formed with distinguished persons in the respective communities. Mosques often receive government allocations which are spent for repair, reconstruction or development of the mosques. The whole management of such receipts of money and expenditure is dealt with by the respective mosque committees.

The community based *pujas*⁵ among the Hindus involve some incomes and expenditures. These are managed by the Puja Committees formed with representatives from the Hindu *paras* in the village. Subscriptions of small amounts (usually 5-10 taka or any amount that someone may be willing to pay) are collected from individuals or households. However, participation is not restricted by non-payment of subscription.

³ *Eid* is the greatest religious festival of the Muslims. Each year there are two Eids.

⁴ *Eidgah* is the place where the Eid prayer (prayer in congregation) is held.

⁵ Most of the Hindu religious festivals are known as some *pujas*. The word *puja* means worship. Hindus observe quite a number of *pujas* all the year round. Each *puja* is meant to worship some god or goddesses.

III HUMAN RESOURCES

People of Shantipur generally have good health. No alarming disease is present. Health facilities are also available with differential access determined by affordability and socio-economic factors. People are generally quite educated with level varying across paras and groups. Many have notable skills that they use for their livelihoods.

Health

Major Health Problems in the Village

Epidemics like pox and diarrhoea have almost disappeared, or at least do not break out as epidemics. However, chicken pox still comes every year during the spring and diarrhoea is more or less common in a limited extent. Minor diseases like fever and cold are very common. This is because of the fluctuating weather conditions (e.g. difference in day and night temperature) that prevail in the region.

Causes of Death

The villagers think that there has been significant change in the causes of death over the last 2-3 decades. Huge improvement in reducing child mortality is obvious. This has been possible largely because of successful implementation of immunisation programmes and improvement in the reproductive health care. Involvement of NGOs has also played an important role in this advancement. Changes have also been noticed in the causes of death among the adults. Diseases like heart attack, cancer, stroke etc are now becoming more and more prominent as causes of deaths.

Health Services and Facilities

Access to the health services and facilities available in and around the village depends on capabilities of the villagers and other socio-economic factors.

Institutional Services

1. **Community Clinic at Mohabbatpur.** Situated within 1 km from the village, this clinic serves all the villagers of Shantipur. However, villagers living in the southeast *paras* do go to the clinic more frequently than others. People go to this clinic particularly for children's treatment.
2. **Government Health Centres at Cheradangi.** Separate health centres for men and women are situated near the office of the UP. Treatment and medicine are supposed to be free here. However, required medicines are hardly available. Only poor people go to this clinic. Even those who are a bit less poor tend to avoid this clinic as getting free treatment and medicine is not considered to be prestigious.
3. **Reproductive Health Services of BRAC.** BRAC's services in providing reproductive health care are well appreciated by the villagers. Although they operate from the town, their services are regular and timely.
4. **Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs).** Four TBAs are available to the villagers. They are often required at times of emergency.

Private Practitioners

Privately practicing doctors are available at Shikdarhat. Among them are 4 allopathic, 5 homeopathic, and 3 herbal practitioners. The allopathic doctors are trained as rural medical practitioners (RMPs). Another RMP has his chamber at Kandena Para at the southeast corner of the village. The chambers of the physicians are attached with dispensaries. Consultation

fees for RMPs vary between 20 and 50 *taka*. However, if the doctors goes to the patients house on call, then the fee is usually 100 *taka*. No separate consultation fee is usually associated with the homeopath doctors; the fees are implied with the price of medicines. People appear to have greater trust on allopathic than homeopathic treatment. “Allopathy works fast; pain disappears for only one *taka*,” says one of the villagers. However, for illnesses and injuries that require costly treatment, the poor villagers have to take resort to the less costly homeopathic or herbal medication.

Immunisation

Immunisation coverage is more or less full; hardly any child can be found not fully and effectively immunised. This has been possible for mass awareness as well as for availability of immunisation services due to very good road communication system using which the vaccinators can reach down to each household.

Family Planning

The family planning programmes are limited now. But thanks to the previous programmes and awareness building activities, almost all villagers use family planning methods at present.

Sanitation

Percentage of villagers using sanitary means of defecation is very low. According to a recent survey conducted by the UP, out of 538 surveyed households, 395 do not use any sort of latrine. Even among the remaining 143, all do not use sanitary latrines.

Education

Educational Institutions

Following are the educational institutions that the villagers usually use for educating their children.

Educational Institutions for Shantipur at a Glance			
Level of Education	Number of Institutions	Locations	Distance from the village (if outside)
Primary (formal)	4	Shikdarhat	
		Mohabbatpur	Less than 1 km
		Cheradangi	Less than 1 km
		Ulipur	Less than 3 km
Non-formal primary (NFPE)	At least 5	BRAC Schools in the village	
Secondary	2	Shikdarhat (for girls)	
		Cheradangi	Less than 1 km
Higher Secondary	1	Mashimpur (KBM College)	Less than 2 km

The above institutions serve almost all the villagers. However, few of the very well off people send their children to nearby kindergarten schools.

Education Status of the Villagers

Among the villagers, number of educated people is quite significant. The number of graduates (having bachelors degree) is not less than 30. In addition, those who have completed higher secondary or secondary levels of education count for more than a hundred. Many of them are continuing education as students.

Attitude towards Education

Contradictory attitudes towards education simultaneously prevail among the villagers of Shantipur. On one hand, the villagers are generally aware about the importance of education. They know that education is needed for creating opportunities in and outside the society and for overall advancement of the community. On the other hand, they are frustrated due to the fact that getting education rarely translates into getting job. The frustration is particularly acute among the young people. Most of the poor households cannot afford to continue their children's education and therefore seek employment just after completion of a moderate level of education. Unfortunately that rarely happens and frustration creeps up.

<i>Skills</i>

Following special skills in Shantipur deserve to be noted.

Special Skills in Shantipur

<i>The Skills</i>	<i>The Skilled People</i>	<i>Learning Mechanism</i>
Mechanics (able to repair small machines, watch and clocks, and radio and tape recorders)	Few persons in different paras of the village, working at Shikdarhat	Apprenticeship
Handicrafts (making of mat and broom with palm leaf)	Inhabitants of Adibashi Para (the Santals)	Traditionally learned
Preparation of <i>chuani</i> (local wine)	Inhabitants of Adibashi Para (the Santals)	Traditionally learned
Blacksmith and carpenter	Based in Shikdarhat	Apprenticeship
Herbal treatment	Based in Shikdarhat	Learned and practiced over generations
Computer operation	Based in Shikdarhat	Government provided training

Some of these skills are directly converted into the main income generating activities of the respective persons. These include the works of mechanics, blacksmiths and carpenters, herbal treatment, and computer operation. The other traditional skills are not the main source of income of those who have the skills.

IV SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RESOURCES

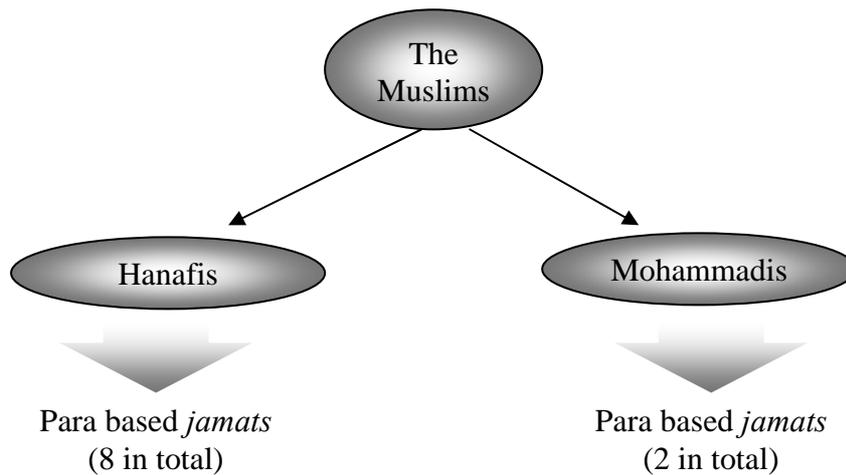
Diverse social categories live together in Shantipur. Muslims, Hindus and the 'Adibashis' are three main social groups with their separate identity. In migrants known as Rangpuria have formed another large social group in Shantipur. Identified separately, these groups live in an integrated social atmosphere in the village. The relationships are complex.

Social Groupings

The Muslims, the Hindus and the Shawtals

Three broad social groups live together in Shantipur: the Muslims, the Hindus and the Shawtals. Muslims are further divided into two sub-groups namely Hanafi and Mohammadi, manifested in their different ways of performing prayer and other religious activities. The Hanafis live mainly in Chaulia Para, Dabor Para, Belpurkur, Daktar Para, Molla Para and Paschim Para. On the other hand, the Mohammadis are concentrated mainly in Haji Para and Panua Para. Even smaller unit of social groupings among the Muslims is *jamat*, which is said to exist only in ideas at present. While there are almost no practical differences among the people of these *jamats*, they can be clearly identified by the villagers.

Social Groupings among the Muslims



Social groupings among Hindus are a bit simpler. While all the Hindus living in different *paras* possess strong community feelings, they form separate social groups in respective *paras* known as *samaj*. Hindus belonging to same or similar castes live in the same *para*. However for observing large religious festivals like *puja*, the whole Hindu community in the village appear to be belonging to a single social group.

Shawtals, the ethnic minorities, live in two small neighbouring *paras*. This little ethnic community is also divided into two social groups. The Shawtals living at the Adibashi Para are converted Christians. They are the majority among the Shawtals. Only a few households living in Kandena Para follow their original religion. Therefore, this division among the Shawtals is a religious one.

The number of *jamats* and/or *samaj* is increasing in Shantipur as the society is becoming more and more divided. There was a time when only 3 or 4 *jamats* and/or *samaj* existed in the village. Now there are more than 10 such social units.

The Settlers

The in-migrants who have settled in this village coming from other northern districts are considered to be belonging to a different social category. These people are locally known as the *Rangpurias* (implying ‘people from Rangpur’). While these poor people do not seem to have strong ties among themselves, their identity as a separate social group is rather reflected in their exclusion from the mainstream population of the village. There are around 175 such households living on others’ land in and around Molla Para. They may not originally belong to this village; still they constitute a very important social group in Shantipur.

Organisations

The NGOs working in Shantipur limit themselves in their savings and credit activities. However, at least one of the NGOs does have other social programmes. BRAC operates non-formal primary education programmes with their schools at different *paras* of the village.

Inspired by the savings and credit activities of the NGOs, few local organisations are also emerging. These are usually *para* based and still do not have any significant influence in the social spheres of Shantipur. At least 4 such clubs are active in the village. Organisations are also being organised from outside. One such initiative has just started. An NGO has mobilised few young people of Shantipur to form a club in the village. Some of these people have been provided training by that NGO on Integrated Pest Management (IPM). That training has inspired them to be organised. Currently the club has 25 members from 3 *paras*: Daktar Para, Haji Para and Molla Para.

Leadership

The diversity of the village makes it almost impossible for a single leader to lead the whole community, unless the leader has exceptional qualities. In absence of such commonly accepted figures, *para* based leadership is now established that does not necessarily hold that much of control on even the respective *para*. The determinants of such *para*-based leadership vary across *paras*. One or more factors like education, financial strength, intellectual ability, being in some committee etc determines leadership in each *para*.

Political leadership is provided by the elected Member of the UP. Though elected, the position of Member does not appear to possess confidence and acceptability all over the village. Involvement of huge money in the election, increasing rate of corruption etc appear to have negative influence in the overall acceptability of the leadership position like UP Member. People like to consider the current Member more as a businessman (he is a fertilizer dealer having his shop at the Shidarhat) than as somebody who works for the people. Above the Member is the UP Chairman who provides leadership to the whole Union. The current Chairman is young and educated (from Dhaka University) and hence appears to have a fair image. The perception that he has good political connections upward makes adds to his image.

Another form of leadership is a peculiarity in Shantipur. Being elected in the Mela Committee (the authority in charge of the famous Cheradangi Mela, a yearly village fair taking place within 1 km from the village, near the UP office) is considered to be a position of power and prestige. These *mela*-based leadership positions are in no way less important than the local government positions.

A changing leadership pattern has been emerging in Shantipur over the recent time. Young leaders are gradually replacing the older leaders. Money and influences of party politics are doing the tricks. As a result, basis of leadership also changes. Power replaces popularity and respect.

Election

Political activities pivot around two major local elections in Shantipur. One is the local government election (the UP election) and the other is the election of the Mela Committee. Both elections involve a lot of money and political activities. Inter- and intra-*para* competition and conflicts also become apparent during elections. However, democratic practices prevail and results are accepted sportingly. Influences of the national political parties are limited in local elections. However, at the national election is highly party oriented. In electing the Member of Parliament (MP), people consider the party more than the person. Four major political parties of the country possess (BNP, Awami League, Jatyo Party and Jamat) significant popularity in the village. The relative gain and loss in popularity are reflected in the results of the election. Voting at the national election has now become more of an individual affair than a social one.

Government Services

Safety Net

Government safety net programmes are available in the forms of VGD and VGF. VGD (vulnerable group development) cards are provided to the selected poor villagers in every two years. Currently 16 people of Shantipur have the cards. VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards are distributed 4 times a year. Both the cards are associated with distribution of certain quantity of food and/or cash. The cards are distributed through the elected representatives and local political leaders. Transparency is always a matter of concern.

Legal Services

The UP also provides the service of village court. Each Monday is the week-day fixed for village court. The conflicts that cannot be resolved within the village by the UP member come to the village court. Broadly two categories of cases are filed: family affairs and agricultural affairs.

V CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural diversity is obvious in Shantipur. Based on religion and ethnic identity supplemented by socio-economic factors, the different cultures co-exist. Tension is there, so is tolerance.

Cultural Identity

Primarily social grouping and cultural identity or distinctiveness of Shantipur villagers evolves from different religions that they are practicing. These are Islam, Hinduism (*Sanaton Dharma*), Christianity and *Mujhithan (Adidharma)*. Religious sects within aforementioned religions further segregate them. Their system of beliefs and practices varies and organizes a group's members in a condition of solidarity and gives a broad social base to social interaction across different social positions (i.e. class, gender or ethnic identity etc.). Containing all of these differentiated features they are separated out in relation with *jamat* or *samaj*. It plays a significant role of management concerning religious ceremonies, lifecycle events, and other cultural institutions.

- The Muslims follow two *majhabs*: i. Mohammodi and ii. Hanafi/Ahali Sunnat
- Among the Hindus, according to typical caste segmentation, Brahmon and Khatriya are living here.
- Majority among *Sawtals* are converted Christians and those who are not converted follow their tradition religion named *Mujhithan*.

Religious Ceremonies

- ***The Muslim Religious Events***

Every day prayer and Eid Jamat

The *Mhammodis* or *Hanafis* among the Muslims conduct their every day prayers in 6 mosques (three for each as identified) situated at different places in the village. The two sects among the Muslims organize two different *Eid Jamat* (prayer congregation on Eid day) out side but adjacent to village, the *Mohammadis* are at *Charadangi* and the *Hanafis* are at *Zugibari*. Every year the committee responsible for the management of *Eidgha* (the place for Eid Jamat) collect fund from villagers and the bazar at the time of *Eid*. Any prayer at mosques or *eidgah* is open for all Muslims

Kurbani

During *Kurbani Eid* sacrifice of selected animals in the name of Allah is organized once in a year. Previously sacrifices were done at different mosques based on *jamats*. After 1980s, this has turn in to a mixture of family and *jamat* based ritual. Whatever the ritual is family or *jamat* based, the meat has to be divided in to three portions: one portion is distributed within the same *jamat*; another portion is distributed among beggars; and the remaining portion is kept for the family who sacrificed. However, individual families are not compelled to follow these general practices.

Milad

Milad is a ritual that only the Hanafis observe here. Sometimes, it plays a role of healing session, sometimes a meeting of remembrance of some body died as well as a special prayer session for the good of that dead man's soul. Usually after the completion of *milad* sweets (i.e. *gilapi*) are distributed among participants.

Waz-Mehfill

It has become a growing tendency among the young Muslims that they organize *waz-mahfil* (Islamic lectures/discussions) in the village premises. For some instance, party activist (of *Jamat I Islam*) arrange it.

- ***Events among the Hindus***

Pujas are the major religious events for the Hindus. They observe *Bashonti puja*, *Haribashor*, *Holi*, *Durga puja*, *Laxmi puja*, *Buri puja*, and *Narayan puja* within village. They also go outside village for *Chorok puja* (at present this *chorok puja* take place only in three places of Dinajpur), *Durga puja* etc. *Puja* committee arranges community level *pujas* by collecting donation from individuals. They also participate in above community level *puja* at *Ramsagar*. Govidha of Brindabonpara is the cashier of *Ramsagar Baroari Puja* committee. The glitter and fame of Hindu *pujas* has been declined for 1947 partition, abolition of zamindari system and migration of rich Hindus to India etc.

Kirton

Kirton is a kind of worship music that *Dangapara* inhabitants are expertise for playing. Previously its subject matter was focused only on *Dehatotto* or description of *Radha-Krishna* myth. Now a day *kirton* become a musical play by which social disputes or flaws, moral and immoral positions of individual and ignorance of social duties, critique of power and system expressed through songs. Musical instruments for *kirton* have been changed with time. In earlier times *Khomoc* (*gopi* instrument), *khonjoroi*, *Tal* and *Juri* were the instruments for *kirton*. Harmonium, *Aktara*, *Dotara*, and *Khol* is the newer addition to *Kirton*. Hindus of *Dangapara*, arrange eight *prohor* or twelve *prohor* *Kirton* in *Haribashor*.

Arrangements and Sponsorships of Events

Thakurs from *Dangapara* conduct *pujas* and other familial rituals in *Shantipur* village. Two *Brahmman* families are living there. They are hired based on payment in cash and/or kind from *puja* fund accumulated by the committee. Fund raising is depending on collection donation from individuals based on capacity. Hired *Brahmmons* from outside village are the cousin brother of *Dangapara Brahmmon*. In some events like *Haribashor* it appears as individual responsibility for hosting the *puja* which is very costly. In this is three day long *puja* invitee will have meal from host. In a recent *Haribashor* near about three thousand invitees were participated in the *puja*.

- ***Events among the Sawtals***

Sawtals living in *Adivashipara* are converted Christian but not baptized as Mission 'feel' they are not yet converted their entire cognitive level in to Christianity. *Mujhithan* was the religion of their predecessor's time. *Sorohay*, *Baha* and *Er AĀ* were three clause of their religion. Consequently, Christianity (or the church) creates a double jeopardy for Sawtals as religion operates from deep level of collective mind. They had to change their religious events immediate after the changes of ownership of their dwelling land by the Mission. Until intervention in the land issue a local landlord owned that land. Mission allows them to live on that land at the cost of alteration of their religion *Muzhethan* in to Christianity. The residing is still temporary as Mission owns it. Beside this, Mission shows a daydream of good houses and other facilities can be approved for them from KARITAS followed by an absolute conversion of every aspect of life (as Sister Tariza told).

Elders of the 18 Sawtal families have been grown up and their thought process being constructed all the way through of *Muzhithan* religion. Even so, after 1984, they have to

adapt Christianity as religion. Backlash of religion alteration is explicit regarding religious events. They have to and are following Father/Sister's instruction. They sit for weekly Sunday prayer at the Church in *Adibashipara*. They are celebrating Palm Sunday, Easter Sunday, *Patchka* and Christmas Day. Religious events are guided, instructed, and monitored by Mission through Father's/Sister's regular visit to the locality. Yet, it is difficult for them to give up their *Muzhithan* rituals as they are still following that in marriages, indication of married women (i.e. use of *shakha*) etc.

Life Cycle Events

Birth

Among Muslims, the name giving ceremony of newborn is called *akika*. In *akika*, one (for girl) or two (for boy) animals are sacrificed in the name of Allah for hoping well for the child. Meat is cooked and the invitees are fed. Invitations depend on capability of the family.

Among Hindus, *annoprashan* (the ceremony of feeding cereal for the first time) is arranged between the ages of 2-7 months of baby. They invite close relatives and neighbors. Inviting relatives and neighbors is costly and the poor Hindus cannot afford.

Death

Muslims buried dead body in graveyards immediately after one's death. Among *Hanafi* Muslims, on the fourth day of one's death, *kulkhani* is observed with *milad* (a prayer). *Mohammadies* do not arrange any *milad* for this ritual. After 40 days, *challisha* is usually arranged. In *challisha* relatives, members of same *jamat* and beggars invited for feast. Invitation depends on capability and there is no restriction in inviting anyone.

Adivashi Christians buried dead body in graveyard beside river nearby village. They are facing problem regarding ownership of that graveyard.

Hindus bury dead body when a child dies before the emergence of the earliest teeth. Adults are cremated. After death, they arrange *sraddha*. After one year of death they arrange a ceremony named *batshoric* for remembrance and as social duty but often ignored when it goes beyond affordability.

Marriage

Among Hindus, it is required to match same *jati/goshti* for matchmaking. Thus, half of the Hindu girls of Shantipur village get married to a man from distant village. *Thakur* is required for performing all religious rituals for the completion of marriage. Marriage ceremony has to be completed in front of fire where fire is treated as witness of marriage that called *agnishaksi*. Invitations and arrangements are depending on capacity.

Among Muslims, social position is the key factor for matchmaking. Most of the marriages are arranged by girl/boy's father or guardian. There is a discrepancy among local and in migrants regarding marriage. It is not socially acceptable for local elite to get married with in migrants. Marriage age between local and in migrant Muslim girls/boys varies. Marriages in Shantipur have to be registered to *Kazi* (marriage registrar). Invitations and arrangements are depending on capacity.

Among Sawtals, as they are not yet baptized it is not possible for them to conduct marriage according to Christian canon. Then they follow *Muzhithan* marriage rituals however it expressing their 'dishonesty' (as assumed by the Father and that told by Jotsna Hembrom) for conversion in to Christianity. 'Where do we go?' said Arati Tudu.

Major religious figures and sacred places

Church Master: He is the key religious leader among *Sawtals* nominated by Mission. He maintains liaisons with Father/Sister and assists them in weekly prayer. He also gets education allowances from mission. He is relatively young and SSC candidate. The conventional *Muzhithan* leader's position has been replaced by the position of 'church master'.

Brammon Thakur: Two *Thakur* families are living in Dangapara. They are conducting *pujas* over generations. They also cook in religious festivals. Kalipoda, son of Bimol *Thakur* taking lessons from a *Tol* 'Dinajpur Dharma Bodhini Sava' (est. in 1860) has become a **Kabbotirtha** this year. Tow year later through a successful completion of *Tol* study he will become a **Pandit**. Brahmmon Pandit is a very high role among Hindus.

Imam: Important religious leader among Muslims. The *imam* conducts the prayers in mosques. On Fridays, they preach people gathered for the *jumma* prayer. The influence of an *imam* usually goes beyond the boundary of the mosque and reaches the social spheres of the Muslims.

Haji: A *haji* is one who has visited the holy Mecca for pilgrimage (*hajj*). There are a few *hajis* in Shantipur. *Hajis* usually have substantial influence in the social life of the Muslims as they honour the *hajis*. However, their actual hold depends on other factors.

Graveyards: Christians and Muslims generally consider graveyards sacred for bury dead body. The *Sawtals* have no graveyard in side the village. They bury dead bodies in a far graveyard where they are facing problem regarding ownership of that. There are quite a few numbers of graveyards for Muslims, which are *para* or family based in this village. There is also a common graveyard near by **JamalKamal Dargha** that serves the Muslim villagers' purpose.

Mosques: Total numbers of mosques are six. Three are for Hanafi and three for Mohammadi.

Temple: For community level *pujas*, committee established temporary temple in Tatipara every year. In Dangapara three old banyan trees are there as sacred place for Buripuja.

Church: The only church of the village is situated in Adivashipara. It is a tin roofed clay house.

Major Nonreligious Events

Mela (fair): *Cheradangi mela* is the biggest *mela* of North Bengal that take place every year in front of Cheradangi High School and alongside UP office and adjacent to Shantipur village. Previously it was running for one and half month. Now it reduces to one month. This *mela* includes huge arrangements like Circus, *Jatra* (local form of play), *Nagordola* (made of wooden and still frame) and Mary-go-round for entertainment of the villagers. Villagers can buy wooden and still made home furniture, different type of local foods, or other utensils etc.

In every three year, a *mela* committee formed through election. This election is more splendid than UP election among villagers and candidates spend more money than UP election. All males from Auliapur Union (No. 6) are the sole voters for this election. Female have no right to vote for *mela* election. Dulal Hossain Babu is the current *mela* president and 22 members are in the committee. Among 22 members, nine members are *jotdari* member as *mela* take place on their lands and other thirteen are general members. This committee manages every thing of the *mela* including security. People are come from various places of Dinajpur even

from other Districts for observing *Mela*. At this time, some of the villagers rent houses to visitors.

Different honorific titles

Practical use of *bogsha/goshti* title among Shantipur villagers seems to be found has lesser worth. Among Muslims *bongsha* identity loose its significance as it was. *Mia* and *Sarker* exist but they do not use title in their name. Once there were *Chowdhury bongsha* resided in the village. In the period of *Maharaja*, those who were engaged in writing job (deeds/other documents) called *Sarker*. Individualism or individual position has become high up then conformity of *bongsha/goshti* identity.

Amongst *Sawtals Tudu* and *Hembrom* are found as title but with less significance.

Among Hindus according to caste system *Brahmmons* are enjoying the uppermost social and honorific position. In accordance with *Sonaton* religion they are not allowed to do physical labor rather allowed to serve society intellectually. For this they are alienated from cultivation or any laborious job. Regarding *bongsha Shahs* from *Tatipara* are the most respectable one but they do not use title after their name.

Status

Status is a set of position(s) in Shantipur village social structure is arranged in a hierarchical fashion. Apart from other customary determinant factors, location of the village adds value in the meaning of status position. Closeness and contact to Dinajpur town and Auliapur UP office, KBM College and having a large bazaar in village premises open up the opportunity of more access to education, trade and other opportunities to all. Thus, a relatively poor person can make his/her everyday earning depending on his labor or hardship. Predominantly agriculture based society simultaneously has the opportunity of nonagricultural earning. Patron-client relationships are less apparent in Shantipur village. Thus, status positions of Shantipur villagers heavily influenced by the village economic structure as well that enable one to achieve higher status.

In the process of making and unmaking of status position in Shantipur village incorporates some specific determining factors. These are educational qualification, affluent position, receiving special training (i.e. medical practitioner either modern or traditional, advocacy etc.), position holding in political party/ in govt. positions/ in UP or in the *mela* committee. All of these are more forceful factors than *bongsha/goshti* identity. On the other hand, to some extent ethnic identity and interethnic relation operates as a role for determining status positions. All of these complex propositions for status are closely associated and overlaps each other.

In Shantipur village context, the person who identified as *Murubbi* is a person with *khomota* (power). He has to be affluent along with political connection. Such as Samad Master (owner of a market building in bazaar and Jamat E Islami leader) and Kamruzzaman Sarker (owner of a husking mill, have big business and BNP leader) or for instances the Chairman of Auliapur UP (graduated in journalism from Dhaka University, Thana BNP leader and holding the Chairman post). Member of ward No. 5 Saleur living in *Daborpara* is a fertilizer dealer and has showroom in the bazaar. They categorically own *morjada* in positive connotation within like-minded people but among others, they treated in a negative manner that these *murubbis* are powerful and *Morjadaban* but without *sunam*. In other words, they are called 'merchant party' as they turn every thing in to business and politicize most of the things.

The person who has been accepted regardless religion among all is a person of *sunam*. Noro Hari Roy (Lal Kabiraj) and Govinda (educated one) are or late Brindabon were accepted to everyone for their good conduct. MBBS doctors of this village are reputed with *sunam* for their specialized service and good conduct. All of these people could have earned a personality by interacting with people. It is a time honoured processes that *morjada/khomota* or money cannot buy.

A poor '*morjadaheen*' powerless person might put himself in a better *morjada* position than any Sawtal by means of interethnic privileges that constructed by the society in a wider context. In the same way a landless local inhabitant (mostly Muslims) might exercise and express power against one in-migrant with the 'local-non local' dichotomies.

Discourse of Cultural Identity

THE IDENTITY DILEMMA

To the ethnic groups living in Shantipur, the word 'Shawtal' has become an oral abuse. This has happened over a long period of time due to the continuous abuse of this word by other people in the village. The Shawtals now feel ashamed in introducing themselves as 'Shawtal'. Instead they have started to use the word '*adibashi*' (implying original inhabitants). But does it work in changing others' attitude towards them? Perhaps no.

Women status

Women living in this village are not a homogeneous category. Their realities categorically differ from one to another. For example Sawtal women, Muslim women or Hindu women (considering sect difference); Married/unmarried, non/local, women from rich houses / women from poorhouses, etc are the heterogeneous categories not living with the same status. In migrant women are socially accepted for working in a husking mill whereas local women (what ever the economic position) are not socially permitted to work in the same place. Sawtal women are allowed to work in the paddy field. Four girls from *panua para* commute daily for tailoring job from town to residence.

Other than, those women most of the women are belong to household work. Five or six women are engaged in teaching. Whatever the income generating work they are engaged in, she has to complete household work which is her particular duty. When a women working as a day labor she always get ten to fifteen taka less than male.

If we consider use of veil among women as *parda* fifteen to twenty ago it was quite unimaginable to see a woman in public places without veil. Even when they travel through rickshaw, the rickshaw had to be covered with a long cloth. Now a day use of *Borkha* is hardly seen. Muslim women use *Borkha* when they go outside village but not great in number.

Education rate among young women is notable. Shikdarganj Girls High School situated at the village premises and it is easier for girls to get education. Some girls have completed BA, HSC and SSC.

Beside aforementioned purposes women go to town for shopping, treatment and visit relatives but whatever the case she can not move without prior permission of her husband or guardian. No women (except *SawtalRangpuria*) come to Shikdar for shopping. School/college going girls can move alone to schools/colleges. Most of them walk for short distance and use rickshaw for long distance. Some girls with bicycle are also visible.

VI NATURAL RESOURCES

Shantipur is not rich in natural resources other than the quality of land. People's access to the only common resource is virtually non-existent.

Common Resource

The only natural resource that has been available in Shantipur is a large *beel* (water-body) situated towards the west side of the village. This *beel* was *khas* and hence open for everybody's use 3 years ago. All could fish at it. Government started to lease the *beel* 3 years ago. Then started its abuse. Now the access is not open, as the whole *beel* has been captured by a number of encroachers. The *beel* has lost its depth too. As a result, those who leased it in or grabbed it, now use it for agriculture.

Natural Vulnerability

Natural vulnerabilities exist in the form of cold wave and occasional flooding. Cold wave is a regular occurrence (during each winter) and the poor are particularly affected for lack of winter clothes. Only if a large flood occurs, the village is affected. The last time it was flooded was in 1988. The damage was not that much however.

VII Issue to Consider

The previous sections tried to outline the major features of the village. However, more issues are there that deserves further in-depth consideration. This section only presents the issues and their dimensions.

Marriage

The dominant mode of marriage in Shantipur is the arranged one. Hardly one percent of the marriages are not arranged (e.g. affair marriage). The usual practices are traditional. After the first contacts, information about bride and groom is gathered and then if the guardians agree on the choices of bride and groom, arrangements begin. All the traditional festivities (mainly three: gaye holud, marriage and boubhat) are usually involved subject to affordability of the guardians.

The Muslims tend to marry at or around the locality and often within relatives. But the Hindus often have to go far as they have to ensure matching according to the caste practices. Roughly 2 percent among the Muslims marry far from the locality. However, this percentage among the Hindus is as high as 40. Another notable aspect is that the locals are not generally interested in marriage with the non-locals in-migrants (the *Rangpuriyas*). The converted (but not baptized) Shawtals here are facing a particular problem regarding marriage. Neither have they the access to the Christian standard marriage practices nor can they take resort to the practices of their original religion.

Marriage Age

In most cases, the age difference between the bride and groom is 5 to 10 years. Marriage age often depends on the economic conditions of the families. For example, the usual age of marriage among the girls of *Rangpuriyas* is around 12 to 15. The boys also get married in early age. However, among the majority of the villagers, marriage age varies between 18 and 25 for girls, and between 20 and 30 for boys. Level of education and economic conditions of the families are important determiners of marriage age.

Dowry

Marriage without dowry is almost non-existent. Even if the bride's father has nothing, he has to pay at least 5,000 *taka*. He might even need to collect money from the shops at the *bazar*. The following are apparently considered in determining the rate of dowry.

- Level of education of the bride.
- Bride's beauty
- Financial condition (relative and absolute) of the bride's and groom's family.
- Professional profile of the groom (e.g., a job holder groom demands more).
- Family tradition (e.g., a family with good tradition may not be willing to receive dowry).

Usually the combination and interaction of more than one of the above factors determine the rate of dowry. Few incidences of post-marriage pressures for dowry can be known.

Polygamy, Abandonment, Separation and Divorce

Polygamy hardly prevails. Abandonment also is not very common. There are 10 to 15 cases of abandonment in the whole village. Divorce is not very frequent. On an average, around 5 divorces occur each year. The frequency of divorce markedly declined as the practice of marriage registration has become common.

Migration

Shantipur village is not too far from the Dinajpur district town (4.5 km away) and traditionally agriculture-based economy with considerable establishment of paddy husking mills (12 in total) located at Sikdarhat. The *hat* within the village boundaries also serves other villages. Consequently *hat*, mills, agrarian pattern and closeness to town – all of these features influence the migration and population movement pattern. It is also influenced by the land owning pattern prevailing in this village.

Rangpurias, the in-migrants

The majority among the in-migrants came from Rangpur and the rest from Kurigram and Gaibandha (apart from Shawtal who are discussed later on). They are called in a single word ‘*Rangpuria*’ (people from Rangpur) in general. The place they are living in is called ‘*Rangpuria Potti*’ (*potti* is synonymous to *para*). Population density is higher in this *potti* close to *Paschimpara* and some of them are living in some other *paras* scattered from the majority. Approximately, 1000 in-migrants are living in 175 households in *Rangpuria potti* and around 475 persons are voters among them. Seven or eight in-migrant families are living in between Dabor and Chawliapara, situated in the other side of the village.

Natural catastrophes (i.e. river erosion, flood etc.) and economic necessities have been responsible for these people moving to this village. They have started to come here after 1971 and the influx increased particularly after the 1988 flood. In the village, the majority of them are living on other’s land and their shelters are temporary in nature as landowners can evict them any time. Beside this, movements of migrants back to their places of origin are evident. Even those who are not going back do possess a dream in their mind of going back to their place of origin. Some individuals have already invested money or bought land at the place of their origin as ‘returnee investment’.

Some of them bought land and established dwelling units here. A few of them got married with local girls. These can be treated as their adaptive strategies as well. They are expanding their social and kin relations through marriage. Once they had formed a sort of *samiti* or organization of themselves that broke down later on.

Regarding occupations most of them are day laborer, more precisely, agricultural labor, rickshaw (van) pullers (mostly pulling at the town), husking mill workers and small traders (trading at Shikdarhat). Among all mill workers, three fourths are from these in-migrants. Notably in-migrant women are working at mills whereas local women (even the poorer ones) are not generally allowed to work there.

All these migrants are Muslim. Their level of education is generally lower than that of local inhabitants. Local elites and other villagers treat them as outsiders although some of them are living here for more than two decades, having own dwelling unit and being married to local women.

Adibashi⁶ Sawtals

Ethnic group like the *Sawtals* are living in this village at two locations. Few of them (17 households) are ‘original’ inhabitants living in Kandena Para and the few others (18 households) who came from outside were later converted into Christianity. This latter group is living on the two *bighas* of land at Adivhasi Para owned by the Roman Christian Mission situated at Kosba in Dinajpur town. The history of migration of these people dates back in 1947 when their preceding generation was living at Ghoraghat in Dinajpur. After the partition

⁶ Etymologically it means native resident but here it is used instead of value-laden term ‘tribe’.

in 1947, they went to India. However, as they could not sustain there, they came back to Dinajpur. Mr. Brindabon of the neighbouring Brindabon Para gave them shelter at that time on the basis of mutual benefit and in 1984 the Mission brought this land for their living in the price of alteration of their religion from *Muzhihan (Adidharma)* to Christianity.

None of them have any land of their own. They are mostly day labourer. Mongla, most prominent among the older men of the *para*, once went to Dhaka for work and came back later on.

Out Migration

After the partition in 1947, migration to India became a continuous process amongst Hindus. It was accelerated by the 1956 riot and aftermaths. After 1971, the scenario the migration did not stop as might be expected at that time.

Two or three persons from Panua and Daktar Para went to Saudi Arab, Dubai, and Malaysia for work. Asadulla Sarker of Sarker family from Hajipara immigrated to Canada.

Other Forms of Migration

Occupational migration is apparent. A few of the villagers went to Dhaka and Chittagong for work. Two government officials went outside the village as they were transferred to other workstations. Two MBBS doctors and one professor migrated to the town for their private practice and job. Some girls are working as dressmakers in town and commute daily.

Day labourers from the adjacent villages come every day to Shantipur for working in cold storage and mills. They also do small business and daily basis works at the *bazar*.

Social Order

In absence of strong and unique authority to maintain social order, it is ultimately the individuals' responsibilities to maintain their safety and security. Both formal and informal authorities for maintenance of social order co-exist in the village.

Four notable aspects can delineate the major features of social order in Shantipur.

- The traditional form of social order in the village as perceived by particularly the aged has been going through a major shift as the ones previously responsible for maintaining it are no-longer in the scene. Simultaneously with this, new individuals and groups with power (e.g. political, educational, financial) have emerged to challenge the traditional social order. The ultimate result is the breaking down of a unique authority to maintain the traditional social order and emergence of hetero-centric authorities.
- As a result of gradually deteriorating Hindu-Muslim relationships, the whole Hindu community of the village has developed their own social order. However, each of the Hindu *paras* appears to have their independent social order the maintenance of which usually rests on an individual or a family.
- As the in-migrants are excluded from the mainstream in many aspects of social spheres, no effort of bringing them under the major social order(s) are apparent. They themselves too appear to have no-social order, as they have not yet practically passed more than one generation in this village. Efforts were taken but vein.
- The Shawtals do have their own social order usually controlled by the aged. However, the appearance of the Church has been causing in developing an alternative social order pivoting around the people involved with the Church.

The above aspects relate to the informal social order only. The formal authority to maintain social order, however, is the Union Parishad (UP). The UP through its member for the village, work as the conflict resolution authority. However, if it does not work, people go to the UP office for better solution. The nearness of UP office from the village also allows people to frequently go there. The effectiveness of UP as an authority to maintain social order in the village is questionable.

The following are considered as threats to social order.

- Declining respect for the elderly among the young generation.
- Empowerment of women.
- Increasing political influence in the local spheres.
- Infusion of money and corruption in local government affairs.
- Border trade and increased drug addiction particularly among the young people.
- Lack of employment and increased frustration in the youth.
- Rise of individualism as an effect of increased urbanisation.

VIII PERCEPTION OF WELL-BEING

Perception of well-being varies in the village where inequality prevails in various forms.

Material Sense of Well-being

It is distinctively different among different social groups. Broadly *adibash'* (converted Christian and the followers of *adidharma*), Hindus and Muslims are three different social group based on religions living in three different reality. In migrants known as *Rangpuria* have formed another large social group in Shantipur. To the Muslims having 'a home' or secured permanent shelter is one of the most important factors in determining material well-being. It is different for the *Rangpurias*. The majority among the *adibasi* people do not have any land of their own for living, and hence it has become key factor of their life. Hindus of this village are living in dissimilar reality. It is more a question of root. Regular income and good economic conditions are the other determining factors of material well-being.

Political Sense of Well-being

Within village the influence of *dosh samaj* is declining, and has changed and taken over by rise of individualism and political activity; more precisely, party politics. Existence of different supporters within one household is common. On the other hand, the *shalish* as a dispute resolution mechanism is not operating as before. Political connections or identity become more prominent. It determines the question of *khomotaheen* and *khomotaban* in one way. Nature and politics of inter ethnic and inter religious relations are another location of *khomota*. Having political connection or political identity ensures political well-being in one way, but that is not the end. Ethnic and religious identity is significant platform of *khomota* practice. Economic strength is also playing a crucial role.

Socio-cultural Sense of Well-being

Acquired social status position and being honoured by others can give a feeling of happiness in one's mind. This is true irrespective of economic condition. Belonging to particular social (e.g. *Rangpuria*), ethnic (e.g. *Shawtal*) and religious (e.g. 'Turi' among the Hindus) creates feelings of *morjadaheenota*. This has evolved through interactions among different groups over generations. Beside these, economic strength is influential for being *morjadaban*. Being *morjadaheen* (honourless) is usually linked with violation of values within customary practices. Education is viewed as a very important determiner of *marjada*.

Equality and Inequality

People are unequal in many respects. Economic position is one major determiner of inequality. But the following factors are important too.

- Status
- Occupation
- Ethnic identity
- Financial capability
- Power
- Education etc.

These determiners of inequality do not act separately. Rather the complex interaction of these determines inequality in Shantipur.

Community's Sense of Happiness

Happiness is very much relative and depends on the fulfilment of aspirations. It is very diverse and socially differentiated. Following things are required to make people happier in Shantipur.

- Financial security
- Hospital
- Employment of one's liking
- Living together with unity
- Rule of law (good governance) in the community
- Good relationship with neighbours
- Good relationship within the family