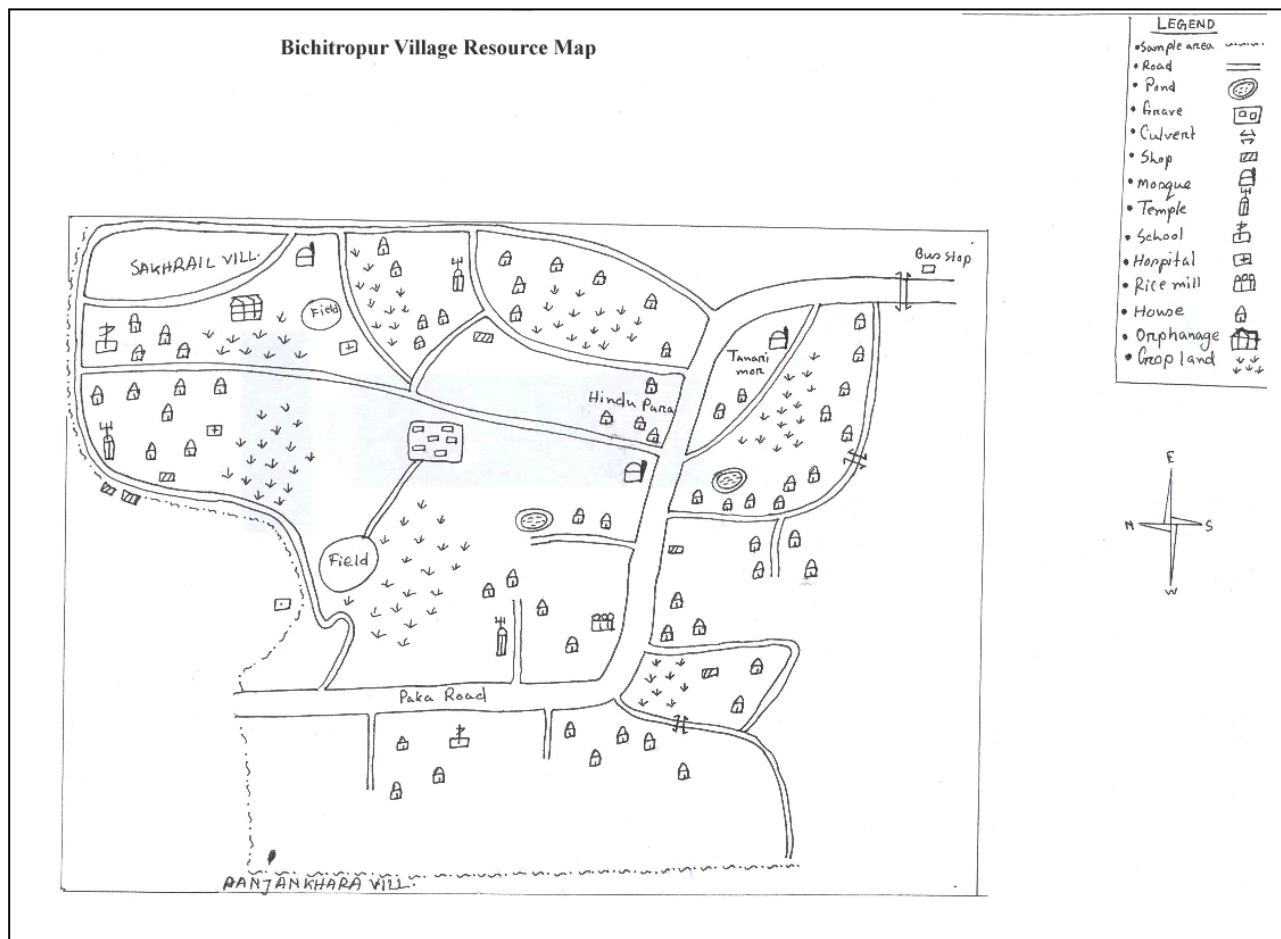


Provisional Community Profile of Bichitropur, Manikgonj

A basic sketch of economic, social and political characteristics of a remote rural site



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Section 1

Introduction to Bichitropur

PHYSICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SITE

Location

Bichitropur is a village under Garpara union in Bichitropur mouja and about 4.5 km to the northwest of the district town of Manikganj. The village has an area of 253 acres (BBS, 1991) and consists of various *paras*.

Infrastructure and Its General attributes

The overall, facilities in the village are good as electricity is available all across the village yet availability of power connection depends on individual household's financial ability to subscribe for this commodity. Sanitation system is good and all villagers use tube-well for drinking water and almost every household boasts a tube-well. There are two *Tara pumps* in this village and everyone has access to them. It is also noticeable that most of the tube-wells are affected with iron contamination and some are found to have arsenic contamination.

There is a Government-run health complex in the middle part of this village and one private hospital in the eastern part. The government-run health complex provides for primary health care and the private one all kinds of health services including weekly visit by specialist doctors as well as emergency treatment. These two hospitals could serve all the villagers, but the well-to-do sections go for better quality services in the district town. Most of the internal roads are *kutcha* (unpaved muddy roads), but a *pucca* road (paved) runs through the village. This road allows villagers to get easy access to the district town. The village has one high school and is located on the western boundary of the village, has four mosques in southern-east, middle, northern-west and eastern parts, Its six temples are scattered in the different paras of the village. It has one market (the *ghosher bazar*), one bridge (in the north-western part), one culvert (in the south), two ponds (in the south and close to *Ghosser bazaar*), one saw mill and one rice mill near the bazaar, one orphanage and one primary school in the north, one graveyard in the north and two play grounds-one in front of the UP complex in the west and another in the east.

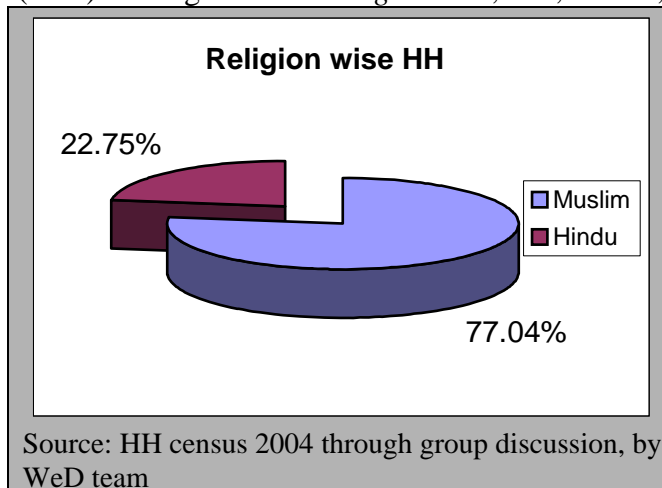
Facilities At a glance:

- Electricity for the whole village
- Tube well
- Tara pump
- One government health complex
- One private hospital
- Pucca (paved road)
- Four mosques
- Six temples
- One bazaar
- One culvert
- Two ponds
- One saw mill and one rice mill
- One primary school
- One graveyard
- Two play ground

PEOPLE AND PLACE

Population

Bichitropur has a total of 488 households (Households Census, 2004 by WeD) having approximately 2300 voters. According to 1991 BBS data the household was 447. Total population was 2262. Amongst them 1136 male and 1126 female. The census data reveal that the majority of the population are Muslims (77%) having different *bangsha* like, Mir, Mallik, Khan, Miah, Mollah, Kaitta, Sheikh and there is also a significant number of Hindu households comprising 23% of the population with various castes and sub-castes including Rishi, Saha, Ghosh, Kayasta, sheel, Brahmin. There is not such caste division among the Muslims, but the among them lies in terms of power, status, wealth as well as resource control all of which create a hierarchy among them (the Muslims) and it levels its influences on social interactions such as marriage.



The villagers are divided into different *samajs* and conventionally these are based mainly on kinship and in some cases on religion as is the case for the *Rishi*. Among the Muslims there are seven different *Samajs*, located in different parts of the village. The Hindus have their own *samaj* (e.g. Saha, Rishi) evolving on their religious rules, norms and principles. But they also connected to the wider *samaj* strongly controlled by the Muslims. This works when they need or seek social supports from the Muslim leaders.

Table: Hindu Caste and title

Group	Title
<i>Brahmin</i>	<i>Chakrabarty, Goshamy</i>
<i>Namashudra</i>	<i>Mandal, Sarkar, Biswas, Baroi, Sing, Mallik</i>
<i>Rishi</i>	<i>Moni das</i>
<i>Saha</i>	<i>Saha</i>
<i>Ghosh</i>	<i>Gosh</i>
<i>Sutradar</i>	<i>Sutradar</i>
<i>Sheel</i>	<i>Sheel</i>
<i>Das</i>	<i>Kormoker</i>

Table: Muslim Bangsha

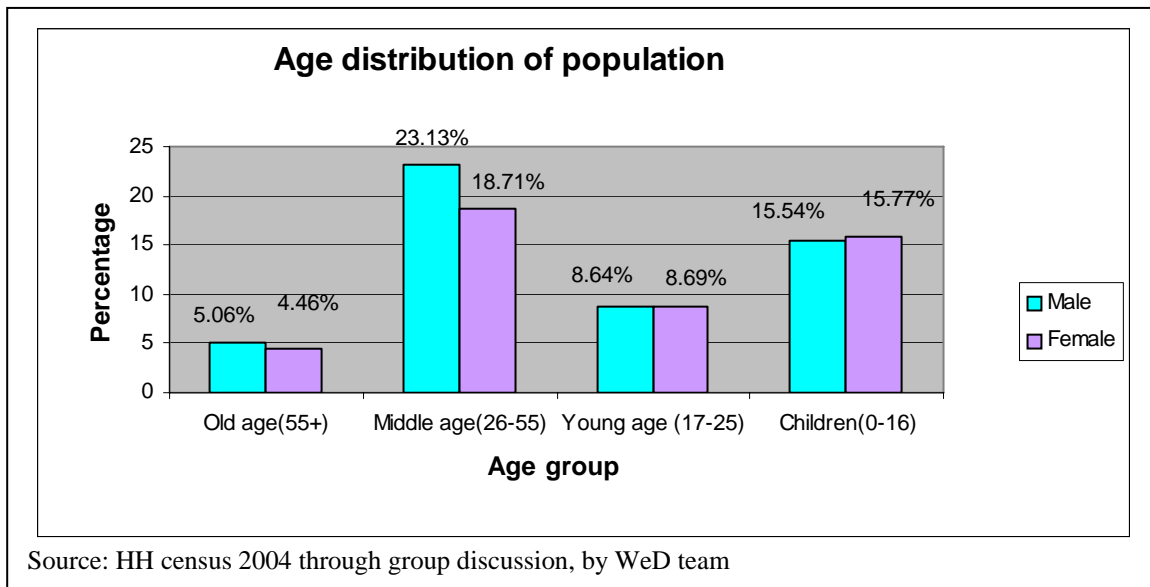
Bangsha	
<i>Bepari</i>	<i>Miah</i>
<i>Bhuiyan</i>	<i>Mir</i>
<i>Chakrabarti</i>	<i>Molla</i>
<i>Chowdhuri</i>	<i>Mollik</i>
<i>Dewan</i>	<i>Mondal</i>
<i>Fakir</i>	<i>Monshi</i>
<i>Gazi</i>	<i>Sarker</i>
<i>Haque</i>	<i>Shekh</i>
<i>Khan</i>	<i>Shikder</i>
<i>Khondoker</i>	<i>Siddique</i>

Source: HH census 2004 through group Discussion, by WeD team

There are different occupations in the village. The Muslims have no caste bar to any occupation but for the Hindus, different castes have different occupations and titles such as *Brammin - Thakur* of different sub groups, *Baishya - Ghosh* (dairy products producer of), *Khaitria* -business (*Shaha*), *Shudra* (scheduled caste) - *Malini, Rishi, Namashudra, Sheel, Das*. Among them, the *Brahmin* is considered the upper echelon. The following two tables give at a glance a picture of the Muslim and Hindu community here:

Sex ratio and age composition

From the census data, based on age and gender the villagers are clustered into four categories. These are: Old(55+ yrs.), Middle (26-55 yrs), young (17-25 yrs), children (0-16 yrs). The following chart shows the population distribution in different age categories:



The Pattern and Number of Household

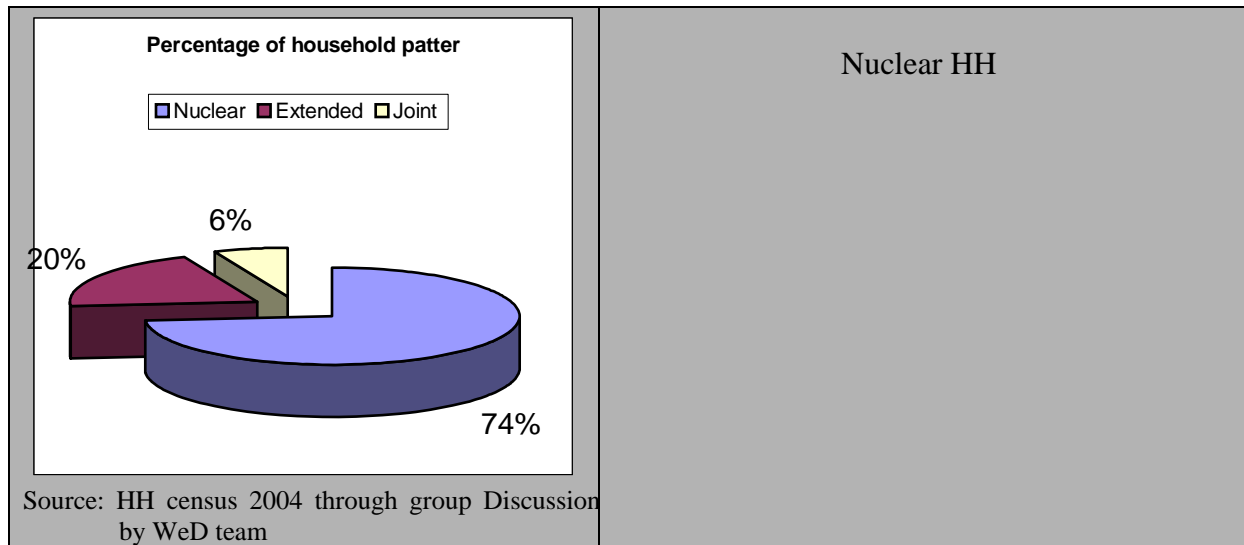


Basically two things have been considered here. Household structure and Household headship. So far as household structure is considered, there are three major types :

- Nuclear HH
- Extended household
- Joint household

The most common form is nuclear household comprising a married couple with unmarried children. Based on the information from *para* wise discussion with the villagers, it is gathered that approximately 74% of the population reside in nuclear families.

The second most common form of family organisation consists of more than one married couple. There are around 20% extended households and very few (6%) joint households

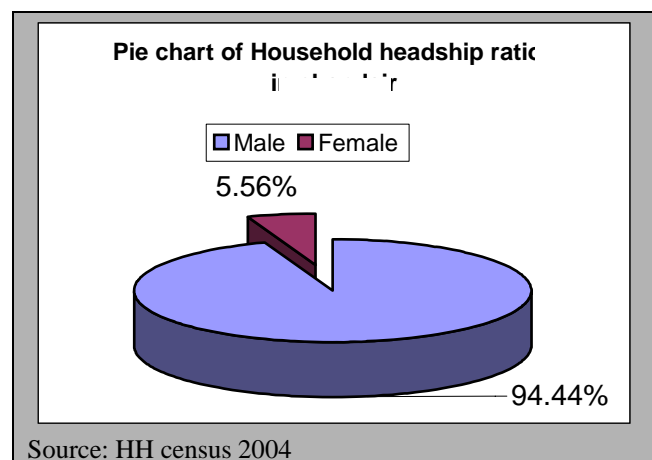


in this category, which can identified as non -nuclear family. But it is difficult to define an extended and a joint family. For example, the aged parents or only mother or father do not live with any married son permanently. They shift from one son’s HH to another. Most of the time they stay with one son for three months, then move into another son’s house. The following chart shows the percentage of household pattern. According to the villagers, poverty is the most dominant factor for creating regular intra-household conflict and misunderstanding between a daughter- in-law and a mother- in-law and with other members of the in- law's household. This causes to sour relationship and break the extended household, increasing the nuclear households.

There are two types of headship:

- Male-headed
- Female-headed

According to the census data, 6% households are headed by female



Social Settlement and Its Mapping

Bichitropur is a big village with different religious and occupational groups in different paras. The villagers depend on two dimensional senses in constructing the paras: one is geography and other is religion. People like to identify some paras as 'north', 'middle', 'west' para etc, and at the same time, cite them on the basis of religion (and caste) such as 'Hindu', 'Muslim', 'Rishi' etc. The Muslims are scattered in different parts- in the south, southern east, west, northern east, east, and middle. The Hindus are also scattered; but they are clustered at some particular points. A group of Hindus (familiar as *namashudra*, *kaysthya*) belonging to the low caste and involved with *chatai* business live in the eastern part, the Saha, a trading community live in the western part, the Rishi with their leather based occupation, live in the northern part. Occupational identities are important for the Hindus such as. the Rishi; however, for the Muslims it has no link with their religion. The villagers' residences are largely associated with their inheritance of land properties as well as lineages. We see that the notion/practice of *samaj* comes from lineage (*gosthi*) and religion; therefore, lineage's location/residence is almost as same as that of the *samaj* location. The physical infrastructure of the houses apparently reflects the economic conditions of the dwellers, for the Muslims in particular. Most of the *pucca* houses have good infrastructure (e.g. brick-built and well designed) and are located in the southern west (shaha para), west (the educated Muslims), and in the eastern parts (the Muslims who are educated and 'powerful'). Some houses are in the northern middle part, just opposite to the Sheel para where a group of rich/middle class people lives. The poorer section lives in the southern east part, just on the eastern side of *ghoser bazaar*, whose occupation is labour work. Their houses are built with tin or/and bamboo products. The middle classes of people irrespective religion and occupations are scattered all across the village.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SITE

The village came into being five to seven generations ago. An old Hindu shrine in *Ghosh para*, is one of the oldest historical mark in the village. It also conveys the symbolic past Hindu dominance in the village. But gradually the Hindus had migrated to India for various reasons. At the time of partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, some Hindu *Zamindars* and rich people (landlords) had migrated for security reasons. According to the villagers, some also migrated because of their permanent jobs in India. Again in 1971 15-20 households migrated when Pakistani carried out a genocide. After the liberation more than 10 families migrated to India as they feel victims to exploitation by the majority Muslim people.

Changing Pattern of the Community Life

Economic Changes

From the economic point of view, different types of changes occurred over the last decade.

A significant change has occurred in the agriculture sector, which plays a positive role in the economic life of the village. Expansion of the irrigation service increased production of vegetables and maize and the overall agriculture production. 10-

Major economic changes

- Change in agricultural productivity
- Sectoral shift (farm to non-farm activities)
- Diversity in employment opportunity and changing wage rate
- Remittance (cash flow) through migration
- NGO intervention
- Infrastructure

15 years ago most of the villagers did agricultural work when the seasonwise main crops were: in *Chaitra*- Mustard, *Kalai*, *Khesari*, Wheat, *Paira*. In *Baishakh-Jaishtha*- *Aush*, In *Agrahayan-Aman*. Most of the crops were used for consumption and the rest were sold in the market to meet up their need for essentials like salt, kerosene, cloth etc. Currently, the season-wise cropping pattern is: in *Chaitra*- Mustard (less than before), *Kalai*, *Kawon*, *Til*, Wheat, In *Baishakh-Jaishtha*- Irri (Boro rice-relying on irrigation system), In *Agrahayan-Aman* (compared to the past, Aman cultivation land is now only 10%). Now crops are produced mostly commercially. Besides, cultivation of sugarcane and banana has increased and jute cultivation has decreased. On the other hand, maize cultivation has been introduced with increasing success. Farmers cultivate it for commercial purposes.

Non-farm sectors (e.g. jobs, business) have expanded over the last decade. Educated and well-off people shifted from agriculture to non-farm sector for their main income. The number of service-holders has increased in the village with the increase in the number of higher educated people. Some households dependent on waiving for generations still stick to it, but it is no longer profitable like the past.

Over the last ten years, the wage for labour has marked a significance rise The village has made room for new occupations. The poor have now taken to rickshaw/van pulling, tailoring, motor vehicle driving, small trading, carpentry etc. At present a day laborer earns 70-80 taka along with two meals as wage per day but ten years before it was only 20-25 taka per day. A rickshaw/van puller's daily income varies between 100-120 taka while a tailor's average daily income 150-200 taka. People working at brickfields receive payment under different arrangements but they usually get payment for a whole season. For a season (consists three months) they earn 10000-15000 taka.

Along with occupational diversity, the villagers now have greater mobility both within the country and outside. A significant number of people migrate to other districts of the country for better income. Some also migrate overseas with jobs and contribute to the village economy through remittance.

The NGOs play a role in bringing about a change in the poor people's live. BRAC, ASA, Grameen Bank, PROSHIKA and some local NGOs have micro-financing programme for income generation by the poor. Moreover, the dependence on towards traditional money-

lenders (*Mohajhan*) has reduced due to NGO intervention. Some organizations like IRDP, BRAC, PROSHIKA provide for other facilities as well. IRDP basically imparts training on livestock and poultry rearing. BRAC imparts training on livestock and poultry rearing and primary education, sanitation facilities, PROSHIKA on primary education with the aim to increase their efficiency.

The village has two small-scale commercial points (usually known as 'moor' e.g. *temar moor*) in where more than eight shops cater for the daily need or essentials of the villagers. These shops, fewer in the past, indicate a change in the occupation of some villagers.

Communication is an important indicator of economic change. A *pucca* road running through the village has made an important impact on the villagers. The commercial moor, is a gift of the road. Now people can easily travel to the district town and promote their economic activities better. The construction of a road (a connected road with the district town, goes up to the *Bangladeshi Haat*), is considered a major breakthrough for the village.

Social Changes

There is a range of factors that can be identified as responsible for a change in the social life of the villagers. The village, about 4 km away from the district town, being marked by changing characters in many areas.

In the past, most of the land of this village was owned by the Hindus and a small member of Muslims. The ownership has changed for different reasons. Many of them sold land to invest the sale proceeds in business, some of them left the village after selling their land. Now most of the arable land of the village is owned by 20-25 households.

Major social changes

- Land ownership pattern
- Household pattern
- Attitudes towards elderly people
- Notion of status and power

At present, nuclear family is a dominant feature in the village. Most of the families are nuclear, while a few are extended and joint, the majority of which exist in the Hindu community. Family safety net has weakened as the young couple leaves their old parents to love separately. This practice is more predominant in the Muslim than the Hindu community. The tendency of break- families away separating parents is prevalent among less/ uneducated and poor people.

Not only the structure, values and relation among members within the households also are growing through a change -once the children felt filial obligation to their parents but no longer. Some of the respondents however gave a different opinion in they claim that relations between parents and separated sons improve when they live separately.

A significant social change has taken place in the status and power in the village. Aged people from different *samajs*, who were shown respect no longer enjoy the esteem, and they are being replaced by young political leaders.

Cultural Changes

Noticeable cultural changes have occurred over the last decade. The aged are dissatisfied with the attitudes and activities of the younger generation. They perceive that the *samaj* (culture and society in broader sense) in which they live is getting different from the past. The main trends of changes are: attitudes towards parents, guardians, and elderly people, social customs and practices, once so respectful, have now weakened.

The most significant changes are:

- More inter-generation interaction and less differential attitudes towards the aged
- Young generation's involvement with politics and violence
- Preference for urban manner
- Better interaction between different classes and castes

People had peace in the past; but nowadays they are experiencing violence with political overtones.

The way of living has changed over the years: people are becoming educated, there are more and diversified modes of employment, and people are more familiar with the urban manners of living. All these have made an impact on the mode of their living: designs of housing, clothing, fascination for movies, and music, thanks to the introduction of modern home appliances women's mobility in public places (e.g. study, shopping), entertainment (e.g. cricket). There is a noticeable change in the celebration of different ceremonies like marriage, birthday (e.g. decoration, food, entertainment) urban manners are imitated.

It is told that an account of wider mobility, now the rigidity has slackened among different castes. For example, though upper caste Hindus do not interact with the low caste *rishi* within the village boundary, they find no problem working in the same places, or living in same accommodation.

Political Changes

Generally, the rural power structure is associated with *matbar*-type powerful persons who usually are the leader of a particular *samaj* as well as the local political leader. In Bichitropur, they are primarily responsible for resolution of conflict, imposing social sanction and maintaining social order. They have great control over manpower and community resources by which they can exercise power easily. Currently, the traditional social structure has changed and the young people rather than the older ones are assuming power and control of things. The regime of Ershad was a turning point/crucial period because it has brought out one of the dominant leaders in the village. He was a prominent leader of Ershad's party, now dead, but his family is very influential in the village. He sheltered a group of *mastaans* in interest of politics that began the pollution of the political environment in the village. According to the villagers,

young political leaders are mainly responsible for social control and social sanction. Authority and power of traditional leaders in the village been curbed because the young leaders do not respect them and allow them to have any part in the village judiciary. The new generation leaders' political affiliation facilitates the exercise of their power in society. In every political, social and cultural activity they directly intervene and establish control over different resources. *Salish* (setting for village judicial purposes) is a good example where *netas* or young political leaders have exercise their power unfairly and unjustly in the interest of their parties. Power struggle among different political groups is common, and sometimes, during election in particular, this leads to serious conflict and violence. The villagers think that politics is turning violent.

Natural Changes

Significant natural changes that took place are as follows:

- Arable land on the decrease
- A road constructed by blocking a canal
- Increase in the number of trees

In the past, the village boasted expanded arable lands. Gradually the area of arable land has decreased with an increased population requiring more land for housing.

One important natural change in the village filling up of the canal on the eastern side, which met the demand for irrigation twenty years ago. As a result, flood is one of the natural consequences people have to face from time to time. One positive change is the increase in the number of trees in the village.

Section 2

Introduction to the community resources

MATERIAL RESOURCES

Occupation and employment

The majority of the villagers depend on many non-farm activities (e.g. business). Although some of them have arable land and produce crops, they do not consider it their primary occupation. Rich people own big business and have industries established outside the village. Some people operate small business (e.g. involved with rice/ mustard stock business, running jewellery shop) mainly in the district town. A few villagers run grocery shops, a few their dwelling houses, and others at the local market places. These are sources of income for the shop owners.

Major occupations:

- Off-farm activities
- Services
- Traditional work
- Wage labour
- Agriculture

A large number of educated people belonging to the middle/upper middle classes do jobs in government, NGOs and private sectors. A good number of educated women are employed in different institutions (e.g. teacher, doctor, Govt. jobs).

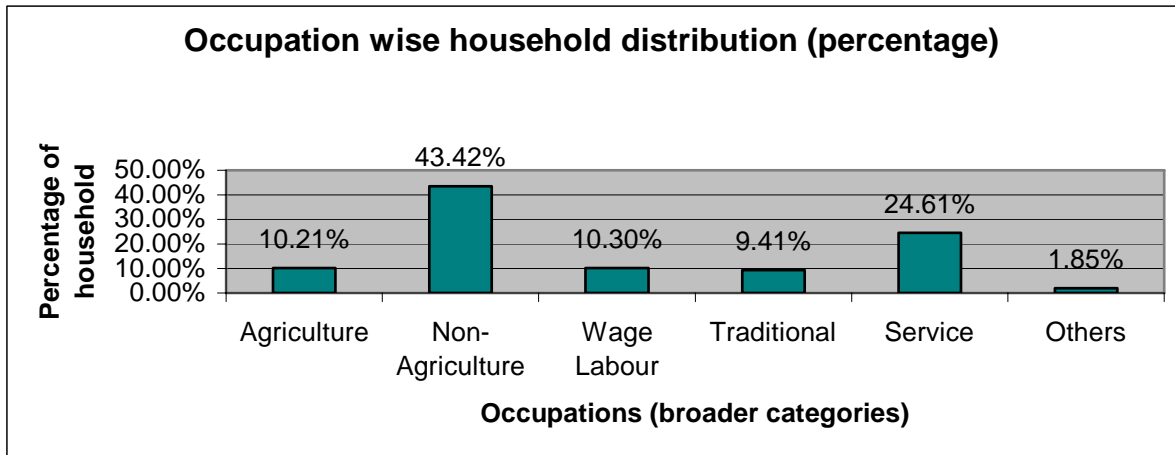
The village has different castes/sub-castes among the Hindus who are involved in traditional occupations under the caste system (e.g. the *Rishis* can do only leather related work, the *Ghosh* trades in card, sweetmeats and other milk products). Some women from *sheellpara* are engaged in EIG at domestic level (e.g. sewing and selling women's wear), but they are not allowed to work public places although the extremely poor women from *rishipara* are forced to do so (e.g. earth digging) to earn an income. People of different castes are not allowed for some occupations such as rickshaw pulling, van pulling, earth digging, burger, which are considered as *nistha kaj* (hated/not accepted) to them.

Manual labour is one of the common occupations in the village for the poorer section. A significant number of people work in Dhaka and other cities as wage laborers. Moreover, recently, rickshaw/van pulling, tailoring, driving, small trading, carpentry etc have opened up for the poorer section.

A few villagers do agriculture work. Different crops such as wheat, maize, pigeon pie, sugarcane, tobacco, banana grow on the land (high and usually does not go under water) of the village. A very small area of land is cultivated for paddy. Crop production requires irrigation water and the pumps are managed by some individuals (also owners of 'china' machine for irrigation) on the condition of crop sharing (one fourth of crop for water supplier).

A small number of people (mainly male and a few female) work in abroad (middle east in particular) and they send remittance back home. Also there are some weavers whose income is gradually falling.

The following chart shows the major occupations under the broader categories at a glance:



Source: HH census 2004 through Group Discussion, by WeD team

General overview of expected incomes (monthly) from specific occupations

It is found that over the last ten years, the expected income of the poor has increased. At present a day laborer earns 70-80 taka with two meals as wage per day but ten years before it was only 20-25 taka per day. A rickshaw/van puller's daily income is 100-120 taka while a tailor's average income is 150-200 taka. People working at brickfields get payment under different types of arrangement and for a season they earn 10000-15000 taka. People in government service get the government scale. It did not look for the expected income from non farm activities. It will be examined in next phase.

Savings and credit

Lending institutions and opportunities

Mainly there are three types of lending institutions where from people seek credit. These are:

- Bank
- NGO
- Cooperatives

Savings

Two aspects mark people's savings behaviour. The general perception is savings is that only for rich people and poor people do not have any savings. But the reality is different. In the village people involved with any NGO or cooperatives, have savings under a mandatory

system of those institutions. On the other hand, the rich and middle class use commercial banks of district town Manikjanj for savings.

Credit

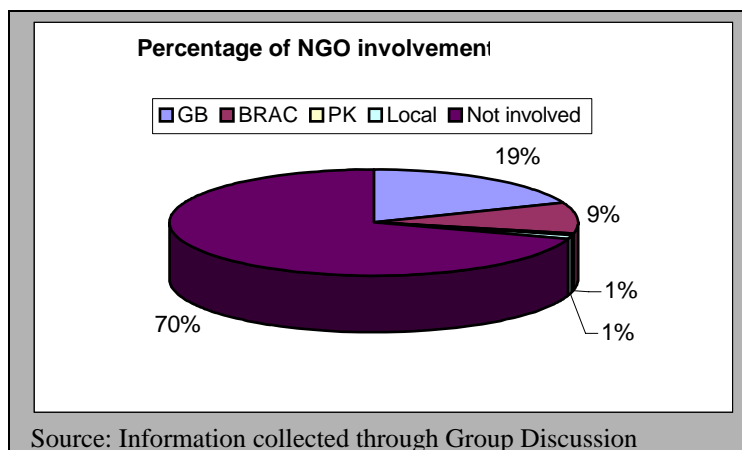
There are also two aspects of the credit options. First to get access to the institutions and second, to make use of the institutions. Credit opportunities are not equal for all classes. The non-poor people have financial interactions with different banks located in the district town about 4 km away from the village. On the other hand, NGOs extend credit to the poor. Apart from NGOs, there are three *samities* (local cooperatives) in the village. Small-scale business-persons formed them and they are located at *Gosher bazaar* (market). Two other *samities* organized by local people are located at the *Tenarir more* (a point) of the village. Poor people can look for credit from them.

The following table shows at a glance the feature of the credit and savings status of the village.

Table: Classwise savings and credit facilities (both formal and informal institutions)

Name of the Class	Savings Facilities	Credit Facilities	Remarks
Upper Class	Bank, Insurance company,	Bank	
Middle class	Bank, Insurance company	Bank and NGOs	Some middle class families who are engaged in business, take loan from NGOs.
Lower Class (poor & extreme poor)	NGO, Local Samity	NGOs and local samity, <i>Mahajan</i>	Some extreme poor have no access to take loan from NGOs so only option for them to go to mahajan

It has been noticed that BRAC, PROSHIKA, ASA, Grameen Bank (GB registered not as an NGO, rather as a bank, although people know it as an NGO) and 'Gono Kallayn Trust' have programmes in the village. It is seen that the percentage of women's involvement is higher than men.



Community incomes and expenditures

Villagers contribute on different occasions organised for the whole village, especially during *mela, natak etc.* Also during several Hindu festivals along with the Hindus, the Muslims also participate willingly.

Welfare/ Services- Govt services non-Govt services

Government service/welfare

There is a government health complex. However, they are not satisfied with its services. Different safety net programmes are these for the villagers. Now approximately 20/25 persons in the village are VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) card holders. The old aged pension is the other state welfare programme in operation in the village.

Significant private and No- Govt. services

In private sector, villagers get service from a hospital and a high school. A large number of people benefit from the hospital at low cost. There is a non-government high school to impart secondary education and the students of the village study there.

In non-Govt. service people get service from NGOs and Cooperatives. BRAC, PROSHIKA, ASA, Grameen Bank and Gono Kallayn Trust and some other local NGOs and local samities have programmes in the village for both credit and training purposes. Apart from NGOs, there are three *samities* (local cooperatives) in the village, which run small-scale business and provide credit support as well.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Land

Land is very fertile here. A variety of agricultural products like paddy, jute, maze, zinger, banana, papaya and wheat grow on the land. There are two types of land - high land and low land. High land is used for housing and low land is used for agriculture. Land is also categorized on the basis of its quality; *Doash mati* (soil) is used for jute and paddy cultivation and *bele mati* is used for maze, wheat, sugarcane and winter crop cultivation. Most of the land located in the village belongs to 'high' category while a small area located in the southern part, is low, and goes under water during the monsoon. There are plenty of trees, mainly planted on the roadsides, in the village.

Canal

The canal beside the village was once an important source of fish but now there is hardly any in it. Only those who are living on fishing catch fish in the canal.

Pond

Most of the ponds in this village either belong to rich households or different institutions. The school and the bazaar have their own ponds and a part of their income comes from fish culture. There is no open water body in the village .About thirty years ago there was a *beel* (waterbody) called "*ghorar talash*" in the southern part of the village where villagers caught fish. But that *beel* does not exist any longer and it is used for agriculture.

Livestock

Rearing of cow/ goat/hen/duck is common in most of the households. Four/five households are the owner of commercial dairy farms and other four/five households have commercial poultry farms.

Plantation

Twenty years back there were many big trees like mango, jack fruit, black berry, coconut trees in the village but most of them were felled. The villagers then realized and started planting trees. Instead of fruit trees they planted trees that can give fine quality timber. *Meheghani, gamari, shishu* etc. topped the list. Also a huge number of trees have been planted on the roadsides under government supervision. The hedge, once a dominant feature of the village landscape has now become extinct and paddy field has taken its place.

Common Resources

There are some common utility resources (public property) in the village: play ground, road, and bridge. At times conflict arises over the use of the play ground between the aged people and the young. Now a portion of the playground is used by the aged people for playing with cards and the other portion for young playing games and sports.

Natural Vulnerability

This area is not generally affected by natural calamities. However, sometimes fog, heavy rainfall occur. Sometimes flood and storm destroy and damage their crops and property, cause physical injuries, spread various water- borne diseases. Such disasters adversely affect their income. The poor are mostly affected because they cannot sell their labour. At such times they receive loans from *Mohajon* and mortgage their household materials (*tin, ornaments*) to overcome the crisis.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Education

Institutions

There is one primary school and one high school in the village.

Education status of adults

Garpara (greater identity of Bichitropur) is the most educated area in Manikganj. A significant portion of the population is educated and do jobs in different areas. The female education rate is higher. A good number of women completed their bachelor degrees and some of them obtained the masters degree. In *Parawise*, *Miah para* is more educated than other *paras*. *Danesh Kha's* family distinguished as it has produced four doctors. Education has its reflection on the housing pattern of the village. Many houses have been built in the urban fashion and they belong to middle and/or rich classes. But a sizable section of people, usually poor, find no interest in education as it needs money to pursue, and they cannot afford it. They are not really to go for a long-term investment in education. They like to earn money on a daily basis as it is necessary for running their HHs. Poverty stands in their way of education.

Enrolment and drop out

In fact, the state of education in this village is better compared to others adjacent villages. Girl's enrollment is high at the primary and secondary levels but at the college level it is low. Most of the girls get married when they study at the secondary level or complete it. At the graduation and post graduation levels, some male and female students were found to be studying. The number of female students was fewer than their male counterparts.

Main value attached to education

Higher educated people always get respect. They are successful in their professional careers. They get higher status and the village is proud of them. It will be discussed more in the well being section.

Skills

People have developed skills for different occupations. These are: Masonry, carpentry, Earth digging, Thonga making (cone -shaped container made of paper), *Bash* and *Bater kaj* (weaving baskets from bamboo and cane), Sewing, work as *Malini* (sweeper), serving as *Housemaid*, Agricultural work, Private tuition, Rickshaw pulling, extraction of Sugarcane juice for selling.

Teaching mechanism

Different initiatives have been taken to encourage people about education. For child education, girl's education, adult education, a number of programmes have been undertaken by the government and NGOs. For example, stipends for girls, food for education, and extensive media coverage to aware people of education. All these have some positive impact on this village like other villages in the country.

Health

Major health problems

Diseases like fever, gastritis, diarrhoea, cough and cold, are common irrespective of age. For women anemia, uterus related problem (uterium prolepses) and body ache, for children, pneumonia and skin disease and for older people asthma are common in the village. Moreover adults and aged people also suffer from diabetes, heart disease and weakness.

Health Service

General feature

There are two types of health service available to the villagers. These are

- Modern and
- Traditional.

For modern health service the following institutions are there:

One government community health complex providing the primary health care service for the community people.

One private hospital named 'Sahera hospital' provides primary, maternity health care and also treat complicated cases.

Manikgonj district hospital have better facilities where severe cases are referred.

Villagers also visit private doctors' chambers for treatment.



Access to and use of the services

Considering class, age and gender all services can not be shared on equitable basis. The government Community health complex is supposed to provide the primary health care service to the community people. But the villagers are not happy with the services as the doctor of the clinic comes only twice a month; medicine is hardly available in the store. Apart from common medicine (i.e. medication for stomach problem, vitamins) no life-drug is available in this health complex. For family planning, villagers get services from government health workers. There is adequate service for immunization in this village. Government health workers serve the community.

People from middle and upper classes are quite happy with Sahera hospital's service when they compare it to the government health complex. A 20 *taka* fee ensures consultation from a 'good' doctor (physicians with higher degree and coming from Dhaka). Well-off women go to Sahera hospital. However the poorer people can not or do not manage this amount of money and are less interested in this hospital. They seek TBA/ *Dhatri* service during child delivery.

In case of emergency, patients are taken to Manikganj district hospital. This hospital is 6 km. away from the village and although the service is less costly, they feel unhappy. When the case is complicated, patients referred to Dhaka for better treatment. They mentioned "*Morlee hatir tale pare marai vhalo*". It is better to die in the hands of an expert rather than a layman.

Villagers also visit private doctors' chambers for treatment. Generally, men seek treatment from a private doctor or from Manikganj sadar hospital. Women from poor families usually do not go to a doctor if it is not a serious case and if they have to go, usually do not complete the course of medicine for economic crisis.

Traditional health care system is also important here. The villagers seek care from *kabiraj*. There are some *kabiraj* in the village. *Kabiraj* from other areas also visit the village. There is a homeopath doctor in the village. He has a chamber at *Gosher bazaar*.

PHYSICAL RESOURCES

Transportation and Communication

There are several options for the villagers to travel from the village to district town Manikganj, an economic and business center-one that is connected with the capital city. Both mechanized and non-mechanized vehicles are available for public transportation in the village. Mechanized *tempo* (different version of scooter) and non-mechanized rickshaw are used by the villagers irrespective of class and gender. Tempo is a widely used mode of transport in the village since it is cheaper and faster compared to rickshaw.

Institutions

There are various types of formal institutions in the village; these institutions are categorised as educational, religious, and social institutions. Among educational

Institutions, there are one high school and one primary school in the village. Four mosques for Muslim community, and six temples for Hindu community are the religious institutions that exist in the village. One orphanage (ashram) operated by the Hindu community is the only social welfare institution of the village.

Institution type	Name of the institution(s)
Educational institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One high school• One primary school
Religious institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four mosques for Muslim community• Six temples for Hindu community
Social formal institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One orphanage (ashram)

Market

The village has only one market place, called *Gosher bazar* situated on the road connecting the high way. This is a small market; only the necessary goods for daily use are available here. Therefore, the villagers frequently need to go to the district town for other purposes. They also visit Dhaka as it takes little time (maximum 2 hrs) to reach different markets there. Apart from *Gosher bazar*, many shops at different *moors* (point) e.g. *tenarir moor*, *ghosher moor*, *temar moor*, serve the villagers in their emergencies.

Main purchases and sales from markets

The major produces and products are on sale: Rice, maize, wheat, mastard, vegetables, sugarcane, milk and milk products, jute, banana, *chatai* (Bamboo made), *shari and lungi*. The main items on the purchase list are: Rice, vegetables, potato, salt, kerosene, *shari and lungi*, fish, meat and toiletries.

Female participation in markets

Generally, women do not go to the local market/ *haat* to purchase and sell products. Sometimes a few women do. They are widow and poor old women. But some women from the middle class and rich families go to the district town for shopping.

SOCIO-POLITICAL RESOURCES

Social and political grouping

Social

Religion plays a significant role in forming social groups. Two broader types of division/segmentation existing in the village are based on religious identity-for the Hindu religion, Hindu samaj and for the Muslim community-*mosalman samaj*. Two major trends of social stratification in social groups are visible in the village. In Hindu community, the caste system and its occupational identity determine the distribution/division of different housing location and setting and power structure and in Muslim community socio-economic identity (i.e. *goshthi, bangsha, bari*) is the important source of power and status.

Religion-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Muslim • Hindu
Kin-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Samaj/ bangsha</i> • Caste
Occupation-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different cooperatives
Politics-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different political parties • Different groups within a party

Among the different *samajs- Miah Par, and Thanga Para* are the most dominant Muslim *paras* in the village. In Miah Para lives the most educated and conscious section of people. A good number of service-holders come from this *para*.

The most important *bangshas* are:

- Mir
- Mallik
- Khan
- Miah
- Sheikh
- Mollah
- Kaitta Sheikh (Dairy product producer)

In Hindu community, there are different titles for different castes, expressing their status and rank in the community. Among them, the Brahmin is considered the most honourable.

Different castes are as follows:

- Brahmin
- Saha
- Ghosh
- Sheel
- Namashudra
- Rishi
- Sutradhar

There is alone karmokar family in Mistree para/ Korate para. A *mondir* belonged to the Kormokerhas been handed over to another caste because it can not continue puja on account of the rising costs. In mistree para, most people's occupation is Korate (Wood keeper). They mentioned that every caste has its own Brahmin and one brammen performs the *puja*. In Mistre para Haridas *mondol* arranges the puja and invites everybody of this Hindu community as well as the Muslim community.

Political

In Bichitropur village rural power structure has changed dramatically, where young political leaders rather than older traditional leaders control social order and social norms. Different political groups or factions exist in this village. Mainly two groups are strong in this village: one is affiliated with the BNP party and another with the AI. The BNP group is now stronger because its party is in power. It is lead by a young leader and another young leader leads AI group. It is notable that now the front leaders of the AI in the locality are away from the village because they are implicated in a murder case. They can not enter the village for two reasons: one is fear of BNP attack and the other is fear of the police. The BNP is also divided into two groups, led by two young leaders. These factions or groups are organised on the basis of common interest like resource control and accumulation, control over territory and arrogance of power. In this village there are also small groups but they are not active. Usually they make alliance with the ruling power.

Socio-political conflict and cooperation

In the prevailing situation, it is difficult to separate social and political conflicts and leadership one from another. In resolving social conflict *samaj* plays a strong role. A *matbar* represents a village *samaj*, and a *samaj* may have more than one *matbar*. There are no specific criteria for a *matbar*. But people usually advanced in age, educated with a good family background and knowledge capable of doing justice are accepted as Matbar. They have control over their own *samajs* or *parsa* and generally deal with minor issues e.g. intra-household/social tensions, and in case of '*boro bichar*' (big issues like money transaction), not only the *matbars* but also members of political parties, UP chairman and members also participate, if needed.

According to the villagers, now in most cases, any conflict has political overtone and different stakeholders come to handle the problem. Most of the villagers mentioned the name of a person as the most powerful local political leader who has great influences. But we get the sense that there are a number of powerful leaders of different statures in this village.

Villagers expressed a positive attitude towards the chairman. They mentioned he has a record of doing justice. Some low caste Hindu villagers told that when villagers are in trouble, they go to the chairman but poor people do not go to him directly; rather they seek his help through other persons having access to him.

The village has a strong national political trend, along with participation in independence war. There were two ministers and one mayor from this village.

Considering social and political aspect, in this village there are some influential personalities who are not residents of the village but have strong connection and contact in the village.

<i>Influential individuals</i>
Professionals like Doctor, Professor
Political figure
Highly educated (PhD)
Top rank Govt employee, Colonel
Businessman

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Major religious events and community participation

The village has religious diversity and there are two main religious groups: Muslim and Hindu. Again, the Hindus divided in castes and sub-castes perform their religious rites separately with individual *thakur*.

The Muslims, whatever their titles or class, perform a common set of religious ceremonies. The *chandra mas* (the moon calendar of month) fixes the festivals or/and programmes. However, at the community level, there are some more events like *Waz mahfil*, the purpose of which is make aware the Muslims about their religion.

The Hindus perform different *pujas* according to *Bangla* as well as moon calendar in some respects. Durga puja is the most important festival of the community. However, no *durga puja* takes place in the village as it is costly, and no Hindu can afford it. People of the village go to a nearby village to participate in *durga puja*.

Laxkhi puja is also important to them. *Utshab*, a religious programme, attracts a huge number of people as it continues for more than a week, and people feel 'emotional' when they participate in it. *kirton*, a programme of devotional songs is arranged by the Hindus. Money for *puja*, in most cases, comes from the community donation; even the Muslims also donate, particularly for the *Utshab*.

Major events at a glance	
Muslim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eid ul fitre</i>, • <i>Eid ul Azha</i>, • <i>Ramadan</i>, • <i>Shab-e-barat</i>, • <i>Shab-e-kadar</i>, • <i>Maharram</i> etc.
Hindu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durga puja (in Ashiwn), • Swarasati puja (in Magh), • Laxmi puja (in Ashiwn), • Kali puja (in Chaitra), • Buri puja (in Baishak), • Biswakarma puja (in Vadra), • Dol puja (in Falgun), • Chaitra Sangkranti (in Chaitra), • Shib puja (in Falgun), • Kartyaon (in Kartic), Utshab (in Agrahayn) etc

Access and seclusion

For the Muslim there is no class barrier but they have gender differences while performing religious activities. The Muslims pray (*namaj*) in mosques, however, only the male members go to mosque and the female do not, they pray in their homes. They have no access to a graveyard while no male faces any barrier to do *jiarat* (pray for any departed soul) at a graveyard. A few customs make it impossible for women to be equal to their male counterparts in religious practice, particularly in the public place.

In Hindu community, though different groups have their own *thakur*, people from every sub-caste come and participate in other's *puja*; there is no cultural/social barrier to participation. Yet not many people (both Muslim and Hindu) are interested in interacting with the Rishi, a 'hated' Hindu caste, which handles leather, a 'dirty' job. The upper caste Hindus (Saha, Brahmin) usually do not expect the presence of Rishis in their programmes.

It is noticed that there exist 'harmonious relations' among different groups in the village, and both the Muslims and the Hindus invite each other to religious ceremonies and the communities participate accordingly.

Major non-religious events and community participation

The villagers enjoy some social events such as *mela* (village fair), *natak* (people's drama), *jatra* (folk drama), *Kabi gaan*, *Bichar Gaan*, *Putul nach*.. These have no religious connection, and people from all communities/groups have access to enjoy the events. The expenditures for the programmes come from community donation as well as special contribution by an affluent person like an industrialist or/and political leader of the village/locality.

Major religious figures and sacred places

For the Muslims, a mosque is sacred place while for the Hindu temple compound is considered sacred. The village has 4 mosques in different places, and men pray there. It has 6 temples for the Hindus and different castes/sub-castes have their own temples as well as *thakurs*. There is another sacred place, called *peer bari*, in a nearby village, and a lot of people of the village participate (e.g. participation annual programme or *urosh*) in its religious festivals. A graveyard is another sacred place for the Muslims. There are a number of *hajis* in the village.

Life cycle events

Most of the elements come from their social tradition, and a part from culture or religion. Programmes related to people's birth, marriage and death are the common programmes. For example, *akika*, a programme related to birth, and meant for children, takes place among the Muslim people and *Choi haturia*, a programme takes place on the sixth day after a child's birth is practised in the Hindu community. *Annaprasan*, the purpose to feed rice to a 7/8 month old child, takes place among the Hindus. *Adhibash*, a programme of applying 'turmeric powder to body' of the bridegroom takes place among the Hindus and a similar programme called *gaie halud* takes place among the Muslims. *Gathmangal*, a marriage ritual takes place among the Hindu people only. The pattern of marriage is not same for Muslims and Hindus. Arrangement for the Hindu marriage is elaborate but in brief for the Muslim. Use of tools and vehicles has changed. The rich people, even the upper-middle class now use car for their marriage programme, but in the past (30 years ago) it was not necessary at all.

Different honorific titles

There are different titles representing different *bangshas* in the village: the major are *Meer*, *Mallik*, *Khan*, *Miah*, *Mollah*, *Sheikh* etc. These are significant because they have connection with 'power' and 'status' in the village. For example, people of '*Miah*' *bangsha/bari* enjoy 'power' as they have an elevated status in the village. Colonel Malek, an ex-minister of the government came from this *bangsha*. Also people of this *bangsha* are more educated. Apart from the *bangsha* or lineage, there are other titles among different sub-castes among Hindus such as *Ckakrabarti*, *Mallik*, *Mandal*, *Saha*, *Das*, *Ghosh*. These also carry status or a sense of stratification among them. For example, a *Brahmin* with *Chakrabarti* title gets the high esteem while some *Namashudra* (the *Rishi* group) with *Das* title are of lower status. *Matbar* is another term usually reserved for a social leader who conducts *salish*. *Neta* refers to a political status and both *matbar* and *neta* have power in society.

Section 3

Status of Women, Migration and Social Order

This section introduces the major issues we would like concentrate on in the village. A number of issues need to be explored, but at this level three issues the status of women, migration and social order are considered.

STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE COMMUNITY

Bichitropur is representing the traditional patriarchal society like any rural area of Bangladesh where there is the need to address the issue of female status from several aspects. At this level, attention is given to the basic status of women in both private and public space. In private life, the concentration is mainly on marriage, which shapes women's life according to social sanction.

The Marriage

Age and arrangement of marriage

Following the general social trend, in Bichitropur also, marriage is considered a fulfillment of social obligation rather than a personal choice of two individuals, particularly for women. Women are married at much earlier ages than men. The general trend is 15 to 22 year for women from both Muslim and Hindu communities and for men it is 20 to 25 years. Marriage is considered almost mandatory for a woman, and the household decision on it is final. No marriage takes place between the Hindus and Muslims but they do participate in each other's marriage ceremonies. The Hindus usually arrange marriage within the same caste. But exceptional cases such as if a boy and a girl from different castes get married as a result of personal choice, the parents from both castes initially do not allow them to stay with them but finally accept them. The Muslims in the past highly valued *Bangsha* in a marriage, but the trend has shifted in favour of money and education.

After getting married a wife has no decision-making power in the family but after producing offsprings, considered one of the major responsibilities for women, she can participate in the decision-making process. In a nuclear household, a wife can play a more important role in decision-making compared with a non-nuclear household.

Dowry is a strong phenomenon in any marriage of the village. Irrespective class and religion marriage without dowry is seemed unimaginable. It is evident that 100% HHs have to give dowry in their daughter's marriage. Both cash and kind are considered dowry. In the Hindu community, giving cash money with gold and other things is traditional and in the Muslim community, a groom's family takes cash but also prefers other material things as well. Two parties in the rich and educated section verbally agree on the amount or size of cash and other materials in a marriage. This affluent section generally hands over, as gifts furniture, motorcycle etc. in the marriage as gift. At present, the rate of dowry for different sections of people is as follows: for the poor people- tk.10000 to 20000, for the middle class-tk.30000 to 50000, for the rich section- tk 100000 to 300000. The amount of dowry depends on age, physical beauty, family status etc. Some parents from the brides' families told that if the grooms' families want a fix amount of dowry it is easy to manage for them but when grooms' families do not specify, and say "*mayeke sazie deben*" means 'you can give your daughter what you prefer', this is more critical because, to meet up the hidden desire of a groom's family, a bride's guardian has to give more/beyond his limit as dowry. If a bride's family cannot pay full amount of dowry some grooms' families create pressure but sometimes they forego, though such cases are few and far between. Villagers are aware that dowry is a two-fold approach. If you take dowry for a son, you have to give it back in your daughter's marriage. Though they are suffering the pain, they accept it as a socio-cultural burden. According to the villagers, BRAC has a positive impact, so far as making them aware of the evils of dowry is considered. The following table shows the approximate amounts of the deals in marriage as dowry in the village:

Consequences: Polygamy, Abandonment, separation and divorce

There are several consequences of dowry for women's marital life. In a traditional society where women are undervalued they have to accept a husband's more than one marriage. This leaves her in some form of abandonment, separation or divorce anyway.

From the informal group discussion 28 cases of polygamy is found. Villagers mentioned more than one marriage for a husband take place formally. But it is observed that there are a number of polygamous relationships in the village which are not shared with the team in detail in this phase. They may be explored in the next phase. Of those who had more than one marriage, some live in the same household, others separately.

It is found that 10 women were divorced because of failure to meet the dowry obligation. There are approximately 10 abandoned and separated women as direct consequence of dowry, household conflict resulting from low income of husband. A wide age gap between married couples has left 107 women widowed in the village. It is should be mentioned that six men were divorced in this village for different reasons. One reason has been cited as mental disability. The other reasons why women have to divorce their husbands in such a rigid male dominant society will be explored in the next phase.

Women's public life status

Education of young women

Women's education rate is good. But the ratio varies according to the situations of different *paras*. When they get married, they have to leave their study. But in some *paras*, girls are not getting married before they study or complete education at the secondary level. Hindu girls are at the risk of facing verbal or physical abuse on their way to school or homes. Sometimes this restricts them to have higher education. Eight women completed graduation and are doing different jobs.

Work in Public places

A good number of women (approximately 43) of the village work in public places. The extremely poor women do manual work in public (e.g. earth digging) as they need to do it for their survival. Poor women of *Tenary more* area, *Rishi para* do such work. A few very poor women, do work as maidservants in rich families in the village. Some women (educated and middle class) do tailoring work in their houses for an income. Among the Hindus, Namasudra women are not allowed to do public-place work. But they can engage themselves in income-generating activities (e.g. mat, sewing) at home. Rishi para's two of the poorest women do earth digging work. Some poor women migrate overseas (approximately 10), with manual work. Some women from educated or well-off families (approximately 8) do socially acceptable and honorable jobs as doctors, teachers, govt. service-holders within the country.

Extent of women's mobility

In general, women's mobility is at an optimal level in the village. Women of the village do not find any big constraint to go outside for education, job and services, to visit different places like shopping centres in the district town, and even in Dhaka. However, it is expected that they will maintain a *purdah* while in the public place. Society is lenient towards the most vulnerable (e.g. widow, abandoned) because they have no alternative source of income. Marriage is another condition. Unmarried girls are not allowed to move alone and if anybody dares, has to face *salish*. Moreover, these women or their families do not get special status for their migration abroad because the community do not know about their working status outside the country. Women from educated or well-off families are allowed to migrate to any place inside the country for work. Because people know what type of job they are doing. They get status for some honourable jobs as doctors, teachers, govt. servants etc. Some women are involved with NGO like BRAC, PROSHIKA, BRDP, Grameen Bank etc. They take credit and try to earn some money.

Prevalence of purda

Purdah is not widely prevalent. Women of both Muslim and Hindu communities usually cover their heads and some Muslim women use *Burkah* (cover the whole body). And as

mentioned before, women can move outside without facing strict restriction but of course enjoy limited not full freedom.

MIGRATION

History of migration

The village has a history of both in-migration and out-migration. A great degree of out-migration started from the village after the emergence of Pakistan. A significant number of the Hindus left the country for India during that period. Along with other people, people of '*zamindar bari*' in Ghosh para left the country for India in 1947. The other out-migrant section left the country during the Liberation War of Bangladesh. The last stream left the country after 1975. One of the main reasons for leaving the country, according to villagers, is associated with the security concern of the Hindu community. This out-migrant section left the country forever. The other out-migrant section moved from the village for higher education, job, for national and international destinations. There are a good number of in-migrants in the village, who came for residing here at different times.

Now- a-days, out-migration is quite a significant feature from the village. Both national and international migrations take place in the village. Not only men (approximately 10 %) but also women (approximately 5%) have left the village with migration abroad, 25% people of the village migrate from the village to different districts of Bangladesh for their livelihoods.

The migration places could be divided into two broader categories- one is within the country and the other is outside of the country. The migration within the country has for its destinations places like Dhaka, Rajbari, Chittagong, and for migration outside the country these are the Middle East (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia), and America etc.

Reason

The out-migration of pre-independence period was primarily associated with the sense of insecurity of the Hindu community. But now migration related to occupation and education is the dominant feature of the village. People migrate for various types of work, for example, Govt. job, teaching, small business, construction work, health service, employment as domestic help and salesman at shops. People who migrate to Middle East go either for doing manual work or as housemaid (for female migrants). Usually villagers are helped by relatives and agents in their migration on abroad.

Types and prevalence

There are both national and international migration in this village. A primary estimate of migrated villagers follows

Female migration

Only women from poor households get social need for international migration as housemaid. At present six women work in overseas. But unmarried girls are not encouraged to migrate,

rather social restrictions are imposed on them or these households. Those who migrate outside the country, are stigmatized by society because on one hand, their working identity/status is unknown to it and on the other, the unknown lifestyle of women creates an image crisis for them and their families. But the reverse is true for women migrating in different places of Bangladesh with jobs or educational purpose. At present eight women have different government jobs. For para wise women's comparative work status in relation to men.

Labour migration status of the village

Name of the Para	Migration status (No.)			
	National		International	
	F	M	F	M
Dokkhin Mollik Para	3	12	5	13
Grihosto Para	2	4	-	-
Shaha Para (Nicho)	-	6	-	-
Shaha Para (Ucho)	-	15	-	-
Ghosh Nagar/Para	-	4	-	1
Rishi Para	-	15	-	-
Shil Para	-		-	-
Bichitropur Utter Para	-	8	-	4
Miah Para	2	20	1	10
Tati Para	-	1	-	4
Hospital Para (Shahera)	1	12	-	12
Mistri Para	-	4	2	6
Utter Mollik Para	-	8	2	-
Total	8	109	10	50

Source: information collected from para wise group discussion

Remittance

Mainly the remittance is in cash. It also comprises goods, gold and toiletries. Mostly they transfer the money through banks (95% money), friends and relatives. The person who is authorized by the migrant controls the money. Remittance is mainly used for repaying loans, purchasing land and goods. When migrated people send remittance to their wives, it leads to intra-household conflict (e.g. Shamsu- conflict created between his wife and the loan giver).

SOCIAL ORDER IN THE COMMUNITY

Main threats and strength

The villagers' perception is that *netagiri* (doing party politics by the younger people) is the main threat to social order and it is breaking all norms and values in society. Now-a-days, some/a group of younger people in the village/locality have emerged as *netas* (leaders), and they are now posing to be a threat to the common people. They have affiliation with the national level political parties, even they do not have any regard for *murubbis* (older people supposed to receive honour for societal values) of the village. They (*netas*) like to take all responsibilities in mitigating social/political conflicts, which was once a job of the *matbars*

(social leaders had/have no party affiliation, and had/have well acceptance to all in society) of the village. The *netas* like to have control over the common resources because of their connection, and this causes disruption of social cohesion and peace. The ‘good’ (well accepted) *matbars* as well as the general (like in peace but ‘powerless’) villagers are helpless in this situation and do not dare interfere in the activities of the *netas*.

Safety and insecurity status of the villagers

Responses are different about social safety. These depending on age, gender, religion etc. Most of the villagers feel that ‘society’ is becoming unsafe due to increasing *political intervention*. However, the older people take it seriously as they find the younger people’s action and behaviour offensive. The perception is that the villagers would be safe if the *netas* had not played the excessive role (negative sense) in society. *Salish* (village judicial practice) is a good example where the *netas* have significant influence. They do not hesitate to interfere unfairly and do injustice if that serves their interest. This is a critical situation, according to the participants/community people. People particularly feel unsafe when election comes/appears and the contending groups wield with their muscle ‘power’. It has been observed that the minority Hindus are afraid of attack on their assets from the Muslims. Many Hindus have left the locality since 1947 and whenever there is a national unrest, they feel insecure in their village dominated by the Muslims. Women, beautiful young ones in particular, are more vulnerable. Hindu girl students have been facing this insecurity problem for the last two years. They are dropping out from school.

Incidents of violence and their resolution

When the *Babri mosque* was destroyed in Ayodhya in India in 1990, the Hindu villagers were panicky as some young Muslims intended to attack the Hindus property. After the fall of Ershad in 1990, an ex-President of Bangladesh, some people attacked and burnt the houses of Colonel Malek, who was a prominent leader of Ershad’s *Jatiy party*. During elections, tension arises among different parties, often leading to political violence. It has been noticed that hardly there is any ‘good relations’ between different individuals/*bangshas* in the village and it may be a cause of violence in the village (for detail refer to Social Groupings).

The most serious crime was Kabul murder case: eight people were sentenced to death by the court (2004).

Formal and informal conflict resolution system

The villagers have access to formal judiciary. There is the district court and in case of review or appeal the High Court and Supreme Court are in Dhaka. Disputes and conflicts are not reconciled at the local level (e.g. *salish*) are usually placed at courts. Some common issues (e.g. intra/inter households/intra personal

Fatwa/Pathi

Both Muslims and Hindus do perform different rites and rituals for the spiritual purposes. But no *fatwa* (verdict from religious aspect in Islam) or *pathi* (for Hindus) case could be traced in the village.

conflicts) are settled by *matbars* (social leader/representative of *samaj*). But in recent years, the *netas* (younger people with political affiliation) are increasingly interfering in such matters. Therefore, mitigation of conflicts follows a 'micro-macro line' (*samaj* to state) in the village.

Section 4

Equality and inequality

PEOPLE'S STATUS: EQUALITY-INEQUALITY

A range of discussions as well as observation supports the argument that the villagers are not equal both in economic and non-economic terms. The sense of equality/inequality comes from different indicators/criteria developed by themselves. However most are economic such as ownership of material assets, involvement with business--large or small, jobs as well as cash flow, ownership of land--arable or homestead. Some non-economic reasons, particularly religion and gender factors, differentiate one group from another and the male and the female. Castes and sub-castes among the Hindus also reflect the possession of material resources, status, power etc. For example, the *Rishi*, a group of low caste Hindus is looked down upon by the 'mainstream' society (includes both Muslim and Hindu). Gender wise, women have a limited participation in the public sphere activities. Politics and political connection also make a difference. Yet economic factors contribute to the greatest difference between and among different classes in the village. The village has one industrialist, considered rich, who may have a cash at least 20 lacs taka. It has a large number of middle class (*maddhaybitta*) people who may have a cash of 7-8 lacs taka, but not arable land. Land is not so much important for the majority of the villagers as many of them have involvement with profitable non-farm activities. A vast number of villagers are poor (according to them 75%). Many of them have homestead land only. There are some households headed by women, a few of them quite aged and they are extremely vulnerable. Therefore, the villagers are not equal in many respects--economic, social, cultural, political and demographic.

Section 5

Perceptions of Well-being of the community

MATERIAL SENSE OF WELL BEING

Rich and poor people in the village: defining factors

The sense of material resources in relation to well-being has been explored in the village. The respondents classify themselves into *borolok*, *maddhyabitta*, *garib* etc, based on material resources they possess.

It has been noticed that they are considered as *borolok* (rich) who have large amount of money, industry, and other material assets e.g. nice houses. Possession of two million taka is one of the indicators/criteria they set for judging the rich. Not land rather cash flow is the main criteria for the top rich in this village. The participants also view those people rich who can survive by their own source of income and do not have to depend on others and also extend helping hands towards others in crises.

Table: Categories of the villagers and their criteria

Categories of the villagers	Criteria
Rich (<i>borolok</i>)	Owners of property such as hospital, super market, industry; cash/money, brick-built house, land
Middle class (<i>maddhyabitta</i>)	Business, money, land, government & non-government services
Poor	Only homestead lands, small ponds, small horticulture lands, cows
<i>Niriha garib</i>	Only homestead lands, aged FFH, no cash in hand, rickshaw puller

Source: wealth ranking among the villagers

Maddhyabitta is classified as the solvent class whose solvency comes mainly from different jobs including teaching and business. A significant number of villagers are employed in government and non-government sectors, and the villagers think that doing jobs (government in particular) with regular income make people solvent. Apart from jobs, a large number of people who (e.g. the *Saha*) have business earn 'enough' money and the villagers consider them a solvent section. Possession of 7-8 lacs of cash money, without having land or alternatively possession of 300 decimal lands is the main indicator of a defining middle class.

People who migrate to other countries for jobs (mainly to Middle East) by taking loan or selling few assets they have, are regarded as poor and these section (30-35%) suffers from insufficient material resources, according to the villagers. The day labourer section is the poor segment of the village and they have no agricultural land, except homesteads, a few have a small pond for fishing or small land for growing vegetables and few of them have cows. The

ownership/possession of the material resources is vital for the villagers since such resources (e.g. homestead land, jobs) determine how far/to what extent one can meet up one's basic needs (e.g. food, education, health). They point out that a large number of villagers; the poorest section (30-35% of villagers) cannot meet up their basic needs because of insufficient material resources.

Villagers identified the *Niriha garib*- very poor who have only homesteads (aged, FFH) no cash in hand or rickshaw pulls (their own). The bottom level is *Bhumihin*- landless, who makes houses in others' land, have no asset, survive by rickshaw pulling (hired).

POLITICAL SENSE OF WELL-BEING

'khamataban' and 'khamataheen': determinant factors

The term *Khamata* (power) is directly linked to political connection and money. A person has connection with the ruling party, enjoys 'power', but a political leader's power diminishes with defeat in election and loss of position if his party fails to return to state power. The villagers have expressed their dissatisfaction with their *netas*, who like to wield 'power' rather inordinately. When somebody has connection with the ruling party, s/he is *khamataban*; the reverse is true for one in the disposition. Now, many people think that the President of *Zilla Zuba Dal* (Youth branch of District BNP) is one of the most influential persons in their village as his party is now in power. People who need helps from the state machinery, turn to him with their 'problems'; a group of people benefit from these connections, but others are not comfortable, with the *neta's* activities, because now a days "they are dangerous, carry arms, do *chandabazi*...do not hesitate to kill people... etc". Thus, the activities of political leaders have an effect on people's well being. Religion and gender factors make a sense of well-being. The villagers tell that now a days, the right wing parties are becoming stronger and they are not well disposed of towards the minority groups and are against freedom of women in public places. Their political ideology has a negative influence on people's well -being (children and women in particular).

Political rivalries cause tension as well as conflicts among different social groups, mostly during elections both local and national.

For example, relations between *Mia* and *Mallik baris* are not particularly good and tension and conflict between the two lineage groups during election that are a natural consequence. Many people are dissatisfied with the *Mollah bari*. A cabinet member of *Ershad Government* (1982-1990) came from this lineage group. Many people 'did not like him' and he was not so much popular with all as most of them think he did nothing for the community. He had a group of *chamcha* (stooges) in the village and they ensured vote in favour of him. That was not a fair election at all. He donated money to different mosques and temples to make a show of his 'good' as well as 'religious' character. But it did not work ultimately. A group of people burnt his house after *Ershad's* fall in 1990.

Though for a period such men enjoy status, it does not last long. It has been told that most of the villagers pay 'respect' to their leaders out of fear not from their hearts. It is interesting that

even the younger people who are involve with politics do not honour (from heart) their leaders, they only follow them to take some advantage

Different political parties are moreover risen by conflicts. Some Awame league leaders of the village were forced to leave the locality after the last election (2001), and still they cannot return to the village.

Villagers are quite pragmatic in their views about political leaders, "*ajke fuler mala, kalke juter mala*" refers 'who get bouquet today, will be subjected to the ultimate disrespect.

SOCIO-CULTURAL SENSE OF WELL-BEING

'Marjada' 'sunam'-'khamata': determinant factors

Different terms *marjada*, *sunam* and *khamata* which refer to status depend on various factors: money, education, social contribution, nature of jobs, political connections etc. There are some people who have higher status in society and they enjoy much more *marjada* than others. Some of them enjoy *khamata* also. However, *marjada* and *khamata* are not same and persons enjoying *khamata* may not enjoy *marjada*.

The term *Marjada* and *sunam* have positive connotation. There is a sharp distinction between *marjada* and *sunam*, for instance those who are *marzadaban* maintain a leading position in their respective fields on the other hand, *sunam* is associated with generosity (he/she provide service without return). *Sunam* refers to reputation. Along with other characteristics social values and norms and certain behavioral pattern are expected of persons who are reputed in the village. In the village context, well-educated people coming from a respectable family/*bongsha*, and doing respectable jobs, are considered in *marjadaban*. Those who contribute to the village enjoy *sunam*. Then there is the term *probabshali* used to refer to influential individuals of the village. The source of influence is the combination of multi - dimensional qualities- education wealth, political connection, family background, and respectable jobs. Besides the real freedom fighters (who do not get title/identity by collecting certificates as a freedom fighter) enjoy status in the village.

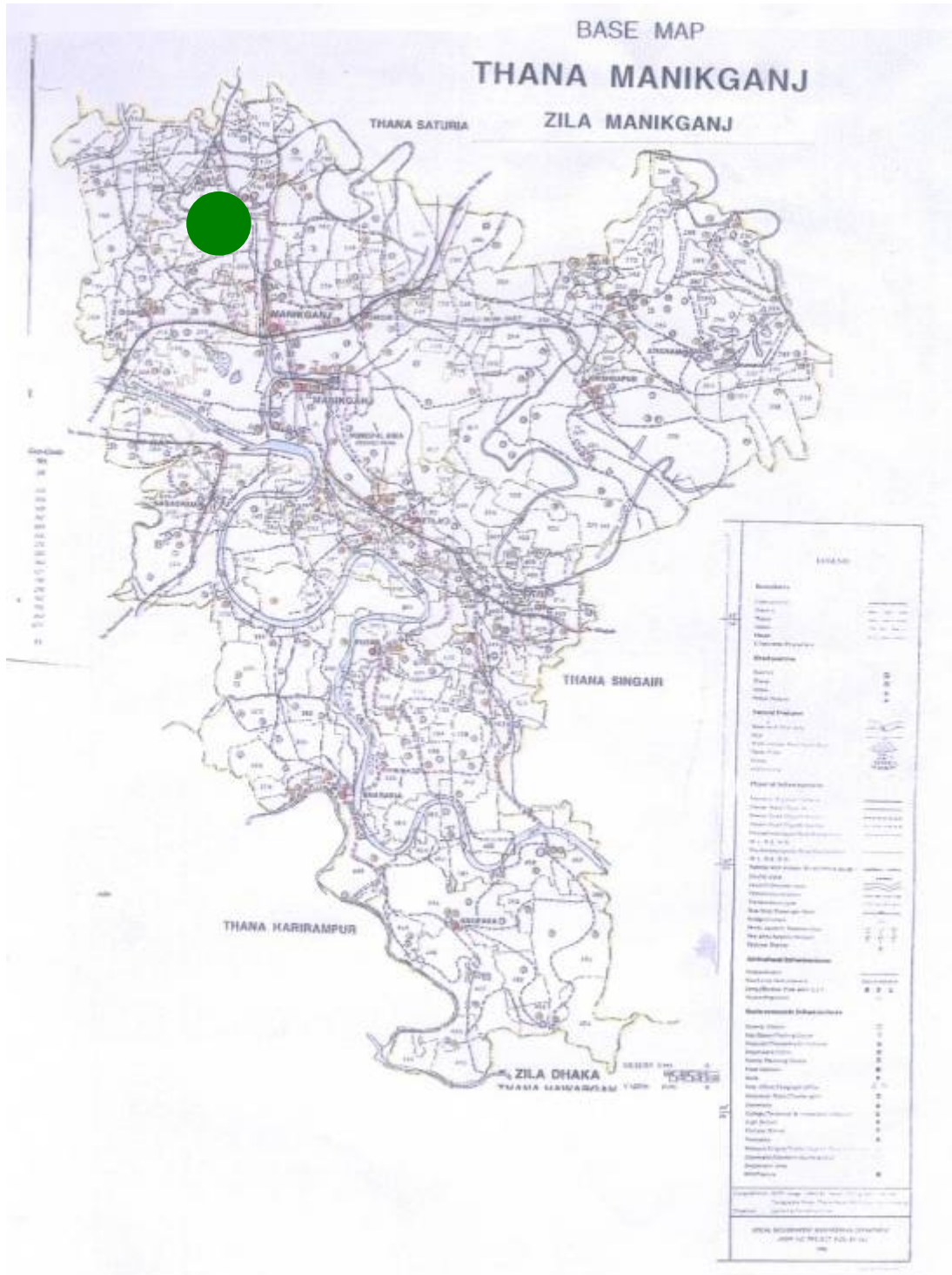
Fakirnnir Bachha, the term has a negative connotation. Those who are ill mannered, rough and don't know how to behave with other people are called *fakirnnir bachha*. In terms of status they are the most lowly.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SENSE OF WELLBEING

The villagers of Chandiar expressed their opinions about happiness and unhappiness, which are multi dimensional. According to them, happiness is a composition of both economic and socio-cultural aspects. The following table summerises the major concerning issues of their life determining psychological wellbeing.

Categories of states of affairs	Indicators of psychological well-being	
	Economic aspect	<i>Socio-cultural aspect</i>
Happiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service • Financial capital • Trading • Agriculture • Land • Ability to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmony among the family members • Respect for elder persons • Good mother-in-law • Sound Education for children /well behaved children
Unhappiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial crisis (Low income of family members and high expenditure) • Carelessness about saving attitudes for future • Dowry • Lack of property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diseases of family member(s) • Lack of mutual understanding among the family members • Neglect of son/daughter to their parents • Large family size • Daughter's marital life problem due to early marriage • Absence of well educated son/daughter in the family

Annex-1: Map of Manikgonj (showing the close site)



Annex 2: Glossary

Adhibash-a programme of 'body turmeric' performs by bridegroom takes place among the Hindus

Akika-a programme related to birth, devoted for children, takes place among the Muslim

AL - Awami League, a major political party

Annaprasanna-the purpose to feed rice to a 7/8 month of year's child, takes place among the Hindus

ASA- Association for Social Advancement, an NGO

Ashar-a bangla month (mid-June to mid-July on the Gregorian calendar)

Ashwin-a bangla month (mid-September to mid-October on the Gregorian calendar)

Babri mosque- a historical mosque at Uttar Pradesh in India

Baishak- a bangla month (mid-April to mid-May on the Gregorian calendar)

Baishaki mela- Bangla cultural festival

Baishya-social group, mainly refers to a caste in Hindu

Bangsha - social group, a group of people comes from same ancestor

Bari-house or lineage

Baroi-a social group

Bash and Bater kaj - different things/handicraft from bamboo and cane

Bazar - market place

Bhumihin- landless

Bichar Gaan-folk song

Bichitrapur - fictitious name of Bichitropur, the 'close' site for the WeD study

Biswas- a title among Hindus, also refers to trust and faith

BNP - Bangladesh National Party, a major political party

Boroloke- rich people, mainly refers to class

Boyan-religious speech

BRAC - Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, an NGO

Brahmin-social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu, Brahmin belongs to upper caste

BRDP - Bangladesh Rural Development Programme, a programme for rural development

Burkha- one kind of veil, mainly used by women

Chakrabarty- a title among Hindus

Chamcha - a local term, widely used to refer a political person who is a blind follower of his/her patron

Chandabazi- money collected by force

Bichitropur- name of the 'close' rural site for the WeD study

Chandra mas - the moon calendar of month

Chatai- mat, made by bamboo or *hogla* leaf

Choi haturia- a programme takes place in the six days of a child usually practiced in

Christmas -Major religious events

Das- a social group mainly refers to caste in Hindu; *das* belongs to lower caste

Dhatri- Traditional Birth Attendant

Durga puja- the most important religious festival for Hindus

Eid ul Azha- one of the most important religious festivals for Muslims

Eid ul Fitre - one of the most important religious festivals for Muslims

Fakirnnir Bachha -the term is associated with negative connotation, widely used to disrespect the poor group of people

Fatwa/Pathi - religious promulgation/norms

Gaie halud- a programme of 'body turmeric' performed by bridegroom takes place among the Muslims

Gana Kalyan Trust - a local NGO

Gangalidhar- a para

Garib- the poor people in general

Garpara- name of the union that Bichitropur located

Gathmangal- a part of marriage takes place among the Hindus

GB - Grameen Bank, familiar an NGO to the people

Ghosher bazar - a local market in Bichitropur

Gonj - big market place

Gosh- a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Goshamy- a title among Hindus

Gosti -social group, a combination of different *bangsha*, or others identity

Haat - periodical market

Haji-person who performed *haj* in Mecca

Imam/hujur-main responsible person of a mosque

Jaista-a bangla month (mid-May to mid-June on the Gregorian calendar)

Jatra-folk drama

Jiarat - pray for any departed soul

JSD- Jatiy Samajtantrik Dal, a left wing political party

Kabigan- war of song between two persons

Kabiraj- traditional village doctor/healer

Kamaar-blacksmith

Kartic-a bangla month (mid-October to mid-November on the Gregorian calendar)

Kaysthya-a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Khaitria-a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Khamataban and khamataheen- Powerful and powerless, widely use to refer political power

Kirton - religious songs takes place among the Hindus

Korbani - event of Eid when cattle slaughtering takes place

Kutchra road - under constructed road/pavement

Laxkhi puja- a religious festival for Hindus

Maddhyabitta- middle class, widely uses to refer the economic situation of a person

Magh-a bangla month (mid-January to mid-February on the Gregorian calendar)

Maharram- a religious festival for Muslims, especially for *Shai't* group

Majar-the place where spiritual leader is buried, holy place both to Muslims and Hindus, shrine

Malini- sweeper, a occupation practice by low caste Hindu women

Mallik-a social group, also refers to lineage

Mandal-a title or social group, also refers to lineage

Manikgonj- name of a district in Bangladesh

Mastaan-local muscleman

Matbar- informal local leader

Matha-liquid cream of curd

Mela- village fair

Miah Para-a para in the study village/community

Milad khatam-one kind of Muslim ritual

Mohajhan -informal moneylender

Moors -point, refers to geographical location of a place

Morjada, sunam and khomota- status, reputation and power respectively

Mosalman samaj- the Muslim community

Mouza- revenue unit, widely uses for land administration

Murubbi- age/senior person usually gets honour comes from social norms

Nabinagar- name of a place, one of the most important places around Manikganj

Namaj-prayer system of Muslim

Namashudra-a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Natak -peoples' drama

Neta - leader, refers to political connection

Netagiri -involving in party politics by the younger people

Niriha garib- very poor

Nistha kaj -'hated' work usually done by lower caste people

Orosh- an annual programme in respecting the departed soul of a *pir*

Pakka road- constructed road/pavement

Pir - spiritual leader; respected to both Muslims and Hindus

Pir bari- a place/house specially honoured in the name of a religious person

Poush- a bangla month (mid-December to mid-January on the Gregorian calendar)

Poush mela- Bangla cultural festival

Probabshali- influential person

PROSHIKA- (abbreviation of Training, Learning and Work), an NGO in Bangladesh

Purdah-veil system widely prescribes for women

Putul nach- dance of puppet

Ramadan- starvation period of Muslim

Rishi-a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Rishipara-a para where the Rishi people reside

Robi -winter crops

Sadar-headquarter of a territory

Saha- a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Salish- village informal judicial system

Samaj -segment of a village community

Samity - local cooperative

Sarkar-a title or a social group

Savar-name of an Upazilla under Dhaka district

Shab-e-barat- a holy night in Islam when Muslims pray to God

Shab-e-kadar- a holy night in Islam during Ramadan month, also for praying to God

Sheel-a social group, refers to the barber, a title also

Shillpara- a para where *sheel* lives

Sing- a title or social group

Singair- name of an Upazilla under Manikganj district

Sraban- a bangla month (mid-July to mid-August on the Gregorian calendar)

Sutradar-a social group, mainly refers to caste in Hindu

Temar moor- a point (geographical location) in study village

Tenarir more- a point (geographical location) in study village

Thakur - person performs religious activities in Hindu

Thatanga para-a para adjoining to the study village

Thonga - cone-shaped container made of paper

Tuchha – minor matters

UP- Union Parishad, a tier of local government

Utshab-festival, mainly refers to a special religious programme in Hindu

Vadra-a bangla month (mid-August to mid-September on the Gregorian calendar)

Waz-mehfil- religious preach in Islam

Zamindar bari- house of landlord

Zubu Dal -the youth wing of BNP, a political party