

Sarvodaya and Development

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE
FROM
MUSAHARI

SACHCHIDANANDA
PRADHAN H. PRASAD
JAI B. P. SINHA
S. AKINCHAN

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N. S. INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES
PATNA

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SN 195

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30-3-77

Sole-distributor :
ASSOCIATED BOOK AGENCY
Ashok Raj Path, PATNA-800006

PRICE : Rs. 30/-
\$ 8.00
£ 4.00

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Preface

In April 1973, a group under the leadership of Dr. Z. A. Ahmad, M. P., visited the Musahari Block in the district of Muzaffarpur for a day on behalf of the National Commission on Agriculture. In that Block intensive work was being done through the Sarvodaya movement for the past three years. Shri D. Bandyopadhyay, one of the members of this team, on the basis of his visit raised two issues. The first is concerned with the motivation behind this movement itself. He observed that rural violence is nothing new on the Bihar agrarian scene. In Musahari, however, when a rural violence broke out with a great fury in the summer of 1970, cognizance was taken of the threat, both inside and outside government. The Sarvodaya movement took up the ameliorative portion of the job leaving the administration to take stern measures to put down the unrest and restore peace and order.

The second issue raised by him related to the outcome which followed from the implied motive. It was seen that the land was concentrated in a few hands and as such it was inevitable that the advantages flowing from the development activities of the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) and other agencies working for the Sarvodaya movement would accrue only to big landowners. It was further observed that he had a definite evidence to indicate that at Musahari it was the rural rich who had cornered the the bulk of the benefits.

These two critical comments brought sharp reactions as well as specific clarifications (Sen & Gupta, 1973) and a reply to them (Bandopadhyay, 1973). One argument that emerged clearly was that Mr. Bandopadhyay's observations were based on only one day field trip to Musahari. However competent the visiting group might be, the visit was too short to come to any firm conclusion. In view of this Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, who was at that time Chairman of our Institute, requested us to conduct a survey of the development effort done in Musahari on behalf of the Gramswaraj movement.

Since this was going to be a comprehensive survey, it was considered desirable to involve in it all the three existing disciplines at the Institute

at that time. The strategy for the study was evolved in course of several meetings the senior faculty had among themselves and with some of the Sarvodaya workers who directed the activities from the headquarters at Muzaffarpur. The sociological aspect was studied by Sachchidananda and S. Akinchan, the social psychological aspect by Jai B. P. Sinha and the economic aspect by Pradhan H. Prasad. Although the administration of schedules and questionnaires was largely done by investigators, each of the research workers named above visited the field several times staying there for a number of days. Since each team worked with a separate questionnaire reflecting its disciplinary bias, it prepared separate report. An effort was, however, made to see that data about the same aspect was not collected by more than one team. However, in interpretation certain overlap could not be avoided. Thus, even though the universe and the broad objectives of the study are the same, the conclusions arrived at in the three reports are different. Each study, therefore, may be taken as an independent study.

I am grateful to Shri Bhuwaneshwar Sharma and Shri Mahfooz Alam Ansari who collected the data for the sociological and social psychological sections of the study. Thanks are also due to Shri S. Ahmad, Statistical Assistant at the Institute, for the statistical processing of the data. Shri P. M. Tripathi, Project Executive Officer of the AVARD and Shri Kailash Sharma of the Sarvodaya organization put us in a deep debt of gratitude by extending to us all possible help and co-operation through the entire course of field work. Dr. Mani Bhushan Prasad, Reader in Social Psychology at the Institute not only prepared the index but has also taken great pains to see the book through the press. I am grateful to him for this.

11th June, 1976

A. N. S. Institute of Social Studies
Patna

Sachchidananda
DIRECTOR

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CHAPTER 1

The Sociological Perspective

I

The Perspective

More than twenty-eight years have elapsed since the historic stroke of the midnight hour announced India's awakening to 'life and freedom' and heralded a new era of 'her tryst with destiny' (Nehru, 1949). That was the solemn moment when the makers of modern India took the pledge of transforming the long suppressed and much exploited Indian society into a Welfare State in which every citizen could secure social justice and a guarantee of the satisfaction of his fundamental necessities. In order to ensure the redemption of this pledge in free India, a set of social objectives was enshrined in the Constitution under what we call the Directive Principles of State Policy which required : "(a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood; (b) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good; and (c) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment." However, the actual socio-economic conditions in the country even after the implementation of four successive five year plans, present a grim picture. Today the poverty of the Indian masses stands out in sharp contrast against the lavish living of the elite. The bulk of the people still suffer from hunger, mal-nutrition, unemployment and widespread exploitation. In recent years rising resentment against such conditions led to violence in many

parts of India such as Kilvenmani, Monghyr, Banda, Taloda, Musahari, Tebhaga, Telengana, and Naxalbari.

The growing tension and spurt of violence in rural areas have been ascribed mainly to the faulty implementation of development policies and failure to ensure distributive justice. One of the glaring examples of such failure is the case of land reforms which was intended to protect the interest of the tenants and redistribute ownership to the landless labourers and the share-croppers who are the actual tillers. Unable as it was to bring about redistribution of ownership of land because of the continued pressure from the vested interests, the legislation attempted to provide security of tenure to tenants, to fix land rents and the conditions of tenancy. According to Myrdal a legislation of this type, which left the landlord in possession of his land while attempting to ameliorate the tenants' plight, was rather a compromise solution, both politically and economically (Myrdal, 1968). Moreover, tenancy legislation being not comprehensive failed to grasp the interdependence of fixation of ceiling on rents and security of occupancy rights. In the absence of limits on rent all rules about security of tenure could be nullified; the landlord could simply realise the rent beyond the tenant's capacity to pay and then legally evict him for non-payment. By the same token, legislation on maximal rentals was meaningless if not buttressed by security of tenancy (Myrdal, *op. cit.*). Besides, the legislation which was intended to provide security to the tenants paying fixed rentals left out the majority of the share-croppers who represented the more vulnerable section of the Indian peasantry (Dutta, 1974).

Recent studies conducted on the backwardness of agriculture have in more than one way proved that the type of exploitation actually perpetrated on poor landless and share-croppers is same as that which existed under classical feudal system characterized by 'master-serf' type productive relations. Various empirical evidences have been given in support of this argument. First, invariably in all the agriculturally backward regions, extensive non-legalized sharecropping still prevails. However, the fact is that on an average two out of every three tenants do not have the 'registered' status and hence cannot enjoy the 'legal rights.' Secondly, the poor peasant and the landless find themselves

badly in the grip of perpetual indebtedness. They borrow grains during agricultural lean season, mostly to pay back in grain just after the harvest from the "legally stipulated or agreed share". And the interest they have to pay over the borrowed grain after about six months ranges from fifty to hundred and fifty percent. As a result of this, they do not have even enough food for sheer survival from one harvest to the other and, as such, they are compelled to borrow again for consumption until the next harvest comes. Hence their perpetual indebtedness on consumption-loan basis. Thirdly, this situation is worsened by two factors—indentured labour and inaccessibility to the organized market—which are characteristic features of traditional agrarian scene. The fact that the tenant leases in land from the same man to whom he is perpetually indebted, virtually reduces him to the state of a traditional serf, while elevating the landowner to the status of a feudal lord. The tenant tied to his 'feudal lord' must depend on his mercy partly because he cannot move out in search of a new landowner without settling his debt and also partly because as a 'loyal' tenant he enjoys the possibility of getting, whenever in need, some credit from his own landlord, a security which he might not get from a new landowner. This situation enables the landowner to use two modes of exploitation: through his traditional property right on land as well as through usury which together constitute the economic basis of semi feudalism in the backward areas. And, finally, even the subsistence farming of small tenants and poor peasants is forcibly integrated into the market by the credit-nexus of semi-feudal production relations (Bhaduri, 1973). Here it is not the question of production for the market in search of profit, but rather an obligation of producing for 'the semi-feudal lords' and money-lenders in view of settling the previous debt not through the market of product characterized by 'impersonalized exchange' but through 'personalized transactions' implying involuntary involvement of the poor peasants and the two fold exploitation continuously perpetrated on them.

It is this situation which has been responsible for growing agrarian tension and incidents of mass upsurge in the country. A close examination of the agrarian tensions, especially during the last one decade reveals the fact that most of agitations and struggles in rural areas involved landpoor peasants and agricultural workers against landlords. Forcible occupa-

tion of land continued to be the recurring phenomenon in the States, such as Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Manipur, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. There were in addition to mounting struggles of tenants for tenurial security and fair rent, struggles of agricultural labour for minimum wages, and struggles of tribal people against all forms of exploitation by landlords and moneylenders. The struggle for land took various forms, from satyagrah to forcible occupation of land and forcible harvesting of standing crops. Such organized agitations of tenants or land were strengthened equally by powerful movement of landless agricultural labourers for higher wages (Vyas, 1971). The 'green revolution' triggered a serious relapse of government machinery and the community of 'academic' experts, technocrats and 'pure economists' living on the periphery of the establishment. Many states witnessed violent upsurge of landless agricultural labourers in the years 1970 and 1971 for asserting their rights on crops and homesteaded lands, despite ghastly repression by the land-lords. It was this orgy of violence marked particularly with a systematic repression of the landpoor and landless labour that was responsible for the emergence of Naxalism as a violent alternative to the inequitable agrarian system. The government, even while understanding the deep-rooted causes of such violence, tried to deal with only the superficial aspect of the problem that was related to the maintenance of 'law and order'. Thus, Jayaprakash Narayan, commenting on this attitude of the government, wrote : "Naxalism was primarily a social, economic, political and administrative problem and only secondarily a law-and-order question", and farther, "As for the law-and-order aspect of Naxalism, it is my view that it should be solely the concern of the Government, which alone has the authority, duty and resources to protect the lives and property of the citizens. I believe that any encouragement to organized private armed resistance to Naxalism especially in the context of a weak government is fraught with the danger of eventual escalation into civil war. But, while the government must do its duty, let no one forget that no amount of arrests, imprisonment and shootings can put down Naxalism or any other kind of revolutionary violence unless at the same time the remedy is applied to the roots" (Narayan, 1971).

Poor peasants are, initially, the least militant class of peasantry. Nevertheless, when subjected to extreme and exceptional cases of exploitation and oppression carried beyond the point of human endurance, they may ultimately resort to violence. In a revolutionary situation in which anti-landlord and anti-rich peasant sentiment might prevail, the poor peasant may be raised to a potential revolutionary force by becoming susceptible to the militant call of those who are relatively "enlightened" and represent the central force of proletarian movement in the country side (Alavi, 1969). This is the most common process in which rural violence ever occurs. And if this hypothesis holds valid, the crux of the problem is the removal of those conditions in which agrarian tension mars the smooth functioning of rural community, thereby resulting in mutual distrust and moral degeneration. Hence is the necessity of redeeming "community spirit" to peasant society by reinforcing the system of morals and values which hold together its members in a congenial social framework.

It was in view of the urgency of moral reconstruction in rural India that Sarvodaya, the cherished mission of Mahatma Gandhi, emerged as a definite response to the Telengana movement and found expression in the form of Bhoodan movement under the leadership of Vinoba Bhave. Sarvodaya was the logical culmination of the constructive programme to usher in an era of non-violent revolution that promised 'peace and prosperity' to all. Two years later, this creative approach led to Bhoodan and, with it, the revitalization of the Gandhian movement. Bhoodan, the campaign to persuade landowners to donate voluntarily a part of their lands for redistribution to the landless labourers who constitute the poorest fifth of India's rural population, came to be seen as the vital lever by which revolutionary social change on Gandhian lines might be affected. Intuitively, Vinoba had sensed that, in India as in other Asian countries, the peasants held the key to social revolution (Ostergaard & Melville., 1971). "In a just and equitable order of society", declared Vinoba (1967), "land must belong to all. That is why we do not beg for gifts but demand a share to which the poor are rightly entitled". Vinoba aimed at a three fold revolution, viz., to change people's hearts, to create a change in their lives, and, finally, to change the social structure. Bhoodan was, therefore, a non-violent, persuasive programme for social transformation which was

opposed to none yet strived to help all.

The apex of Bhoodan is what is known as Gramdan-Gramswaraj movement. The latter sought to establish village republics after attaining the "triple target of wiping out inequalities, generating people's self-reliant power, and of transforming individual virtues or assets like truth and non-possession and non-violence into social forces through the process of persuasion, consent and conversation, in which non-cooperation with injustice or evil is implied" (Desai, 1968). It proposed to bring about such a revolution, from the bottom upwards, as will help produce a new society which, marked by economic inequality and social justice will have its first as also ultimate reliance on non-violence and human values. Thus Bhoodan, finding its ultimate expression in Gramdan Gramswaraj spear-headed Sarvodaya movement in its genuine spirit which strived to deflect popular anger from violent revolutionary path and turn it into a social force to rebuild the system which would be free of inequalities and exploitation.

II

The Present Study

(a) *The Key Issue*

Social Scientists paid little attention to the empirical study of the multi-dimensional impact of Sarvodaya movement in the areas where it was launched. In fact, most of the studies which have so far been conducted in the states, such as Andhra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu, suffer from mainly two drawbacks : they either entail sweeping generalizations based on 'peripheral' investigations in these areas or consist of ideologically based analyses which call into question the wrongly reckoned potentialities of Gramdan as a genuine revolutionary alternative to Naxalism. Many controversies have in recent years cropped up around the movement. In some quarters serious scepticism has been expressed with regard to the revolutionary potentials of the movement visualising essentially 'a change from below'; in others, the 'partial success' of the movement is considered as merely 'sporadic effects of its charismatic leaders, which have tended

to dwindle away; still in others, it is suspected to be 'a camouflaged counter-revolution' of bourgeoisie which is not only biased in favour of the rural rich but also designed in collaboration with the administration to suppress the rural poor (Bandyopadhyay, 1973).

The present study is a modest empirical endeavour to explore the facts in an area characterized by the aftermath of Naxalism as well as the impact of Sarvodaya programme for social reconstruction. Free from any 'ideological bias', the study intends to appropriately assess the actual 'revolutionary' potential of the Sarvodaya movement.

(b) The Field of Study

The study was conducted in Musahari Block of the district of Muzaffarpur in north Bihar. It was one of the strongholds of naxalite activities during the years 1969 and 1970. Characterized by typical features of semifeudal agrarian system, it is in this area that violent activities culminating in murders were organized by Naxalites. Sarvodaya activities were accelerated in this area not to fight Naxalite violence but to eradicate the social and economic injustice which was prevailing in the system. For, Sarvodaya programme in Musahari was opposed to Naxalism not in terms of its goals, i.e., a radical change from below for guaranteeing fullest equities in the system, but in terms of the method of attaining those goals "through positive action" which could demonstrate that "the challenge of violence could be used to speed up the process of non-violent social change and reconstruction that Vinobaji had initiated through his Gramdan-Gramswaraj movement" (Narayan, 1972).

The peaceful programme for social transformation involved a process of change which was supposed to set a pattern of change in agrarian relations for the whole state. This process which was "extensive and widespread" in the beginning and, in the end, "intensive and deep-going" covered a wide range of activities, i. e., "from the collection of gramdan pledges on paper to their implementation and consolidation at the very ground level" (Narayan op. cit.). The programme of work was divided into two parts. One relating to the implementation of the Gramdan pledges obtained earlier in the Block involved mainly five stages of the work: 1. establishment of the Gramsabha; 2. redistribution of one-

twentieth of the land covered by the Gramdan; 3. setting up of the Gram Kosh; 4. organization of the Gram Shanti Sena; and 5. preparation of the necessary papers, village-wise, to be submitted to the Gramdan Confirmation Officer for legal confirmation of Gramdan. The other part related to ensure redistribution of land and to secure justice to the landless. It covered: 1. distribution of undistributed Bhoodan lands and correction of mistakes and wrongs discovered in respect of previously distributed lands; 2. action to ensure that every "privileged person" is given his homestead *parcha* (the prescribed official form stating the area of the homestead and granting permanent tenancy in it to the privileged persons concerned) and adequate measures to rectify irregularities and wrongs in respect of previously distributed *parchas*; 3. assistance to the landless labourers with a view to raising their income, employment and productivity as well as to strengthen their collective power within the village community; 4. creating necessary conditions by arousing public conscience, which will help attain the state of Police-Adalat-Mukti, i.e., freedom from police and law courts.

The launching of this comprehensive programme implying a virtual restructuring of the traditional rural community was a big event in the history of Indian agrarian relations. The socio-economic scene in this block was "ugly and distressing in the extreme", for one who naively believed the "high sounding words, grandiose plans, reforms galores" of the state or the central Government and came here with the hope of seeing an impoverished area transformed into a "land of promises", witnessed, to his agony, only "utter poverty, misery, inequality, exploitation, backwardness, stagnation, frustration, and loss of hope" (Narayan, *op. cit.*). What is more, the various laws enacted in view of urgent land reforms have hardly been implemented. The government has always shown its promptness without the least realization of the fact that "the benefits of these laws will not accrue to those for whom they are meant unless there is a change brought about in the people's attitude of mind and in their values of life, and unless the village community comes to be organized and run more democratically, so that the balance of power in the community, which tilts at present to the side of the landed and the moneyed interests, comes to be held evenly by all the interests in

the village''. In fact, it is this human aspect of the land reforms laws that has formed the basis of the Gramdan-Gram-Swaraj movement. The crux of the problem for the Sarvodaya leaders is neither frantic law enactment nor its 'mechanical' implementation but a series of processes which are intended to generate a voluntary process of individual and social change leading to village reconstruction and community self-government or Gram Swaraj. Thus the whole programme for Sarvodaya transformation in the area involves attitudinal changes forming the basis of those socio-economic as well as personal-relations which are the prerequisites for promoting 'community action'.

(c) The Purpose of Investigation

The present study is intended not only to throw light on the various subtle aspects of the Sarvodaya programme for social transformation in rural areas but also help correctly assess the manifest revolutionary potential of the movement as also its latent repercussions in the agrarian social structure. It aims at exploring the extent to which Sarvodaya movement has succeeded in fulfilling its objectives for establishing a new social order based on 'collective spirit' and 'moral values' that tend to minimise inequities in the system. This requires a detailed study of the welfare activities done by the various gramsabhas for the benefit of Harijans, backward classes, and the landless. This investigation also focusses on the processes which might lead to the emergence of a collective conscience among the rural peasantry. An inquiry into the functioning of various institutions and voluntary organizations striving to contribute to the collective welfare while highlighting the actual strength of their membership and the frequency of participation, enables us to measure the extent of 'social mobilization' and 'collective unity' in different villages. The rural communities, in the course of the implementation of Sarvodaya programme, might be characterized by a more effective polity based on political awakening of the electorate and 'secularization' of the attitude of traditional leaders. Therefore, a detailed investigation has been made into the changing pattern of leadership in the villages in the post-gramdan period for assessing its capability to provide 'linkage' between various strata of the rural community. We have tried to trace shifting trends in the social position of

traditionally dominant caste groups which might, under the influence of Gramdan, yield to relatively backward castes, thereby encouraging their free and effective participation in the decision making. Finally, as Sarvodaya programme of work is aimed at generating certain institutional in-built mechanisms for co-ordinating all the strata of the rural community in an effective network of functional interdependence, the study involves a careful analysis of those newly generated institutional frameworks and value-systems which might account for the manner in which conflict avoidance and tension management is ensured. This is particularly significant in view of Sarvodaya's objective of avoiding recourse to police and courts for the solution of disputes. Efforts were also made to see whether the Gramsabhas function in the spirit of Sarvodaya.

(d) Note on Methodology

The study was made in 15 randomly selected villages in Musahari Block. Out of these 13 were from the Gramdan area and two from the non-Gramdan area. The sampling of villages was intended to ensure not only their 'representative' character but also to facilitate the task of erecting a continuum of the 'types' of Gramsabhas which have reached varying stages of 'functional autonomy' in view of Gramdan-Gramswaraj. About 25% of the heads of the families were covered in the respective villages. The sample included respondents from donors, non-donors, donees and non-donees. All the members of village executive as also a considerable number of respondents belonging to Harijan and relatively backward communities were also sought to be covered. In the initial phase of research, it was decided to introduce in sample size adequate number of Sarvodaya grass-root workers, but due to paucity of time and certain technical reasons, we finally gave up the idea. The total number of samples thus covered by the study was 390. The villages covered by the study were Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 1), Musahari (No. 2), Dhobaha, Mukundpur, Brahmasthan, Chaksalempur, Madapur Chaube, Chak Mohammed, Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur, Madhopur, Budhnagara Ragho, Tarora Gopalpur, Prahaladpur and Sagahari. It may be remembered that the last two are non-Gramdan villages and were taken as control villages. Necessary information from these villages with regard to their

location, economic structure, social morphology including the organisation of Sarvodaya institutions (Gramsabha, Gramkosh, Shanti Sena, etc.) and non-Sarvodaya agencies (Panchayat, political parties, cooperatives, etc.), was acquired with the help of a Village Information Schedule which was filled by responsible knowledgeable persons in the village.

Valuable information was collected from the respondents with the help of a questionnaire which had been pre-tested. The entire set of questions were so worded and framed as to be readily grasped by the respondents and, at the same time, gain their confidence by arousing their interest. The questions—both 'open-ended' and 'projected' with necessary 'leads'—were grouped into five categories which correspond to as many number of the main items of research, as collective unity, affiliation and social mobility, chosen strategies for the welfare of weaker sections, power structure and democratic institutions, social equality and self-reliance, and, finally, dominance and exploitation. More often than not, a free and frank discussion with the respondents, followed by verbatim notes as also mechanical data recording, proved to be far more valuable source of information. While we resorted to depth interviews for unfolding attitudinal disposition of the respondents with regard to Sarvodaya as an alternative to Naxalism, we conducted many group interviews as well for knowing the extent of collective unity and group disposition for community work. Separate questionnaire was devised for two control villages. During the course of investigation, we were often handicapped by the apathy of arrogantly rich respondents on the one hand, and the scare expressed by the poor peasants and the landless, on the other. Nevertheless, we succeeded in obtaining relevant information by establishing necessary rapport and by devising intimate depth interviews.

The Universe

(a) Location and Economic Condition

Musahari is one of the Community Development Blocks in the district of Muzaffarpur. The block is adjacent to the Muzaffarpur town and covers 73.36 sq. miles. Of its 47,012 acres, about 36,000 are under cultivation. The soil of the block is supposed to be extremely fertile. The

block comprises 123 villages, whose total population, according to 1971 census, was about 1,19,000. About 36% of the total population, or over 45,000 persons constitute the working force, the breakup of which by industrial categories is as follows :

Table I

NATURE OF THE WORKING FORCE IN MUSAHARI

	<i>Percent</i>
Owner cultivators	35
Landless agricultural labourers	38
Other allied agricultural activities	2
Artisans	8
Others (trade and commerce, transport, services, etc.)	17

As for the land holding pattern, more than 70% of cultivating households in the block have occupational holdings below 2.5 acres. Only 5% households own more than 15 acres each. The economic condition of the block is generally depressing. Small holdings, continued fragmentation of land, inadequate means of irrigation, preponderance of the land-poor and landless, and poor implementation of community development and land reform policies have added to the growing impoverishment of this area. This is indicated by the fact that the consumption of 8 out of every 10 landless agricultural households and of 7 out of 10 cultivating households with holding below 2.5 acres is less than Rs. 30 per capita per month, an expenditure which is below the level needed to consume the minimum caloric requirement of 2250 per capita per day. The consumption expenditure of one-third of the remaining cultivating households (mostly the size of 2.5 - 5.0 acres) and two thirds of artisan households engaged in household industry only is also below the minimum. We have inferred therefore that atleast about 65% of the total households (1,036) in the block are below the poverty line.

(b) Efforts for development under Gramdan

In view of the appalling economic conditions of the block, various non-official organisations and agencies have, in recent years, initiated certain development programmes for social and economic uplift of the area. Mention may be made of the Muzaffarpur Development Agency, the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD), Bihar Relief Committee, and Zila Sarvodaya Mandal (Muzaffarpur). These

organisations have been making sustained efforts for the overall development of the block. They started work under the guidance and inspiration of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan who had tirelessly worked in the area to promote the gramdan movement since the middle of 1970. The block is known as a Gramdan Block as 102 of its 123 villages have Gramsabhas. Most of the development work in different villages of the block have been performed under direct supervision of the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development which is headed by Shri Jayaprakash Narayan as its chairman.

In order to fulfil the objectives of overall development, a number of follow-up programmes have been initiated by the AVARD, which ensure equitable distribution of credit and various inputs for the development of agriculture and industry in the area. The recent rural development schemes formulated by the AVARD have geared to bring about significant changes in the prevailing agrarian economy, which not only help intensify the Gramdan Movement but create necessary conditions for its success. Thus the activities of the Agency are aimed at attaining various short-term as well as long term goals. These are—to promote rapid expansion in employment, output and income harnessing the growth potentialities of the area particularly with a view to serve the weaker sections; to ensure acceptance and enforcement of the minimum wage rate to agricultural/non-agricultural labour and see that the rates continue to rise in real terms proportionate to the rise in per acre productivity accruing from the implementation of the programme; to guarantee, in the case of share-cropping, at least equal sharing to cost and produce between the share-cropper and the rentier; to promote common cropping and consolidations particularly in command of the community works created under the project; to distribute available waste land and extra-land obtained by consolidation (often allowing for the common utilities) to the landless; and finally, to ensure maintenance of all project works on community basis (Singh, 1974). In order to expedite a thorough implementation of the programme, the Agency has sponsored at the instance of National Commission on Agriculture, a whole village Development Project in Musahari, which covers a group of 23 Gramdan villages in the block. The project involves development activities under different heads, viz., irrigation, input plan, crop plan, consolidation land shaping, etc. Some of the villages covered by the present study are actually being benefitted by the whole village Development Scheme.

(c) Achievements under Gramdan

The endeavours of AVARD and other organisations to bring about desirable economic changes in the economic structure of the area by way of implementing various development schemes, are greatly facilitated by the Gramdan Movement which was accelerated under the leadership of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan in 1970. The movement visualized to affect necessary changes in the agrarian relations and create an atmosphere in which the rural community characterized by a sense of belongingness and unity could move toward self-reliance through collective action. The achievements of the movement are noted below :

(i) A total of 102 Gramsabhas has been established in as many villages. Together they cover 82% of the total inhabited villages in the block. The Gramsabhas have been established after the fulfilment of the following conditions : (a) written consent of atleast 75% of the people in the village including landowners holding atleast 51% of the land held by co-villagers to join the movement on forms prescribed under the Bihar Gramdan Act; (b) donation of one-twentieth part of cultivable land held by the land-owner for redistribution among the landless; (c) Gramsabha's right of pre-emption over every transfer or mortgage of the remaining land; and (d) regular contribution to Gramkosh at a minimum rate of a seer per maund of food-grains harvested, or one-day's salary, wages of labour per mensem.

(ii) About 1300 acres of land are expected to be thus redistributed to the landless when the process is complete. A considerable part of this land has already been redistributed to 355 landless after completing all the formalities prescribed under the Bihar Gramdan Act.

(iii) Establishment of Gramkosh implies the creation of material resource potential of the Gramasabha for collective welfare. Though all the Gramsabhas invariably have created Gramkosh, the progress in collection has been rather uneven, varying from one Gramsabha to another. In some villages Gramkosh collection has improved, in others it is practically nil. However, there seems to be common awareness of the importance of Gramkosh among the villages.

(iv) Organisation of Gram Shanti Sena is the voluntary effort to organise the youth into a peace-loving army of local youngmen who constantly contribute to the maintenance of social order through restoring and preserving community spirit. In various villages Gram Shanti Sena has already helped in resolving many disputes and in maintaining peace and security.

(v) Distribution of Bhoodan land is, beyond any doubt, the soul of the movement. Re-survey of 180 acres of Bhoodan land which were distributed to 393 landless families in the block has been completed, and corrective measures, wherever necessary, are being taken. About 5 acres of undistributed Bhoodan land have also been distributed to 18 landless families.

(vi) Helping issue of homestead deeds to scheduled castes persons constitutes the next important step of the movement. A hut-to-hut survey of homestead was conducted with a view to identifying and correcting the errors and omissions made by the authorities in respect of issue of homestead parchas to these persons. The results of this activity can be best seen from the fact that 3814 families which did not receive their parchas, despite many special drives by the State Government, have been identified and provided with homestead covering 191 acres.

(vii) Assistance to the landless labourers has been the cardinal concern of the Gramdan movement. Labour committees of the landless have been formed in more than 50% of the Gramsabhas founded in the block. This is in addition to the development programmes being implemented by other participating voluntary agencies, like the AVARD and the Bihar Relief Committee. The latter has to date installed at cost (payable in easy instalments) 856 irrigation hand pumps exclusively for the marginal farmers in the block, in addition to 251 drinking water pumps free of cost for Harijans and other depressed sections of the rural community. Mention may also be made that the wage earners working in AVARD projects are receiving a high wage—4 Kg. of wheat per manday and a weekly paid holiday—which is rather an unusual feature in the state of Bihar.

(viii) Freedom from Police and Law Courts is the foremost precondition for the emergence of 'self-reliant' village republics which constitute the ideal of the Gramdan movement. Musahari being on the urban fringe of the district town, the rich land-owners enjoyed an easy and quick accessibility to the police and law courts and, as such, succeeded in harassing the rural poor. Therefore, this campaign had greater significance for Musahari where, today, many villages are almost free of litigation (Singh, op. cit).

(d) The Village Sample and the Infra-structure of Gramdan

The thirteen experimental villages randomly selected from the Musahari block represent small, medium, and large size of the villages in which,

under the influence of Gramdan Movement, Gramsabhas have been established and are actually functioning for realizing the goals of Sarvodaya. Two of these villages are adjoining the urban fringe of the town of Muzaffarpur (Brahmasthan, Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur); six villages are close to the block headquarters (Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 1), Musahari (No. 2), Budhanagra Ragho, Tarora Gopalpur, and Dhobaha); and, the remaining five villages are representing relatively remote rural areas of the block (Mukundpur, Chak Salempur, Madapur Chaube, Chak Mohammed, Madhopur). According to their functional stages, the gramsabhas of these villages can be grouped into three categories, viz., not-confirmed, confirmed and Gazetted. The 'not-confirmed' status indicates that the Gramsabha has not yet been recognized as a legal entity by the government. It enjoys legal status only after it has been 'confirmed' through prescribed registration. It is only after confirmation that the Gramsabha is listed for Gazette notification.

Six Gramsabhas—Musahari (No. 1), Musahari (No. 2), Dhobaha, Brahmasthan, Chak Mohammed and Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur were formed rather recently (mostly during the period 1972-73), and are not yet confirmed; two Gramsabhas—Budhnagra Ragho and Tarora Gopalpur—have been confirmed and are awaiting Gazette notification; and, as many as four Gramsbhas—Manika Manohar, Mukundpur, Madapur Chaube, Madhopur—have their confirmation duly notified by the Government Gazette. Gramsabha has not yet been formed in the village Chak Salempur. The strength of each Gramsabha ranges from 7 to 17. The strength generally depends upon the size of the village.

(e) Economic Status, Educational Level and Caste Position of the Members

Functional consistency of Gramsabhas with the objectives of Sarvodaya depends much on the type of representatives who compose its executive body. This means that the members of Gramsabha should represent various strata of the rural community in so far as their economic status, income level, and caste position are concerned. As contrasted with the statutory political institutions such as village Panchayat and block committee which are generally characterized by the predominance of influential caste groups, the Gramsabhas seem to have encouraged more effective represen-

tation. Table II shows the economic status of Gramsabha representatives :

Table II
ECONOMIC STATUS OF GRAMSABHA MEMBERS
(IN Rs. PER ANNUM)

Total No. of Members	137
Below Rs. 500/-	63
501-2000	45
2001-5000	11
3501-5000	11
5000-6500	3
6501-8000	2
8000 & above	2

It is interesting to see that invariably in all the Gramsabhas, the maximum number of representatives are drawn from the first two income categories which represent the low income groups. The higher income groups are proportionately represented. Effective representation of low income groups is particularly pronounced in the villages like Chak Mohammad, Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur, Budhnagra Ragho, and Tarora Gopalpur. The only exception is Manika Manohar where there are no representatives from the lowest income group.

Furthermore, the representation in Gramsabha is characterized by significant increase in the number of literate and even highly educated members from the various strata of the community. Data presented in Table III support this position :

Table III
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE MEMBERS OF GRAMSABHA

Total Number of Gramsabha membership	137
Illiterate	44
Primary	53
Middle	17
Matric	11
Intermediate	3
Graduate	7
Post Graduate	2

It is evident from the Table III that in various Gramsabhas the number of illiterate members is far lower than that of literate, educated, and highly educated members.* However, atleast two villages—Musahari (No. 1) and Chak Mohammad are exceptions as the number of illiterate persons is still preponderant in these Gramsabhas.

* In order to facilitate the present analysis, we have treated primary and Middle as literate, Matric and Intermediate as educated, and Graduate and Post-graduate as highly educated categories.

As for the social stratification of the members, we found that various castes falling into four principal categories, viz., high castes, backward castes, scheduled castes, and Muslims were represented in the Gramsabhas. This is evidenced by Table IV.

Table IV
COMMUNITY-WISE BREAK UP OF THE MEMBERS OF GRAMSABHA

Sl. No.	Name of the Gram Sabha	Total Nos. of members	Caste-wise Break-up of their members			
			High Caste	Backward Castes	Scheduled Castes	Muslims
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1.	Manika Manohar	9	3	1	2	3
2.	Musahari (No.1)	8	4	—	4	—
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	13	—	7	6	—
4.	Dhobaha	7	—	3	4	—
5.	Mukundpur	7	—	2	5	—
6.	Brahmasthan	17	4	8	3	2
7.	Madapur Chaube	11	5	3	2	1
8.	Chak Mohammad	10	—	2	8	—
9.	Sahpur and Chit. Bhagawatipur	14	—	2	10	2
10.	Madhopur	13	6	4	2	1
11.	Budhnagra Ragho	15	1	5	9	—
12.	Tarora Gopalpur	13	—	8	2	3
Total		137	23	45	57	12

The preceding table indicates that out of 137 members of the various Gramsabhas, only 23 members belong to the high caste category, 45 members come from the *backward* category, 57 members are drawn from the *scheduled* castes or Harijan community, and 12 members are Muslims. Here it is significant that while high castes seem to yield in favour of lower castes, thereby deliberately losing their preponderance, lower castes comprising backward, scheduled, and Muslims constitute atleast 50% of the actual membership of the Gramsabhas. In some Gramsabhas the absence of the members of high castes is due to their *non-existence* in the community (Musahari (No.2), Dhobaha, Mukundpur, Chak Mohammad, Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur, and Tarora Gopalpur). Furthermore, in some villages where Gramdan has a more effective impact, the lower castes, as compared to high ones, constitute more than 60% of the actual membership (Manika Manohar 66.6%, Brahmasthan 76.4%, and Budhnagra Ragho 93.3%). The phenomenal increase in the numerical strength of the lower

caste membership indicates its growing involvement in the political decision making of the Gramsabha and, hence, reflects a significant shift in the institutional base of Gramdan village.

(f) Political Profile of the Members

The intensification of Gramdan movement and the new political institutional base generated by it in Musahari block have had a direct bearing on the political orientation of the members of Gramsabhas. In most of the villages which were once in the grip of Naxalite politics, the masses and particularly the leaders appear to shed their radical orientation in favour of sarvodaya ideals. Table V gives a picture of the political orientation of the members of Gramsabhas.

Table V
SYMPATHY WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Name of the Political Parties and their Sympathisers								
		Total Nos. of members	Cog. (R)	Cog. (O)	J. S.	S.S.P S.P	CPI	SVC	CPI (ML)	Indifferent
1.	Manika Manohar	5	—	—	—	9	—	—	—	—
2.	Musahari No.1	8	—	—	—	5	—	—	—	3
3.	Musahari No. 2	13	—	—	1	6	—	6	—	—
4.	Dhobaha	7	1	—	—	6	—	—	—	—
5.	Mukundpur	7	—	—	—	6	—	—	—	1
6.	Brahmasthan	17	—	—	—	7	—	—	—	10
7.	Madapur Chaube	11	—	—	—	—	5	—	—	6
8.	Chak Mohammad	10	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	8
9.	Salpur	14	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	10
10.	Madhopur	13	1	—	—	—	2	—	1	9
11.	Budhnagra Ragho	15	—	—	—	11	—	—	—	4
12.	Tarora Gopalpur	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13
Total		137	2	—	1	49	14	6	1	64

Table indicates that out of a total of 137 members, 73 members (53.2%) are in sympathy with one or the other political party, whereas the rest express their indifference to any of them. Particularly significant is the fact that under the impact of Gramdan, which does not encourage party politics, a greater number of members of the Gramsabhas are characterized by indifference to political parties. Meanwhile, most of the

sympathisers of the political parties in the case of Gramdan villages identify themselves with only those parties which plead for a rapid social transformation. There is only one member of a gramsabha with radical political motivation who sympathises with CPI (ML).

(g) *Collections for the Gramkosh*

As we have explained earlier, one of the essential features of Gramsabhas is the operation of Gram Kosh. Regular contribution in cash or in kind to the Kosh is obligatory for all the members. The daily wage agricultural labourers are supposed to contribute one day's wage, others contribute a certain part of their agricultural produce, and still others make contributions both in cash or in kind depending upon their personal convenience. The collections thus made are utilized by the Sabha for the benefit of the community in general and the poor landless and Harijans in particular. The latter can borrow in cash or in kind from the Gram Kosh during the lean season with rather easy conditions of repayment. Table VI indicates total collections, expenditure and actual balance in the Gram Kosh of the various gramsabhas.

Table VI
POSITION OF THE GRAM KOSH

Sl. No.	Names of the Gram Sabha	Total Collections		Expenditures		Balance	
		In Cash (Rs.)	In Kind (mds)	In Cash (Rs.)	In Kind (mds)	In cash (Rs.)	In Kind (mds)
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1.	Manika Manohar	86	0	0	0	86	0
2.	Musahari I	195	0	0	0	195	0
3.	Musahari II	150	0	25	0	125	0
4.	Dhobaha	40	0	25	0	15	0
5.	Mukundpur	59	8	54	4	5	4
6.	Brahmasthan	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.	Madapur Chaube	2700	8	2200	8	500	0
8.	Chak Mohammad	0	0	0	0	0	0
9.	Sahpur	0	0	0	0	0	0
10.	Madhopur	1137	35	1137	14	0	21
11.	Budhnagra Ragho	45	6	45	0	0	6
12.	Tarora Gopalpur	406	1	406	1	0	0

The table indicates that except in three villages—Brahmasthan, Chak Mohmmad, and Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur—collections have been made, though the figure is not satisfactory. The small size of some villages or the extreme poverty may be reasons for the non-existence of the Gram Kosh. However, in at least two villages—Madapur Chaube and Madhopur—the collections have been quite satisfactory. The collections in all the villages have been followed by a corresponding expenditure sometimes reducing the balance to zero. A few villages show considerable balance of collections, which, however, seem to be not due to *austerity* but fresh receipts in the current year that are included in the balance.

(h) *Formation of Shanti Sena*

The task of attaining the goal of self-reliant *village republic* as laid down by the philosophy of Gramdan would be difficult for the Gramsabha unless it were supported by an organized local youth who willingly participated in the reconstruction of rural community. Shanti Sena or the village peace-brigade is one such organisation which is entrusted with the task of maintaining peace in the community life.

Our investigation showed that in all the experimental villages, save Chak Salempur, Shanti Senas have been organized and the strength of their membership varies from four to seventeen. The members of Shanti Sena have been performing mainly three types of works, viz: Shramdan Voluntary contribution of labour, helping village judiciary to clear off the local cases, and ensuring collective security. However, as the varying strength of membership indicates, the growth of Shanti Sena, like Gramkosh, has been rather uneven. In most of the villages, Shanti Sena suffers not only from poor strength but also from inefficiency in their work. One of the obvious reasons is that most of the 'Sainiks' are illiterate and lack in appropriate 'training' for which little provision has been made by the Gramsabhas. Another reason is that the 'Sainiks' are mostly drawn from the backward castes and Harijan community and are generally inhibited by a 'feeling of inferiority' toward the members of influential and dominant caste groups.

(i) Court Cases

The smooth functioning of the infra-structure of Gramdan would be greatly hampered if the Gramsabhas themselves were not efficient and competent enough to resolve the local issues which would otherwise go to the legal courts where the justice is beyond the reach of land-poor and landless. In fact, freedom from the police and the courts is both the beginning as well as the apex of the movement. Table VII indicates the position in various Gramsabha villages :

Table VII
COURT CASES YEARWISE

	<i>Total No. of Court cases</i>
1969-1970	1
1970-1971	87
1971-1972	70
1972-1973	155

There has been gradual decrease in the number of court cases except in three experimental villages—Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 1), and Musahari (No. 2) where there has been a sudden spurt. This is caused by the fresh clashes among the interest groups, local feuds, and household disputes. As for the control villages, the number of court cases throughout the four years has been almost the same. Though there has been gradual decrease in the number of the court cases, the Gramdan villages are still far from being fully emancipated from the police and courts. The sudden spurt in such cases might far from being simple 'deviations' refer to a 'relapse situation' in which Sarvodaya spirit is often-times overtaken by the revival of the politics of interest groups.

Keeping in view the actual infra-structure of Gramdan and institutional characteristics in various villages, we now turn to the facts which relate to the attitude and orientation of our respondents.

III

Collective Power and Unity

The new institutional base that has been generated by Gramdan is

expected to provide a firm foundation upon which the edifice of new agrarian society can be erected. The structure of this society will be characterized by 'solidarity' and 'cohesion' and will provide ideal condition for 'role-gratification' which will obviate the possibility of exploitation in semifeudal situations. As visualized by the Sarvodaya movement, the mutual accountability and sense of responsibility will lend this society strength and unity which will enable it as a collectivity to assert itself and exercise the ultimate power for the uplift of all its members. However, the institutional network itself will be meaningless if the individuals did not fully and freely participate in various activities of the community through local organizations. The greater their involvement in the socio-political processes, the fuller will be integration and unity of the community. This is why Gramdan through the instrumentality of Gramsabha strives to achieve three basic objectives : village unity, mechanism to resolve local issues, and equitable distribution of resources and amenities—which will together constitute the ground for the emergence of Lok Shakti or collective power. Therefore, in the present chapter, we endeavour to throw light on the nature of involvement of the individual members in the available institutional network and the mode of their participation in various activities of the local organizations.

For measuring the collective power and unity in the Gramdan villages, we elicited, as the first step of our inquiry, information about the respondents affiliation with various local organisations, viz., Village Panchayat, Caste Panchayat, Prakhand Samiti, Gram Sabha and its different sub-committees. Our findings are presented in Table VIII :

Table VIII

RESPONDENTS' AFFILIATION WITH VARIOUS LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

<i>Name of the Organization</i>	<i>Total number of members</i>
Village Panchayats	47
Caste Panchayats	0
Gramsabha's Executive Committees	137
Agriculture Sub-Committee	2

Cont. Table VIII

<i>Name of the Organization</i>	<i>Total number of members</i>
Labour Organizations	31
Education Sub-Committee	50
Mahila Mangal Samiti	0
Shanti Sena	101
Prakhand Samiti	6
Any other	16
	390

Table VIII indicates that more than half (212) of the total respondents (390) of various caste categories have their affiliation with Sarvodaya or non-Sarvodaya organization. However, the strength of membership in the case of the sub-committees of the Gramsabhas such as those on agriculture and education is feeble. There are no women's organizations in the villages. Representation of the village—both experimental and control villages—is impressive, especially in the villages like Madapur Chaube and Madhopur. In none of the villages, Caste Panchayat representing narrow goals and interests is active—a fact which we attribute to the impact of Gramdan on the ideas and aspirations of the peasants who are marked with secular attitude.

Peoples' awareness of the various activities of Gramsabha, viz., 'social', 'economic', and 'any other', were assessed. Social activities included the initiative taken by the Gramsabhas for maintaining social unity and cultural cohesion. Economic activities involved measures adopted by the Sabhas to increase production and extension of economic benefits to the weaker and vulnerable sections including efforts to ameliorate conditions of work and wages. Other activities included the Sabha's efforts to widen the scope of political participation and involvement of weaker sections in the political decision making as well as the Sabhas' ability to act collectively. Data collected in this regard indicated that respondents were quite aware of the functions of Gramsabhas :

Table IX

RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS OF THE FUNCTIONS OF GRAMSABHA

Sl. No.	Name of the Gramsabha	Respondents' Awareness of the Function of Gramsabhas			
		None	Social	Economy	Any other
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	Manika Manohar	0	25	24	1
2.	Musahari No. I	0	55	54	0
3.	Musahari No. II	0	32	32	0
4.	Dhobaha	0	18	18	0
5.	Mukundpur	0	6	6	0
6.	Brahmasthan	34	0	0	1
7.	Madapur Chaube	0	30	20	14
8.	Chak Mohammad	8	0	0	0
9.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	1	11	1	1
10.	Madhopur	2	16	15	7
11.	Budhagra Ragho	2	76	73	17
12.	Tarora Gopalpur	0	16	16	13
Total		47	307	272	52

N=390 (Exclusive categories)

Table IX indicates that all the respondents from seven villages—Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 1), Musahari (No. 2), Dhobaha, Mukundpur, Madapur Chaube, and Tarora Gopalpur—were familiar with different activities of the Gramsabha. In the case of three villages—Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur, Madhopur and Budhnagra Ragho—more than 75% respondents expressed their awareness. Respondents from Chak Mohammad seemed to be ignorant of Gramsabha activities. Likewise, all the respondents except one from Brahmasthan were unaware of the various activities of Gramsabha. However, after the verification of respondents categories, we found that most of the respondents who expressed ignorance about the activities of the Gramsabha were either non-donors or non-donees. Out of the total respondents who expressed their awareness, more than 70% knew the Gramsabhas activities which were grouped in the social and economic categories. The only exception here is Salempur where only one respondent knew about economic activities of the Gramsabha. The number of respon-

dents who knew activities of Gramsabha under 'any other' category was, barring the cases of Madhopur, Budhnagra Ragho, and Tarora Gopalpur, generally disappointing. This means that while most of the Gramsabhas, in the opinion of the respondents, satisfactorily performed their activities of social and economic categories, they still had to create conditions for greater political participation and involvement of the people in the decision making.

The final part of the investigation in the context of collective power and unity was designed to elicit information about the respondents' priority allocation to the three basic elements of the community structure, viz., caste, family and village collectivity. Respondents were asked as to which of the three they regarded as the most important. Table X indicates their varying responses :

Table X
RESPONDENTS' PRIORITY ALLOCATION
(N=390)

Sl. No.	Name of the villages	Respondents Priority Allocation Village Wise				
		None	Caste	Family	Village	Any other
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1.	Manika Manohar	—	—	24	1	—
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	—	—	55	—	—
3.	Musahari II (No. 2)	—	—	32	—	—
4.	Dhobala	—	—	17	1	—
5.	Mukundpur	—	—	5	1	—
6.	Brāhmasthan	—	—	31	4	—
7.	Chak Salempur	—	—	4	—	—
8.	Madapur Chaube	2	—	20	8	—
9.	Chak Mohammad	—	—	7	1	—
10.	Sahpur	—	—	13	—	—
11.	Madhopur	—	—	—	23	0
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	—	—	70	8	—
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	—	—	13	3	—
14.	Prahaladpur	—	—	30	—	—
15.	Saghari	—	—	17	—	—
Total		2	0	338	50	0

Table X indicates that, contrary to the expectations of Gramdan, majority of the respondents considers family to be the most important in social life. Only Madhopur is an exception as invariably all the respondents give, in the true spirit of Gramdan, top priority to the stakes of the village community as a whole. Here, only two respondents from Madapur Chaube show their indifference to any of them. No respondent from any of the villages considers caste to be the most important. The respondents' attitude to caste explains, partially atleast, the absence of Caste Panchayats in any of the villages—a fact which we noticed in the first part of the present investigation.

To Sum up

(a) Although in experimental villages, a healthy organisational base has been visualised by Gramdan, participation of the masses in various local institutions is not very satisfactory. Membership in various local organizations is generally feeble except in the case of Shanti Sena and Gramsabha executive committees. In none of these villages Caste Panchayat has been formed.

(b) There is a growing awareness of various activities of the Gramsabhas, and particularly social and economic. However, the political failure of Gramsabha to enable the weaker and vulnerable sections of the community to participate in the decision making seems to be responsible for the indifference of a certain section of village population which is yet to be integrated into the collectivity.

(c) The fact that majority of the respondents treat family as the most important calls into question the Sarvodaya spirit of the Gramdan villages where the stakes of the village community as a whole must predominate over all other considerations. They do not seem to have fully grasped the very meaning of society which is visualized for them by the Gramdan movement. Meanwhile, it seems imperative for the leaders of the Gramdan to make the concept of community less abstract by stressing an effective coordination of the families rather than individuals into a cohesive social framework.

(d) Although the Gramsabhas have succeeded in infusing a sense of "we feeling" in the mind of the people and in creating a set of new values and institutions, the conditions for the emergence of an agrarian community marked with collective power and unity (Lok Shakti) are yet not ripe.

IV

Social Uplift of Weaker Section

The Harijans and other backward castes represent the weaker sections of village community. The continued segregation of these sections from social life and the ruthless exploitation of their labour and resources even in the post-independence era has only thwarted the balanced growth of village economy. Sustained efforts on the part of the Government to ameliorate their social conditions has not been wanting, especially in the spheres of social legislation and planning. What has been wanting is an emphasis on the replacement of old institutions by the new ones which could not only foil the exploitative designs of semi-feudal lords but introduce equities in the system and add unity and strength to it. The institutional approach becomes all the more necessary in view of the fact that weaker sections of village community constituting the bulk of labour force in rural areas and representing main axis of agrarian economy, are of pivotal importance for any strategy for the development of rural India. This is why the approach of the Gramdan movement to the problem of social and economic uplift of the Harijans and other backward communities which is one of its cardinal concerns has been mainly *institutional* in that the political infra-structure in Gramdan villages is supposed to curb the prevailing social distance among various strata and thus turn the village into a 'viable and stable' community characterized by equitable distribution of its resources and production. In this chapter we explore the reliable indicators of 'attitudinal changes' which would symbolise not only the full integration of 'weaker sections' into the collectivity but their free participation in the decision making.

Our findings in this context indicate that there is significant change in the attitude of the villagers toward the Harijans with regard to three main aspects of social life, viz., meetings, commensality, and consultation.

Table XI details the findings.

Table XI

ATTITUDE OF THE VILLAGERS TOWARDS THE HARIJANS

(N=390)

<i>Social meet</i>	Exptl. Villages	Control Villages
Not applicable	54	10
Discrimination persists	145	20
No discrimination	144	17
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	343	47
<i>Commensality</i>		
Not applicable	54	10
Discrimination persists	159	23
No discrimination	130	14
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	343	47
<i>Consultation</i>		
Not applicable	54	10
Discrimination persists	152	37
No discrimination	137	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	343	47

Thus, it can be noticed that though the responses of a greater number of respondents were in affirmative, a considerable size of the responses ruling out the persistence of discrimination suggested, all the same, that new social forces generated by the Gramdan movement continued to at least weaken the discrimination against the Harijans. On the contrary the majority of the respondents in control villages felt that discrimination in all the spheres of social life is continuing.

The position of discrimination, explained here-in before, could be compared with the respondents participation in decision-making process and the actual position of their effectiveness in exercising their rights in this regard. Table XII presents our findings in this context :

Table XII

RESPONDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

(N=390)

	Exptl. Villages	Control Villages
Not applicable	54	10
If participates : has no say	88	2
Has a say but not effective	68	24
Has an effective say	133	11
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	343	47

Table XII indicates that all those respondents to whom the questions were applicable feel that they have been enabled, though with varying degrees of effectiveness, to participate in the collective decision making process. Out of these respondents, 88 respondents feel that despite their participation, they do not have any say in strategic decisions; 68 respondents think that they do have a say but it is not effective; and, finally, 133 respondents claim that not only their voice is heard in the matters of strategic decision but from time to time they effectively influence the course of decision making. Thus it is evident from the table that a considerable number of respondents 133, i. e. 46%, are now in a position to effectively participate in the collective decision making process. It is significant here that only 88 respondents (30%) feel that they are altogether ineffective in decision making process. The position of 68 respondents (26.9%) who are characterised rather by 'restricted effectiveness' seem to be the cases of 'marginal participants' whose effectiveness in decision making will possibly increase when they become more 'meaningful' to and play 'assertive' roles in the process. In the case of control villages, the majority of respondents (64.9%) feel that they have no effective say in the decision making.

Our inference regarding the healthy trend of increasing representation of weaker sections in the Gramsabha's meetings and their effective participation in the collective decision making is further supported by the fact that in Gramdan villages, the people were now giving social rights to the Harijans and other backward communities through an effective functioning of the Gramsabha. Asked about the extent of the Sabha's success in this regard, their varying responses affirmed our hypotheses. Our main findings in this context are presented in the table which follows :

Table XIII
RESTORATION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS TO HARIJANS
THROUGH GRAMSABHA
(N = 343)

	Exptl. villages
I do not know	9
Gramsabha did not discharge any function	57
Gramsabha discharged its functions unsuccessfully	108
Gramsabha discharged its functions successfully	169

Table XIII indicates that, barring the cases of 9 respondents who were either indifferent to our questions (Brahmasthan and Budhanagra Ragho) or fell beyond the purview of the enquiry (Chak Salempur), 57 (16.6%) respondents felt that Gramsabha had not so far done anything to accord equal rights to the Harijans; 108 (31.4%) respondents felt that it did move in the right direction but failed to attain its goals; and finally, 169 (46.9%) respondents were of the opinion that the Gramsabha successfully performed its functions in this regard. Thus, we see that there is already a considerable number of the respondents who seem to be convinced of the successes of the Gramsabha in this respect. In contrast to this position, the number of those who doubt its success and, as such, seem to be pessimistic about it, is low. Meanwhile, the position of those respondents who express rather unawareness with any such activity of the Gramsabha is not necessarily to be identified with the 'pessimists' as their responses are marked with an *implicit concern* for the uplift of the weaker sections which might, in the latent course, positively bear on the functioning of the Gramsabhas in this regard.

(d) *To sum up*

(a) Social life, even in the Gramdan villages, continues to be characterized by discriminatory attitude to some extent toward the Harijans and other backward sections of the village community. However, the actual situation when compared to traditional one will show significant shifts in such attitude, especially with regard to social meets, commensality, and consultation. Such attitudinal shifts are directly attributable to the impact of Gramdan.

(b) Participation of weaker sections in the collective decision making has been increasingly marked with their effectiveness to influence the course of strategic decisions. This position will further improve when their representation will be fuller, assertive and more meaningful.

(c) Giving equal rights to weaker sections of the community has become a common concern for the people in Gramdan villages. However, the Gramsabhas have so far failed in taking adequate initiative and in choosing appropriate strategies for the uplift of the weaker sections. Two factors

explain such failure of the Gramsabhas : (1) effective participation of the weaker sections in the activities of the Gramsabha is often inhibited by the discriminatory attitude of the members belonging to the advanced castes, and (2) the representation of weaker sections is hardly enlightened, and much less united.

V

Polity, Power structure, and Leadership Attributes

The gradual transformation of traditional peasant society into an egalitarian, self-reliant, and self governing village community is the avowed aim of the Sarvodaya movement in the Gramdan villages. This has wider ethical implications for the society than the official efforts for democratic decentralization through the institution of Panchayati Raj. The former strives to build a community which will be marked by 'mutual accountability', 'collective welfare', and 'equipotentiality' and will be free of interpersonal and inter-group antagonism whereas the latter does not go beyond the question of creating "a polity under which decision making power is shared by the peoples' representatives even at the lowest level" (Oomen, 1973). Thus, while the emergence of Sarvodaya Community based on the perfect 'conformity' of the individuals announces a phase of moral revolution, democratic decentralization implies utmost the redistribution of power without adequate institutional mechanism to promote those community characteristics and values which could provide a guarantee against the misuse of the redistributed power. In this chapter, we endeavour to study major 'ethical and institutional' changes in the Gramdan villages.

Significant changes have taken place in the polity, power structure and the leadership pattern in the Gramdan villages. Most of these changes are consistent with the expectations of the Gramdan. The first indicator in this regard, is an obvious shift in the position of the various caste groups whose 'dominance' has been measured in terms of different attributes, viz., numerical strength, rituals, economic position, education, caste solidarity, etc. Table XIV indicates the actual dominant caste categories in different villages and the respondents ranking of the attributes of

dominance.

Table XIV
DOMINANT CASTE CATEGORY AND ITS ATTRIBUTES

Sl. No.	Name of the Village	Dominant Caste Category	Attributes (First three in order of a Ranking)
Experimental Villages			
1.	Manika Manohar	Advanced castes	Economic Position, Education, Numerical Strength.
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	Advanced Castes	Economic Position, Education.
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	Scheduled Castes	Caste Solidarity, Numerical Strength, Economic Position.
4.	Dhobaha	Scheduled	Numerical Strength, Economic Position, Education.
5.	Mukundpur	Backward	Numerical Strength, Caste Solidarity, Economic Position.
6.	Brahmasthan	Backward	Education, Numerical Strength, Economic Position.
7.	Chek Salempur	Backward	Economic Position, Caste Solidarity, others.
8.	Madapur Chaube	Advanced castes	Economic Position, Education, Numerical Strength.
9.	Chak Mohammad	Scheduled	Numerical Strength, Economic Position, others.
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagwatipur	Backward	Numerical Strength, Caste Solidarity, Economic Position.
11.	Madhopur	Advanced castes	Caste Solidarity, Economic Position, Education.
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	Backward	Economic Position, Caste Solidarity, Education.
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	Backward	Numerical Strength, Education, Economic Position.
Control Villages			
1.	Prahladpur	Advanced castes	Caste Solidarity, Economic Position, Education.
2.	Sagahari	Backward	Caste Solidarity, Education, Economic Position.

Table XIV indicates that while in five experimental villages the traditional dominance of advanced castes continues, in others backward and scheduled castes are now in 'assertive' position. The dominance of advanced castes derives its strength from their economic status and is reinforced by their education and caste solidarity. As contrasted to the advanced castes, the main attributes of the actual dominant position of the scheduled and backward castes in certain villages are numerical strength, economic position, and caste solidarity. It is significant here that invariably in all the villages where scheduled and backward castes seem to have taken the lead, the first attribute is numerical strength whereas caste solidarity and economic position, unlike the case of advanced castes, are ranked the last. Musahari (No. 2) is an exception as caste solidarity is considered to be the first attribute of dominance of the scheduled castes. Meanwhile, in the case of both the control villages, the attributes of caste dominance are rather traditional.

This position can be further clarified by an overall view of the respondents ranking of various attributes of relative dominance which is presented in Table XV.

Table XV
RESPONDENTS RANKING OF THE ATTRIBUTES OF DOMINANCE
(N=390)

<i>Attributes</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
Numerical Strength	203
Economic Position	108
Education	30
Caste Solidarity	20
Rituals	2
Others	21
No response	6
Total	390

Thus it is clear that traditional attributes of dominance like caste solidarity and rituals have lost their significance. What matters in the actual situation is either numerical strength or the economic position. The attributes of education and political resourcefulness, though not ranked higher, seem to acquire growing significance for the actually dominant castes.

The dominance of advanced castes has always been characterized by simultaneous existence of local factions which symbolize inter-group and intra-group clashes for grinding their own axe. The persistent conflicts among the various interest groups has often resulted in the split of the whole village community into many warring factions. In contrast to this, the trend of shifts in the dominant position of different caste categories under the impact of Gramdan is indicative of secular outlook of the castes. An obvious outcome of this outlook has been the gradual disappearance of local factions. The data presented in Table XVI testify to this fact :

Table XVI

**FACTIONS IN THE VILLAGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE
WORKING OF GRAMSABHAS**
(N=343)

No factions	245
Factions exist but have no impact	2
Factions exist and have impact	92
Not applicable	4
	<hr/>
	343
	<hr/>

It is clear from Table XVI that according to the majority of the respondents, factions do not exist. The respondents who feel otherwise mostly belong to the villages where incidence of fresh clashes among the interest groups have been recorded in the recent years. In most of these villages, advanced castes with traditional attributes continue to dominate the community life. Table XVI further indicates that two respondents from Madhopur are of the opinion that factions do exist in their village

but hardly affect the working of the Gramsabha. The overall picture that emerges is that under the impact of Gramdan, factions have tended to decrease in most of the experimental villages.

The secular outlook of the castes and gradual disappearance of interest groups and factions prepare the ground for the emergence of healthy polity in which power will not be concentrated in the hands of a few rural lords but on the contrary, it will be shared in equal proportion by all those individuals who work together to contribute to the welfare of the community as a whole. Such polity, in order to be efficient and meaningful, will essentially comprise enlightened leaders who may enable the community to achieve the goals of Sarvodaya. Our findings indicate that leadership pattern in the Gramdan villages has been able to cut adrift from the traditional moorings. This we can examine Table XVII.

Table XVII

PRE-GRAMDAN AND POST-GRAMDAN LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES
(N=390)

Sl. No	Characteristics	Overall Respondents Ranking	
		Pre-Gramdan	Post-Gramdan
1	2	3	4
1.	Ex-Zamindar or Wealthy Person	120	17
2.	Membership of Upper caste	90	21
3.	Helpfulness	22	72
4.	Arbitration	11	60
5.	Prime mover in collective works	12	149
6.	Tyrannical person	73	3
7.	Highly educated	8	6
8.	Being an elder	3	11
9.	No response	4	4
10.	Not applicable	47	47
		390	390

The comparative view of the respondents ranking of leadership attributes in the pre-Gramdan and the post-Gramdan period indicates that out of a total of 339 respondents who agree to indicate the most predominant attribute of their leaders, 120 respondents were of the view that in the pre-Gramdan period ex-zamindars themselves became leaders, for they were wealthy persons. In contrast to this, the majority of respondents (149) felt that, after Gramdan only those who proved to be the prime-movers in the collective work were recognized as leaders of the community. Membership of upper-caste did matter in the pre-Gramdan period but it gradually lost its importance in the post-Gramdan period. Other 'genuine' attributes like 'helpfulness', 'arbitration', and 'being an elder' were far more stressed in the post-Gramdan period than in the preceding situation. This is evidenced by a sharp increase in the respective number of respondents who rank the genuine attributes relatively higher. As for the 'non-genuine' attributes like 'ex-zamindar or wealthy person', 'membership of upper caste' and 'tyrannical person', their sharp low-ranking by the respondents in the post-Gramdan phase is indicative of a growing urge for emancipation from 'undemocratic' and 'imposed' leadership of the traditional situation.

All the four respondents who did not give any reply belong to Chak Salempur where Sabha has not yet been formed. The remaining forty-seven respondents to whom our questions were not applicable hail from control villages.

As we have noticed earlier, the emergence of a new polity in the Gramdan villages symbolises two major changes in the political profile of the rural community : (1) the community itself is gradually transformed into an equipotential system in which power, far from being a matter of privilege, is proportionately wielded by different strata of village community for the welfare of the collectivity as a whole; and (2) the 'political elite' genuinely representing people's confidence and concern for the fulfilment of the goals of Sarvodaya ensures an effective equilibrium in the system which might otherwise be weakened by the persistence of the conflict among interest groups. However, neither of these changes will appear to be 'substantial' unless the benefits of Gramdan percolated through all the strata of the community. In view of this, we thought it worthwhile to know the extent to which the benefits of Gramdan were equally shared by

all. The opinion of the respondents sought in this context are presented in Table XVIII.

Table XVIII

BENEFICIARIES OF GRAMDAN AND OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

(N=343)

Sl. No.	Name of the Gramsabha Villages	N. A.	Beneficiaries of Gramdan	
			Only Restricted	All equally
1.	Manika Manohar	—	4	21
2.	Musahari No. 1	—	13	42
3.	Musahari N o. 2	—	1	31
4.	Dhobaha	—	6	12
5.	Mukundpur	—	5	1
6.	Brahmasthan	—	6	29
7.	Chak Salempur	4	—	—
8.	Madapur Chaube	—	15	15
9.	Chak Mohammad	—	—	8
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	—	3	10
11.	Madhopur	—	9	14
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	—	15	63
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	—	2	14
Total		4	79	260

Table XVIII indicates that out of a total of 343 respondents from the various villages, as many as 260 respondents feel that the benefits of Gramdan have been shared in equal proportion by all the needy persons of their respective villages. 79 respondents think that the lion's share of such benefits have gone to certain privileged persons who continue to discriminate against the poor and needy peasants in this regard. The questions were not applicable to 4 respondents who belong to village Chak Salempur where Gramsabha has not yet been formed. Thus we see that in most of the experimental villages, the majority of the respondents confirm the view that Gramsabhas have succeeded in ensuring equitable distribution of the Gramdan benefits to the poor peasantry. The percentages in this context vary from 50% (Madapur Chaube) to 96.7% (Musahari No. 1). Mukundpur is an exception as only one respondent gave the reply in affirmative whereas the remaining five respondents held the opposite view.

The smooth working of Gramdan polity presupposes the capability of Gramsabha to protect the interest of the poor peasantry and ameliorate

their conditions of living. This means that the Gramsabha must ensure effective redistribution of land among the landless with adequate material help for earning their subsistence. However, this objective cannot be fulfilled by the Gramsabha unless all those who possess adequate land are willing to donate a certain part of their land for the purpose of redistribution. We, therefore, decided to ask the non-donors why they did not donate any land and whether they have made contribution to the Gramsabha in any form as they have been unable to donate land. The reasons for non-donation are presented in Table XIX.

Table XIX
REASON FOR NON-DONATION
(N=343)

Sl. No.	Names of the Villages (Gramsabhas)	N. R.	Reason for Non-donations			
			Limited Land	Joint-family constraint	Lack of Initiative	Not applicable
1.	Manika Manohar	0	9	1	3	12
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	0	31	1	5	18
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	0	1	0	0	16
4.	Dhobaha	0	1	0	3	14
5.	Mukundpur	0	6	0	0	0
6.	Brahmasthan	0	3	0	20	12
7.	Chak Salempur	0	0	0	0	4
8.	Madapur Chaube	0	5	0	3	27
9.	Chak Mohammad	0	4	0	3	1
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	0	1	0	10	2
11.	Madhopur	3	5	0	0	15
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	0	32	0	4	42
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	0	12	0	1	3
Totals		3	125	2	52	161

Table XIX indicates that out of a total of 182 respondents whom we actually interviewed, 125 respondents indicated 'limited land' as the principal factor behind their non-donation; 2 respondents could not donate land because of joint family constraints; and, 53 respondents attributed their non-donation to the lack of adequate initiative on the part of the Gramsabha.

Table XIX shows that most of our respondents, though willing to donate land to the Gramsabha, were handicapped either by the limited

possession of land or by the lack of adequate initiative which the Gramsabhas ought to have taken for this purpose, especially in the villages like Musahari (No. 1), Brahmasthan, Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur and Budhnagara Ragho. Joint family constraints did not stand in the way of donation except in the case of the respondents from Manika Manohar and Musahari (No. 1).

Donation of land to the Gramsabha under the conditions laid down by Gramdan has been taken as a reliable 'indicator' of rich peasantry's benevolence toward the landpoor and landless for whom human dignity is to be restored in the productive relations. However, all those who for one reason or the other have not donated land should not necessarily be regarded as 'deviants' in the process of Gramdan. For, far from being 'antagonistic' or 'indifferent' to the changes visualized by the Sarvodaya movement, they might not only enthusiastically participate in the activities of their respective Gramsabhas but also substantially contribute to the achievements of the Gramdan. This hypothesis is validated by the findings which are presented in Table XX.

Table XX

NON-DONORS PARTICIPATION IN GRAMSABHA

(N=343)

Sl. No.	Name of the Village	Non-donors participation		
		No contribution	Contribution	N. A.
1.	Manika Manohar	3	10	12
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	7	30	18
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	2	14	16
4.	Dhobaha	0	4	14
5.	Mukundpur	1	5	0
6.	Brahmasthan	3	20	12
7.	Chak Salempur	0	0	4
8.	Madapur Chaube	1	7	22
9.	Chak Mohammad	1	6	1
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	1	10	2
11.	Madhopur	0	8	15
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	4	32	42
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	0	13	3
Total		23	159	161

We find, in Table XX that out of the total of 182 non-donor respondents, 159 respondents (87·36%) claim to have actively participated in various works of their respective Gramsabhas. Only 23 respondents (12·64%) think that their participation in Gramsabha's work has been poor. It is significant that in some villages—Dhobaha, Madhopur, and Budhnagra Ragho, all the non-donor respondents give a positive reply. In other villages the percentage of positive reply varies from 70·6% (Manika Manohar) to 90·09% (Budhnagra Ragho).

While the success of the Gramdan seems to be contingent upon the participation of even those who have not donated land, it also requires confidence and patience of those who have not yet been benefitted by the movement. Thus realizing the imperativeness of extending our investigation even to the landless, we interviewed all the non-donee respondents for knowing their opinion about the factors responsible for non-availability of land to them. Table XXI presents details of their attitudes in this regard.

Table XXI

**REASON FOR NON-AVAILABILITY OF LAND ACCORDING
TO NON-DONEES (N=343)**

No Response	18
Paucity of donated land	53
Favouritism in redistribution	2
Any other	8
N. A.	262
	343

Table XXI indicates that out of 81 non-donee respondents, 18 did not give any reply; 53 respondents felt that paucity of donated land was the main factor behind non-availability of land to them; only two respondents felt that they could not get land because of favouritism in redistribution; and, finally, 8 respondents indicated other reasons including the lack of others' initiative and their personal insistence.

It is interesting to see that the opinion of non-donee respondents about the factors responsible for the non-availability of land is quite

consistent with the views earlier expressed by the non-donors who also consider that the factors of 'limited land' and the 'lack of initiative' are chiefly responsible for non-donation. The view of both are characterized by a clear realization of 'real' hurdles either to donation or to redistribution of land. Furthermore, the possibility of traditional factors—joint family constraint, favouritism, indifference, etc., impeding the process of adequate donation and effective redistribution is categorically ruled out by them. However, the persistence of the 'real factors itself', particularly because of the continuing fragmentation of land and increase in the number of landless, presents a great hurdle to the Gramdan.

To sum up

(a) The functional diversification of Gramdan organization which enables all the strata of the community to be involved and effectively represented in the Gramsabha activities for collective welfare, has introduced a shift in the position of traditionally dominant castes who are more and more yielding in favour of other castes. The traditional attributes of dominance, such as caste solidarity, 'landlordism', and 'economic position', show the sign of losing their significance in view of new 'caste equations' which are rather characterized by genuine attributes, such as numerical strength, education, etc.

(b) The growing 'secular' orientation of the Gramdan peasantry and the corresponding changes in the leadership attributes have come to characterize the newly emerging Gramdan polity in which power is proportionately possessed by all. The equipotential characteristics of the polity has minimized the chances of agrarian polarisation.

(c) In a number of Gramdan villages, factionalism has tended to disappear from community life. It seems to continue only in those villages where unequal distribution of the benefits of Gramdan has revived the politics of interest groups. However, the overall position does not permit us to have too optimistic a view of the whole situation. Given the fact that the achievements of Gramdan and the benefits ensuing from it would always be limited, it would be difficult to avoid the 'implicit competition' often leading to factional conflict among the beneficiaries of the movement. And given the fact that it is impossible to convert the totality of peasants into a

group perfectly 'altruistic' and 'conformist' individuals (an argument which takes a rational view of the human nature), it would be futile to think that factions will completely disappear from the scene. Therefore, the matter of concern is not their persistence in the present scene but the Gramsabha's failure to render them 'non-malign' by way of channelizing their 'competitive spirit' into a recurring force of the Gramdan movement.

(d) Non-donation and consequent paucity of land for redistribution might from time to time affect Gramsabha's efforts to ensure distributive justice. However, they hardly pose the problem of 'stasis' in the Gramdan polity. For, the non-donors, far from being apathetic or antagonistic to the movement, willingly participate in the Gramsabha's work while expressing their inability to donate land. The validity of this inference is confirmed by the fact that the non-donees realize 'genuine' handicaps of non-donors.

VI

Tension Management and Sarvodaya Orientation

Earlier we discussed how new caste equations and changing pattern of leadership have promoted the emergence of Gramdan polity which ensures not only a continued dispersal of power but also an effective coordination of the various agrarian strata 'landrich', 'landpoor', and 'landless' into a cohesive social framework. The emerging Gramdan polity seems to be the culmination of a process of change in the pattern of agrarian relations, which reduces the chances of polarisation and widens the scope for collective action characterized by unity, confidence, and consensus. However, we found that in many villages, socio-economic conditions were yet not ripe for the free growth and functioning of the Gramdan polity. Community life in these villages continued to be characterized by factionalism which constantly affected the Gramsabha's endeavour to attain the Sarvodaya goals. Since factions essentially involved a 'conflict situation' in which the behaviour of certain groups or individuals in a vital social role is rather determined by their own interests and motivations than by the requirements of the role and other rational considerations, one might fear that the Gramdan villages generally lacked in requisite value-

orientation which was the foremost precondition for the success of the movement. Unless the Gramdan population has fully accepted the Sarvodaya values, factions will not only thrive in the area but also cause tension in agrarian relations which will imperil the very cause of the movement. Therefore, it can be argued that the success of Gramdan is contingent upon the extent to which the Gramsabhas have helped the Gramdan peasantry to fully internalize the Sarvodaya values to ensure effective management of tension in productive relations.

Our enquiry, in the above context, reveals the fact that in most of the villages the Gramsabhas have succeeded in suppressing tension while striving to put an end to the exploitation of poor peasants and landless. The data of Table XXII support this position :

Table XXII
PERSISTENCE OF TENSION AND EXPLOITATION
(N=343)

Sl. No.	Names of the villages	Persistence of Tension		Persistence of Exploitation	
		No	Yes	No	Yes
1.	Manika Manohar	22	3	11	14
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	54	1	42	13
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	32	0	27	5
4.	Dhobaha	4	14	5	13
5.	Mukundpur	6	0	6	0
6.	Brahmasthan	35	0	35	0
7.	Chak Salempur	4	0	4	0
8.	Madapur Chaube	20	10	14	16
9.	Chak Mohammad	8	0	8	0
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	13	0	13	0
11.	Madapur	23	0	22	1
12.	Budlmagra Ragho	67	11	49	29
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	16	0	16	0
Total		304	39	252	91

In three villages—Musahari (No. 2), Mukundpur, Madhopur, and Tarora Gopalpur—all the respondents agree that there is no tension at all in the relationship between the land owners and the landless. In three villages—Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 1), and Budhnagra Ragho the situation is comparable to the 'tension-free' villages, as only 1 to 11 (1.8% to 14%) respondents indicate the persistence of tension. Two villages, Dhobaha and Madapur Chaube, are exceptions as 10 to 14 (50% to 77%) respondents felt that agrarian relations in their respective villages are yet not free of tension.

So far as persistence of exploitation is concerned, all the respondents of six villages—Mukundpur, Brahmasthan, Chak Salempur, Chak Mohammad, Sahpur and Chit Bhagwatipur, Tarora Gopalpur—felt that there is no exploitation in their villages. In four villages Musahari (No. 1) Musahari (No. 2), Madapur and Budhnagra Ragho—only a minority of respondents (4.3% to 37%) think that poor peasants and landless are still exploited by the rich peasants. And finally only in three villages—Manika Manohar, Dhobaha and Mukundpur—the majority of respondents (53.3% to 72%) hold the view that exploitation of poor peasantry and landless labour has not been eliminated despite the Gramsabha's efforts. Here, it is interesting to see that except Manika Manohar where the forward castes are predominant, the two villages—Dhobaha and Mukundpur—where exploitation persists are exclusively inhabited by backward and scheduled castes with only one Muslim household. Persistence of exploitation in these villages can therefore be explained more in terms of inter-caste hostility and ineffective functioning of the Gramsabha than in terms of, 'high caste dominance' or 'landlordism.'

Eradication of exploitation and effective tension management in agrarian relations would be impossible if the functioning of the Gramsabhas were not consistent with the ideal of Sarvodaya. In other words, the Gramsabhas, in order to put an end to exploitation, must not only prepare the ground for collective efforts for integrated development of the villages, but also ensure welfare of all through equitable distribution of material and resources. The ethos of Sarvodaya is 'mutual accountability' in a social framework and a sense of 'self-reliance'. And the Gramsabha, in order to rebuild the village community, must rigorously follow

these ideals. In view of this, we tried to know from our respondents the extent to which the functioning of the Gramsabhas were consistent with the ideals of Sarvodaya. Table XXIII shows the varying responses in this regard :

Table XXIII

GRAMSABHA'S FUNCTIONAL CONSISTENCY WITH SARVODAYA

(N=343)

Sl. No.	Names of the Gramsabhas	Gramsabha's functional consistency with Sarvodaya			
		Not at all consistent with the Sarvodaya	Consistent with the Sarvodaya	Highly consistent with the Sarvodaya	N. A.
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Manika Manohar	10	15	0	—
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	19	31	5	—
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	9	18	5	—
4.	Dhobaha	1	17	0	—
5.	Mukundpur	6	0	0	—
6.	Brahmaasthan	11	24	0	—
7.	Chak Salempur	—	—	—	4
8.	Madapur Chaube	19	6	5	—
9.	Chak Mohammad	8	0	0	—
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	9	4	0	—
11.	Madhopur	6	14	3	—
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	21	4	8	—
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	5	9	2	—
Total		124	187	28	4

Table XXIII shows that out of a total of 343 respondents who belonged to the experimental villages, as many as 215 respondents felt that the activities of the Gramsabhas were consistent, though in varying degrees, with the ideals of Sarvodaya. Out of these respondents who gave the positive response, 187 respondents considered the activities of the Gramsabhas 'generally consistent' and 29 respondents 'highly consistent' with Sarvodaya goals. As contrasted to this, a relatively lesser number of respondents (124) held the contrary view.

In atleast five villages—Musahari (No. 1), Mukundpur, Madapur Chaube, Chak Mohammad, and Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur the majority of respondents refuted the argument that the activities of the Gramsabhas were any more consistent with the ideals of Sarvodaya. In the remaining villages—Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 2), Dhobaha, Brahmasthan, Madhopur, Budhanagara Ragho, and Tarora Gopalpur the number of respondents who considered the Gramsabha's activities inconsistent with Sarvodaya was insignificant.

The expectation of the people in Gramdan villages that there should be perfect consistency between various activities of the Gramsabha and the ideals laid down by the Sarvodaya movement implies full confidence in the Gramdan's potentialities for overall transformation of traditional agrarian structure into a coherent system which can guarantee equity and human dignity in productive relations. While the majority of the people living in the area has shown its firm faith in the ideals of Gramdan, it has also expressed its disillusionment toward the actual functioning of Gramsabhas which have yet not succeeded in removing the inequality in the distribution of Gramdan benefits, discrimination against weaker sections in decision making, and exploitation and tension in productive relations. Yet, if the Gramdan were to be further intensified, the Gramsabhas must survive. And this is possible only when the people in the Gramdan areas reaffirmed their faith in the movement while facing the present hardships which are caused by the residues of traditional agrarian society. Our enquiry in this connection revealed the fact that the actual weakness of the Gramsabhas notwithstanding, the people in the Gramdan villages still express their faith in the ideals of Sarvodaya.

Table XXIV
ALTERNATIVE TO SARVODAYA
(N=343)

Sl. No.	Name of village	Alternative to Sarvodaya				Status
		N. R.	None	Naxalite	Military Rule	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Manika Manohar	—	10	0	15	0
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	—	45	0	10	0
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	—	25	0	7	0
4.	Dhobaha	—	18	0	0	0
5.	Mukundpur	—	6	0	0	0
6.	Brahmasthan	—	13	0	17	5
7.	Chak Salempur	—	0	0	4	0
8.	Madapur Chaube	2	0	4	7	17
9.	Chak Mohammad	0	3	0	5	0
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	0	11	0	2	0
11.	Madhopur	3	10	6	4	0
12.	Budhnagra	1	48	4	24	1
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	0	11	4	0	1
Total		6	200	18	95	24

We find that the majority of the total sample from the experimental villages reaffirmed its faith in Sarvodaya by indicating the non-existence of any viable alternative to Sarvodaya. Some respondents belonging to Madapur Chaube, Madhopur, Budhnagra Ragho, and Tarora Gopalpur seemed to prefer Naxalism to Sarvodaya.

It is clear from Table XXIV that although the majority of the respondents belonging to the various experimental villages give priority to Sarvodaya by indicating non-existence of any alternative, the number of those who prefer Naxalism or Military Rule cannot be ignored. The position of the latter respondents, in contrast to the former ones, is indicative of their 'desperate position' which seems to have been caused by the actual flaws in the functioning of the Gramsabhas and the consequent extremist orientation of some of their members. However, disillusionment toward

Naxalism continues in that even among the 'desperate' respondents very few seem to like the idea of Naxalite revival.

To sum up

(a) Though Gramsabhas have strived and succeeded, to some extent, in eliminating exploitation of the weaker sections, agrarian relations in the Gramdan area are not entirely free from tension. Persistent factionalism which has so far resisted the onslaught of secular forces generated by the Gramdan seems to account for this situation. Other factors which have been responsible for tension in agrarian relations are lack of distributive justice, discrimination in decision making, and the residues of landlordism which continue to hinder the efforts of the Gramsabhas for collective welfare.

(b) Achievements of the Gramdan have been contingent upon the extent of consistency between the mode of the Gramsabha's functioning and the ideals laid down by the Sarvodaya movement. However, in the actual situation, the Gramsabhas seem to lack requisite initiative and enthusiasm for initiating change in terms of Sarvodaya goals.

(c) That the bulk of the people in Gramdan villages has full faith in the movement's capability to deliver the good is an indisputable fact. Yet, one can hardly claim that the process of internalization of Sarvodaya values by the Gramdan peasantry is complete. This fact is again explained by the actual impediments to the movement, e.g., acute paucity of resources, lack of people's initiative, inarticulate collective conscience, inadequate mechanism for tension management, etc.

(d) Lack of the 'Sarvodaya rigour' in the functioning of the Gramsabhas and its failures particularly on the economic front, have resulted in a state of 'desperation' for those who are living in extreme poverty and are still facing social and economic deprivation. This situation accounts for their radical orientation and enlarges their affinity towards Naxalism.

VII

Overview

The launching of the Sarvodaya movement in Musahari block in 1970 by a group of committed social workers was intended to offer an alter-

native to Naxalism, which could bring about radical change in agrarian relations through non-violent means. It strived to rebuild the rural community not only by working for distributive justice through gradual elimination of poverty, unemployment, and a myriad socio-economic injustices which gave rise to all rural violence but also by arousing collective conscience through moral regeneration.

The findings of our study suggested that the success of the movement could be measured in terms of two facts : (1) creation of a healthy organizational base which could cover the totality of the Gramdan population and ensure its full and effective participation; and (2) orientation of the Gramdan population towards the ideals of Sarvodaya such as measures adopted for the uplift of weaker sections, democratization of political processes and institutions, elimination of exploitation and tension management, and emergence of a self-governing and self-reliant polity which may be characterized by collective conscience and unity.

The Sarvodaya movement in Musahari block, has been active over a period of about 4 years. Its extensive character is indicated by the fact that out of a total of 123 inhabited villages, as many as 102 have been declared as Gramdan villages after they fulfilled the requisite terms and conditions under the Bihar Gramdan Act. In all these villages, the Gramsabhas and their auxiliary bodies have been formed for realizing the objectives of the movement. Some of the Gramsabhas have been officially confirmed and notified in the Government Gazette. In the remaining villages also, steps were being taken by the local people to acquire requisite land donation and set up Gramsabhas for declaring them as Gramdan villages.

A close examination of the infra-structure of the Gramdan threw light on the intensive character of the movement which has succeeded in creating an organizational base for ushering in substantial change in community structure and function. Since the nature of change visualized by the movement is 'integral', the purposeful functioning of the Gramsabhas in this regard has been ensured by the working of its various committees, viz., educational, agricultural, labour, women welfare, etc., which correspond to various aspects of community life that are generally susceptible to exploitation and, therefore, require greater collective effort

for their growth. Such diversification of the Gramdan's infra-structure involving gradual institutionalization of 'secular' patterns of behaviour has gone a long way in making the movement stable and viable—a fact which dispels the belief in certain quarters that it would dwindle away with the disappearance of the charisma of its leaders. Such healthy organizational base is to be witnessed in many villages, such as Manika Manohar, Musahari (No. 2), Mukundpur, Madhopur, Brahmasthan and Tarora Gopalpur.

The Gramsabhas are intended to serve as principal instrument for realising the objectives of the Sarvodaya movement. Their proper functioning is a prerequisite to the creation of a new institutional base for the emergence of a 'coherent collectivity' which will replace the old agrarian society. However, our findings indicate that this task has not yet been fulfilled. Their efforts to generate collective unity have generally been hindered by the feeble membership and by a lack of enthusiasm in the activities undertaken by them. This was mainly because of two factors : (a) incomplete exposure of the gramdan population to the Sarvodaya values and institutions, and (b) the persistent discrimination against the weaker and vulnerable sections in the decision-making process. It was therefore inferred that the actual situation in the Gramdan villages involved a transitional phase which required reinforcement of the Gramdan institutions and internalization of Sarvodaya values by the rural masses. Meanwhile, it seems imperative for the leaders of the movement to redefine some of the ideals which seem to lack a realistic vision about the human nature. For example, the concept of 'Sarvodaya Order' would be meaningful for the individual only when the movement succeeds in creating a cohesive social framework in which all the families of the village can effectively be coordinated, for, the *families*, much more than individuals, have always constituted the "core" of community life. Furthermore, one cannot accept 'pure altruism' and 'perfect conformity' at the cost of individuals existential variations which constantly bear on the social expectations, not more than one can look for a community at the cost of families which together constitute it and provide with members who perpetuate it. It is this conceptual inconsistency which accounts for the inability of the rural masses to fully grasp the very meaning of the society

that the movement visualizes for them. We have confirmed the validity of this argument by our findings about the villagers 'reinforced' attachment with the family rather than with the 'community' whose image continues to be vague for them. And, by the same token, we have ruled out the possibility of fully mature conditions for the emergence of a Gramdan collectivity with articulated unity and power (Lokshakti) as long as the movement does not succeed in shifting its focus from 'abstract idealism' to concrete realities.

These ideological weaknesses and functional shortcomings notwithstanding, the movement has quite succeeded in revolutionizing the social and political life in the Gramdan area. Discriminatory attitude toward the Harijans and other backward sections of the community has tended to disappear, especially with regard to social meets, commensality, and consultation. They are in a better position to assert in meetings. It has enabled them to effectively participate in the various activities of the Gramsabhas. However, their effectiveness to influence the course of strategic decisions has been constricted by certain objective factors. Where the Gramsabhas have failed to take adequate initiative for their welfare, the members of weaker sections have become sceptical, if not apathetic, towards their capability to deliver the good. It is this scepticism coupled with a sense of 'inhibition' towards the members of the advanced castes that generally explains the lack of their participation.

The movement has introduced a shift in the position of traditionally dominant castes which are gradually losing their dominance. New caste equations are characterized by the modern attributes of dominance like numerical strength and education. Traditional attributes of dominance like caste solidarity and economic position are relatively low-ranked by the people. Similarly, the leadership has come to be characterized by secular attributes like 'concern for collective welfare'; 'arbitration', and 'helpfulness'. These changes have paved the way for the emergence of a Gramdan polity which not only ensures continued dispersal of power but also strives to build an effective system of distributive justice. However, the functioning of this polity is frequently marred by persistent factionalism and revival of the interest group politics for taking the lion's share of the benefits of the Gramdan. Here, we argued that since the achieve-

ments of the Gramdan and the benefits flowing from it would always be limited factions will not completely disappear from the scene. Therefore, it is imperative for the Gramsabhas to render the factions 'non-malign' by channelising their 'competitive spirit' into a recurring force of the movement, rather than insisting on their total disappearance. We indicated that although paucity of land for redistribution was a great handicap to the smooth functioning of the Gramsabhas, it hardly posed the problem of 'stasis' in the Gramdan polity which strived to ensure a system of distributive justice in the area. We had adequate evidence to show that while the non-donors, despite their inability to donate land, actively participated in various activities of the Gramsabhas, the non-donees too realized the reasons for non-donation and consequent non-availability of redistributable land. Thus the 'empathetic' attitude of the donors toward non-donees and the 'realistic' disposition of donees toward non-donors not only minimise strains in the community relations but also lend much strength to the Gramsabha's activities for integrated development of the villages.

There are evidence to show that the Gramsabhas, despite many social and economic hurdles, have considerably succeeded in minimizing exploitation in productive relations and in making an effective coordination of the various agrarian strata—landrich, landpoor, and landless—in a social framework. By infusing a sense of mutual accountability and self-reliance in the minds of the villagers, the Gramsabhas seem to have diminished the chances of agrarian polarization which has been the root cause of rural violence. Yet, it cannot be claimed that agrarian relations in the area are entirely free from tension. In many villages, persistent factionalism, discrimination against weaker sections in decision making, and the residues of landlordism have rendered the Gramsabha too ineffective to manage tension in agrarian relations.

In the actual situation, though the Gramsabhas seem to lack in requisite collective enthusiasm for initiation of change in terms of the Sarvodaya goals, the people still express their confidence in the Gramdan's potentialities for transforming the traditional agrarian structures into a coherent system which can guarantee equity and human dignity in productive relations. However, this faith in the movement seems to have abated in those villages where the Gramsabhas have failed to rigorously

follow the ideals laid down by the movement. Such 'deviations' in the functioning of the Gramsabhas have caused a sense of despair among those who are yet to get any help from the movement for coming out of their state of destitution. This is why a large number of landless poor now seems to have, in utter desperation, developed a radical orientation.

In fact, the real trouble arises from the movement's inability to transform its initial success into substantive change in socio-economic life of the people. This was due to the fact that people's enthusiasm for the movement was not sustained. Stereotyped programmes were taken up. The stress was not laid on the active participation of the large mass of the people. This could only have been achieved by taking up programmes specially for the weaker sections. False hopes were raised and when these were not realised, there was a setback for the movement. Secondly, the movement ought to have been confined only to a few selected villages on experimental basis, rather than being diffused over the entire block. This would have enabled the grassroot workers not only to do away with the errors arising out of a gap between the precept and the practice but also to create a cadre of 'enlightened' local leaders for intensifying the movement. Confined to a limited number of villages as pilot project, the movement would have radiated to other villages and could have, in turn covered them. In fact the Gramdan Toofan watered down the effectiveness of the movement. The very mistakes which were responsible for the failure of Community Development Programme were repeated in it. The anxiety for increasing the coverage impaired the quality of the impact. Instead of equipping the people with knowledge and skills for better performance of their jobs, the workers promised them material benefits in the shape of gifts, incentives etc. The paucity of dedicated workers weakened the movement a great deal.

A period of less than three years is too short a time to look for any fundamental change in attitudes and aspirations of people. There still remains a wide gap between the ideals of the movement and the social realities with which one is confronted with in the Gramdan villages. Acute paucity of redistributable land due to the indifference of the landrich and the strain caused by the overwhelming number of the landless and land-poor looking for help, have already crippled many Gramsabhas. Half-

hearted donations, discrimination in decision making, persistence of exploitation, and the revival of factionalism, etc., testify to the fact that the process of internalisation of the Sarvodaya values by the Gramdan population is yet a far cry. Devoid of charisma it seems to be imperilled by the revival of interest group politics, and reversion to old ways.

The Social Psychological Perspective

A. The Background

1. Poverty and Inter-Person-Relational Style

Musahari, like any other area of North Bihar is poor. In fact the proportion of landless labourer to the total population is higher. Evidence of poverty is all round : children with bulging bellys and running noses, adults who move like phantoms, dilapidated huts, dirt, and disease, etc. The fact that the scene is quite familiar does not, however, diminish the intensity of shock experienced even by a casual visitor. To explore this reality even for a brief duration is allowing oneself to be overwhelmed by the anguish written all over the face of the area.

Equally familiar is the contrast provided by the presence in the area of a few well-to-do landowners. Abolition of landlordism has changed nothing for them. The former landlords are still the lords. The biggest of them could be easily recognized by their *pucca* houses standing proudly among the huts. In *Madhopur* it is Tiwari's, in *Madapur Chaube* it is Pandey's, in *Musahari*, it is Singh's, in *Budhanagara Ragho* it is Roy's. Names change, yet the pattern remains the same. They are called the "Darbars" and they treat their tenants, share croppers and labourers like "Prajā". In between the extremes, there are small landowners or peasants who imitate the big landlords in dealing with their subservients and imitate the latter while interacting with the former. The basic interactional style is what we can guess in the *Raja-Prajā* relationship.

A landlord is like a *Raja*. He allows his labourers to settle down on one of his pieces of land. At times he helps them build huts and even grants them a tiny piece of land, sometimes free and sometimes on a nominal rent. The labourer does not own this land; he simply uses it as long as he works for his lord on a wage which is much lower than what he can get in the open market. So long as his *Malik* (landlord) has work for him—he is not allowed to work elsewhere. This does not, however, mean that his *Malik* is obliged to give him work for the whole year. In fact, for a significant part of the year, he remains unemployed. Agricultural operations in the area are such that there are busy spells when his *Malik* will not allow him to earn more elsewhere followed by slack seasons when he can not find any work in the village. He has to go to Muzaffarpur town where with a little bit of luck he can earn three rupees a day without which his family will have to go without meal. Some *Maliks* (and we were told that there were many in the area) have clever ways of exploiting them further. They take work till early afternoon and then announce that they do not need them any more and that the work will be treated as half-day. As the labourers cannot get any more work for the rest of the day, he has to rest with half wage while the *Malik* gets three fourth of the day's work. The irony of the situation is that, though unemployed, he does not get the rest. He is available for the errands of his *Malik* for which he is not paid at all or paid only nominally.

The wage for an attached labour was reported to be Re. 1/- plus a light meal of two thick breads; and Rs. 2/- to 3/- for unattached labour. At places 4 *kachcha* seers of coarse grains were given for a whole day's work. Musahari is a sweet potatoe producing area, and hence, quite often wages are given in sweet potatoes. The proportion is double of the coarse grain. But then a labourer eats more of sweet potatoes than coarse grain to keep going. The point that the present author is trying to drive home is that no matter how in cash or kind the wage is given, it is just sufficient to postpone his and his family's starvation till the next day. With whole day's work and with two dependents, a labourer will literally live from "hand to mouth". Even if he has a single day's lay off, starvation is all he and his family can have.

This hard reality requires that the whole family including small children

must be drafted in this struggle for survival. While the adults work, children take care of cattles and goats or wander in the fields to pick up the left-overs of harvests: At times female workers who do not get any work join this scavenging. Pathetic is the scene in which one finds an army of children, women and even male adults closely following the orders of *Maliks* and their men, ignoring the constant howling and abusive languages showered on them. At times out of impatience a few bold scavengers get too close with the inevitable consequence : their basket is cut into four pieces so that they or the others may not dare again. In *Budhanagara Ragho* we saw with our eyes a new basket being cut into four pieces. We were told that a basket costs around Rs. 1.50. The pick-up could be hardly worth 25 Paise.

This, combined with the previous experience of short lived Naxalite movement, led to two incidents which were quite revealing. In *Narauli* this army which was engaged in scavenging decided to loot the piles of sweet potatoes of a rich man already sold to an outside dealer or a *paikar*. A few days thereafter in the *Rohua Hat*, the labourers threatened to loot all sweet potatoes unless, instead of being sold to a *paikar* (an outside dealer), they are sold to the local people on a reasonable price. When these incidents were brought into the notice of a young land owner in Musahari village in connection with the group interview, his face was flushed with anger while others laughed. One of his family members or neighbours proudly pointed out "where is the money with which they can buy our sweet potatoes? If we don't sell them to *paikars*, sweet potatoes will rot in the field", and then the young man (who was the treasurer of the *Gram Sabha*) added "and how can we buy fine dhotis—you know it comes Rs. 40-50 a pair, the prices are going up, etc."

And then, many such *Maliks* would proudly point out that they help their men (retained labourers) in their *Shradha-Sukha*, i.e., in ceremonies ranging on the occasions from death to joys (e.g., marriage)—although the so-called help, more often than not, comes in form of a loan. In course of our various group interviews, it was clear to us that there was hardly any landless labourer or small peasants in the area who was not in debt. The rate of interest was reported to be varying for retained labourers from others and for cash than for kind. Those who are primarily money lenders charge

much more than those who employ money lending as a part of the *Raja-Praja* relationship. On occasions, loans are given with the full awareness that the person is already in deep debt and cannot be expected to return any part of it. Such occasions are death, marriage, serious illness, or accidents in the family. At times part of the interest or even principal is waived. On all such occasions such a generosity is so much emphasized that (a) the recipient must realize his moral obligation to repay it through never-ending-services to the donor, and that (b) he must understand that he is being treated, as if, a part of an extended family of his *Malik* who does not remain aloof when his "subject" (*Praja*) is in the deep water. A closer analysis of the whole pattern of money-and-grain-lending seems to suggest that it is much more a strategy of power-maintenance than an economic move to make profit. A few do make it out as their main occupation, but for the rest of them it is the most effective device to keep the labourer under tight tentacles.

There is nothing unexpected in the fact that the economic and power inequalities are mutually supportive—though at times one looks like being instrumental for the realization of the other. These two taken together help the landowners perpetuate a system which is built for the prosperity of a few and which is at the cost of the poor labourers. The third factor which provides a helping hand for exploitation is the *caste structure*. As in other parts of the country, the rich in the Musahari Block often comes from high caste and poor is often the low caste Harijans. *Bhumihars*, though in minority, are influential wherever they are. Backwards have numerical strength and are quite rich and often compete with *Bhumihars* for wealth and power. But the *Harijans* are always at the bottom. The caste hierarchy seems to provide legitimacy to whatever landowners (*Bhumihars*) and backward classes do.

In summary, there exists in Musahari Block a system of inequality and exploitation which is well integrated, strong, and age old. The system is built on the pillars of economic disparity, concentrated power in a few hands who are at the top of the caste structure. It is a system of make-belief equilibrium, super-imposed on tension, loaded with gross disequilibrium.

2. A Short-lived Naxalite Movement

No wonder, then, that this high level tension precipitated into what they called as *Naxalite* movement when a young, educated and poor *Bhumihar* boy aggrieved of an insult and injury caused to his father by a landowner, organized a group which killed a notorious money-lender and a few other landowners. The whole area got charged with emotion. Police moved in and whoever was suspected to be a Naxalite was jailed. During daytime, poor and low caste people were scared and during nights, anxious landowners kept themselves inside their doors. We were told that a call given on the beats of a drum from a tree top was enough for thousands of landless people, young and old, to gather and loot sweet potatoes of any rich person if he happened to be known for his exploitations. Sometime in May 1970, the President and the Secretary of the *District Sarvodaya Mandal* were served with notices of death which were to be executed on June 5 and 7, respectively.

3. Beginning of the Sarvodaya Movement in Musahari

It was then that Jayaprakash Narayan rushed to Musahari. "The mind insisted that the Naxalite threat was an urgent call to demonstrate through positive action how the challenge of violence could be used to speed up the process of non-violent social change and reconstruction that Vinobaji had initiated through his *Gramdan-Gramswaraj movement*" (Narayan, *Face to Face*, 1971, p. 7) (Italics added).

At that point, eight specific objectives were advanced :

1. Establishment of the *Gram Sabha*
2. Redistribution of 1/20 of the land covered by *Gramdan*
3. Setting up the *Gram Kosh*
4. Organization of the *Gram Shanti Sena*
5. To distribute undistributed *Bhoodan lands* and to correct mistakes and wrongs discovered in respect of previously distributed lands
6. To ensure that every "privileged person" has received his homestead *parcha* (prescribed official paper stating the area of the homestead and granting permanent tenancy in it to the

privileged persons concerned) and to rectify irregularities and wrongs in respect of previously distributed *parchas*

7. To look into the problems of landless labourers and try to do the needful (e.g., the problems of gambling, alcoholism, etc.)
8. To take up specific cases of injustice and oppression brought into the notice of the Sarvodaya workers and to help in their redressal.

With these objectives and a small group of workers Jayaprakash Narayan started the *Sarvodaya* Movement in the beginning of June 1970. Soon a number of other voluntary organizations such as *AVARD* (Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development), the *Bihar Relief Committee*, *The Good Earth*, etc., came for what was considered to be a total restructuring of the Musahari Block. *Gram Sabhas* were formed, bands of *Tarun Shanti Sena* were organized, lands were donated and distributed, workers moved around, and in many cases village rifts were patched up and small quarrels resolved.

B. The Procedure

After some preliminary discussions with the Sarvodaya worker and the visits of Musahari by Sachhidananda, P. H. Prasad, and Jai B. P. Sinha, three separate questionnaires, keeping in view the objectives of the Sarvodaya movement, were prepared for conducting surveys from sociological, economic, and social-psychological angles. This report is based on the social-psychological survey.

It was considered neither feasible nor necessary to contact the whole population. Hence 11 villages were randomly selected out of the list of 102 Sarvodaya villages provided by the *Prakhand Sabha* (Block level Sarvodaya Organization in Musahari). Later on, two more villages were added at the instance of the *Prakhand Sabha*. For the purposes of comparison, two control villages—one big with mixed castes and one small consisting of low castes and Muslims—were also included. Thus the survey was conducted in 15 villages. It was decided to interview 25 percent of all househeads of the sampled villages so as to include all donors and donees of land and the members of the *Gram Sabhas*. The procedure adopted was to contact every fourth househead, starting from one end of a village. The villages,

their total number of houseads, and the number of interviewees are given in Table XXV.

Table XXV
NAMES OF VILLAGES, TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHEADS
AND NUMBER INTERVIEWED

<i>Sarvodaya Villages</i>	<i>House heads</i>	
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Interviewed</i>
1. Manika Manohar	110	25
2. Musahari (No. 1)	218	56
3. Musahari (No. 2)	115	31
4. Dhobaha	72	18
5. Mukundpur	24	6
6. Madhcupur	232	59
7. Tarora Gopalpur	64	16
8. Budhanagara Ragho	315	78
9. Brahmasthan	141	35
10. Madapur Choube	100	30
11. Chak Mohammad	29	8
12. Satpur and Chit Bhagwatipur	51	13
13. Chak Salempur	7	4
<i>Control Villages</i>		
14. Sagahari	67	17
15. Prabaladpur	120	30
	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 1665	<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/> 426

In *Sarvodaya* villages 25.64 per cent of househeads were interviewed. In total 25.58 per cent of househeads were interviewed.

An investigator was stationed in Musahari Block who completed 426 interviews in about three months. In addition, the author with Sachhidananda made several trips to 13 of the 15 villages and tape-recorded 11 groups interviews, in addition to one interview of an employee of the *AVARD*. In a mixed caste village, the group interviews were invariably made separately for the high caste and the low caste villagers. Despite our best attempts, in two cases a high caste person managed to stay on while we were chatting with the Harijans.

C. The Results

Very soon it was obvious to us that extreme poverty restricts the mean-

ing of *Sarvodaya*, or, for that matter, any movement in that area. That is, any attempt to restructure the village community have to be first of all translated in terms of material gains to the poor, elevation of their living conditions, and decrements in enormous disparity between a few rich and the overwhelming majority of the poor.

1. The Economic Programmes

(a) *Granting Parchas*

Sarvodaya movement has a number of such programmes. One of them was to get the *Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act*, 1948, implemented, which required that every privileged (landless) person should have legal authority on his homestead. Before the *Sarvodaya* movement, only 50 per cent were reported to have *parchas* and some of them were reported to be evicted from their homestead despite *parchas* they had with them. We were told during our village trips and group interviews that almost all of them have now got *parchas*, except in one village (*Sahpur—Chit Bhagawatipur*) and there was absolutely no case of eviction. But similar was the situation in the control villages. In *Prahaladpur*, the evicted person was quickly restored to her homestead. There were a number of indicators (some of them will be discussed later) to suggest that the political awareness in the area has grown enormously and, to that extent, crude exploitation has decreased. For example, it was quite common previously to ask a poor person for errands without paying anything, or, to humiliate and beat him on the flimsiest grounds. But now these practices have stopped. Implementation of the *Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act*, it seems, is a direct function of this growing political awareness. To the extent that the *Sarvodaya* movement has helped this awareness to grow by protecting the poor against tyranny, the credit must go to the movement. We did not, however, have any good evidence to be sure of this link

(b) *Distribution of Land*

Another important programme of the movement was to get the donations of 1/20 of landowner's land and to get them distributed among the landless. Our survey revealed that 12.40 per cent of the respondents have donated land to 15.30 percent of the respondents. The total land donated

was 10·53 to 13·78 acres (as reported by donees and donors, respectively).

A few points need to be clarified here. While the survey covered only 25 percent of the total househeads of the 13 villages, it included all donors and donees. This means that (for comparison purposes) the percentage of donors and donees to the total number of househeads of these 13 villages will drop by four times. That is, about 3·10 percent of total househeads donated any land to about 3·82 percent of the househeads of the surveyed area. Thus a vast majority of landless labourers (called *Hansua Farosh*) have been left with the feeling that nothing has been done by *Sarvodaya* movement for them.

A more revealing was the finding that 87·27 percent of the donees have received land from their own *Maliks*, a finding which was substantiated by 73·33 percent of the donors. 92·59 percent donees felt grateful for this *Dan*, and 94·55 percent reported that they leave even their important work unfinished in order to serve their *Maliks* from whom they have received *Dan*. 84·62 percent felt that they have to yield to their *Maliks* and overwhelming majority of them (96·08 percent) believed that their *Maliks* had given them the piece of land out of generosity.

Majority of donors supported all the above contentions : 65·22 percent conceded that the donees do feel grateful to them; 64·44 percent accepted that they leave even their important work unfinished in order to work for them, 66·67 percent reported that donees are under their control, and 97·83 percent felt that they have donated land out of generosity. These percentages are slightly lower (except for the last one) than the ones reported by the donees. It is but natural. What is surprising, however, is the finding that landowners are openly admitting that donation of land, under the garb of generosity, is just a device which helps them maintain control over their retained labourers.

It is an old practice in the villages of North Bihar that a landowner grants a tiny piece of land, in addition to the homestead, to some of his favourite retained labourers. In return, they work for him at lower wages and are expected to stay loyal. The *Sarvodaya* movement by accepting this practice as "bhoodan", has allowed the landowners to enjoy the privilege of being *bhoodani* without really losing much. In the author's village located 20 miles away from Musahari, which has not been exposed to *Sarvodaya*

movement, landowners do grant land free of cost in return for loyalty and right of reservation for their labour.

It may be argued that the author is missing the point. *Bhoodan* transfers the ownership while in traditional practice the ownership is vested in the *Malik*. But how could it be impressed upon illiterate landless labourers without proper registry of the land! The proper registry in the Registrar's office is not permissible as the donee might sell the land. However, it does give him the impression that he does not actually have the legal right and that *Dan* depends on the sweet will of his *Malik*, and that he can have the land as long as he works for him, and stays loyal to him. Even one instance of eviction from *Bhoodan* land is strong enough to keep him convinced. In *Manika Manohar* the President of *Gram Sabha* has evicted a donee from his already donated land. The *Gram Sabha* feels quite helpless. Even though there are not many such cases of eviction, the programme of land redistribution in this sense has failed to change the *Raja-Praja* style of relationship between landowners and their attached labourers.

(c) *Incentive to Agriculture*

The third economic incentive which motivated many landowners and petty peasants to form *Gram Sabha* was the prospect of receiving amenities for agriculture. With the presence of *AVARD*, *The Bihar Relief Committee*, and *The Good Earth*, etc., villagers were made to believe that they will get hand pipes, tubewells seeds, fertilizer, etc. Some were even promised better livestock. Even talks of various cottage and small scale industries were floated in the air. In big villages such as *Madapur-Choube*, *Madhopur*, *Musahari*, *Budhanagara Ragho* etc., the affluent landowners got interested, *Gram Sabhas* were formed, and lands were donated. In the process, the affluent ones also started vying for tube-wells, more of hand pipes, and more effective say in the management of the *Sarvodaya* movement. In small and low caste villages, such as *Tarora-Gopalpur* and *Sahpur-Chhitbhagwatipur*, villagers enthusiastically formed *Gram Sabha* despite almost no chance of any redistribution of land (the landowners belonged to other villages and were not willing to donate any land. Those who did donate got the land back because they had less than two acres).

In all these villages, bands of *Tarun Shanti Sena* were also organized. It seemed that the *Gram Sabha* would really be able to help the villagers in some of their chronic problems such as land disputes, litigations, gambling, alcoholism, etc. They even brought the Harijans and the higher caste landowners together. In the meetings of *Gram Sabha* they all sat at the same mat and resolved many of their disputes and differences (Exceptions were seen in the villages of *Chak Salempur* and *Brahmasthan*, which according to the *Prakhand Sabha* were the Sarvodaya villages—although neither accepted this contention. The latter had *Gram Sabha* only for four days—though the village is located quite near to the *Prakhand Sabha* office).

Soon this enthusiasm had to face the ugly reality that not all can get hand pipes, not all villages can have a tubewell, or, not all the needs of agriculture can be met by Sarvodaya people. Let us take a few specific cases.

Madapur Choube, after initial hesitation and fear among some landowners, responded warmly to the call of JP. Some lands were donated; but more important was the fact that the *Gram Sabha* was so active and effective that even a high caste Hindu could be tried and punished by the low caste members of *Nyaya Sabha* for fatally injuring a donkey who had strayed into his field. A high school was started for the poor children. The village was considered to be an ideal *Gramdani* village and was approved for a deep sunk tubewell and cultivation of fishery in the village tank. The Bank of Baroda was approached for a loan and the loan was almost given. But then an influential member of the *Prakhand Sabha* got sore over the behaviour of some of the villagers and the village did not get the tubewell. Enthusiasm sank low and the *Gram Sabha* ceased to function. All became indifferent and sore. The situation can be understood by the report of the investigator that out of the names of the *Gram Sabha* members provided by the President, three—Baidnath Saha, Peer Mohammad, and Krishna Deo Mahato—denied being part of the *Gram Sabha*. It is quite likely, the further investigation seemed to indicate, that some of them got sore over the favouritism shown by *Bhumihars* in the distribution of hand pipes. It was alleged that they got all the hand pipes near their own houses thus driving the low caste people straight into the lap of a CPI leader.

In *Sahpur-Chhitbhagwatipur* a tubewell was provided, but later on was shifted to some other village. It was never returned back to the village. With the tubewell the enthusiam and involvement of the people also evaporated. Previously this low caste village had very active *Gram Sabha* which resolved many conflicts. For months now, no meeting was held. Quite uncared, the wooden signboard—a symbol of the *Sarvodaya* movement in the village—has also disappeared. No one knows what happened to it.

In Musahari, inflightings were as old as the village. An influential person having connections with the high level caste politics of Bihar backed the *Sahanis*. Thereupon, *Bhumihars* got a *Paswan* as the President of *Gram Sabha*. One of the richest among the *Bhumihars* got the treasurership. But soon the *Gram Sabha* broke up over the issue of distributing hand pipes. Months have passed but no one dares to call the *Gram Sabha* into a meeting lest an open fight ensues.

Tarora-Gopalpur is a small village consisting lower castes and Muslims. It has been one of the show pieces of the *Sarvodaya* movement. *Gram Sabha* meetings used to be held weekly. *Tarun Shanti Sena* was quite active. Gambling and alcoholism were dying fast. The villagers constructed a school by *Shramdan* and the school was running fine. The village, because of its caste structure and poverty, was a victim of all kinds of exploitations by the landowners of the neighbouring villages who owned the land in the village. But with *Gram Sabha* and *Tarun Shanti Sena* around, they dared not do a thing. A tubewell was granted to the village by the *AVARD*. Villagers mortgaged their tiny pieces of land as security. Then the machine broke down and neither the *AVARD* nor the *Prakhand Sabha* could help them procure the spares. We saw their bumper maize crop dying and with that the enthusiasm too was going down. The weekly meetings of *Gram Sabha* were now held monthly and with growing embarrassment for the office bearers and resentment among others.

In *Manika Manohar* the meetings of the *Gram Sabha* have not been held for months. The secretary revealed: "They say why should we attend? What have we got from *Gram Sabha*? *Gram Sabha* does not have *kosh* enough to cater to their needs. There is not much help from outside (e.g., *AVARD*)" and at the top of everything was the instance of eviction from the donated land by the President of the *Gram Sabha*.

Finally, let us visit *Madhopur*—the village of *Tiwaris* who have also figured in the report of Bandyopadhyay. Despite the contrast of their modern residential buildings with “white piano-key switch board, concealed electric wiring, silver painted grills, and the surrounding dilapidated thatched hovel” (p. 15), the *Sarvodaya* work was going on well in the village from villagers’ point of view. A *kachcha* road was built to connect the village with black topped Muzaffarpur-Darbhanga road, the meetings were held regularly, Rs. 1500/- was collected for the *Gram Kosh* and many disputes were settled. In one case the Harijan members of the *Gram Sabha* tried a *Tiwari*, 25 years old, for slapping a Harijan and were able to punish him. All these successes were due to the assertive leadership of the Secretary of the *Gram Sabha*. He also got two deep tubewells which of course were sunk in his land, but the beneficiaries were not only *Tiwaris*. Bandyopadhyay’s assertion here was not quite true.

The boat was sailing smoothly but then suddenly it hit a formidable rock—the rock being the issue of a village pond.

The pond was under the control of the Secretary and his family. According to the villagers it is actually located in *Gairmajarua Khas* (i.e., a public land under private control) in name of the four original *Bhumihar* families of the village (*Tiwari* being one of them), yet the Secretary controls the whole of the pond. The others taking advantages of the *Gram Sabha* wanted the pond to be donated to the village. The pond is suitable for fishery which could fetch Rs. 2000/- annually. The Secretary does not relish the idea. The ownership of the pond is too valuable to him to give it up, others insist. *Gram Sabha* begin dominated by *Tiwaris* feel helpless. Conflict ensues. A hut belonging to him catches fire which is suspected to be started by the enemy families. A case of arson is initiated. The prime casualty is the *Gram Sabha* and the *Sarvodaya* workers.

Some Harijan members of the *Gram Sabha* attempted to revive the *Gram Sabha* but were sarcastically called “the new leaders” and for fear of being accused as Naxalites, they gave up the idea of doing anything in this regard. The *Gramkosh* of Rs. 1500/- is lying locked in the Bank of Baroda without any use to the villagers.

These cases raise a number of very significant issues. The success of a *Gram Sabha* depends, first of all, on economic inputs, which, no matter how

much *AVARD* etc. does, will never match the needs of the people. Second, with the very sharply skewed distribution of land, the economic benefits automatically go at the best to the landed peasants. The nature of land donation leaves a large percentage of labourers still *Hansua Farosh* (i.e., landless) who do not get even a small bit from the economic benefits, and consequently feel hostile toward *Sarvodaya* movement. The pumping set and other things require security bonds which only the rich or middle class peasants can provide. Naturally, the economic benefits also have a tendency to be skewed in proportion to the steepness of disparity in land-ownership. Above all, a *Gram Sabha* has to conform to the existing *Raja-Praja* power structure of a village. It will work as long as it is headed by a rich and influential high caste landowner who is agreeable to the idea. The moment his supreme authority is even symbolically challenged, he, as if, pronounces : "Go to hell !"

2. The Power Structure

This contention may be supported by the story told to us about the formation of the *Prakhand Sabha*. There was a tussle between an influential man (whose reference appears earlier in this report) and a *Tiwari*. The *Tiwari* made it a point that *Prakhand Sabha* can not be formed unless he is made the Secretary. Stalemate continued till JP intervened and he was made the Secretary. The story could have been regarded untrue except that JP himself confirms it, at least partially, when he wrote in his open letter (dated Oct. 25, 1972) to the villagers of the *Gramdani* villages of *Musahari* Block : "A *Prakhand Sabha* has also been formed though the election of office bearers could not yet been held due to the internal rivalry of the leaders; only a co-ordinator has been elected" (p. 2).

Let us see the structure of the *Prakhand Sabha* once it has been formed.

Table XXVI

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PRAKHAND SABHA

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Landowned (acre)</i>	<i>Education</i>
1. President	Bhumihar	10	Middle pass
2. Vice-president (1)	Bhumihar	10	B. A. Trained
3. Vice-president (2)	Backward	10-20 (has business)	Middle pass
4. Secretary	Bhumihar	15	B. A.

(Continued)

Table XXVI (contd.)

Positions	Caste	Landowned (acre)	Education
5. Treasurer	Harijan	2	I. A.
6. Asst. Secretary (1)	Bhumihar	75	Matric pass
7. Asst. Secretary (2)	Brahman	?	Literate

Of seven members, four were *Bhumihars*—the powerful minority in the Block. Only one *Harijan* was given the innocuous position of a treasurer. He being a businessman uplifts his status and (if the principle of *Sanskritization* is a valid one) he might be a greater conformist of high caste feudal values than the *Bhumihars*. The fact that the overwhelming majority of them had good acreage of land (despite it is being reported on the low side due to the spurious land divisions within a family for defeating the land ceiling act) makes one feel that the *Prakhand Sabha* would not have the disposition to actualize any radical restructuring of the socio-economic life of Musahari Block which will go against their self-interests. At best it can provide some relief to the people and can diminish the crudeness of exploitation. By and large, it would tend to maintain *status quo*.

One may go further along this line of argument and explore the structure of the *Gram Sabhas* in order to see whether they manifest the existing power structure in the community or reveal any significant break through from the traditional pattern. Table XXVII provides the results.

Table XXVII

**INFORMATION REGARDING PRESIDENTS, SECRETARIES,
AND TREASURERS**

	Caste				Land	Education	
	High	Backward	Low	Muslim		Below Matric	Above Matric
President	5	4	3	—	8b.	3	3
Secretary	3	9	—	—	4b. 1k	3	3
Treasurer	2	8	—	1	20b. 3k	—	6
Total	10	21	3	1		6	12

N. B. Information was not available about the remaining ones

b=Bigha; k=Katha

Let us read Table XXVII with Table XXVIII which provide the power ranking of the three important positions in a *Gram Sabha*. The power making was obtained by asking the respondents to judge who is the most powerful, who is the second most powerful, and who is the most powerful among the three

Table XXVIII

**POWER POSITION AMONG PRESIDENT, SECRETARY, AND
TREASURER**

	Powerful			
	1st	2nd Most	3rd	
	%	%	%	
President	42.80	39.40	17.80	(N=236)
Secretary	63.09	90.87	6.04	(N=298)
Treasurer	11.69	22.08	66.23	(N=231)
<hr/>				
χ^2 (df=2)	34.202**	4.873	67.798**	(**p < .01)

The high caste's complete domination at *Prakhand* level has now been a bit changed. The backward caste has emerged as a major share-holders of power, although high caste is still strongly anchored. The low caste has only three representatives occupying the Presidentship of the *Gram Sabhas*. The Secretaries are most often mentioned as the most powerful person in the *Gram Sabha*. Treasurers are generally those who are rich yet ineffective. In some cases Harijan officers were no more than the mouth organs of high-caste rich persons of the village who actually were the king makers. In sum, the *Gram Sabha* reflected the power structure of the rural community.

Another way of understanding the caste structure of the *Gram Sabha* officers is to compare it with that of the most powerful persons of the control villages. Table XXIX provides the results.

Table XXIX

CASTE OF GRAM SABHA OFFICERS AND POWERFUL PERSONS IN CONTROL VILLAGES

Villages	Castes			
	High	Backward	Low	Muslim
Sarvodaya	10	21	3	1
Control	13	47	—	12

Obviously the pattern is strikingly similar. Backwards due to their wealth and numerical superiority emerged as the predominant sharer of power, while low caste persons were nowhere to be seen. Surprisingly enough, the basis of their power was not perceived to be caste nor wealth as such, but cleverness and smartness (चतुराई). Probably, the power structure is too familiar to be credited to the caste structure, and therefore, the smartness or manipulateness (चतुराई) of the occupants of power positions is perceived to be the crucial factor.

With this kind of organization, the author's contention is that not much of restructuring of the socio-economic life of Musahari could have been attained. And, hence not much (in the sense of narrowing of economic disparity, power distribution, literacy, or the style of life) has been attained.

3. The Gross Exploitation

This does not mean that nothing has been achieved. The gross level of crude exploitation has certainly gone down. The social distance in terms of untouchability has decreased to some extent. There were a number of questions regarding the two issues. Let us see how they are responded to by the villagers.

Table XXX

**PERCENTAGE OF LANDLESS RESPONDENTS SAYING "YES"
TO THE QUESTIONS**

Questions	Villages		X ²
	Sarvodaya (N=270) %	Control (N=72) %	
1. Is it true that landowners do not pay due wage after full day's work ?	79.03	90.27	0.746
2. On lame excuses, they drive away your cattle ?	38.15	60.52	5.072*
3. Are they evicting you from your land ?	52.40	61.84	0.780
4. Do they involve you in false cases ?	50.74	62.33	1.188

* $p < .05$

Compared to the control villages, the differences are pronounced and meaningful enough despite the fact that the control villages were located quite nearby.

These questions were modified so that meaningful responses may be obtained from the land owners of the *Sarvodaya* and *Control* villages. The responses were as follows :

Table XXXI
PERCENTAGE OF LANDOWNERS SAYING "YES" TO THE
QUESTIONS

Questions	Villages		
	Sarvodaya	Control	X ²
	(N=79) %	(N=17) %	(df=1)
1. Is it true that labourers don't work hard despite getting full wage ?	49.37	35.29	2.342
2. Do they leave their cattle in your field deliberately ?	21.52	47.05	9.505**
3. Are they claiming your land illegally ?	20.25	51.85	13.850**
4. Do they involve you in false cases ?	11.39	23.52	4.215*

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Except for the sincerity with which work is done by labourers, the landowners of control villages have revealed greater mistrust and conflicts of interest. However, in no case (except illegal claiming of land reported by the *Control* villages) the majority felt that the labourers were exploiting them. On the contrary, it was the labourers who reported being exploited by the rich persons. For example, while 11.39 to 23.52 per cent of landowners suspected that labourers are framing them up in cases, 50.74 to 62.33 per cent of labourers accused that they are being framed-up (Tables XXX and XXXI). While 20.25 to 51.85 per cent of landowners reported that their lands are being illegally claimed by the labourers, 52.40 to 61.84 of labourers claimed that they are being evicted from their lands (Tables XXX and XXXI). Similar trends were reported regarding the other two indicators of exploitation (see Tables XXX and XXXI).

In summary, the process of exploitation is predominantly one-way which is aimed towards the landless labourers; and the extent of exploitation is lesser in *Sarvodaya* villages as compared to the *Control* villages. Because these villages are located nearby, the credit for this change goes to the *Sarvodaya* movement.

Despite the finding that the gross level of exploitation has gone down due to the *Sarvodaya* movement, the *Gram Sabha* was not considered to be a very effective defense against such exploitation. In response to the question, "Whose help do you seek when you are exploited by the rich" (who does not pay you due wage, drives your cattle away, or evicts you from land) the following were the percentage distributions among the various alternatives :

Table XXXII

**PERCENTAGE ENDORSING THE SOURCES TAPPED FOR GETTING
HELP AGAINST EXPLOITATION (N=176)**

<u>Alternatives</u>	<u>Percent Endorsing</u>
Gramsabha	10.23
Panchayat	1.70
Court, Thana	1.70
Silently suffer	86.36

When they clash among themselves, the alternative are : (N=461, one respondent may endorse more than one alternatives, thus increasing the N size)

Gramsabha	39.04
Own relations and kins	36.66
Court-Thana	13.23
Panchayat	10.85

The findings taken together suggest that while the *Gram Sabha* is a weak defense when a poor is being troubled by a rich, it is relatively more effective when equals clash. It was reported to us during group interviews that since the *Gram Sabha* does not have any legal power except through the consensus in the village, it quite often finds helpless when one of the parties refuses to listen to it or when a vested interest in the village instigates one of the parties to disobey the *Gram Sabha*. Therefore, the *Nyaya Samittee* of *Gram Sabha* lets the dust settle down before it can

successfully intervene to persuade the parties to come to terms. It feels quite helpless when this kind of good sense does not prevail. In cases where one of the parties happens to be a rich or powerful man, the good sense seldom prevails (e. g., the issue of the pond in *Madhopur*). It was reported to us that in the village Tarora-Gopalpur despite the best efforts of the *Gram Sabha*, the neighbouring landlord of *Rohua*, managed to grab the land of one Mr. Lateef as well as 50 acres of the collective land of the village.

4. The Social Distance

Apart from the economic objectives, the *Sarvodaya* movement has also got social objectives which may or may not have economic implications. For example, the social distance among high and low caste people was one of the issues under consideration. There were two questions designed to throw some light on this issue.

One of them probed whether the social distance between high and low caste has :

Table XXXIII
SOCIAL DISTANCE IN THE VILLAGES

	Villages		X ² df=1
	Sarvodaya (N=376)	Control (N=93)	
Remained constant	9.84	4.00	2.464
Decreased	75.80	80.64	0.148
Disappeared	11.97	19.35	1.738
Increased	2.39	—	—

A significant majority thus reported that the social distance in the *Sarvodaya* as well as *Control* villages has decreased. Similarly, overwhelming majority of villagers (97.54%) in *Sarvodaya* as well as *Control* (61.70%) villages reported that high and low caste people sit on the same mat during meetings, etc. The difference between the two is again reflective of the impact of the *Sarvodaya* movement.

It was obvious that the social distance is decreasing and significant portion of people felt that it has in fact disappeared. The difference between

the *Sarvodaya* and *Control* villages on the issue of social distance was not great suggesting that this change was probably a part of the forward moving general change processes in the area—*Sarvodaya* might, of course, have contributed to it. Social changes, in contrast to the material changes, do not necessarily confine themselves to specific villages. In our group interviews we were told that the younger people of high castes were more receptive to these changes and that there has been greater narrowing of the social gap between backwards and Harijans than between high caste and Harijans.

We had an item asking “What happens when a low caste man pays a visit to a high caste person regarding some work”? The most frequently mentioned responses in the *Sarvodaya* and *Control* villages were :

Table XXXIV
SOCIAL DISTANCE IN INTERACTIONS

Alternatives	Villages		X ² df=1
	Sarvodaya per cent (N=346)	Control per cent (N=93)	
He talks standing while the high caste man keeps sitting	1.16	13.97	9.476**
The high caste person asks him to sit with him	49.42	36.55	1.926
The low caste man sits on the ground and talks	47.40	48.37	0.008
The low caste man takes a seat with him without even asking	1.73	1.07	—

** $p < .01$

It is quite clear that though the disparity has decreased, it is still tangible. In our group interview at *Budhanagara Ragho*, a rich and influential person told us that his attached labourers can sit with him (although *Bhumihars* do not allow). Then we moved to the Harijan section of the village where poor *Chamars* were located. We were offered a mat. When we invited an old *Chamar* to come and sit with us on the mat, he hesitated. We insisted, then he made a move but could not make it. Finally he could

occupy only 4" of the mat. He was in fact sitting on the ground. The fact was starkly clear to us that centuries of distance had a tendency to die hard. The young men on both sides, we were told, were much more daring.

5. Gambling and Alcoholism

One glaring problem of Musahari is the rampant gambling and large scale alcoholism. The *Sarvodaya* movement naturally directed its attention to the problem. One of the main tasks assigned to the *Gram Sabhas* was to control these two evils which were hurting the poor much more than the rich. Let us see how things stand. Our question in the survey was "Do you have gambling and alcoholism in your village"? The alternatives and the percentage of respondents in the *Sarvodaya* and *Control* villages are given below :

Table XXXV

GAMBLING AND ALCOHOLISM IN THE VILLAGES

	Villages		
	Sarvodaya (Per cent) (N=287)	Control (Per cent) (N=77)	X ² (df=1)
Gambling :			
<i>Alternatives</i>			
(a) We don't have any one gambling here	10.45	—	—
(b) Yes, there is gambling going on, but in decreased degree	37.63	42.85	0.338
(c) In fact, it has increased	47.39	55.84	0.690
Alcoholism :			
<i>Alternatives</i>	<u>Sarvodaya</u>	<u>Control</u> (N=373)	<u>X²</u> (N=92)
(a) We don't have any case of alcoholism	9.38	—	—
(b) Yes, we do have, but in decreased number	38.07	40.21	0.058
(c) In fact it has increased	44.77	58.61	1.852

The impact of *Sarvodaya* movement is positive—though the magnitude is not that impressive. At least around 10 percent of the respondents reported that gambling and alcoholism have disappeared from *Sarvodaya* villages. Their responses to the remaining two alternatives also revealed that the *Sarvodaya* movement has made some dent by restraining the growing trend in gambling and alcoholism. Alarming is the finding that the significant percentage of respondents report that the two evils are growing. Being located in the backwater of Muzaffarpur town, this area has been, and continues to be, victim of the evils of urbanization.

6. The Global Evaluation of Sarvodaya People

Finally, we asked all the respondents to make a global evaluation of the *Sarvodaya* people. The alternatives and the percentage of respondents endorsing them in *Sarvodaya* and *Control* villages were as follows :

Table XXXVI
IMAGE OF SARVODAYA WORKERS

Alternatives	Villages		
	Sarvodaya	Control	X ²
	Percent (N=366)	Percent (N=91)	df=1
<i>Sarvodaya people are :</i>			
(a) helping the rich	17.49	4.39	7.842**
(b) helping the poor	34.70	5.49	21.228**
(c) helping both rich and poor	29.78	28.57	0.024
(d) helping no one	18.03	61.53	23.782**

** $p < .01$

The diffused responses by the respondents of *Sarvodaya* villages indicated confusion regarding what exactly *Sarvodaya* people are doing. While only about one third understood the movement correctly, 18 percent were obviously sore—may be due to their over expectations, or, failures on the part of the movement. Among the respondents of the control villages a clear majority felt that it does not help any one. Is it a rationalization ?

May be, because 93 percent of the same respondents prefer to have a *Gram Sabha* and an equally overwhelming majority (97.84%) thought that many of the developmental programmes have not been actualized in their villages because there was no *Gram Sabha*.

Incidentally, there were some interesting—though sad—sidelights. Developmental activities are also the responsibility of the Block Development Office. Invariably we were told that the BDO does not visit the villages except when he has to collect levy, that the whole Block Office is corrupt and handicapped by red tapism, that nothing productive can be expected from the BDO that the VLWs never stay in the village (many had never seen him), that the school teachers never come to school in time and some never come at all.

D. Conclusions

Our findings reveal that in the Musahari Block a number of changes have occurred. Gross and crude exploitation has decreased with increasing political awareness in people. Social distance has decreased too. There has been some restraint on the growing trends in gambling and alcoholism. The landless labourers have got *Parchas* of their homesteads and they are no longer evicted from their homesteads. Credit for these changes may go to the *Sarvodaya* movement—although the brief spell of *Naxalite* movement may have been one of the precipitating factors for some of these changes.

Yet, these changes are far from being radical and, consequently, have failed in restructuring either the village economy or the minds of people. At best they have provided some relief to the system.

The reasons for such a situation are not difficult to identify. The movement has fallen into the hands of those who are *haves* and hence are not disposed to make any radical change. They are mostly interested in the programmes which might cool the system so that the *status quo* could be maintained. Consequently, the mass in the Musahari Block feels left out.

What the movement needs is, in order to become a mass movement, to incorporate those who really need a radical change and restructuring, viz., the landless people. If the movement is for them, then let it be *their movement* even if it means leaving the present set of the *Sarvodaya* workers out.

The Economic Perspective

Muṣahari is a Community Development Block of Muzaffarpur district in North Bihar. The town of Muzaffarpur forms the urban sector of the Block. It has an area of 196 Km.² having, according to the Census of India 1971, a population of 242726. It shows highest density of population both for the rural as well as for the urban area compared to the average population density obtained in the country, the state and the district (Table XXXVII). The proportion of urban population is fairly high (Table XXXVIII). The urban influence of Muzaffarpur town, a divisional headquarter and an important railway junction, makes the area less dependent on agriculture. A higher proportion of workers are engaged in Manufacturing, Processing, Servicing and Repairs, Construction, Trade and Commerce, Transport, Storage and Communication and other Services than is obtained either in the State or the district (Table XXXXI). There is a railway wagon factory also. The Block has acquired some features of relative development: schools, colleges, a university, a medical college, railways, roadways etc. The National Highway passes through the Block. Besides this, the Block has 77 Kms. of metalled roads, 82 Kms. of District Board and 200 Kms. of village roads. The town of Muzaffarpur is also on the air map. As at the end of March 1975, 66 out of a total of 122 villages have been electrified and about 158 private tubewells energised. The level of literacy is fairly high (Table XXXIX). The literacy rate, urban and rural taken together, is higher than the country. But this is essentially because a much higher proportion of population in the Block is urban than in the country as a whole.

But the fact that this urban influence is not very deep as soon as we examine the participation rate and the conditions prevailing in the rural sector. The percentage of workers in urban population is lower compared to that in India and Bihar. The district (Table XXXX) situation in the rural area is only a shade better. The lowest proportion of female workers betrays the still lingering influence of feudal tradition. The mainstay of the rural population continues to be agriculture which employs about 81 percent of the workers from the rural part of the Block (Table XXXXI). About 77 percent of its area is under cultivation and about 64.13 percent of the cultivated area is double cropped. The soil is alluvial and is very fertile. The river Burhi Gandak flows across the Block offering immense irrigation potential. But the potential has only been marginally harnessed even when the need for irrigation in view of the agro-climatic condition, is fairly high. The gross irrigated area to the gross sown area is only about 16.40 per cent and here also 80 per cent of irrigation is done by sub-surface rather than the surface water resources. The land distribution is highly uneven, the proportion of agricultural labourers among those working in agriculture is very high and the agricultural technology is mostly primitive. The vast majority of the population are extremely poor. The average annual per capita income of rural Musahari in 1974-75 stood at a little less than Rs. 400/-.

Rural Musahari, in fact, represents a semi-feudal set-up. The bulk of the rural poor comprise poor peasantry, i.e., those (engaged primarily in agriculture sector) whose labour is utilised by others either through hire or otherwise. They constitute the large majority of the direct producers of the area and at the same time remained the most oppressed among the rural classes. Some of them own some cultivable land. Quite a significant number lease-in land mostly on crop sharing basis or on terms requiring labour services, but in some cases on terms requiring fixed payment either in cash or in kind. But there are others who are landless, some do not own even homestead land. Most of the poor peasant households are deficit ones in the sense that their bare minimum consumption expenditures exceed their incomes. These chronic deficit households are, therefore, forced to take consumption loan both in kind and cash from the landlords, big

cultivators and big peasants who happen to be the main constituent of the rural rich. Sometimes, the stipulated rates on these loans are exorbitantly high. Leave aside the loan, even the full payment of interest often is beyond the means of the deficit households. But the creditors also do not insist on full payment even in the long run. The rural rich use this debt obligation as also those arising out of allowance of dwelling space or some tiny bit of land for cultivation to the poor peasants, to force on the direct producers an informal bondage. Therefore, a system of unequal exchanges exists which gives the rural rich enormous economic benefits such as cheap and assured labour, better terms for leasing-out land, benefits obtained through what is known as "distress sales", acquiring the poor peasant lands almost for nothing.

The enormous economic power which gets concentrated in the process in the hands of the overlords of the semi-feudal set-up, not only allows them to dominate over the economic activities of the area but also makes them politically very powerful. They claim the bulk of the benefits that flows in the area either in the name of development activities of the government or for welfare of the rural poor. They pay less to the direct producers than is legally due to them. Most of the village quarrels among the poor peasants are settled by them. They operate as the sole arbiter even in the context of distribution of relief and other essentials like sugar and kerosene oil by the government. For all practical purposes, they are the law in their areas.

It is mainly because of this that the landlords and big cultivators and rich peasants have developed an interest in continuation of this semi-feudal set-up which exists because the vast majority of the poor peasantry remains in perpetual 'deficit'. Economic gains arising out of this backward, predominantly semi-feudal agrarian structure has made the rural rich inimical to rapid development which, if allowed, is likely to improve the economic condition of the poor peasants who can thereby free themselves from the semi-feudal bondage. That is why the resources for development activities mostly are either wasted away or are used up in conspicuous consumption. It is this which explains the low utilisation of infrastructure meant for

agricultural development and almost negligible net investment in agriculture.

It was against this objective condition of usurious exploitation leading to stifling of rapid agricultural development, intensification of poverty and semi-slave condition of living for the vast mass of people, one finds the eruption of rural violence in the early months of 1970. It may be argued that the subjective condition for the occurrence of the rebellion by the poor against injustice and exploitation was to some extent created by high literacy (Table XXXIX) and contact with proletarianised labour.

Following this rather unusual occurrence of rural violence against the atrocities on the rural poor, the forces of law and order, the police, and of peace, the Sarvodayists, joined hands to restore 'normalcy' in the area. In the month of June 1970, Shri J. P. Narayan came and camped in the area for about a year with a view to revive the 'Sarvodaya Movement' which according to him "was losing its fire" and "its workers were becoming stab and flabby in spirit"¹. He came to "demonstrate through positive action how the challenge of violence could be used to speed up the process of non-violent social change and reconstruction that Vinobaji has initiated through his Gramdan-Gram Swaraj Movement"².

His fight was "a fight for social and economic justice"³. He maintained, "It was not the so-called Naxalites who have fathered this violence but those who have persistently defied and defeated the laws for the past so many years—be they politicians, administrators, landowners, or money-lenders. The big farmers who cheated the ceiling law through *Benami* and fictitious settlement; the gentlemen who grabbed government lands and village commons; the landowners who persistently denied the legal rights of their sharecroppers and evicted them from their holdings and who underpaid their labourers and threw them out from their homesteads; the men who by fraud or force took the lands away from the weaker section; the so-called upper-caste men who looked down upon their Harijan brethren and ill treated and socially discriminated against them; the money-lenders who charged usurious interests and seized the lands of the poor and the weak; the politicians, the administrators, and all others who aided and abetted these wrongs—it is they who are responsible for the accumulated

sense of injustice, grievance, and hurt among the poor and down-trodden that is now seeking its outlet in violence. Responsible also are the courts of law and the procedures and costs of justice that have conspired to deny a fair deal to the weaker sections of our society. Responsible again are the system of education and the nature of planning that are producing an ever-expanding army of ill-educated, frustrated, and unemployed youth, and that are accentuating economic disparities and leading to further polarisation of classes. Responsible yet again are the politicians whose self seeking has reduced democracy, the party system, and ideologies to a farce"¹. In order to tackle the problem of rural violence arising out of such a situation, he actively sought the cooperation and support of the government. Shri Narayan, under whose leadership the Sarvodaya movement sought to revive itself, made it explicit that in his view, "Naxalism was primarily a social, economic, political, and administrative problem" and "only secondarily a law-and-order question"; and that "I was seeking the parties' cooperation in tackling the problem in its primary aspects alone. My modus operandi had also been indicated in the same note. As for the law-and-order aspect of Naxalism, it is my view that it should be solely the concern of the government which alone has the authority, duty, and resources to protect the lives and property of the citizens"⁶. It is needless to emphasise that the impact of the Sarvodaya movement has to be evaluated against this background.

Objective and Structure of the Movement

The movement has been there now for more than three years. The first phase of the programme was drawn in two parts⁶. The first part related to the implementation of the Gramdan pledges obtained earlier in the block and consisted of the following items :

1. Establishment of the Gram Sabha;
2. Redistribution of one-twentieth of the land covered by Gramdan;
3. Setting up of the Gram Kosh;
4. Organisation of the Gram Shanti Sena; and,
5. Preparation of the necessary papers, village-wise, to be submitted to the Gramdan Confirmation Officer for legal confirmation of Gramdan.

The other part, which were added after 1970, consisted of the following items :

1. To distribute undistributed Bhoodan lands and to correct mistakes and wrongs discovered in respect of previously distributed lands;
2. To ensure that every "privileged person" has received his homestead parcha (prescribed official forms stating the area of the homestead and granting permanent tenancy in it to the privileged persons concerned) and to rectify irregularities and wrongs in respect of previously distributed parchas;
3. To look into problems of landless labourers and try to do the needful, and
4. To take up specific cases of injustice and oppression brought to the notice of Shri Narayan and to help in their redressal.

This effort of Sarvodaya movement of service through constructive work and conversion by gentle persuasion so as to achieve moral and social reconstruction of the society and correction of balance of power within it in the context of social and economic justice, was sought to be aided by Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (AVARD) in collaboration with the Bihar Relief Committee and other local agencies. This led to formation of Muzaffarpur Development Agency with Shri Narayan as its president.

To ensure meaningful coordination with existing development agencies as also to secure their participation and guidance, the agency has an Advisory Committee consisting of District Magistrate (Muzaffarpur), Director, Small Industries Service Institute (Patna), Director, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (Patna), and concerned block and district development officials.

The main aims of the Agency were :

1. To promote and encourage integrated development of Muzaffarpur district in general, and of the Gramdan areas in particular, through a phased programme of agro-industrial development;
2. To prepare and implement area development programmes, particularly with a view to providing gainful employment to landless agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers, rural artisans,

and such other poorer sections of the rural community;

3. To help farmers, artisans, labourers, educated youth, entrepreneurs, etc. in obtaining all such supplies and facilities as are required by them, including credit and other inputs, implements, custom and managerial services;
4. To promote and set up village and small-scale industries, agro-industrial services, training centres, etc.;
5. To promote and strengthen the Gramdan Movement;
6. To promote and render research, evaluation, extension, planning and educational activities in related fields;
7. To establish liaison and develop mutual areas of cooperation with different organisations—voluntary and official agencies, specialised institutions, groups and individuals and such other associations;
8. To raise funds through borrowings, grants, aids and such other assistance to carry out the activities of the Agency;

The institutional arrangement guiding the implementation of *Community irrigation works*⁷ (including inter and intra-relationships among the various parties—beneficiaries, Gram Sabha and Muzaffarpur Development Agency) is detailed below.

Cultivators were made eligible for project assistance on following terms :

1. Authorise the Gramsabha to (i) recover loan dues from them, (ii) maintain and manage community works created in the village, (iii) impose and collect water levies and other charges for regular operation and maintenance of various works. (The physical area/land occupied by the work concerned shall be the property of Gramsabha. Community works such as a tubewell will, however, become the joint property of the beneficiaries concerned after full payment of the loans taken on this account);
2. In case of medium and long-term loans, hypothecate/mortgage land and/or other movable/immovable property to commercial banks or lending institutions;
3. Consolidate holdings and accept common cropping programme on land irrigated by community works;

4. Agree not to install private tubewells in the command of the works created under the project;
5. Donate the part of land falling within the construction base of community irrigation works to the Gramsabha;
6. Authorise the Gramsabha to transact/negotiate on their behalf and arrange timely and proper distribution of inputs, supplies, services, etc.

Gram Sabha was made responsible for :

1. Identifying individual beneficiaries as per technical requirements of the scheme;
2. Wherever necessary and/or proposed by the Agency organise such beneficiaries into appropriate groups;
3. Honouring the technical plans/schemes suggested by the Agency;
4. Ensure proper distribution of inputs/supplies/services as per technical plan. In case of any failure in this regard, authorise the agency to take appropriate steps;
5. Recover loan dues from individual beneficiaries and arrange proper supply of inputs and other services as per technical plan;
6. Collect and maintain such information/records as are specified by the Agency from time to time;
7. Ensure enforcement of all conditions earlier detailed in respect of extension of assistance to project beneficiaries;
8. Ensure proper maintenance and management of all works created in the village;
9. Prevent construction of private tubewells in the command area of community irrigation works created by the project;
10. Generally assist the Agency in all its programmes and activities related to the village;

The Muzaffarpur Development Agency was made responsible for :

1. Overall supervision, policy and implementation of the project and its decisions are binding on all constituent Gramsabhas/individual beneficiaries;
2. In all group/community works involving loaning assistance from commercial banks/other lending institutions, the Gramsabhas will authorise and empower the Agency to transact/handle all such funds

- on its behalf according to the technical requirements of approved plans or schemes. (Tripartite legal agreement to this effect shall be reached and signed between the concerned parties : Gramsabha, Agency and commercial bank or lending institutions);
3. On behalf of constituent Gramsabhas, maintain and prepare periodic progress reports and statement of accounts;
 4. Until a project/scheme/work is fully completed, the responsibility for its execution and completion will vest with the Agency. All decisions of the Agency in this regard will be final and binding on Gramsabhas/individual beneficiaries;
 5. Extend technical support with a view to ensure timely maintenance and operation of completed community works in the initial years, and, in case of works involving earthwork, undertake necessary repairs at its cost in the first year following the completion of the said work. (The Agency will continue to enjoy technical and supervisory authority over all project works until the loans extended for their construction/installation are fully repaid by individual beneficiaries/Gramsabhas);
 6. In case of any major technical breach in the construction of works, the Agency will be responsible for correcting the fault and putting the work in order at its cost.

These efforts were supplemented also by FAO's *Freedom From Hunger Campaign*, Indo-Japanese Agricultural Research Project and numerous other schemes sponsored by Government such as Crash Scheme of Rural Employment, Gandak Project, Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project, etc.

Method

We decided to use the technique of field survey for evaluating the impact of the movement. Sarvodaya office provided us with a list of 100 villages where, according to the office information, Gram Sabha has been constituted. We selected 10 villages out of the list on random sampling basis. They were—*Manika Manohar, Musahari—Rajanagar (1), Musahari (2), Mukundpur, Brahmasthan, Chaksalempur, Madapur Choube, Chak Muhammad and Sahpur*. This was the first set of villages. Three other villages were suggested by the Sarvodaya office for inclusion in the sample as their performance, according

to them, was very good. These were *Madhopur*, *Budhnagra Ragho* and *Taraora Gopalpur*. These formed the second set of villages. The third set of two villages, *Prahladpur* and *Saghari*, were selected by Jai B. P. Sinha to form a control set in nearby area outside the Gram Sabha belt. Each household of these villages was surveyed and information was collected on a prescribed questionnaire. Those families who were living jointly were treated as one household. Information in respect of households were collected mostly from the head of the households but in case, when the head was not available, the information was collected from other adult members of the household. Thus, the information was collected from 1085 households comprising 5488 persons of 15 villages. The sample size was 10 per cent of the villages of Musahari Block where Gram Sabha was formed and 8.55 per cent of the total villages of the Block. We also held discussions, from time to time, with people belonging to different classes in the villages, workers of the Sarvodaya movement and other allied agencies and government employees of the Block.

There was a methodological problem related to the question of categorisation of different rural classes. We have found, in course of analysis of data related to agriculture, that the categorisation of rural classes on the basis of size of land-holdings is not reliable due to wide variance in the quality of land, value of property and other factors related to it. At the same time, we have found data regarding income distribution and scale of operations rather inaccurate and unreliable for this purpose. Moreover, any categorisation based on either size of land-holding or size of income or scale of operations will have to be of an arbitrary nature. Hence, for our purposes we have made use of criteria which can both be reliable and avoid arbitrariness. It is based on relations into which men enter with each other in course of their productive activities in terms of utilisation of different types of labour. Thus, we have differentiated the class categories as follows. *Landlord* and *Big Cultivators* are those who mainly use other's labour for cultivation, hired or otherwise. *Peasantry* uses either family labour or both family and others' labour. Among them those whose labour is utilised by others either through hire or otherwise are put in the class category of *poor peasantry*.

Analysis and Conclusions

The data from the sample of villages selected for the survey, shows that the large bulk of households are still dependent on agriculture (Table XXXXIII). The dependence is highest, that is, about 87.20 in the case of second set of villages (which was suggested to us by the Sarvodaya office for their best performance in the context of "overall development"). Thus, the phased programme of agro-industrial development has yet to make its impact felt in the rural Musahari. It is also evident that attempt to provide gainful employment to agricultural labour in other activities than agriculture by promoting area development programmes and setting up village industries etc., has hardly achieved any success. Out of the poor peasantry, the percentage of the households working also in sectors other than agriculture remains pitifully low, i.e., 10.95, 18.64 and 16.07 in the First, Second and the Third Set of villages, respectively. It should be noted that it is considerably lower in the First Set of villages than the Third which is a control set of villages. Even in the Second Set which has a claim for the most successful performance, it is slightly more than the control Set and is confined only to one village of the Set, i. e. *Madhopur*. Even the non-agricultural labourers who constitute about 8 percent of the households have to depend on cultivation for their subsistence needs and they also own and lease land for petty cultivation.

The bulk of households are still the poor peasant households (Table XXXXIII). The highest percentage of poor peasant households is to be found in the Second Set of villages. Majority of poor peasant households are landless (Table XXXXIV). The landlessness is more pronounced in the villages where the programmes of 'Sarvodaya Movement' have been implemented than in others. Those of the poor peasants who own cultivable land, bulk of them own less than one acre of land (Table XXXXV). On the contrary, land ownership by non-agricultural households is well pronounced in the area. The percentage of non-agricultural households owning land is the highest in the Second Set of villages where more than half of the non-agricultural households own land. It is evidently clear that absentee land-ownership is well pronounced in the area.

The land distribution pattern still remains highly uneven (Table L-V).

Field experience suggests that it is difficult to estimate (with a fair degree of accuracy) the distribution of land for sizes owning more than 2.5 acres because of large scale *Benami* holdings and reluctance on the part of the medium and big land-owning classes to state correctly their land holding sizes. It will be seen from the fact that the household data accounts for about 39.25, 60.37 and 45.21 percent of cultivable land in the First, Second and the Third Set of villages, respectively. Some land, of course, belong to those who are from other villages but that would not be much. As a matter of fact the amount of land distributed in the course of "Sarvodaya Movement" has been so little that nothing can be expected of it in the direction of solving the problem of unevenness of land distribution. In the surveyed village of Musahari Block, a little less than 10 percent of households engaged in cultivation received Bhoodan lands (Table L-1) and on an average, the distributed lands came to be a little less than 0.3 acres per household. Moreover, it was not always the poorest who got these land. Households with land formed the bigger proportion of the donees. It is also evident from Table L-1 that peasants other than the poor peasants households also received Bhoodan lands. In a few cases donees have received land outside their own villages implying that the overlords saw to it that the donated lands were mainly distributed among the households who were under their grip even if they were located outside the village. Thus, in this case also the might of the rural elites is well demonstrated. On the other hand, there is some evidence to suggest that unevenness in land distribution continued to increase even after "Sarvodaya Movement". According to Agricultural Census, by 1971 about 50 percent of the cultivating households in Musahari Block operated with less than one acre of land. Earlier in 1961, this percentage was about 45 (Table XXXII). By 1974, in the surveyed villages of Musahari (taken together) the percentage of land owning households owning less than one acre was about 47.

Leasing-in land is a fairly common practice in Musahari (Table XXXVI). In almost all the cases those leasing-in land are required to pay 50 percent of the gross output in kind as the share of the land-owner when the legally stipulated share of the land-owner is 25 percent of the gross output. Land-owners also do not contribute anything to the cost of cultivation. Moreover, if one looks at the pattern of leased-in land, one wonders, if

is it not being used for the purpose of maintaining a grip over the poor peasantry. In the First and Second Set of villages, the bulk of the households leasing-in land are the poor peasant households (Table L-VI). Quite a sizable proportion of poor peasantry leasing-in land are landless households (Table XXXXVI). In all the three sets of villages more than three-fourths of the landless poor peasant household lease-in less than one acre. This pattern of leasing-in small bits of land by large bulk of households is not evident in other class (Table XXXXVIII). Leasing-out land to such households who are economically so weak and hence, incapable of maximising the output from the land, results in the reduction in direct gain to the land-owners from leasing out land. Even then it is widely practised in case of poor peasantry (whose labour is utilised by others either through hire or otherwise) and not in case of others. Then, there must be more indirect economic benefits in such a scheme of things than what direct benefit one loses by not leasing-out to such farmers as have capacity to produce more and pay more in land scarce situation. Therefore, one can hardly escape the conclusion that leasing-out small bits of land is a mechanism which is used for maintaining a grip over the poor peasantry.

The percentage of households regularly taking consumption and/or seed loans is highest among the poor peasantry in all the three Sets of villages (Table XXXXIX). All the efforts taken together have failed to make any dent on this aspect of poverty and usurious exploitation. Such is the extent of economic distress in these households that most of them are forced to consume the grains kept for seed and, therefore, are compelled to go in for seed loan in a very regular fashion. The percentage of poor peasant households regularly taking consumption and/or seed loan in the First, Second and Third Set of villages are 88.69, 89.83 and 96.43, respectively. Thus, the one essential basis of semi-feudal bondage remains well pronounced in the area.

Thus, it appears that both usury and share-cropping, the two widely practiced modes of appropriation, are practised mainly to perpetuate the indissoluble bond between the direct producer and his overlord to get indirect economic benefits arising out of unequal exchanges. In the First Set of villages 77.38 per cent of poor peasant households get less payment

at overlord's place than elsewhere for similar jobs and 10.60 percent work only at overlord's place (Table L). The situation is no less exploitative in the other two sets of villages. In the Second and Third set of villages the percentage getting less at overlord's place is respectively 49.15 and 44.64. The Third Set of villages seems to be least exploitative. Thus, on a cross-section comparison, it can be said that 'Sarvodaya Movement' has strengthened the semi-feudal bondage. In most of the cases the payment at overlord's place is less than one fourth to one third of what is available elsewhere for the same kind of work. In a few cases the payment was, however, found to be 40 per cent less at overlord's place than what was available to him elsewhere.

In the wake of the movement, attempt was made to give legal ownership right to almost all the rural poor at least with respect to the homestead lands. The attempt was to ensure that every "privileged person" received his homestead *parcha* (prescribed official forms stating the area of the homestead and granting of permanent tenancy in it to the privileged person concerned). This was sought to be done to make such privileged person independent of the overlord's obligation to work at their place on account of their providing the homestead lands to the direct producers who did not have homestead land of their own. In respect of distribution of *parchas* considerable progress seems to have been made in the first and second set of villages. But still to about 87.59 per cent of households in the First and to about 85.07 in the Second Set of villages, it did not make any difference to their conditions of work at the overlord's place (Table L-II).

They not only continued to work at the overlord's place but the terms of work and payment continued to be the same. There is no evidence of weakening of the semi-feudal grip on account of this. It also clearly shows that provision of homestead land by the overlord is not the only mode of enforcement of semi-feudal bondage and also that in such a situation a legal status for the rural poor is of little avail. Similar situation is evident in the context of distribution of Bhoodan lands. Most of the overlords follow the practice of giving small bits of land to the labour households, so that they remain informally tied to the overlords. In the wake of the movement, the overlords donated some such lands and, being economically and politically powerful, saw to it that the donees were those who

formerly possessed these lands. It will be seen that among the labour households the percentage who received the lands of the overlords as donees and continued to work at the overlord's place on the same terms as before were 48.48, 48.14 and 100.00 in First, Second and Third Set of villages, respectively.

The Sarvodaya had launched community irrigation schemes. It has some impact in the three villages, two of the First Set and one Madhopur village of the Second Set. Here also the major benefit is realised by the richer section. The poor peasant households, as we know, possess very little land. But out of this little land also only about 7.60 percent is irrigated by these schemes in First Set of villages. In Madhopur, it is a shade better but nothing compared to the benefits flowing to the landlords and big cultivators. The percentages of land of poor peasantry, other peasant households and landlords and big cultivators, irrigated by these schemes are 19.70, 79.39 and 94.24, respectively.

The 'Sarvodaya Movement' also launched a drive to distribute hand-pumps to the poorest at subsidised rate mainly with an objective to provide them with drinking water facilities and also providing them facilities to irrigate the little land that some of them had. It is possible to irrigate about 1/3rd acre of land by hand-pumps in that area. In all the three sets of villages there are 238 hand-pumps, out of which 54 were installed prior to 1970. Out of the remaining 109 were distributed by the agency acting on behalf of the 'Sarvodaya Movement'. Here also major benefit went to classes other than the class represented by the poor peasant households (Table L-III). In the First Set of villages, out of the total 69 hand pumps distributed, the percentages available to the poor peasant households, other peasant households, landlords and big cultivator households and the remaining households were 33.33, 44.94, 11.59 and 10.14, respectively. Here also the dominance of rural rich as arbiter of activities related even to 'Sarvodaya Movement' is in evidence.

We subsequently conducted a survey of 95 labourers who worked in the Government sponsored Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project at Musahari. They all belonged to the poor peasant households. Table L-VI reveals that there has been an increase in the percentage taking consumption

loans on a regular basis and in unemployment since 1971-72. Here again we find evidence of intensification of poverty, the basis of semi-feudal bondage, since 1971-72.

We come across few low wage pockets in the Blocks. In the three villages *Prahaladpur*, *Nawada Mansahi* and *Manika*, the rate of payment to unskilled labourers were less than half the rate which was available to unskilled labourers working in Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project which was undertaken to provide jobs to all the unskilled workers offering themselves for employment and in the process create durable assets as will have the multiplier effect of creating new job opportunities of a continuing nature for the unskilled and will form part of the Area Development plan. Even most of the workers undertaken for the project did not reflect the anxiety on the part of the local people responsible for the selection of the work, to create condition for new job opportunities of a continuing nature for the poorer section of the rural Musahari. In the rural belt such as Musahari where agriculture is the mainstay of the large bulk of the population, which is frequented by floods, where almost all land can be brought under assured irrigation, and where only about 16.40 percent of the gross sown area is irrigated, the overall development requirement would have placed top priority on irrigation, drainage and flood control measures which have the potential for creating new job opportunities of a continuing nature. Even then 'improvement of village road and metalling of roads have consumed a little over 65 percent of the total expenditure incurred under the project from 1-11-'72 to 25-7-'75. On the other hand, on irrigation, drainage and flood control hardly about 2.5 percent was spent.

The semi-feudal social formation got a rude shake-up in the wake of the poor peasant movement in Musahari. The poor, it seems, had a brief period of respite. But this did not last long. The 'Sarvodaya Movement' and the intensification of the process of agricultural transformation from above without altering the land distribution pattern and the 'relations of production' and by pouring in aid from outside in terms of inputs, employment opportunities infra-structural items etc., has once again tilted the power balance against the rural poor. Semi-feudalism has staged a

comeback. The cross section analysis of data as well as the evidences of direction of change over time suggests this. The impressions that we gathered in the field also suggests that the 'Sarvodaya Movement' has its impact on strengthening rather than weakening of the semi-feudal bondage. There are, however, some evidence of a slow evolution of junker dominated big peasant economy excruciatingly and slowly transforming itself from above without fundamental changes in the land-ownership pattern which would mean most painful expropriation, bondage and ruthless exploitation of the rural masses. In view of this, by any reasonable standards, it can not be said that the 'Sarvodaya Movement' is even remotely leading anywhere near social and economic justice. On the other hand, the rural rich who have again grown economically and politically powerful, have pocketed the bulk of the benefits arising out of the development work in the villages of Musahari under the overall guidance of the *Sarvodayists*. Whatever little benefit that accrued to some among the rural poor, was made available to them under the express direction of the overlords, thereby giving an impression that the overlords were their saviour. The power of the rural rich is so overwhelming that none of the laws meant for the benefit of the rural poor (such as Minimum Wage Act and the Land Ceilings Act) could be enforced as yet. The landlords even to-day deny legal share to the sharecroppers. The approach of "conversion by gentle persuasion" and of "resolution of conflicts and problems by mutual adjustment leading to a juster and better social order" has failed in Musahari.

Table XXXVII

PERCENTAGE OF AREA AND POPULATION

	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Area	Population	Area	Population	Area	Population
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
India	100	100	100	100	100	100
Bihar	5.300	10.295	6.360	5.180	5.426	11.441
Muzaffaur*	0.239	0.884	0.168	0.233	0.246	1.046
Musahari	0.006	0.044	0.036	0.116	0.006	0.026

Source : Census of India 1971

*Muzaffarpur district, here and elsewhere, is referred to the old district as it stood in 1971

Table XXXVIII
URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF
POPULATION BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES

Percentage of rural population		Percentage of Males in the total Population	
(1)	(2)	Rural (3)	Urban (4)
India	80.12	51.24	53.79
Bihar	90.00	50.73	55.34
Muzaffarpur	94.75	50.03	54.91
Musahari	47.93	51.27	56.90

Source : Census of India, 1971

Table XXXIX
PERCENTAGE OF LITERATE POPULATION

(1)	Total			Urban			Rural		
	Persons (2)	Males (3)	Females (4)	Persons (5)	Males (6)	Females (7)	Persons (8)	Males (9)	Females (10)
India	29.34	39.51	18.44	52.48	61.55	41.91	23.60	33.77	12.92
Bihar	19.94	30.64	8.72	44.91	55.43	31.89	17.17	27.64	6.38
Muzaffarpur	17.33	27.25	6.26	41.92	52.69	28.81	15.97	25.71	6.23
Musahari	35.11	44.99	23.42	50.48	59.55	38.51	18.42	27.44	8.93

Source : Census of India 1971

Table XXXX
PERCENTAGE OF WORKERS TO POPULATION

(1)	Total			Urban			Rural		
	Persons (2)	Males (3)	Females (4)	Persons (5)	Males (6)	Females (7)	Persons (8)	Males (9)	Females (10)
India	32.92	52.50	11.85	29.33	48.42	6.61	33.81	53.46	13.09
Bihar	31.03	52.16	8.88	28.30	47.48	4.54	31.34	52.73	9.31
Muzaffarpur	29.43	53.41	5.19	27.53	47.09	3.71	29.54	53.79	5.26
Musahari	28.93	49.59	4.48	27.19	45.28	3.32	30.82	54.79	5.59

Source : Census of India 1971

Table XXXXI

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS

		Cultiva- tors	Agricul- tural Labourers	Live stock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Planta- tion, Or- chards & Allied Acti- vities	Mining & Quarr- ying	Manufacturing, Pro- cessing, Servicing & Repairs		Construc- tion	Trade & Commerce	Trans- port, Storage, & Commu- nication	Other Services	Total Workers
						House- hold In- dustry	Other than House- hold In- dustry					
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	
India	T	43.34	26.33	2.38	0.51	3.52	5.94	1.23	5.57	2.44	8.74	100
	R	51.59	30.71	2.53	0.40	3.22	2.29	0.74	2.44	0.82	5.26	100
	U	5.10	6.00	1.68	1.00	4.97	22.86	3.50	20.05	9.97	24.87	100
Bihar	T	43.34	38.92	0.96	1.48	2.47	2.60	0.56	3.26	1.52	4.89	100
	R	46.85	41.76	0.95	0.74	2.26	1.27	0.27	1.75	0.77	3.38	100
	U	8.29	10.63	1.14	8.79	4.72	15.83	3.45	18.31	8.93	19.91	100
Muzaffarpur	T	40.97	46.63	0.59	0.01	2.00	1.33	0.38	2.87	0.90	4.32	100
	R	42.55	48.21	0.57	10.01	1.81	0.92	0.25	1.74	0.59	3.35	100
	U	10.38	16.01	1.14	0.01	5.57	9.29	3.06	24.57	6.83	23.14	100

Table XXXXI (Contd.)
 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS

	Cultiva- tors	Agricul- tural Labourers	Live stock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Planta- tion, Or- chards & Allied Acti- vities	Mining & Quarr- ying	Manufacturing, Pro- cessing, Servicing & Repairs		Construc- tion	Trade & Commerce	Trans- port, Storage, & Comm- unication	Other Services	Total Workers	
					House- hold In- dustry	Other than House- hold In- dustry						
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	
Musabari	T	15.56	30.91	0.97	0.01	3.28	6.88	2.79	15.39	5.95	18.26	100
	R	27.96	53.01	1.01	0.01	1.47	3.48	1.31	3.35	23.38	6.02	100
	U	2.63	7.87	0.92	0.01	5.16	10.43	4.32	27.95	9.68	31.03	100

Source : Census of India, 1971

Table XXXXII
LAND HOLDINGS

	Percentage of Cul- tivating	Households Operat- ing with	Percentage of Cul- tivating House- holds Leasing in land.
	< 1 acre	< 1 acre- > 5.0 acres	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Bihar	21.56	26.67	32.10
Muzaffarpur	39.66	25.22	31.03
Musahari	45.00	24.96	28.60

Table XXXXIII
DISTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO HOUSEHOLD CLASSIFICATION

	First set of 10 villages		Second set of 3 villages		Third set of 2 villages	
	Number of House- holds	Perce- tage Distribu- tion	Number of House- holds	Perce- tage Distribu- tion	Number of House- holds	Perce- tage Distribu- tion
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Landlord and Big Cultivators	28	4.83	14	4.27	6	3.39
Big and Medium Peasantry	95	16.38	95	28.96	60	33.90
Poor Peasantry	283	48.79	177	53.97	56	31.64
Other Labourers	51	8.79	23	7.01	16	9.03
Others	123	21.21	19	5.79	39	22.04
Total	580	100.00	328	100.00	177	100.00
Total Population	2952		1661		875	

Table XXXXVI
PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS LEASED-IN LAND

	First Set of 10 villages	Second Set of 3 villages	Third Set of 2 villages
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Poor Peasant House- holds (owning land)	40.68	22.08	23.33
Poor Peasant House- holds (owning no land)	27.23	13.00	7.69
Other Labour House- holds	3.92	8.69	25.00
Other Cultivating Households	25.20	21.00	16.67

Table XXXXVII
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF POOR PEASANT HOUSEHOLDS
ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF LEASED-IN LAND

Size of leased-in land (acres)	First Set of 10 villages		Second Set of 3 villages		Third Set of 2 villages	
	Owning land	Landless	Owning land	Landless	Owning land	Landless
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
< 1.0	50.00	85.25	70.59	76.92	57.14	100.00
≥ 1.0—<2.5	37.50	11.48	29.41	7.69	14.29	0.00
≥ 2.5—<5.0	12.50	1.64	0.00	15.39	28.57	0.00
≥ 5.0	0.00	1.64	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
All sizes	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table XXXXVIII

**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OTHER THAN POOR PEASANT
HOUSEHOLDS ACCORDING TO SIZE OF LEASED-IN LAND**

Size of leased -in land (acres)	First Set of 10 villages		Second Set of 3 villages		Third Set of 2 villages	
	Non-agri- cultural Labour house- holds	Cultiva- ting House- holds	Non-agri- cultural Labour House- holds	Cultiva- ting House- holds	Non-agri- cultural Labour House- holds	Cultiva- ting House- holds
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
< 1.0	50.00	38.71	50.00	47.83	50.00	63.64
≥ 1.0—2.5	50.00	25.81	0.00	34.78	50.00	18.18
≥ 2.5— < 5.0	0.00	25.81	50.00	17.39	0.00	18.18
≥ 5.0	0.00	9.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
All Sizes	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table XXXXIX

**PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS REGULARLY TAKING CONSUM-
PTION AND/OR SEED LOANS**

(1)	First Set of 10 villages	Second Set of 3 villages	Third Set of 2 villages
	(2)	(3)	(4)
Landlord & big Cultivators	28.57	0.00	66.67
Big and Medium Peasantry	56.84	38.95	56.67
Poor Peasantry	88.69	89.83	96.43
Other Labourer	74.51	78.26	68.75
Others	69.10	52.63	74.36
Total	75.17	68.29	74.58

Table L

WORKING CONDITION OF POOR PEASANTS AT OVERLORD'S PLACE

	Percentage of Poor Peasant Households		
	Working only at overlord's place	Getting less payment at overlord's place than elsewhere for similar jobs	Getting same payment both at overlord's place and elsewhere
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
First Set of 10 villages	10.60	77.38	0.35
Second Set of 3 villages	1.69	49.15	0.56
Third Set of 2 villages	1.78	44.64	0.00

Table L-I

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING BHOODAN LANDS

	Households owning land	Households without land	Poor Peasant households	Other Peasant households	Total number of households receiving Bhoodan land
First set of villages	26	10	33	3	36
Second set of villages	14	14	27	1	28
Third set of villages	5	0	5	0	5

Table L-II
DISTRIBUTION OF PARCHA AND WORK RELATION

	Number of households who received <i>parcha</i>			Number of households who continued to work at overlord's place on the same terms even after getting the <i>parcha</i>		
	Poor peasant house- holds	Other peasant house- holds	Non-agri- cultural house- holds	Poor peasant house- holds	Other peasant house- holds	Non-agri- cultural house- holds
First set	145	7	16	127	—	—
Second set	67	1	—	57	—	—
Third set	1	1	—	—	—	—

Table L-III
**NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING HAND PUMP UNDER
THE SCHEME LAUNCHED BY SARVODAYA**

	Poor peasant households	Other peasant households	Landlord and big cultivating households	Non-agri- cultural households	Total
First set	23	31	8	7	69
Second set	14	21	—	—	35
Third set	1	3	—	1	5

Table LIV

SAMPLE OF 95 POOR PEASANTS OF MUSAHARI BLOCK

	1971-72	1973-74
Percentage taking Consumption loans	55.79	92.63
Average mandays unemployed per year per worker	36	42

Table LV

LAND DISTRIBUTION PATTERN

Size of owned land (acres)	First Set of 10 villages		Second Set of 3 villages		Third Set of 2 villages	
	Percentage of Land owning House- holds	Percentage of Land owning House- holds	Percentage of Land owning House- holds	Percentage of Land owning House- holds	Percentage of Land owning House- holds	Percentage of Land owning House- holds
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
< 1.0	44.40	1.76	51.16	4.14	53.85	4.12
≥ 1—< 2.5	20.69	3.55	15.34	4.16	17.35	7.76
All sizes	100	39.25	100	60.37	100	45.12

Table LVI
PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS LEASED-IN LAND

	First Set of 10 villages	Second Set of 3 villages	Third Set of 2 villages
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Poor peasant Households	72.04	54.53	37.50
Other Labour Households	1.69	3.64	16.67
Rest of the Households	26.27	41.83	45.83
All Households	100	100	100

NOTES

1. Narayan, J. P. (December 1970), *Face to Face*, pp. 6-7.
2. *Ibid*, p. 7.
3. *Ibid*, p. 6.
4. *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.
5. *Ibid*, p. 8.
6. *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.
7. As far as irrigation programme is concerned, the project undertook only community irrigation works.

Summing Up

The *Sarvodaya movement* in *Musahari Block* was stepped up from the middle of the year 1970 under the inspiration of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan. The region was characterised by a semi-feudal set up leading to usurious exploitation, stifling of agricultural development and abject poverty. Earlier that year there was an eruption of Naxalite violence in that area for overthrowing the entire system. Sarvodaya workers bent their energies not only to restore normalcy but to secure for the people a better quality of life. They tried to bring as many villages as possible in the Gramdan and Gramswaraj movement. The strategy was to create an atmosphere for securing social and economic justice, reducing exploitation of the weaker sections of the population, better deal for landless labourers and attaining freedom from police and law courts. The instruments for attaining these objectives were the *Gramsabha*, the *Gramkosh* and the *Santi Sena*.

Data for this work was collected from 15 villages, 13 in which *Gramsabhas* had been formed and 2 which were outside the *Sarvodaya* system. The latter were the two control villages. It was found that although *Gramsabhas* had been formed in most of the villages, their structure was loose, they were rent by factions and could not shake off high caste ascendancy. The weaker sections did not have much say in the decision making process and as such their confidence in the organization was shaken. Doubtless, there was some improvement in the status of scheduled castes in sitting with caste Hindus and in commensality but exploitation was not appreciably reduced. Similarly, the *Gramkosh* collections were satisfactory only in two villages but its management was poor in almost all the villages. Although *Santi Sena* existed in all

experimental villages except one, it was marked by weakness and inefficiency. There was, however, some change in the attitudes and orientations among all castes, high and low. The collective power of the village or *Lok Shakti* was still to emerge.

Gross and crude exploitation had decreased with the increasing political awareness in people. So was the case with social justice. The growing trends of gambling and alcoholism have been slowed down. A large number of landless labourers got the title deed for their homestead and they could no longer be evicted. These changes were far from being radical and consequently failed to restructure either the village economy or the minds of people. At best they have provided some relief to the system.

The semi-feudal social formation had got a rude shake up in the wake of the poor peasant movement in Musahari but this did not last long. There was some evidence to suggest that the *Sarvodaya* movement strengthened rather than weakened the semi-feudal bondage. One of the authors does not see the *Sarvodaya* movement even remotely leading anywhere near social and economic justice. In some cases, the rural rich have continued to grow economically and politically by cornering the bulk of the benefits flowing out of the development work in the villages of the region under the auspices of *Sarvodaya*. In his opinion ruthless exploitation continues as before.

The reasons for such a situation are many. Most of the worker in the movement not only belonged to the higher castes but also to the well off peasant category who are not disposed to any radical change. They are largely interested in building up an alternative locus of authority in the village through the *Gramsabha*. They intend to maintain the status quo by tinkering here and there in the system. The result is that the common mass of the people in the region is not enthused by the programmes. Inadequate resources, poor quality of workers and smallness of their number have contributed to make the coverage rather thin. Unless the movement has a distinctive focus to pay pointed attention to the poor peasants and landless labourers, it cannot become a mass movement for which the ideological orientation in the region is extremely poor.

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Appendix I
ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES OF CASTES

Forward	1. Bhumihar 2. Brahmin 3. Kayastha 4. Rajput
Backward	1. Bania 2. Barhi 3. Barai 4. Gareria 5. Gwala 6. Hajam 7. Halwai 8. Kahar 9. Kalwar 10. Kanu 11. Koeri 12. Kurmi 14. Lohar 15. Nunia 16. Sonar 17. Tatma 18. Teli 19. Mallah
Scheduled	1. Chamar 2. Dhobi 3. Dom 4. Dusadh 6. Mchtar 7. Musahar 8. Pasi
Others	1. Muslim

Appendix II
LANDLESS HOUSEHOLDS

Sl. No.	Name of the Village	Total no. of Households	Landless Household
1.	2.	3.	4.
1.	Manika Manohar	110	52
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	218	137
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	115	47
4.	Dhobaha	72	38
5.	Mukundpur	24	10
6.	Brahmasthan	141	58
7.	Chak Salempur	7	3
8.	Madapur Choube	100	55
9.	Chak Mohammad	29	11
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	51	27
11.	Madhopur	232	178
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	315	202
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	64	27
14.	Prahaldpur	120	72
15.	Sagahari	67	37
Total		1665	954

Appendix III

CASTEWISE BREAKUP OF HOUSEHOLDS
(N=1665)

Sl. No.	Name of the Villages	Total No. of Households	Forward castes.	Backward castes.	Schedu- led castes.	Muslims
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Manika Manohar	110	6	8	46	50
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	218	23	159	34	2
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	115	×	28	82	5
4.	Dhcbaha	72	×	17	53	2
5.	Mukundpur	24	×	24	×	×
6.	Brahmasthan	141	32	53	16	40
7.	Chak Salempur	7	×	4	3	×
8.	Madapur Chaube	180	39	30	26	5
9.	Chak Mohammad	29	×	7	22	×
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	51	×	39	×	12
11.	Madhopur	232	56	107	56	13
12.	Budhnagra Ragho	315	30	163	111	11
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	64	×	50	3	11
14.	Prahladpur	120	23	72	25	×
15.	Sagahari	67	×	37	×	30
		1665	209	798	477	181

Appendix IV

CASTE CATEGORIES OF RESPONDENTS
(N=390)

S. No.	Names of the villages (Gramsabhas)	Total res-pondents	Caste Categories of Respondents Village wise.			
			Forward Castes	Backward castes.	Scheduled castes	Muslims
1.	Manika Manohar	25	9	3	5	8
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	55	8	14	33	0
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	32	0	13	15	4
4.	Dhobaha	18	0	4	13	1
5.	Mukundpur	6	0	1	5	0
6.	Brahmasthan	35	10	15	3	7
7.	Chak Salempur	4	0	2	2	0
8.	Madapur Chaube	30	13	6	8	3
9.	Chak Mohammad	8	0	3	5	0
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	13	0	2	8	3
11.	Madhopur	23	7	5	10	1
12.	Budhanagra Ragho	78	7	23	47	1
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	16	0	7	3	6
14.	Prahladpur	30	10	10	10	0
15.	Sagahari	17	0	9	0	8
	Totals	390	64	117	167	42

Appendix V
RESPONDENT'S FUNCTIONAL POSITION
(N=390)

Sl. No.	Names of the Villages (Gramsabhas)	Participants Positions			
		Donors	Donees	Non-Donors Non-Donees	Total Res- pondents
1.	Manika Manohar	2	2	21	25
2.	Musahari (No. 1)	1	4	50	55
3.	Musahari (No. 2)	2	9	21	32
4.	Dhobaha	0	0	18	18
5.	Mukundpur	0	0	6	6
6.	Brahmasthan	0	0	35	35
7.	Chak-Salempur	0	0	4	4
8.	Madapur Chaube	8	7	15	30
9.	Chak-Mohammad	0	0	8	8
10.	Sahpur and Chit Bhagawatipur	0	0	13	13
11.	Madhopur	6	7	10	23
12.	Budhanagara Ragho	10	12	56	78
13.	Tarora Gopalpur	0	0	16	16
14.	Prahaladpur	0	0	30	30
15.	Sagahari	0	0	17	17
Total		29	41	320	390

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