BENGALI VILLAGE WOMEN

MEDIATORS BETWEEN TRADITION AND DEVELOPMENT

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PREFACE

The present study is the result of three years of experience in East Pakistan, and is an extension of the interest that developed in the culture and people of that country. From 1961 to 1963, I worked as a Peace Corps Volunteer at the Academy for Rural Development, under the directorship of Akhter Hameed Khan. My particular task involved assisting in the design and establishment of a small, experimental program for the village women who resided in villages having men's cooperative societies. The object of the program was to provide village women with opportunities, heretofore nonexistant, to learn techniques and acquire knowledge which would enable them to become more effective in the areas of their responsibilities; i.e. their homes and families. For this reason, the program emphasized practical skills and basic knowledge centering around such subjects as child care, home sanitation, kitchen gardening, poultry raising, sewing, literacy, the cooperative movement, handicrafts and so on.

While still at the Academy, I realized that my educational background was inadequate for understanding and summarizing that in which I was involved and that which I was observing. Hence, I decided to go to graduate school to acquire the necessary concepts, knowledge and tools that would further my effective contribution at Comilla. I entered the Department of Sociology

at Michigan State University in January, 1964. During my graduate training, I found that I gained a broader perspective on my interest in Comilla. From a concern with programmatic problems, I have become increasingly aware of the power of the theoretical analysis of the process of change, not only in its implications for Comilla, but also for other areas and other programs involved in development.

The present study represents the change in my own thinking from a programmatic concern with village women, to a theoretical consideration of them in the throes of meeting and coping with the rapidly changing world that is impinging on their level of consciousness as well as on the structure and life of their villages.

The field work was done during the year 1966. The months in the field, and much of the graduate study up to this point, was made possible through a grant from the International Programs, Michigan State University. The sincerest thanks go to Dean Taggart, Dean Smuckler, Dr. Ross and Dr. Jacobson for their help and interest in making this project possible.

A sincere thank you can only inadequately express my appreciation and gratefulness to Richard O. Niehoff, Coordinator of the Pakistan Project for his instrumental help and support in making this study possible.

Also, grateful thanks are due to Akhtar Hameed Khan, the faculty and staff of the Academy for Rural Development, for

all their help and support during my stay there, and most particularly for letting me return to do the study. Thanks are also due to Tahrunnessa Ahmed, Instructor, to my assistants Korduza Ahmed and Nilifur Nur, and to the women of the staff of the women's program for their patience, cooperation and support.

Out of all the help and guidance given me, greatest thanks and deepest appreciation go to Dr. John and to Dr. Ruth Hill Useem. It was largely through their efforts and patient instruction that I gained the skills and perspective necessary to support new intellectual concerns that range far beyond the confines of this study.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

In order to understand the following study some background information is necessary. The site for the research project was in East Pakistan, in the Comilla Thana (county) at the Academy for Rural Development. East Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim country, with only a small percentage of the people being Hindu, or Christian. Until 1947, the area that is now East Pakistan was part of the province of Bengal in India. After partition the area of East Bengal became East Pakistan with Dacca as its capital. As of 1961 the total population of this province was roughly 60 million people.

While East Pakistan does have a problem of rapidly exploding population, many of the people came from other areas of eastern India with partition. This exchange of population and its antecedents in communal living has had its influences on the cultural patterns of Pakistan now, in that while it is mainly Muslim in population there are areas of overlap with the Hindu culture. However, of most relevance to the study are the Islamic patterns that influence the world of women, particularly village women. Most crucial is the system of "purdha" which is the

exclusion of women from the majority of active positions within the society outside of the home and family. "Purdha," as discussed by K. M. Kapadla in Marriage and Family in India, is considered to be a series of impositions "on the social intercourse and public movement" of Muslim women.[1] The ramifications of this system affect all areas of the lives of women as they are less educated, less able to go out and experience the outside world, or contribute to the family income, or have the positions and rights in regard to inheritance and property that women have in most other cultures. As will be discussed later, this has had great influence on the villagers' attitude to change as regards women and on the self image of the women themselves. Women in purdha were once characterized by Akhter Hameed Khan, Director of the Academy for Rural Development, as "frogs down a deep well."[2]

The position of women in the Comilla thana is one of isolation, in terms of their ability or actual moving from their village to other villages, to the town, or in some instances from

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1. Kapadla, K. M., Marriage and Family in India, London: Oxford University Press, 1958, pp. 185-203.
2. Speech at the Third Women's Rally, Comilla, East Pakistan, 1966.

one area of the village to another. This system of purdha has ramifications on the independence of women as they, having no opportunity to earn money, are entirely dependent on their husbands for support. Nor does the system allow for much education of the women, except as they may learn in their father's house, before puberty and marriage. It is within the context of the purdha system that the first efforts were made to develop a program for women at the Academy.

The Comilla Thana

The Academy is situated in the Comilla Thana, an administrative unit similar to a "county" in the United States. The Thana is located in the Tippera District which is about fifty miles southeast of Dacca, the provincial capital of East Pakistan. The Thana covers an area of approximately 107 square miles. Within this area live 217,297 people scattered in over four hundred villages and two urban centers. The town of Comilla has a population of roughly 55,000 people.

The Academy: A Modernizing Institution

The Academy for Rural Development, in the Comilla Thana, is basically an in-service training institution sponsored by the government of Pakistan, and the Ford Foundation, whose grants are administered by the Michigan State University. The Academy began functioning in 1959. The original objective of the Academy

was as an in-service training institution for government officers in the methods and approaches to development, and to the reconstruction of the rural areas. Basic in the approach of the Academy was the experimentation within the Comilla Thana of methods and ways of combating the problems of the rural areas.

The government of Pakistan assigned the Comilla Thana to the Academy as an area for experimentation, observation, and research. The objectives were to find the prerequisites and methods for successful village improvement. The concept of training was expanded to include "training fortified by research and validated by demonstration."[3]

> "The principle underlying the total approach of the Academy is that training must be supported by research, and research must be directed to practical ends, that is to actions that result in the revitalization of old institutions in the villages."[4]

Experimental projects were initiated in four main areas of village life. In economics, a program was devised encouraging the formation of village multi-purpose cooperative societies to provide savings, credit, and the facilities for increasing goods and services for local villages. Of crucial importance in this under-

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3. Akhter Hameed Khan, "The Basic Principles of the Comilla Program," Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, February, 1963.
4. "The Academy at Comilla: An Introduction," Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, 1963.

taking was the on-going training and utilization of local village leaders by the Academy for the introduction of new ideas and methods into the villages. Second, was the reorganization of local governmental administration by providing for greater co-operation between governmental officers and village leaders. This was given impetus through a rural public works program, a public school works program, and specialized training for Thana officers. The third area was in education. Efforts were made to improve the number and quality of village schools and teachers, to establish youth clubs and to begin programs of adult education for village men and women. Religion was the fourth and most recent area to be touched. An experiment was devised whereupon village religious leaders took on the functions of school teachers in villages which did not have primary schools. The women also were trained to teach other adult women in the villages, and in the primary schools.

Since April of 1963, the Academy has been situated at two sites. The original site is located about one mile south of the town of Comilla on the Pilgrim's Road. This was originally an old Gandhian institution called the Abhoy Ashram. It is now called the Thana Training and Development Center. Here are located the Thana officers, the central office of an Additional Director of Agriculture in charge of the Comilla Expansion pro-

gram to other Districts; the extension plots, rice research experiments, The Kotwali Thana Central Cooperative Association and Special Cooperative Federation, with the bank and loan facilities. Numerous other experimental projects such as a dairy, rice mill, and creamery are located in the Center as well as classroom facilities for the training of villagers.

The other site of the Academy is approximately six miles west from the Abhoy Ashram. Called the Kotbari campus, it was opened in 1963 as the main site for the training of government and non-government people, and the center for the numerous research projects that are being done. Here are located the classrooms, communication section, cafeteria, dormatories, and administrative offices. The Kotbari campus has come to be known as the Academy, while the other center is known as the Abhoy Ashram, or simply, K. T. T. C. A.

The Women's Program

The persons who were the object of the study were those women who worked as teachers and/or organizers in the Academy's women's program. Basically this program was established to involve the women in the development process by presenting them new opportunities for learning and earning that would make them more effective in their homes.

Major socio-economic problems encountered in establishing the women's program were: strongly conservative traditions, including the system of purdha which confines women to positions within the family; high rates of illiteracy; extremely poor economic conditions in villages; and high rates of interest and indebtedness. A technique which had been used with success in the men's cooperative program was the "organizer system," whereby a local villager was selected by other villagers to be their representative at the Academy and the Academy's representative in the village. The "organizer system" was adapted to the women's program by having the men's cooperative select village women for participation in the new program for women. The women so selected went to the Academy[5] for training one day a week, for a period of eight to sixteen weeks. At the close of the training period, each woman established a class in her own village on the subject in which she had been trained. Many women took training in additional subjects or in different jobs related to the women's program, and hence had continuing contacts at the Academy for a lengthy period and taught multiple classes in their villages. (Related areas to the teachers and organizers are the

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5. Academy is the word used by the women to mean the Abhoy Ashram, however for most of the other people "Academy" means Kotbari. The term Academy will be used as the village women use it, i.e. to mean the Abhoy Ashram.

midwife training class and association, and family planning agents).

Since its inception in ten villages in 1961, the women's program has expanded to approximately forty-three villages, with other villages being included this year, and with still other villages in which there were only part of the total women's program. For example, villages that only have midwives coming to the Academy, or hand spinners. A family planning program has also expanded during this time. However, the basic framework still exists, training village women at the Academy and teaching by these women at their local level.

A Bengali Village

Geographically it is difficult to distinguish the boundaries of Bengali villages. From the air what is seen are groups of houses located in clusters and shaded by trees. Reasons for this indistinct boundary pattern is the lack of fixed territorial or township systems of land division, and also land settlement patterns. Land holdings in Bengal tend to be fragmented. That is, the limited lands of the cultivators are not consolidated plots but are broken up into small segments and scattered in the area surrounding the homes.

Within the village there are other geographical distinctions. One of these segments is called a "para." A "para" is a cluster of living units which include outbuildings, kitchens and cow barns that are set off from the rest of the village by paddy fields, bamboo

groves, garden plots, or tanks (ponds). The number of inhabitants in the village, the number of families and kinship groups, and the land holding all influence the number of combined living units composing a "para." However, the determinate factor of "para" is that of geographical separation from other living settlements in the same village. Another partial explanation for village settlement patterns is the people-land relationship. Settlement developed in one area as heads of households established their homes and worked the land. One finds within a "para" more than one kinship group. Over a period of time, the distinct relationship of family land may become blurred, but the settlement as a "para" remains. That is, a family may lose their land, but still remain living in the same "para," even though the men of the families either work for other landowners or work outside the village in the town.

The patrilineal and patrilocal hierarchal pattern in the villages also influences the placing of combined living units within a village "para." Living units are built on the land surrounding the head of household or elder of a particular kinship group. These kinship units in "paras" are called "baris." A bari is a living unit of usually four to ten houses built around a central rectangular compound. The individual living unit is called "ghor." When all available land in one bari is occupied another area of familial

land is selected for settlement. A cluster of houses then develops in this new area. While the area might be in another para of the village, the kinship ties remain strong and binding.

The "bari" or living unit is a combination of dwellings (ghors), kitchens, cow sheds, and the surrounding trees, bamboo, gardens and possible tanks. Within a bari live a single kinship group, patrilocally based. For the women this means that they leave their father's house at the time of their marriage, and go to live in the village of their husbands. The fact that the women are non-related to each other except by marriage is the cause of many frictions and quarrels within the family, as Nicholas has pointed out.[6] Within the bari there may be more than one household, as is determined by kitchen. A household is defined by the people who share food out of one kitchen. It is possible for there to be three or four kitchens in one bari, all of the same kin group. The smaller eating units are indicative of the joint family in transition.

The "ghor" is the main living building in a bari. The "ghors" give some indication of the wealth, amount of land, and social rank of the land owner. While the overall architecture is the same from

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6. Ralph W. Nicholas, "Economics of Family Types in Two West Bengal Villages," The Economic Weekly, Special Number, July, 1961, p. 1059.

ghor to ghor and from generation to generation the differences are significant. A villager's house is usually about 20 feet long and 10 feet wide. The house of an owner of paddy fields (rice) is usually made of thick mud walls covered with a mixture of clay and cowdung. A door and two small heavily shuttered windows give the only light to the ghor. As a measure against floods, the floor level of the ghor is raised three to four feet above ground level of the compound, which has itself been raised three to six feet above the surrounding paddy field level. The roof of the ghor is generally made of thatch. Less prosperous families, often landless, have ghors of woven bamboo. Villagers with more land may have corrugated iron roofs on their mud ghors. A very few villagers have wooden or brick ghors of several rooms, and these also have corrugated iron roofs.

Within most villages the main occupation is agriculture, however there are many men that are unemployed and landless, and who find seasonal work only either working for some larger landowner, or on the public works program. In most villages now there is a varying percentage of men who have found employment outside of the village and who either commute to work, or who live outside the village at the place of work. In the Comilla Thana the average landholding is 1.7 acres per family, which includes the land used for the ghor.

Arising out of the past experience which dealt with the development of a women's program for the "functional emancipation" of village women was an interest in how new alternatives for action, new opportunities, and new experiences were incorporated into the lives of traditionally oriented village women. "Functional emancipation" is defined as teaching village women the techniques and giving them the knowledge for making them more effective and contributing members of their families. The newer interest that developed was to see, on a more theoretical level, what is involved for these women who were engaged in the Academy's program. As a way of conceptualizing the process by which village women are selected by their villages to represent the village at the Academy, and the Academy in their village, the concept of "mediation" is used. The conventional meaning of mediator or mediation as working to bring compromise, or agreement between disagreeing parties, is extended to incorporate the process by which village women become and continue to act as links between a traditional village system and that of a modernizing institution such as the Academy. The basic assumption made is that in the process of such activity new patterns of behavior, communication, leadership and influence are developed and maintained, or old patterns are reorganized and modified in light of the experiences of the women involved.

The process of mediation is thought of as being that process by which new knowledge, techniques, and behavior are introduced into

the traditional milieu with some degree of acceptance occurring. Basic to this is the notion that in order to influence other women to change the mediator must remain enough within the traditional pattern of village life so as not to have the village rise up against her or treat her as a deviant. Mediation is a process of attempted balance between old values, norms, and behavior patterns and those incorporated in the modernizing process.

In regard to the mediator herself, the interest is in seeking to learn more specifically what working for the Academy has done in encouraging a woman to leave her village, to learn new techniques, use new methods, to go to new places, meet new people, create or enlarge areas of influence in the village, in the family, and with other women from other villages.

The process of mediation is broken down into more specific component parts; the mediator in relation to the Academy, village, family and self. Areas of interest have been in how village women have been selected or have agreed to go to the Academy; their condition before they began going; their experiences at the Academy; the reaction of the family to a woman's working and her influence in it. In regard to the mediator's work in the village the interest is in how the work began, who helped; kinds of opposition, how it is handled; how the women like the work, how they work in the villages now, what they teach; for what other things do people come to them now, that they didn't before; what were the problems in the beginning, what are they now?

To summarize, the main concern of the study is an investigation of how new patterns of behavior, influence and communication develop and are maintained by village women as they move in a new context which demands new behavior, which offers new opportunities and which teaches new knowledge and techniques. The resultant patterns that develop are not representative of entirely traditional patterns, nor are they entirely new. Rather these patterns and adjustments are an accommodation, a blending of the old and new. The successful reconciliation of old and new depends, in large part, on the ability of the mediator to understand and work in the village milieu, to pass on what she has learned, and on her ability to become a model of or reflect that which she has seen and learned. In the following pages the emphasis will be on the identity of the mediators, their condition before coming to the Academy, and their experiences while at the Academy.

Also to be considered will be the process by which mediators established or are establishing new work roles for themselves in their villages, how the process has been initiated, what kinds of problems have to be overcome, and informal results that occur. Where relevant, findings will be included regarding areas of self and the family.

Research Design

At the time of the research there was a total of forty-three villages in the women's program. These were villages from which

local women came to the Academy and worked in the villages either as teachers of basic literacy, or as organizers, who taught basic health and home economics in the village. The two functions, teacher and organizer, are considered to be the main mediating functions for purposes of the study. While there are other women who come and work for the Academy either as midwives or as family planning agents, they are not included in the mediating strata because their attachment to the Academy is a more tenuous one. That is, they do not come into the Academy as often for training, nor are they directly responsible to the staff of the women's program, but are linked to other government officers posted at the Abhoy Ashram.

The total population of the mediating stratum is fifty-seven women, from the forty-three villages. (In some villages there were two women who work for the Academy, one teacher, and one organizer. In most cases, these two functions are performed by one woman). These fifty-seven women are the universe from which a sample was selected.

In developing the research design it was decided to select a sample based on the types of villages participating in the women's program. Types of villages were used as the basis of selection in order to enhance the possibility of generalizing from the findings to a broader context than just the individuals involved.

For the categorization of the villages, a combined variable "accessibility" was used. This was developed after a period of re-

connaisance during which all of the forty-three villages were visited. "Accessibility" included distance from the town, and communication, or types of roads linking the village to the outside world. That is, consideration was given to the presence or absence of roads, making walking the only means in or out of the village, whether there were dirt roads, or mecadam roads linking the village to the town.

The forty-three villages were then classified into four categories as shown in table 1:

Table 1: TYPES OF VILLAGES AND NUMBER OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED

Category	Total Villages	Proportion Selected	Women Interviewed
In or near town	5	2	3
1 - 3 miles	12	6	7
4 - 9 miles	18	8	10
10 miles and over	8	4	4
TOTAL	43	20	24

From each category a (nearly) proportional number of villages was selected from which the women were interviewed. The sample was a stratified-proportional sample. Selection of the villagers to be included in the sample focused on incorporating as much of the variation as possible in each category. Village information regarding family, occupation, percent literate, schools, number of boys and girls in school, and the presence or absence of a maddrassa (religious school) were matched as much as possible. That is, a village with the main

occupation agriculture, with a relatively high rate of literacy was matched with an agricultural village with a low rate of literacy, and so on. The literacy rates were taken from the Pakistan census, 1961.

A questionnaire was developed and pretested on other mediating teachers and organizers who were not included as subjects in the sample. The questionnaire reflected the interest in the mediator in relation to the Academy, village, family and self. Another section was added to the questionnaire to gather background and profile information on the mediator. A series of questions were developed and pretested aimed at tapping the experiences and problems as perceived by the mediators themselves in a series of open-ended questions.

A flexible interview schedule was used, which rotated the interviewing. That is, the questionnaire was divided into five sections, and one section of the questionnaire was taken at a time. As the mediators in the sample cam e to the Academy, they were interviewed on one section of the schedule at a time. All twenty-four of the mediators in the sample were asked one section of the interview schedule before the next section was begun. This meant that the time spent interviewing one mediator was spread out over five days, in a period of roughly three months. Each section of the interview required approximately one hour. After each interview, and before the next session with each mediator, the recall information was reviewed, and inconsistencies were spotted and noted for later checking. Originally a short-form

interview was planned using the most salient questions, of mediators not included in either the pretesting or in the sample. However, because the time allocated for the study was about finished, there was not sufficient time remaining to do the short-form interviews. On an informal basis, however, the women not included in the pretesting or the sample were asked about specific areas of village life in order to get as much representation or verification as possible. Also, because the interviewing was done in an office where women could come and go freely, many of the other village women came in and listened to the interviews, occasionally adding their own comments.

In regard to the data information process, four months reconnaissance was used to visit fifty villages in the thana, to establish a basic knowledge of the Bengali village culture. This information has been used to supplement and add to the information gathered through the interviews, and the re-visits. Because of the difficulties in getting women alone, or anyone but the oldest woman to speak in the villages, the interviewing of the mediators was done during the time that they were attending the Academy for their weekly instruction. The mediators were interviewed in a separate office in the women's section, but because many of them were nervous, other women were not forbidden to come in. While irrelevant interruptions were kept to a minimum, a generally free and relaxed atmosphere was maintained, in order to make the woman being interviewed feel as comfortable as

possible. The mediators were given "pan" (betel nut and leaf) to chew, and general conversations were held before the actual interviewing began. In most cases, an attempt was made to work the questions into a general flow of conversation. Also the assistant and I spent time in informally talking with the mediators, attending their meetings, answering their questions, visiting their villages. An attempt was made to establish a general recognition that "the foreign memshaeb was curious, but harmless," thereby encouraging the village women to speak freely. That is, our object was to build sufficient rapport and trust so that the village women were assured that what they said would not be misused or cause trouble for them or their families.

All the mediators selected for the sample were used; there were no drop-outs. In general, the mediators were pleased to be asked as it was something of a new experience to be asked as an authority on anything. The mediators in the sample were helpful, interested, and cooperative, especially as they thought it a "good thing that a book was going to be written about them." (This was the rationale used to explain what the project was doing).

After the interviewing was finished, three villages were selected, one from each of the categories of villages, except for the category "ten miles and over" as the time was the end of monsoon and the impassable roads made it impossible to go to any village this distant from the Academy. The purpose of this selection was for "re-

visits." That is, each of these villages were visited again, this time for three days in a row. The object was to see the mediator in action as she moved to different parts of the village, as she interacted with different women, as she, in effect "mediated" between different paras, and people in the village. If time had allowed, more villages would have been "re-visited" in this way, as it gave insight into the problems attendant on any one mediator, in any one village, in a variety of different situations. Also of benefit was seeing and hearing at first hand, how the mediator was accepted by other villagers, both men and women, others' evaluation of the program, and the woman mediator. In this way, also, a number of men, either relatives, the coop manager, or just a villager, were talked to, giving, in some measure, an evaluation other than that derived from the mediator's own perspective. Problems of the cooperative society, of different women in the village, disagreements between different families, or women, tensions and stresses in the work situation were seen at first hand, and were extremely informative.

Field Work

In doing the field work a number of considerations had to be taken into account. For example, the cultural context of purdha set the stage for many of the expectations that were held for me. While there was some recognition among the villagers that I was "different" and not a Muslim, there were certain standards that had to be met,

if for no other reason than that I was held as a model of what a "modern" woman was. For example, it was considered in bad taste for any woman to talk too freely and openly with men. Women do not go alone to the villages, hence I was always accompanied by other women. It is unheard of for women to spend the night in a village that is not a relatives' village.

In spite of the bona fides established during a previous stay in Comilla, there were many village men and women who had not known me before. They required time in order to assess for themselves that which they heard from others about me. The period of reconnaissance was valuable for me and it also gave them the needed opportunity to observe, test and draw their own conclusions about me in comparison with their own experience and value systems. Ultimately, a rejection on their part would have made the study impossible to carry out.

For those village men and women who had known me before, the tendency in some cases was to presume that I knew more than I did. I was supposed to know about many aspects of the Bengali culture because of the previous experience there. Some Pakistanis had a tendency to act in terms of these assumptions and were surprised when I had to ask for interpretation or explanations.

In addition, it was necessary for me to establish a position at the Academy so that villagers could place me within a known struc-

ture. As there is little or no understanding among the villagers about what comprises research, or of what a researcher is, it was necessary to explain my work within their frame of reference. The explanation given was that I was going to write a book about Bengali women and village life. Since education is held in high esteem in the villages, books are known, and valued. Therefore, this explanation sufficed.

Although all the field work, including the interviewing, was done in Bengali, it was still thought advisable to have a Pakistani assistant. The two assistants were invaluable as resource people, and as "mediators" in their own right between hesitant village women, and the thousand-questioned foreign memshaeb. The first assistant worked on the project until the end of the interviewing. She then left to join her husband who had been transfered to another thana. She was a college graduate, and although unused to village work, learned quickly how to relate to village women and put them at ease. Her sustained interest and dedication to the project made her an invaluable colleague. The second assistant was also a college graduate, an extremely intelligent woman who provided invaluable assistance in checking the reliability of the English versus the Bengali translations of the interviews, and in helping with the village re-visits.

With a largely illiterate population, a data gathering technique had to be developed which was cognizant of this. Also with

women who were relatively unsophisticated, it was necessary to have a rationale for the study that made sense to them, in terms of their own concepts, and also to have interview sessions which took into account the relatively short attention span of the women. Also in terms of data gathering, it was found that an interview situation was unique in terms of their past experiences, and so a great deal of time was spent in putting them at ease. During the process of interviewing these women, it was noticed that many of them had to learn to answer questions. That is, in the first interviews the women would often give highly unrelated responses to the questions put to them, making it necessary to ask the question repeatedly or in numerous ways and with much prologue, until it was finally understood by the interviewee what was sought. Later interviews showed this to be less of a problem, and many of the women took time to consider a question before answering it.

Another area of concern in the development of a questionnaire and in the actual interviewing was to obviate a tendency on the part of the respondent to "say what they want me to," or in other words, to get around a cultural phenomena of those who feel in subordinate positions to function as "yes men" to those in superior positions. Regarding village women, an effort was made to ask questions which were open-ended enough or unstructured enough so that this tendency would not be encouraged. For example, no simple "yes" and "no" ques-

tions were asked, and in most cases specific examples were asked so that the question was related directly to the women's own experience, not to some general category of experience or hearsay. In terms of the general understanding that the women had of their own culture, it was necessary to relate questions also to their own experience, and most often to their world and not to that of the men's or of the village or society of which they had little knowledge.

Language presented a whole realm of problems and considerations. The language problem existed on a variety of different levels. One was the fact that the author while relatively fluent in Bengali, was working entirely within another language and therefore another conceptual world. While the problems of this were lessened by the fact of an assistant who also helped with the interviewing, in careful construction of the questionnaire, and in double comparisons and checking of each interview, the whole data gathering procedure became double in length and time, as great care had to be taken in the translating of Bengali responses into English. Also, there was the problem of comparability and equivalence of concepts and words used in the interview schedules. Great care was taken to make the questions as accurate as possible to the English, yet maintaining a valid Bengali meaning.

As a corrolary of this, the semantic differences in the languages and the meanings and conceptualizations attendent in these differences had to be taken into account, not only on the part of the re-

searchers in relation to the village women, but in regard to the women themselves, as they spoke a number of dialects, or with a number of different accents. What would mean one thing to one woman often was expressed in another way, or by different terms by other village women.

As an over-riding concern that of the cultural context in which the study was done, was paramount. The cultural context of the villages, the Academy, the relative position of the women, had to be taken into consideration. It was also necessary to have as much understanding as possible of the culture in order to undertand and evaluate more reliably the information that was collected. In terms of the time sequence of the research, because of the factors mentioned in the last few pages, a period of reconnaissance of four months was set aside and used. The reconnaissance before, as well as the re-visits after the interviewing, were also useful sources of additional information besides that gathered in the interviews.

CHAPTER 2.

The Patterns of Mediation in Its Wider Context

The Recent Traditional Image of Islamic Village Women

Woven into present day Bengal is an image of Islamic excellence for women that has its antecedents in the distant past when the earliest Muslims were Arab tribesmen. Even today in the villages, status for village women is based on criteria stemming from these antecedents of Abraham as the patriarch and the model for family organization, and of St. Paul, who emphasized the need for controlling the influence of women. That is, a woman has high status by being a good example of the ideal as traditionally defined. As one villager said in speaking to this point:

> "They are wives not girls....She (sic) knows and can do farming work. She can speak well. One is good who behaves well, is shy and has shame, who moves in purdha....They can sew, talk well, do good work. There is no jealousy, and no quarreling."

What he is saying is that in order to establish full adult status and prestige, a village woman must be married, and must have children, preferably sons. In this context of being a "wife," the woman must know how to work well in the bari: drying, parboiling, husking the paddy, caring for the house, growing some vegetables, caring for chickens, drying rice straw, sweeping, cleaning and myriad of other chores. She must observe purdha, which in actuality means that from

the age of puberty she should not be seen by strangers, or go out in the village to be seen by other villagers. From the age of marriage to old age, she should remain the majority of the time in the bari of her husband. Twice a year however, she is allowed to go to her father's house, after the two major rice harvests. Besides remaining in the bari, the wife should be quiet but able to talk when spoken to, respectful of her elders, attentive to the teaching of her mother-in-law, refraining from quarreling with other wives in the family. This is part of what is meant also by being "shy" and having "shame." Shyness is defined in terms of a woman's interaction with the members of her husband's family or other villagers, i.e., remain shy in front of elders, keep one's head covered, wear no powder or make-up, work hard. "To have shame" means to behave in such a way as not to bring shame or disrespect on the family name, i.e., not go out in the village and be seen by others, not quarrel loudly that others overhear.

Implied in the idea of "moving in purdha" is the knowledge of the Koran, which means knowing enough Arabic to be able to read part of it, although not necessarily understand it. Usually, this is the extent of a woman's formal education. As a child, before puberty, she might have attended a religious school in the home of the village Imam (religious leader), to learn to read Arabic. The ability to read the Koran, to know and say the Prayers, to keep the Fasts, and other Religious Observances are thought especially important for women.

However, only a few of the women know either the Koran or the Prayers. One old woman, recalling when she was a wife said, "When praying or washing for the prayers I say "Bismillah" and nothing more. Now I have learned a little more from the other women....That woman who is pregnant and reads the Koran, certainly the child will also know it." One finds however, that among the younger generation of girls there is a greater emphasis on their knowing Arabic, the Koran, and the Prayers, and on having a basic grounding in Bengali. A girl who has these talents has a greater chance in getting a good husband.

Marriages in East Pakistan are arranged. The age of marriage varies with economic status and time. Tradition in the past has been child marriages of young girls of seven or eight years to men in their twenties. In these kinds of marriages, the girls remained in the baris of their father until puberty, after visiting her husband's bari. The more recent trend is for girls to be older at the time of their marriages, twelve or fourteen years. Some of the women thought ten or twelve was a good time for marriage. In the higher socio-economic families the age of marriage is eighteen or nineteen years for the girls. This is in part due to the fact that girls from these families are going to school and so are not available for marriage until later ages. The men are usually older by ten or more years.

In settling the arrangements for the wedding, the boy usually has a say in the matter, but the girl is not consulted, although "the

women of her family know if she consents to the marriage or not." If the girl does not wish to marry a particular individual, it is rare for her wishes to be considered. Usually some third party or a professional marriage arranger is used in bringing prospective families together. Representatives from both families visit the other to see the prospective bride or groom, to assess the socio-economic level, histories, and backgrounds of the families involved. Running through any description of the marriage institution is the difference between "ideal" and the "actual." "Ideal" practice is for the girl to come from some village other than that of her husband, to be of a good family able to support her, and keep her well. It may be a family in which previous alliances had been arranged, or it may be a new family. In actuality, many times the marriages are arranged to protect the inheritance of one family and therefore cross-cousin marriages are preferred. In this way, any of the inheritance of a woman's would stay in the husband's family and she would not be able to take it out of the family in case she claimed it. Given the increasingly drastic problem of the shortage of land, it is apparent why these kinds of arrangements are made.

Once the respective families have seen each other, if the marriage is considered to be wise, the steps are undertaken to plan the details of the settlement, the date, and the amount the bride will bring with her. The standard form of the arrangements is that the

groom's family spends the money for the clothes, jewelry for the bride, and her family, and for the feast in the groom's house. The bride's family agrees to pay a certain amount as "morhana" (bride price) for the girl. This goes to the groom. When the wedding party comes to the bride's house, the bride's family bears the cost for the feast and gifts for the groom. If the groom is educated, the bride's family gives him gifts of a radio, watch or bicycle. The "morhana" is a certain amount that is fixed on the bride-to-be during the marriage negotiations. The bride brings this money with her upon her marriage to her husband's house. However, if the marriage is not realized, or if the girl is divorced later, the husband is supposed to return the amount of the original "morhana" along with the girl to her family. This system is supposed to be a protective device making divorce more difficult than just the simple pronouncing three times of "I divorce thee." In actuality however, most women who are divorced neither take nor ask for the return of the "morhana," as village women observed that, "If a case is made to get the money back, if another prospective groom hears about the case, he won't marry the girl."

In regard to property, the traditional pattern still obtains. That is, while under Islamic Law women are entitled to a share in their father's inheritance, in reality this right is rarely claimed. The

women said,

> "Girls don't take their share, but give it to their brothers. Twice a year then the brothers have to bring their sisters to their house. They also have to give them saris, and clothes to any children that might have come along."

The women observed that "if they took their share from their brothers, the brother would not take care of them if it was ever necessary."

Village women keep strong ties with their father's family, even though they spend the majority of their lives in the baris of their husbands. This acts as a built-in security for them in case of divorce or widowhood. If a woman is married into a family that is economically well-to-do, and that can support her if her husband dies, her future is somewhat assured. However, with the death of the husband the wife loses rank and prestige, and in many cases the woman who stays on in her husband's bari becomes saddled with the more menial tasks in the family. Supported widows in a family must have some economic means.

Another alternative for a woman who is widowed is to return to her own family. If her ties are strong and her relationship good, upon the death of her husband, her brothers might welcome her home to live with them. If, however, her relationship with them is not good, if she has taken part of her father's inheritance for example, the brothers might not ask her home, or they may not take such good

care of her. In this context it is not surprising that women do not usually take that part of the inheritance due them, but invest it in their future security by giving it to their brothers. In extreme cases in which neither family can or will support a widow, she may be given a place to sleep but she supports herself by becoming the village midwife or working in the baris of richer villagers. In terms of Islamic values, however, highest honor goes to the family that cares for and supports the widows of their men. The woman's parental family is also reluctant to have their reputation lowered by having one of their women working.

For the younger woman, there exists the possibility of remarriage. This is becoming more frequent. The women say "Where is my food going to come from if I don't remarry? Is Allah going to put rice in my mouth?" Among older women remarriage is possible, but it is not as acceptable. It is better to continue living in the bari of the husband, or in one's own bari than to remarry. But it is better to remarry than resort to work.

The traditional view regarding divorce was generally negative as divorced women have low status. If a woman was sent home, the children remained in the husband's bari. By Law a woman cannot divorce a man. If a woman wants to leave her husband, she can come to her father's house and the men of her family then work to convince her husband to divorce her. Among many of the village wo-

men, however, is the feeling that remarriage of divorcees is a necessity just as it is for widows, for the same reasons, that is as a measure of security where none else exists.

While it is a mark of status to be educated, few Bengali women are. The recent trends within the villages, however, has been to educate the girls of the present generation. With the development of primary schools, the maddrassas (religious schools) and "feeder schools" in the Comilla Thana, ever increasing numbers of girls are going to primary school. The traditional pattern was that girls who went to study went without purdha, hence were bad. Women remarked that the people's reaction was: "Will they have an office job or not? Why should Muslim girls study? They can't go to Heaven if they are not in purdha. They will burn in Hell." The vast majority of those women who are wives now, or older are illiterate. They know no Bengali, but may be able to read some Arabic in the Koran. It is their daughters who are learning to read and write in Bengali now. They can go to the primary school from about the age of five to ten, or until marriage. The interest in the education of girls is not something that all villagers share, but among many of the women education is thought of as one of the elements contributing to the future security of their girls. A girl who can read and write has the opportunity to make a better marriage, to increase her chances of being well cared for while married, and to have security in case

her husband dies or divorces her. As families decrease in economic elements of status reflecting the loss of land as the basis for status, bargaining power has to be built-in to the children through education, and through employment outside the village.

In talking with village women who were not associated with the Academy, and some who did not even know about it, one found that there was an awareness among these women of changes in villages that have occurred during their own lifetime. For example, the vast majority of the women spoken to were aware of the tremendous increase in population and the decrease in the amount of food available.

> "Before people were few. Now they have increased. Before one rupee ($.20) could buy what ten rupees can get today. Things before were good. There were many things before. Now they are scarce...because the people have increased...even with three crops there is scarcity."

Among these older women changes are perceived in the observance of purdha, and in the training and character of the younger women, the wives. Many of the women thought purdha was about "four annas less" (out of 16 annas) than it had been before. One woman put it this way,

> "During my time we had more purdha than we do now. We couldn't go out of the baris or be seen by the men. We washed in the house, someone brought the water to us for bathing. The burkha was not worn then either. When going to my father's house we needed a bullock card or palki to go."

Another woman added, "Before there were maid servants to bring water and go out of the bari for chores. Now there are not as many (servants), the people can't afford them." They told stories about life in their father's baris, where the women had to keep their heads covered at all times. "Even now," one woman about 75 said, "I won't speak in front of my husband. I feel shy in front of him." This grandmother said that when she wanted to go to her father's house she would go to the ghor where her husband was, and "standing behind the partition would inquire, 'I am going to my father's house?' From a distance I would speak." The women say,

> "The young girls are not shy at all. Now women cover their heads in front of men and boys out of respect, but modern girls put clips in their hair and don't cover their heads at all. When women want to go to the cinema, they tell their husbands to take them. Before women listened to their husbands, now husbands listen to their wives."

An old woman remarked, "Before, during my time, the women went out by palki (carried covered box) or by bullock cart. These were the only ways to go. We went around the village, if at all, at night. The burkha came in only recently."

The younger mothers and wives say that purdha is less because of the advent of the burkha which allows a woman to go out legitimately during the day and still observe purdha. While the burkha has been in use in East Pakistan for several hundred years, its use was restricted to the upper classes, those with the economic

facilities, as well as the status to afford it. For the wives of the small farmer, it has been only in the last fifty years that the burkha has come into the villages. In some villages it has been as recent as ten years ago. Along with the burkha, the increase in roads, both dirt and paved, and in rickshaws, buses, and tri-wheeled carts called baby taxis, have all contributed to the greater mobility of women.

Inherent in the trends of change also is the growing belief that for a good marriage it is now necessary for girls to know how to read and write in something other than just Arabic. Before it was said, "Why should girls study: Are they going to have jobs? If girls know reading and writing, they would be talking with all kinds of outsiders. There would be no purdha. It would not be good."

In contrast to this traditional belief, the younger wives are saying, "Now is the age of education. No education, no marriages." This change in belief is also manifested in the changing marriage patterns. Now, not only are boys looking for educated girls, there are actual changes in the arrangements and gift exchange in the marriage negotiations. The tradition is usually that if both parties are sufficiently happy with the prospective couple, the marriage arrangements are finalized. If the boy is illiterate he gives gifts to the girl's family. However, if he is literate and is educated,

then the girl has to give some gifts to him as well, "as it has cost a lot to make this boy literate." The gift exchange becomes mutual if the boy is literate or if both are educated.

In terms of a larger context in which the study of the mediators was done, it becomes apparent that there are elements of change and shifting patterns of behavior and meaning in the villages. They were not static. In many ways, the mediators could be said to be catalytic agents, springing from positions of semi-marginality in the villages, bringing together the threads of already existent change, into new patterns of behavior which serve as summaries of what before was piecemeal, which draws on the store of tolerance and flexibility in the village, and which points to future patterns of change. Besides the actual ability of the individual mediator in her role, much of the success of her work in the village depends on the store of flexibility and change already existent in her village.

CHAPTER 3.

The Identity of Mediators: In Relation to the Village

A Representative Sketch

In order to give some idea of the village context in which the village women live, the following sketch is presented. While not representative of one specific woman, it is based on facts and information drawn from the stories of the mediators themselves.

The first light was just relieving the darkness of night when Joynub unbarred the bamboo door of the sleeping ghor and quietly slipped out into the compound. It was very quiet, about an hour earlier than her usual rising time. Pausing for a moment, she quickly took in the other three ghors and outbuildings surrounding the compound. The chickens were safe, she noted, no jackals had disturbed the enlarged coop the apas (staff) had told her to build. The goats were all right as well. The sasur (father-in-law) was still asleep as was the basuer (husband's older brother) and his family.

Satisfied that all was well, Joynub moved around the ghor, across the garden plot to the latrine. Briefly on her return, Joynub checked the pepper plants, plucked a bug-eaten leaf from a bean plant to take with her to the Academy, and noted with pleasure that the young lemon and papaya trees planted four months earlier looked well and strong.

Returning to the compound, Joynub went to the already unlocked side door of the ghor in which her family still slept. Entering the small area used as a kitchen, Joynub took up the large clay water jug and moved out of the dark, thick-walled ghor across the compound, onto the path leading to the adjacent bari and to the tubewell which served both baris with water.

On the way she stopped to pick up the peg lines and the three goats. Joynub felt pride looking at them. Three years ago there had been no goats in her household, not since the death of her husband, long before, had necessitated selling bit by bit the previous goats, chickens, the cow and finally the land in order to have money to live. But since the Academy work had begun this condition had gradually changed. No longer was it necessary for her husband's brothers to collect donations from the villagers for her support. No longer was it her family that received the skins of the sacrificial animals on Little Eid. Joynub thought how the first goat had been purchased out of the savings she had made from the rickshaw fare given her when she first began going to the Academy. "Out of one rupee I would walk eight annas and ride eight annas worth."

Arriving at the tubewell, Joynub saw that Sayera, one of the wives in the other bari was already filling her jug. "What's new?" asked Joynub.

"You are going to that place today?" Sayera asked.

"Yes, I go every week at this time," Joynub replied, moving to take the handle of the pump.

"Listen, apa. The baby is no better. My husband took him to the doctor shaeb and spent two rupees for medicine besides eight annas for the doctor. But last night he cried most of the night. I had to sleep in the kitchen with him."

Joynub looked at her friend. "You know what to do. Take him to the Academy. They have big doctors there, and good medicine for only two annas. They will give you medicine also."

Sayera sighed, "Each year my children die, but my husband won't give me permission to go and see the doctor. He says there are men at the Academy. If I go they will see me and purdha will be ruined. What shall I do? Perhaps you should speak with him." Joynub, in preparation of lifting the now full jug, flipped the end of her cotton, blue sari over her head. He r keys, tied to the end, dangled just below her ear. "I will ask the apas," she said. "Last time they mentioned bringing other women to see the Academy. If so, I will talk to your husband. They will give the rickshaw fare to you." So saying, she moved away, back toward her own bari.

Back in her own ghor, Joynub deposited the water jug inside. Then taking the basket of leaves and the dried cow dung chips that her daughter had fixed the previous day, she bent over the sunken chula (stove) in the corner and placed and lit a fire. After encouraging

the reluctant flames to a steady heat, Joynub moved to the clay pots hung, one on top of the other, and held by a jute net that held the gound spices, beetle nut and pan leaf, dry spices and general cooking items. Taking down the spices ground the night before, she put them to one side and reached up for an aluminum cooking pot, also hanging in corded nets. Taking some ashes from the side of the chula, she dampened them and moved to the doorway to wash the pot. Rinsing it in clear water, Joynub put the pot on the clay chula, added mustard oil from a bottle hanging overhead, deftly cut up an onion and began cooking the food for the day.

Hunkering before the chula Joynub thought, "Before going to the Academy there was not enough food for us. We would eat one day and not the next. The children would cry, and I would go to other baris and ask for food. Now we have rice. We eat three times a day. How much better the condition is. Two of my sons are married. One daughter is about ready to be."

Rising she went around the bamboo parition to the next room. On the large, wooden bed her children, still at home, were sleeping. Reaching out, she caught the arm of her youngest son and shook him gently. "Hey, Bapu, wake up. It's time to do your lessons." Turning then to the recumbent form next to him she called to her only daughter. The girl, about eleven years, stirred slightly and drew her sari closer around her.

Going to the bamboo door Joynub threw it open, letting the early light into the dark room. Crossing the small room to a row of large storage bins along one side of the room, Joynub took broken rice for the chickens and went to feed them. Letting them run free for awhile, Joynub returned to the kitchen. She added water to the rice and put it on to cook, and to another pot added the remaining spices. With quick, automatic movements she moved about getting down and washing the two aluminum and one clay plates, rinsing the glasses, filling a small jug with water, and getting out the puffed rice and bananas for breakfast.

The children struggled up, first the girl going to the latrine and then to the tank to bathe. Later then the boy. The girl, Korzum, entered the ghor and gathered up the blankets and pillows to be spread out in the sun. Joynub watched her as she went past the door, a thin, slightly built girl, with only the faintest hint showing of approaching maturity. "She's not too dark, and her features are good," thought Joynub. "If she could learn to read the Koran a good husband could perhaps be found for her."

The boy, Bapu, came in, hungry, not really awake, with water still on his face. He was a small-boned child with a pinched face and sharp features. The last child, Joynub remembered how sickly he had been. Now, however, he was going to school. In class two and doing well she thought, "At least he can make and does practice his

letters. If he does well, he will be able to get a good service job."

She set a plate of puffed rice before him with two small bananas and a glass of water. She gave similar food to herself and to the girl. As they ate she gave directions to Korzum about finishing the cooking, sweeping the compound, gathering leaves and fixing the dung for tomorrow and grinding more spices. Bapu was told to watch the goats and chickens and to bring wood and more water after school.

Breakfast finished, Joynub left the dishes for Korzum to wash, and picking up a sliver of soap and her other work sari, went off to bathe in the tank. Returning, Joynub took down the prayer mat and facing east said her prayers. Finishing, she rose, and taking some coconut oil from a small bottle, she oiled and combed her hair. From a bamboo pole running the length of the room she took down a white cotton sari, with a green leaf pattern in it, a yellow blouse, and a white petticoat, her newest possession. Quickly she dressed and gathered her burkha, plastic bag, pan box and notebook together.

Korzum who had been watching these preparations asked, "Won't you eat rice before you go? The rice is almost ready."

"No," said her mother. "The time for going has arrived. I will be late if I linger. Put it aside for me. I will eat when I return." As she moved to the door she added, "Feed the boy before school and see that he bathes. I am going now."

The path out of the village led down between tall mango and bort trees, clusters of bamboo, and shrubbery. To either side the people of the village were appearing, the men on their way to the fields, the children off to collect leaves, to get water, or to look for eggs. The women were in the compounds sweeping, or laying rice out to dry in the sun. Or they were sitting in the doorways of their kitchens eating the first of many pieces of pan and waiting for the rice to cook.

The sun was steadily climbing, chasing away the last of the mist, and any coolness, promising to be hot and unrelieved by rain. On the other side of the para, where the path began to wander among the paddy fields, Joynub met two villagers with hukhas and baskets over their shoulders, on their way to their fields. Rather than turning off across the field to avoid them, Joynub lowered the front of her burkha and walked on.

"There goes the 'Ulka,'" one of the men said in jest.

The other villager addressed her, "Why do you go to that place, the Academy? There are men there. There is no purdha either. You should stay home."

Joynub stopped and said, "All right, I will stay home. However, my son is going to school and needs new trousers. Give me ten rupees so that I might buy him clothes."

The villager said, "I can't give you that money. I don't have it."

Joynub replied, "Then don't tell me to stay home. By going to the Academy I earn money."

"That's right," said the other villager. Addressing his companion he said, "you shouldn't be saying these things to her."

Joynub went past them without further comment. A mile further on where the path joined a pucca road, Joynub took a rickshaw and began the six-mile ride to the Academy. As she went she thought of a time three years ago when she would have been unable to answer such a challenge.

"How frightened I was when I first began going to the Academy. I was unused to going in the village. I had rarely been to the town. The villagers told me that at the Academy there were foreign shaebs who would carry me away. I was afraid to go there. But then I thought people don't eat other people, so I went. I was in tremendous need."

"When I first went to the Academy I sat in the corner of the room, far away from everyone else. I didn't talk to anyone, particularly to the apas. I kept my burkha on. I couldn't answer any questions. I had to give my thumbprint in order to get rickshaw fare."

"The apas took us around to show us the gardens, chickens, dairy, offices, go-down, and bank. I liked it. I went again. I thought that if I could make some income it would be good. Gradually I came to like it more. I met some of the other village women who

also come there. We talked together. I took training classes in gardening, child care, poultry, sewing. I can sign my name now. I make money. There has been much progress. The apas have taught us how to talk politely, how to behave with other villagers."

"Now I don't like to stay in the bari. If I can't come I am upset and sad. All day I think what is happening today? What are the women doing? What are the apas talking about? What am I missing?"

She began to think of the report she would have to give to the apas; the woman with the sick child; the chickens that needed injections; the bugs in the beans that needed spray.

Her line of thought was interrupted by her arrival at the Academy. Getting down at the main gate, she ignored the men standing around waiting for the bus, or waiting for customers for their rickshaws. She instructed her rickshaw-wallah (driver) to be back at 3:30. Turning, she walked around the road by the tank, along the rice go-downs and rice mill to the women's section. Arriving at the bamboo office-classroom buildings, she hurried over the grass toward the classroom and the already gathered women. Another day had begun.

General Status: Age Grade

In Comilla, reflecting a different orientation to time, village women are not sure how old they are and are unable to say their age

in years. Rather, time for them is measured in terms of major events than by years. A woman knows approximately how old she was at marriage, or when her children were born, but it is not a yearly chronology.

For this reason it is difficult to speak of age-grades of the mediators in Western terms. Any categories that would be used would be rough approximations at best.* Of the twenty-four women in the sample, all have been married at one time or another. From this and other information, it is possible to divide them into three age-grades: 1) younger wives, 2) wives, 3) old wives, some being grandmothers. The younger wives range approximately from their late twenties to early thirties. There are four women in this category. They have young children or are still having children. Being younger, these wives have more living family members, that is, parents, in-laws, siblings. In three of the cases their responsibility in the home is less, as there are older women who are in charge and from whom the mediators receive direction. (On the whole these four women are relatively better educated than most, all of them having attended school to at least the fifth grade. Only one husband is traditionally employed in agriculture. Of the other three husbands,

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*Part of the problem also for a foreigner is being able to make accurate guesses in light of influences such as health, many pregnancies, early marriage, and short life spans of the village women involved.

one works as a tutor, one for the police, one in a government office).

The second category of wives is composed of women who range from early thirties to forty years. Eleven of the mediators are in this grouping. These are wives with older children, perhaps the oldest married, but the majority at home. These are wives who have fewer family links, and in many cases have full responsibility for caring for the husband's house.

The third category, older wives, has nine women in it. Six of them have grown and married children, but one or more children still at home. The other three women have all their children at home. In this category there are three of the four women who are supporting themselves and their families by working in other baris.

In general, the need of observing strict purdha decreases with age. An exception to this is in the three cases where younger women are living and working as mediators in their father's bari. In these cases, because it is their "own" village, they have more mobility and are freer to move than are wives in their husband's bari. Being a daughter of a village allows a woman greater freedom as she "belongs" in a way that women brought as wives to that village do not, or as the woman in question does not belong in the village of her husband. She is always considered to be a reflection on her father as well as her husband. Because of this greater free-

dom, women are always anxiously awaiting the time when they can visit their father's village. This is one of the reasons why the women strive to keep amicable relations with their brothers, after their fathers die.

In terms of age grades, there are no young unmarried girls, or no extremely old women who are acting as mediators. The mediators represent village women who are actively engaged in the role of housewife, raising children, caring for the bari and the other people within it. From what has been mentioned regarding the traditional criteria for status, these mediators fulfill the minimum, that is, they are or have been married, and they fall within the age categories that bear the greatest responsibility in village life. Whatever the marginality of the status of the mediators, it did not originate from age. In general, the mediators are catelytists who are integrated enough within the village to be effective in terms of influencing others to change, but who are marginal enough to cause change without disrupting in an obvious way, the traditional patterns of village life.

Marital status of mediators

The marital status of mediators showed that seven are widows, two are separated or divorced, six women have husbands who are living and working away from the village, and nine women have husbands living at home. Of these nine husbands at home, four are

employed (one overseeing his land, two are day laborers, one is a tutor), three are not working, one is old, and one is sick.

Of the younger wives, all four of their husbands are living. Among the older wives, five out of nine husbands are alive and of these only two are employed. The other three husbands are either too old or ill to work, or just unemployed. Of the eleven remaining mediators, six of their husbands are living and five are employed. Two of the mediators are divorced or separated from their husbands and live and work in their father's bari. Three of these wives are widows, one of whom has a married son, the other two are dependent on their father's or their husband's families for support beside what they earn working for the Academy.

All twenty-four of the mediators by being married at one time or another have achieved full adult female status in the traditional sense. Out of the twenty-four women, only two of them have not had children; one woman who has been divorced, the other woman whose husband threatens to divorce her. In this sense, the fourteen women who have been divorced, separated or widowed have lost status, but there are no women mediators who are deviants from the traditional village patterns by not being married. This is an important point in regard to their ability to influence other villagers. If mediators represented deviant elements in the village, their probable influence would be much less, and their being sent to the Academy

would represent a lack of commitment on the part of the village co-operative society to the Academy in this phase of their program.

Education of mediators

In general, those mediators working primarily as teachers in the Academy's program came from higher socio-economic families and are themselves better educated than other mediators from lower socio-economic families.

There are eight mediators who work primarily as teachers, and sixteen women who work primarily as organizers in the Women's Programme. The eight teachers vary in degree of education from class 5 to class 10 and matriculation (junior high school equivalent). Of the organizers, five women are educated up to class 5. The remaining eleven women are uneducated but have learned to sign their names since coming to the Academy. Education is a discriminating item. By knowing if a woman is educated or not, a number of other generalizations can be made. Most generally, a woman who is educated comes from a family which can afford to educate its girls, and which has a somewhat more progressive attitude regarding the education of girls. Besides general family economic condition, the education of girls is a general indication of social status as well. That is, it is likely that educated girls come from relatively high prestige families in which there has been the tradition of educating girls as well as boys. In the sample, it was found

that among the educated mediators, particularly the teachers, the tendency was to educate all the children in the family, girls as well as boys. This was not the case with the organizers. This item of education along with social status and centrality of the mediator in her family when combined, give an indication of the types of mediators represented in the sample. This will be discussed later under types of mediators.

General Socio-Economic Status

Much of the original focus of the Academy's cooperative and women's programmes has been on the marginal, subsistence farmer and his family. These are farmers who, although owning and farming land, are downwardly mobile, predominately caused by a vicious circle of indebtedness to local moneylenders. The early cooperative membership and leadership came from this stratum of the village societies. It is not surprising to find that the majority of the women mediators represented the same lower stratum.

Traditional criteria for status in the villages are: prestigeful occupations; ownership of land; bullocks and other livestock; education; wealth; and long-standing family prestige. Also important is a complete family, i.e., husband, wife, children and extended kin all living together. A family that can feed and care for its widows, divorced daughters and young unmarried kin has higher status than other families who are unable to provide economically for kin beyond the nuclear family.

Of the twenty-four women in the sample, only three come from families fulfilling the traditional criteria for status. One is a younger wife living in her father's bari in what had been a joint family until the year 1966. Her family has enjoyed high prestige in the village; it has land and economic affluence sufficient to support and provide for a large number of people out of one kitchen. (The designation of kitchen is the crucial item in the determination of households). There are twenty-seven members in this family all sharing the same kitchen until last year. The men of this family serve as village leaders, are members of the Union Council (local governmental body), or work outside the village. The mediator's husband works for the police in another District. As an indication of their relative economic condition, this mediator said that there were two laborers kept on a yearly basis to help with the work. "In the harvest months of Agrahon and Posh, ten or more laborers are sometimes needed to help. They are paid on a daily basis."

The second mediator in this category comes from a family in which the men of her husband's family have worked as sub-inspectors or inspectors of police, high prestige occupations. The women brought as wives to this family were educated, the mediator having passed from secondary school. This family helped establish the village school and the mother-in-law of the mediator taught Arabic and the Koran to village girls for many years. While the men of

this family are not primarily engaged in agriculture, there is some land that is farmed by sons of the family. The husband of the mediator works outside the village as a sub-inspector of police. His father also held this or a higher position in the Police. The position of the family is established by the prestigeful occupations that are represented. Before his retirement, the father of the family took his wife with him to his different assignments, and so the old woman has had some knowledge and acquaintance with places outside the village, a rare occurence of a woman of her age.

The third mediator's husband is not employed outside the home, but rather oversees the farming and managing of his land. This is the traditional role of the landowner, which few farmers can fulfill in present times. Besides the prestige deriving from being a fairly large landowner, there are also bullocks and other livestock, and general economic sufficiency to allow for the education for all of the children of the family as they become old enough.

In all three families there are large numbers of kin living together in the same bari or village. There are also extensive kinship ties outside the village as well.

For these three mediators and their families there is food throughout the entire year, the children go to school, some luxury items can be purchased. In general, for these three families, the traditional means of livelihood are still sufficient to the needs of

the families. Change is incurred less and more as the result of novelty, as the response to new ideas, or as the desire for more luxury goods.

The economic condition of the remaining twenty-one mediators is quite different. Eight of the mediators reported that they are poor and that their husbands are dead or separated from them. Typical of the condition of this group is the following:

> "Before going to the Academy my condition was bad. We were very poor. During my husband's time, we rented and farmed a little land, After he died we couldn't do any farming. I worked in other people's houses.... There was no land of our own. When my husband was alive he did some farming. He ate. I ate. Then when he died, the flood took the land. Then our condition became even worse. I made fishing nets, worked in other baris. The little land we had was mortgaged and we lost it. I became totally poor."

This group of mediators has lost the status derived from having a husband who is alive, and by becoming widows or alone, they no longer have the status of their husbands, what ever little it was, to sustain them. Besides destitute economic conditions, these women are poor in other ways as well. That is they have "no people" with whom to share the troubles that come upon them, nor to share any of the happier occasions either. To be without kin means that there is little security for the women in question. There is no one to take care of them in their old age, there is no one to turn to in times of stress or need, or to care for their children should they die. There

are few recourses for action open to these women outside their families. They can work in other baris, or become midwives, or live by hand to mouth, relying on the village to support them.

Seven of the mediators described their previous economic condition as poor with their husbands being home. Three of these seven husbands are unemployed, relying on their wives or the sale of their land for income. The four remaining husbands work as laborers when employed; one is a weaver salesman. All of them have times of unemployment when there is no income, and the families exist on loans, or by mortgaging land, jewelry, or anything else of value. As one woman asserted:

> "Our condition was very bad. My family was very poor. My husband was a day laborer. He cut wood. Before he brought in Rs 2/50 ($.50) daily. We would eat one time and not the next. If no money, then no eating. But there was not work every day. From my bari I wove and sold baskets to keep the family going."

For the mediators of these families, even with their husbands living, pressing economic need and few resources of income result in low social status, and poor economic condition. The women have the personal advantage of having their husbands alive in terms of meeting the traditional criteria of status, but in general their economic and social status is not much higher than the widows and divorced or separated wives. These families have neither wealth, land, livestock, or the occupational status traditionally indicative of status and position in the villages. For most of them as well, they are also "poor in people."

In this category of mediators coming from families of poor economic condition, six of them mentioned having somewhat better economic condition, with food for part but not all of the year. During the short period, food has to be purchased. Representative of this type of condition is the following comment; "Before going to the Academy we were weavers. Sometimes were busy, sometimes not. We got along. That which came we ate. If (there was) no work then the times were difficult." For these six families, while there is employment for the men, it is irregular enough so that a fixed income is hard to maintain. While the family has enough to eat generally, there is little money left over for the purchase of luxury items, or for the education of the children. In these six families there is some land, but not the other accoutrements of wealth, livestock, or prestigeful occupations required for high position in the villages. In regard to family size these families have somewhat larger kinship groups, but still have less than do the families with higher socio-economic status.[7]

"Poor" was defined by the mediators as having insufficient land for farming or no land at all, no bullocks, cows, goats, or even

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7. It should be noted that differences between families in terms of social status, economic condition, in particular, and such items as livestock, etc., are relatively minute. That is, observably there seems to be few distinctions that can be made, but those that exist are well noted by other villagers, and are significant in terms of village patterns. By some other standard even those families noted as being relatively better off would be considered impoverished.

chickens. "Food and clothing was scarce." As one woman described it, "There was such great need at that time. I also worked. If with great difficulty we could buy chickens, if we got sick or if great need came (then) we would sell them. Many days we did not have anything to eat." Being poor also meant having few kinfolk.

For these twenty-one women there is a lack of alternative ways of possibly improving their conditions, and only a narrow margin of operating safety between subsistence and starvation. At some point the land passes to the moneylender and the cycle of yearly indebtedness finishes, leaving the man of the family to work as a farm laborer for other more well-to-do farmers, or perhaps as a tenant farmer for the moneylender, or as a day laborer in the town. In many cases, the woman of the family is not allowed by her family to work outside the bari and so she weaves fish nets or baskets if she knows how. Adding to the economic difficulty also are the dependent children, usually three or four to a family. Traditionally large families were a necessity because of high death rates which resulted in only a few out of the total born surviving childhood. Now, however, with the improvement in basic health services there are greater numbers of children living out of relatively the same number of children being born. On a wide scale there is not the realization in the villages that because more children live, there is less need for so many to be born. Grown and settled children are one of the few sources of security for old people. In this light it is understandable why there is resistance to family planning.

Of the twenty-four mediators in the sample, only three women are without children. Of these three, two of the women are caring for children from a previous marriage of their husband, or are raising the daughter of a sister. For the rest of the mediators there are children for whom the women feel emotional ties and responsibility. The fact of having children to provide for seems to be a motivating factor for the women in working for the Academy. No matter what the limitations in a woman's ability to provide for her children, they represent her links to the future, in terms of security for her old age, and in terms of continuing the family name. This concern with continuing the family is primarily the concern of the men, but not to the exclusion of the women. The concern with family by the women is understandable in light of its importance in establishing their basic status. For example, the lack of children is a legitimate reason for divorce. In many ways, the woman without children is in greater difficulty than the woman without a husband. For the childless woman there is no security in the present nor in the future. One of the mediators faces this problem, as she has had no children after fourteen years of marriage. Her husband threatens to divorce her and marry again, and the improvements that the woman has made in the family through her work in the Academy only partially compensates for this lack of children.

This concern over children, seems to be one motivating force encouraging the women to work for the Academy. For the teachers

the ability to educate their children was mentioned as a reason for working for the Academy when there were few expressed economic reasons for doing so. For the majority of the other women, other factors were mentioned as more pressing, but in the need for food, for example, was included the provision for their children. One of the side benefits of working for the Academy was the ability of the women to send one of the children of the family to school where none had gone before. Also the women expressed the belief that one of the advantages of having an educated daughter was that she could make a more advantageous marriage; for sons, the advantage lay in their ability to obtain a more lucrative position once they began working. These were seen by the mediators as some of the advantages made possible by their working for the Academy.

It should be mentioned that there are some forms of "social security" built in at the village level, that exist outside the family. It is possible for women to work in other baris husking paddy (rice) if allowed to do so by their families. There is a "genteel" form of begging in which a woman can go and ask for food for her children from neighbors, which will be given. Also there are village collections ("pieta") that men of a family can gather for an impoverished woman member and her children. Another source of aid is the giving of food to the needy during the major Islamic Holiday of "Eid" and the donations of sacrificial animal skins to the village mosque or directly to the village destitue during the "Korbani Eid," another holiday.

Family

Within the context of Bengali society, the family is perhaps the most important unit of social organization. Family of orientation and family of procreation are important in areas such as contact and exposure to outside world, education, mobility and to the relative ability of mediators to influence those around them. The type of family establishes a certain frame of reference and background of information from which differences can be observed in kinds and degrees of experience of the mediators. For example, it is thought that those mediators who come from economically poor or lower status families joined the Academy's program for a somewhat different set of reasons that did mediators from higher status, more economically affluent families.

For the more marginal, lower socio-economic status mediators the appeal of the Academy was as an alternative for a situation which traditionally had few if any alternatives. Joining the program was an alternative where none others presented themselves. For the majority of the mediators, economic concerns such as the possibility of earning an income, making money, and having more food, were the primary reasons for their working for the Academy.

For the five mediators of higher socio-economic status, the reasons for joining the Academy's program were economic reasons of a different nature than for the others. The primary interest of these

mediators was in earning additional income that would be used for the education of their children, for more luxury items in the family, and not for crucial necessities such as food. In general, for the majority of the mediators improvement in their conditions represented substantive increases in material items. That is, improvements meant increases in food, clothes, livestock, education where insufficient amounts existed before, or were completely absent. For the five fairly well-to-do families, improvements in the family condition were additions to already existing items, or came in the area of luxuries, not necessities.

The dual nature of the Academy's tasks caused a differential principle to work in the selection of women from different status families in the villages. As mentioned before, the primary tasks were teaching and organizing. Teaching implied educated women, which automatically focused on higher status families in the villages that could afford to educate their girls, or bring educated girls into the family as wives. The job of organizer was geared to the improvement of basic skills and techniques within the village homes, and therefore could be filled initially by uneducated, destitute women.

In discussing the types of families represented in the sample, the occupation of the mediator's husband will be used as a base point. The criterion of husband's occupation is used as an indication of type of family as it is through the male line that status of a family

is determined in the Bengali society. Within the family, a woman has position and status which is hers. But in the village or larger society, her status is basically determined by that of her father, and with marriage is a reflection of that of her husband. In a family, a woman has the prestige of position, such as mother-in-law which carries a great deal of influence and power, especially over younger wives.

A woman has reputational prestige as well. That is, she fulfills the position of wife or mother in terms of her own abilities and is known for her accomplishments. However she is known in the family and village as "yusuf's ma," (the mother of John), or by kin designation "bou" (wife), "ma" (mother), or by some term of affection "oh gou" (hey you). She is not called by name except when a small child. In the villages it was noticed that this was an area of much kidding and joking, as many of the older village women had trouble remembering their given names, and in general, most women were quite shy in saying their names.

In discussing occupation of husband as a basis for analyzing family information of orientation and procreation, there appear to be three rough categories: 1) low prestige, non-agricultural occupations, 2) traditionally prestigeful occupations in agriculture, and 3) high prestige, non-agricultural occupations.

Low prestige, non-agricultural occupations

There were eleven mediators who came from families of the first type. Of these, two of the women are Hindus. Both of their

husbands are weavers, one husband sold woven shawls and saris, the other works at an Ashram in another Thana. One of the husbands has studied to Class 6. The other has not studied as far. Their fathers were also weavers, one could sign his name. The oldest Hindu mediator has had no formal education, but has learned since coming to the Academy. She works as an organizer for the Women's Program. She has one boy, reading in Class 6, and two girls, the older of whom is married, the younger only irregularly goes to school. The other Hindu mediator works for the Academy as a teacher. She has studied up to Class 5. She has five children.

Of the nine remaining mediators in this category, four have husbands who are daily laborers, and five husbands are in low skill, non-agricultural occupations: a clerk's helper, a cigarette maker, a rickshaw puller, a small local wood seller, a husband who performed circumcisions. Seven of the husbands have had no education; three husbands could sign their names or read the Koran; one husband has studied to Class 10. Three of these mediators are widowed. At the present time, four husbands are working, two are unemployed, one has left his family and gone off. The mean average number of children in these families is three, the largest family having seven.

In the mediator's families of orientation, four of their fathers were cultivators, two were farm laborers, four were in small trades, e.g., weavers, or employed as office peons (errand boy) or as clerks, and one was a homeopathic doctor.

In regard to the women in this category, seven of the mediators have had no formal education. The four remaining have studied no farther than Class 5. Of the thirty-one children in nine families, two women had no children, seven children from four families are in school. These are all young children, four boys ranging from Class 6 down, and three girls in the first and second grades.

Traditionally prestigeful agricultural occupations

The second type of family represented by the mediators are agriculturally based. There are five such families. In all cases the husband was a small cultivator by occupation. Three of the five fathers-in-law were also cultivators; one husband was an orphan so there was no information regarding his parents. Information was also lacking on the other father-in-law. Two of the husbands have been to primary school, one to Class 3 and the other to Class 5. The other three were uneducated, three of the husbands have died, one has divorced his wife, the fifth is old and unemployed. In the five families there are twelve children, three of the boys, are in primary schools in Classes 2 and 3. Seven of the remaining children are married.

Except for the mediator who has been divorced and lives with her father, the other mediators in this category were extremely poor and of low socio-economic status. The divorced mediator's father has seven sons, six of whom are employed wage earners. The father is saving money to make the Haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. They have just completed building a new bari.

The other families of orientation of the mediators in this category were also agriculturally based. One mediator's father was a village functionary, the "alim" or man who prepares the dead for burial, an essential but not highly esteemed occupation. One of the mediator's fathers has died when she was quite small and there is consequently little information available about him.

Only one of the five mediators in this group have had any education. That is the divorced woman. She had gone to school to the third grade, and then later, after her divorce and return home, studied at home with her brother's tutor. The other four women were uneducated originally. However, they have learned to sign their names since working for the Academy.

High-prestige, non-agricultural occupations

The third type of family represented by the mediators are those non-agriculturally based, with husbands employed in more prestigeful occupations. There are seven women in this category, or 29 per cent of the total. Two of the husbands are employed as clerks--one, an Intermediate Arts pass (high school equivalent), is in the Malaria office in Sylhet District. The other is the local union board clerk and cooperative society manager. He has attended school to Class 9. Of the other locally based husbands, one is a tutor living in his wife's father's house. He has been educated up to matriculation (junior high school). The third village based husband occupies his time by overseeing his land, a rare occurence in modern day Comilla.

There are four husbands who are employed outside the village; one was the clerk in Sylhet already mentioned. Of the other three, two are sub-inspectors of police, the third works for a government department in Dacca. Two of these men have been educated through Class 5, one through Class 8.

There is only scanty information on the families of orientation of these husbands. For the most part, their fathers were either farmers or employed in non-agricultural occupations such as office boys, clerks, contractors, rail line inspectors, or as government officials. From the information gathered, six of the seven men mentioned have been educated ranging from Class 3 to matriculation (junior high school).

Of the families of orientation of the mediators, their fathers were employed for the most part as farmers. However, the information regarding their husbands' fathers was scanty as many of the fathers-in-law had died before the marriage of the mediator. For this reason there is little information available. In one case, the father-in-law was a sub-inspector of police, educated to an Intermediate Arts level, his wife being educated through Class 7. However, this is the exception to the others.

Of the present families of procreation, there are 29 children altogether, a mean of four children per family. Of these children 50 per cent, or 18 out of 29 are going to school. The largest family

has eight children. The mediator with the smallest family, of two children is pregnant with her third child. In these families all children of school age are sent, boys and girls, and not just one boy out of a family as is the case in the other two types of families. For the majority of the mediators in the two other types of families, the attitude towards education is exemplified by the woman who stated, "One boy should be educated. It will improve his commonsense." These families are just beginning to put into practice that which the higher status families observe as a tradition. For the poorer families however the realization is just coming that educated girls make better marriages, and that educated boys have better occupational opportunities. For most of these families, the desire for education is being matched for the first time with the economic resources to make it possible. The education of some of the children of these poorer families is an example of new ways of building prestige and position in the village. For the families in the high prestige, non-agricultural families, the education of children is not a rare occurence, but a standard procedure. Rather than build prestige or position for these families, educating children is one of the ways of maintaining the position and prestige already held.

Regarding the education of the mediators themselves, two of them have been educated through Class 5, one through Class 6, two attended school to the eighth grade, one through Class 10, and one passed the equivalent of junior high school.

Contact and Exposure to Outside World

To get some idea of the social networks involvement and geographical movement of the village women before they became mediators, questions were asked regarding mobility and friendship patterns within the village, and types and extent of contact outside the village.

Mobility in the village

In the discussion of the traditional criterion for status for women, the observance of purdha was mentioned as being extremely important.

Included in the ideal observance of purdha is the restriction of a woman's movements to only the bari of her husband, and an occasional trip to her father's bari. In terms of village patterns, the freedom of movement of women is a reflection on the position and status of a family. Those families which have status and position to maintain, and the economic sufficiency to sustain it, endeavor to keep their women within the narrow confines of the bari. In families where there is great economic need, there is not this choice and many times the women of these families must work in other baris in order to help maintain their families. Since it is the male line that carries the prestige and status of a family, the mobility of the family women is a reflection on the status of the men. Because a woman carries the status of her husband and his family, and has little status of her own in terms of the village, the necessity that would bring her out of her bari is not indicative of her status, but only

speaks for the condition of her husband's family. The women are foils in a larger game, and their mobility serves as a threat to the men of their families, especially if a position is being maintained. For extremely poor families this would not be an issue, as their position would fall at the lower end of the status hierarchy in the village.

For those women from destitute families who become mediators, the necessity of being mobile in the village posed few status problems for them. However, for the women from more affluent families, there was a general reluctance in moving with any great freedom or regularity in the villages. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the teachers handled this problem by establishing classes in baris having relatively similar socio-economic status. They also established work routines which found them holding classes in their own, and one other bari, but making few, if any, trips to the baris of their students. The impetus for working in the first place was more an attempt to increase or maintain an already established status than it was to build rank. In the village system of values, education and teachers are highly esteemed. To be a teacher therefore, carries a certain status with it that could counter any opprobrium engendered by a woman's moving outside the confines of her bari.

Restricted movement in the village

The mediators reported varying degrees of mobility in their villages before joining the Academy's program. Four of the women ob-

served that they did not go "out to other baris." One woman remarked, "I was a village wife, therefore I could go to my uncle's bari but to no other." (Her bari is separated only by a tank (pond) from the bari of her uncle. To go there she must wear a burkha). Three of the four women are married with husbands working. These women have had some education; two of them up to junior high school, one to Class three. The fourth woman is uneducated. She is married to an older, extremely conservative Orthodox Muslim, who rigorously controlled her movements. Just prior to coming to the Academy, this woman's husband left her, thereby enabling her to have greater mobility, and also precipitated greater need to support herself and her family.

Three of the four come from poor economic conditions. The exception is the highly educated woman from a well-to-do family. Similar to the woman with the conservative husband, the other women have conservative fathers or in-laws who restrict the movement of their women folk. This would be particularly true of families having tenuous positions in the village, where a small deviation from the standard pattern has greater consequence than for a higher status family which can afford to deviate. In this sense, it is the families in the middle that bear the brunt of maintaining whatever the village patterns are thought to be. The more prestigeful families are "above" most censure, and the economically poor have little status of consequence in the first place. One of these four followed a distinctive pattern however, in

that while not allowed to go about in the village, she did go to town to sell the sewing she had done.

Mobility extending to relatives' baris

Five mediators allege that prior to entering the Academy program they went to relatives' baris in their own but not in other villages. One of these is a Hindu woman, fairly young, who says that her husband and the village people do not like it if women go freely in the village. She did go occasionally for some religious ceremonies and functions. The other four women are Muslim. One, an older widow, comes from a conservative family. She has been a teacher of Arabic to village girls, a position of some repute in the village. Being a source of religious teaching meant that the teacher was held as a model for the young girls, a position which carried with it greater expectations, making it unseemly for the teacher to go freely in the village. Also her sasur (father-in-law) survived her husband, and he controlled her movement in the village. The other three women are married with employed husbands, representing the highest socio-economic levels in the sample. All four of the women are educated, from Class 3 to Class 8. Much of the restrictions put on their movements in their villages stems from their relatively high socio-economic positions. Both family members and non-family villagers expect women from such families to be restricted in their movements.

Mobility extending to neighboring baris, both relative and non-relative

Seven of the 24 women mediators observed that before coming to the Academy they could or did go to other near-by baris in their villages, to both related and non-related baris. Three of these women are widows of low economic condition. Their increased mobility grew out of their low economic condition. That is, necessity demanded they work to support their families, and being of widow status the norms of purdha do not obtain for them. Two of the seven are married, but all of low economic condition. Two of the women were old, their husbands are unemployed because of illness or age. What contributions they do make to the family income comes from selling land. The other two married wives are young. Their husband s work outside the village, so their movements are freer. In addition, one young wife is living in her father's village which also increases her mobility. As mentioned before young girls. and women once married have greater freedom in their father's village than do daughters-in-law in the same village, or than they do in their husband's village.

Relatively unrestricted mobility

One third (eight) of the mediators relate that before coming to the Academy they moved with relative freedom in the village. All of these women are uneducated. Of these women, one an older Hindu, was allowed a certain freedom in the village because of her age and religion. An additional factor, her husband was the first manager for

their village's cooperative society. In this newly developing position of leadership in the village, the husband could use his influence with the society members to win permission for his wife to go too in the village.

Four of the eight women, less restricted in their movement, had been employed. The economic necessity to support their families outweighed the tabu on movement. Three of the four are widows. The one married woman and her husband formed a nuclear family with no extended kin, hence the wife and husband had to rely on their own earnings for subsistence.

Another Muslim woman who enjoys a certain amount of freedom in her village is a remarried widow. Originally she had been raised and lived as a married woman in the town and had come to the village only upon her second marriage. These elements in her background plus her age gives her a mobility that other women did not have.

The two remaining women in this category live in their fathers' villages. One is divorced; the other, although married, does not reside in her in-laws' village. Her husband is employed outside his village. Both of these women come from relatively sufficient economic conditions; the former mediator is part of an upwardly mobile family; the later woman a member of a joint family just breaking up.

Friendship patterns

In the village society, particularly in the world of women, friendship is a kin related phenomena. Given the system of purdha which restricts the movement of most women in the villages, and the lack of specific functions or duties that bring non-related women together, it is not surprising that half of the mediators report not having friends. The family is such an important unit in the village that most of the routine of daily living is carried out within the confines of the bari. There is little time, or need (as seen by other family members) for women to obviate traditional patterns by forming a closeness with other women who are not related.

Part of the friendship patterns in the villages is also influenced by the training and orientation given to young girls. That is, they are socialized to anticipate fulfilling the roles of wife and mother. However, in terms of self-identity there appears to be little emphasis given to a girl as an individual with the attendant series of expectations, interests, and rights that would accompany such a self-concept. The girl is trained to be a wife and mother, but there is little socialization of her as a unique individual. In terms of interaction with others, she is responded to and expectations are held of her, in terms of her position in the family. Mention has already been made of the fact that women are not called by name, but by kin term, or designation. The only exception to this pattern is while the girl is very young.

Another exception to the general patterning in the village, is for those girls who attend the primary school. Here the emphasis is on the child as an individual, or at least is based on non-familial terms. It is in the school milieu as well, that the young girl has the opportunity to meet and associate with other girls her own age. In this situation friendships are formed, which add another dimension to the experience of the child. Friendships that are formed in school last until the marriage of the girls involved. In some cases the friendship continues after marriage. Since only a minute percentage of the total female population goes to school, those who receive the advantages of friendships, besides the education, are girls from higher status village families.

The village women mediators spoke of a "friend" as "Someone who always talks with you, about good and bad, who tells secrets. (Friends are) fond of one another; they eat together." Another woman observed, "Those things that I tell her (friend) she doesn't tell to anyone else." The mediators were asked who their friends were before coming to the Academy. Ten of the total twenty-four women replied that they had no friends. Some comment, "It is un-Islamic to have them." Another woman elaborates her answer as follows: "I have no friends. I never made "relatives" of non-relatives either. I am friendly with the village people, but have no friends." This is an excellent summary of the friendship patterns in the villages among older married women. This woman, in saying that she never makes relatives of non-relatives,

is saying in effect, that she never enters into special or favorite relationships with people who are not already her kin. A friend for this woman, is a relative with whom one had a preferred relationship. Friendship in this sense, becomes an additional quality added on to an already established kin relationship. Others of the mediators attested to the veracity of this statement, but none so succinctly stated it.

Seven of the women, particularly those who have been to school as children claim they had friends as young girls in their fathers' baris. Two of the women who have not attended school, also report having friends in their father's baris when they were young children. This does not mean that they have friends in their husbands' villages after marriage. Before joining the program at the Academy, most of the women mention they they had no friends in their husbands' villages.

Seven mediators report having friends in their villages now. In some cases the friends are relatives, in one case it is a man, or is a childhood friend. These are women who are either maintaining ties with childhood school friends, or women who are the most mobile of the women before coming to the Academy. Present friendships seemingly arise out of two situations: one, the women have remained near or returned to their childhood baris and have continued friendships established in childhood; or second, they are mobile and either establish new friends or are able to keep old friendships alive despite separation or marriage.

In regard to other contacts with women, in the villages, the mediators commented that those women who went from bari to bari are most often the older women, not wives. The women who can "visit" in the villages are the older women, for whom purdha no longer applies, i.e., grandmothers. When women come visiting, the mother-in-law or the oldest woman of the bari is called. She does the entertaining, not the younger women of the family. Ten women claim that women may go at night to other baris, in order to get something, to find out some information, or to attend a special function. Nine of the mediators say they went to other baris only on special occasions. In general there appears to be no set patterns of regular association among women outside their immediate bari. There is no convenient well from which to draw water, and exchange gossip. There are no clubs, or even times in a day when the women are most likely to gather just to gossip. Within each family, there are periods when the work lessens, and at these times the women of the family rest. Within the family hierarchy, young wives may converse together, but it is not considered proper to talk freely with the mother-in-law or older wives.

To assess the possibility and frequency of contact of the mediators with outside places, they were asked how often they visited the Comilla town before they began working for the Academy. Eleven of them commented that they did not visit the town before they began going to the Academy. Eight women mentioned they went through the

town on the way to the baris of relatives, or rarely went on other occasions. Only five of the women noted they came with any regularity to the town; to see a doctor, to attend the cinema, to perform pujas, or to visit relatives living in the town.

Mobility outside the village

No matter what the mobility patterns of women within their villages of residence, all who live away from their fathers' baris periodically visit in their bari of origin. The only exceptions are orphans.

It is customary to visit a father's bari after the main rice harvests and after preparing the paddy into rice. The pattern is for the father, brother or head of the woman's family of origin to write or send an emissary to the husband's village, asking for a time when the wife could visit. The woman's husband's family decides when she can go and sends an answer. At the agreed upon time, a representative is sent to get the wife and accompany her home. In some cases, the husband and young children also go for the visit. The length of the visit varies from two weeks to many months, depending on such factors as the economic ability of a family to feed visiting daughters, and the capacity of the husband's family to cook for, watch over, and take care of the husband and children not visiting with the woman in her father's bari.

For fourteen of the women, their fathers' baris are in a different village, but in the same thana, as their husband's. For two of

the women, their husband's bari is in the same village as their father's. Four of the mediators come from different thanas (counties) to live in their husband's villages. Three of these women are from the educated, fairly well-to-do families of the sample. The fourth woman was raised in the town and moved to the village with her second husband. Three of the mediators live in their fathers' baris. None of them intimated that there are set times for visiting their in-laws, i.e., husband's bari. One of these women is divorced, and the other two women said there is no set time for going.

Except for those women who have to travel to another thana to reach their fathers' bari, the vast majority of the mediators have the boundary of the Comilla thana as the parameter in which they move. Within the thana, three-quarters of them are limited to restricted movement within their own villages, or to movement between their husbands' village and their fathers' village. The spatial limitations to their mobility both within and without the village is important in terms of their general orientation to the world, and in terms of the range and depth of experience possible to them. The narrow dimensions of their world, both spatial and intellectual, found the majority of the mediators largely unknowing and unsophisticated about relatively simple things when they first joined the Academy's program. In their association with the Academy this means that learning occurs in areas not of direct programmatic concern to the Academy, but still basic

to the development of role related behavior of the mediators. Examples are learning to sit on chairs, to sign their names, to come to class on time, to use flush toilets, or to wrap their saris "correctly." The previous, relative isolation of the mediators, while limiting their knowledge and experience of the world ourside their villages, made them acutely aware of the problems and happenings related to their own families. This extensive knowledge about their families and the juxtaposition of the Academy's alternatives and resources served as an impetus for quickly learning, accepting and utilizing those aspects of the Academy's program most applicable to their own situations and needs. The classes and techniques taught at the Academy had immediate usefulness for the women. Also their previous isolation resulted in the women being without preconceived notions of good or bad, or set biases. That which the Academy taught seems applicable and possible. The Academy is a prestigeful institution, and the mediators are willing to listen to what the Academy people say. The end result is that village women learn a great deal in short periods of time. This being the case, for many of the mediators the association with the Academy is a means for their own personal development, with the benefits gradually being extended to other village women by the mediators.

Marginality

As has been maintained earlier, mediators are thought to be to a certain extent marginal to modal village patterns, but integrated enough

that they have some degree of influence within their villages. However, "marginality" in this sense does not signify the more standard meaning of persons or people standing between two groups, fitting neither. Nor does "marginality" connote psychological marginality. That is, the village women mediators are not deviants or neurotics. They are not dealing with psychological problems and are not using the Academy as an alternative attempt to solve insoluble problems of their past. Instead their efforts are aimed at coping with external problems, over which they have little control.

"Marginality" as used in the context of the village women connotes structural influences causing the women to be marginal, not those resulting from influences of personality. The personal experiences of the mediators are not unique from the vast pattern of village life. For them as well as for the majority of village people, it is "Fate" which allocates and controls their lives. For this reason, widows are not ostracized for working in other baris, nor are the vicissitudes plaguing a family thought to be retribution for past behavior. In this sense, the misfortune occuring in a family is not thought "to be brought on" by the family members themselves. An individual is thought to be only minimally responsible for the consequences of his or her actions. One can be "ashamed," that is, by bringing dishonor on his or her family, but the individual is not held to be personally "guilty," that is, directly responsible for what happens.

The mediators, in terms of personality types, vary in temperment, disposition and so on, but all come within the range of normal expectations of what is acceptable behavior by village standards. They are "fringe" people in terms of structural happenings over which they have little or no control. Because they are structurally fringe people, and not psychologically marginal, the mediators are able to channel their energies to the attempted solution of external problems. Not being bothered by internal problems, they can remain open to new experiences and respond to new situations which are not threatening psychologically. In this sense, the village women could channel their energies to becoming mediators, even though the position represented something new and unheard of in the villages. To the women, working for the Academy was perceived as an alternative way of coping with the problems facing them. Being open to new experiences, they can and do learn quite fast.

Using the factors of marital status, children, socio-economic status, education, age-grades, and mobility, one can see elements conducive of both integration and marginality influencing the position of mediators in their villages. For example, in regard to marital status, all of the mediators are or have been married, which gives them a higher status than a single woman. The fact of marriage gives them full adult status, and is a factor integrating them in the village structure. Twenty-two out of twenty-four of the mediators have children which further

ties them into the structure of the village. However, only four of the mediators have marital situations which conform to normal expectations. The rest are all marginal in some way: seven of the mediators are widows, two are divorced or separated; six of the fifteen employed husbands work outside the village, and five husbands living in the village are unemployed.

The socio-economic status of the mediators finds only three of them coming from relatively advantaged economic conditions. These families have men working in high prestige jobs or overseeing family property. Theirs are relatively "old" prestigeful families in which there is a tradition of educating children, including girls. This represents a highly desired but seldom obtained condition in the village.

Of the remaining twenty-one women, six of them mention having food for most of the year but having to buy through the short season. Fifteen of the women in this category, with or without husbands, reported being poor. Four of them, three widows, and one married woman, worked in other baris before joining the program at the Academy. Being poor, or in economic need is not in itself a factor of marginality as this is a condition of many villagers, particularly the small farmer. What is marginal is the response made to economic need and the results of these actions to the mediator and her family. The acceptance of a position with the Academy is in itself, a response that the vast majority of village women would not make.

In considering education, the eleven uneducated mediators fit the general pattern in the village, as few women are educated. What stands out as being different is their learning to sign their names and some basic literacy during the course of their work for the Academy. Those five women who are from the better families and are the most educated of the sample are marginal in a different way from the others. They represent an extremely small minority in a society in which even the ability to sign one's name is considered an achievement for a woman. The marginality incurred by high status poses different problems for these mediators than for others. Largely this revolves around being accepted by other villagers. High status villagers are looked up to but not emulated. Their lives are too different from those of the average villager to be models or an obtainable reality. Those with high prestige are above the patterns most known and adhered to in the village. They can "afford" not to observe certain norms, as their position in the village would not be endangered.

As mentioned before, in terms of age-grades, mediators are neither very young or very old women from the village population. They are not expendable people whose going to the Academy or doing something new would simply be discounted as deviancy. Rather they are wives, either still bearing or rearing their children, actively engaged in caring for and managing the family and household.

Also, before they became mediators, the women had only limited mobility in their villages. Except for seven of the women who moved with more freedom than the others, the general pattern was the observance of purdha, as defined by each village, in terms of what was permissible movement for women in the village. For example, one woman who is extremely poor said that in spite of her poor economic condition, her relatives would not let her go to other baris to work, but rather had her stay at home, while they contributed to her support.

In general, it is the participation of these women in the Academy's program, and their response to the presentation of new alternatives that mark them as marginal in ways that they were not before. The fact that they acted as catalytic agents in the village influencing and encouraging change in other women, shows a degree of their being accepted and integrated in the village. Without it, the village response to the mediator's behavior could have been quite different, that is, the responses to a deviant vis-a-vis the response to a non-conforming group member.

Types of Mediators

In order to ascertain possible differences among mediators certain aspects of their behavior were considered in looking for general similarities of patterns. The women represented as mediators, may or may not be representative sample of general village women before they become mediators. But now that they are teachers and organizers

they are different. In ascertaining types, the variables of education, social status, and the "centrality" of the mediator in her family are used as discriminators. These three factors are considered as being the most useful in denoting differences among the mediators, especially when taken together. In assessing possible types, it was found that except for high socio-economic status mediators, the remainder clustered together. Taken separately, none of the three factors mentioned was able to clearly discriminate types. When considered together, the factors of education, social status and the centrality of a woman in her family give indications of possible types among the mediators. However these factors are used as ways of distinguishing possible nascent patterns emerging and coalescing around various mediators. The factors are not meant as predictable units determining who would or would not be "good" organizers or teachers. That is, the factors of education, social status, and the centrality of a woman in her family are units which join together in different ways giving some insight into possible types among the mediators. These distinctions held for the majority of the mediators, but not for all. Four of the women seem to represent somewhat different patterns of adjustments to being mediators.

Social status

Among the twenty-four women in the sample there seems to be a basic differentiation between those women who represent families having

some social status in the villages, and those who have very little. Having or not having social status is also closely aligned with economic condition.

Among the mediators there are thirteen women who come from fairly low positions in the village. These include the widows, with one exception; those with the greatest economic need, with husbands that are not working, or are employed in menial occupations. These are women for whom purdha does not hold as they have few of the accoutrements necessary for its observance. Necessity demands that these women also participate in supporting the family. Except for three of these women, the majority are uneducated.

The remaining eleven mediators come from families having some to fairly high status in the villages. Except for two mediators in this group, the economic conditions of these families is relatively advantaged. That is, some have their own rice for a year, and do not have to purchase any from the local market. For others in this group, rice has to be purchased for a few months each year. Of the two exceptions, one is the widowed Arabic teacher, the other is also a widow, whose economic condition was greatly weakened by the lingering illness of her husband. All except one of these women have had some education. Eight of the eleven are teachers.

It should be noted that social status as discussed here is expressed in terms of the status of the husband's family. As mentioned

before the woman reflects the status of her father or husband in terms of the social structure of a village. However, mention will be made later of the individual status of the mediator, separate from (and in addition to) the one of her husband and its influence on her ability to work as a mediator. In regard to village work, the status of her husband gives the mediator a stratum of the village population in which to work. This stratum usually is complementary to the status of her husband's family. For example, the teaching mediators, coming from the higher status families, tend to establish a class in another relatively high status family bari. Girls and wives from other (lower) status families can attend the classes, but the teacher does not visit these baris very often. For the teachers in general, the village work is utilized to maintain the status already established by the family. For the organizers, on the other hand, their work centers on families who have roughly the same economic condition and social status. The organizers can and do move more freely in their villages, as they have less status to maintain. For them, the work in the village becomes a way of building or improving family status. No matter what their orientation, however, all mediators are establishing new patterns of behavior as, through their work, they become contributors themselves to family status.

Education

In considering the mediators as a group irrespective of the villages from which they come, a simple distinction is made between those mediators who are educated and those who are uneducated. Education is thought of, not in terms of Arabic, but in terms of studying Bengali and attending a primary school, or studying by tutor. The crucial element is a certain mastery of literacy in Bengali. Education is thought to be a crucial variable as it is a scarce phenomena in the villages particularly among women. It is thought that any family that can afford or would make the effort to give some education to its girls would differ in many other respects as well from other families. In general, this distinction proves useful and viable.

There are thirteen out of a total of twenty-four mediators who have had some education. The range is from class three to matriculation (junior high school). Only four of the thirteen women have gone beyond primary school. There are eleven women who are mediators who have never had any formal schooling. On the whole, the educated women are younger than the uneducated women. Of the thirteen educated mediators, four of them are those women designated as being young wives, that is, under thirty years of age. Seven of the educated mediators are in the middle age category of mid-thirties to forties, and only two are older women. In contrast, among the uneducated mediators there are four women between the ages of early thirties and forties. The remaining seven uneducated mediators are over forty years.

Among the uneducated mediators, five are widows and one is separated from her husband. Of the five uneducated mediators with husbands, only two husbands are working. One is a Hindu, of the weaver caste, working in an Ashram in another Thana. The other is a Muslim who is employed as a day laborer. Of the three unemployed husbands, one is too old to work, another is ill, and the third is only irregularly employed as he performs circumcisions, or sometimes works as a laborer.

Centrality of mediators in their families

In order to conceptualize the position of the mediators in their families and baris, the idea of "centrality" is used. By this term is meant the relative responsibility and possible influence of a mediator in her family. The centrality of a woman may be due to no other factor than there being no others with whom to share her responsibilities within the family. In the traditional culture of Bengal, the oldest woman member of the family is in charge of the women's duties and household responsibilities. In joint families, this could be the husband's grandmother, or his mother, In extended families, the woman in charge may be the oldest wife ("jal") of the eldest son, or the mother-in-law, ("sasuri"). In a small nuclear family, the wife carries the total burden. Her relationship with her husband, in this sense, may be more direct than in larger families, as she manages the house herself, makes her own recommendations on what items should be purchased, and even plays some part in the decisions that are made regarding the family.

For smaller families, the increased importance and responsibility held by a woman is indicative of an additional factor. Most often small families tend to be economically poor as well. For in the preferred Islamic pattern, economic sufficiency manifests itself in the ability to care and provide for large families. Sufficient resources means that for all family members food can be purchased, medical aid secured, education provided, and suitable marriages arranged for the children. In a society in which there is no government or village system of social security, the family has this as one of its primary responsibilities. Providing those items mentioned above is part of this security. But an important additional function of the family is to provide "human resources" of extended and distant kin, beyond the family group itself. With "human resources," disasters can be mitigated by having others to help in times of need. Part of being poor is not having others with whom to share the vicissitudes or the joys of life. Within kinship groups the ties are so binding that one relative has to assist another. But because of these ties and responsibilities there is little "civic" or communal help patterns. A man would be more likely to extend aid to a distant relative than to a neighbor, if only because he then establishes the lasting obligation of that kinsman to return the help, if it ever becomes necessary.

Most generally also, lack of kin and inadequate economic condition are indicative of and contribute to relatively low social status. Families who have few resources, either economic or familial, have difficulty

finding advantageous marriage partners for their children. In a sense the process becomes "self-fulfilling prophecy" of a type, in that it is a self-generating process which re-establishes the next generation at the same or, more likely, lower level, but rarely increases the position of a family. In this sense, families who are poor can become poorer, but they rarely improve in social status. These families usually lack the accoutrements of status, of which land, money, family ties are part. The village society offers few if any alternatives. After once losing its land, a family may continue to exist in the village, but it has fallen below and out of that part of the social structure that "counts." A bare existence may be maintained, but the future promises little in a society where there are few alternative ways of making a living other than by agriculture. For the women in such a family, the traditional pattern of purdha does not apply, as she has none of the basis for purdha, i.e. economic or social status. In many cases, a woman of a small family can not observe purdha because she has to work to help contribute to the family income. Under these conditions a woman who works is not opposed, she just does not count, as she is not considered by others as a threat to any of the traditional patterns. Within the family itself, because there are few other relatives with whom to share or discuss problems, and because of the reluctance to talk with those outside the family circle, the wife or sons, if old enough, become included in the decisions that are made.

One alternative however, to the situation in the village, is for a family to leave the village and drift into an urban center. There, although the social status is no different, there is the possibility for some work on a more regular basis. The man of the family may find a job as a day laborer, a rickshaw puller, or as a helper in a small shop. This existence offers few advantages except that the family is closer to the facilities of the town, primarily the schools and health clinics. A possible means of improving a family's condition lies in educating one of the sons of the family, at whatever cost. A son who has struggled through primary school has a slightly better chance of finding a more profitable job, and it is on the basis of the occupation of the sons, rather than on land, that status is created by those families in the urban setting.

Education and social status may be considered in relation to the centrality of a woman in her family, and may be considered in relation to each other. In terms of the twenty-four women of the sample, the following clusterings are noticed:

Table 2: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL STATUS OF SAMPLE VILLAGE MEDIATORS

		Social Status: High	Social Status: Low	Total
Education	Educated	10	3	13
	Uneducated	1	10	11
	TOTAL	11	13	24

In regard to social status, "high" and "low" degrees of status are relative terms in that the significance of status is in its basic presence or absence. For village people who do not have status positions in the village, the norms and expectations of others towards them differ from those held for villagers who have positions to maintain. As mentioned before, the landless families, or the widows have "fallen below" the level that "counts" in the village society. While there are relative differences also among those who do have positions in the villages, the most significant difference is between those who have and those who do not have status in the villages. For this reason, high status in the table is a combination of those mediators who represent families that have status in the village, combining high and "medium" degrees. The significant differential is between those who have and those who do not have much, if any.

Table 3: "CENTRALITY" OF POSITION OF WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Centrality of Position

		High	Low	Total
Education	Educated	8	5	13
	Uneducated	11	-	11
	TOTAL	19	5	24

The general relationship between centrality and education is that in families in which there is not the education of women, and (by implication) general economic need, the women have positions of greater responsibility and weight than in families in which there are more women, with the younger women being educated but having less responsibility. Part of the assumption, as mentioned before, is that families with greater degrees of status than others, also have more advantageous economic conditions and larger families. An indication of status, and economic affluence is the education of women. For eight of the mediators above, a seeming contradiction is implied in their having education yet high centrality. Some insight is gained when it is noted that five of the husbands of these women are employed outside the village, therefore making their wives more responsible for the management of the family affairs if only by default. Those five mediators having education and low centrality are those coming from the highest status and most economically advantaged families represented in the sample. The remaining three mediators, are women who have made particularly individual adjustments to the mediators role.

Table 4: "CENTRALITY" OF POSITION OF WOMEN IN THEIR FAMILIES AND SOCIAL STATUS

		Centrality of Position		
		High	Low	Total
Social Status	High	6	5	11
	Low	13	-	13
	TOTAL	19	5	24

In brief, the table shows that women having low status have more likelihood of also having high centrality in their families. Five of six women who show high centrality and social status, represent women who have some status in their villages, yet whose husbands work out of the village. (For this category and in all mention of status, except where expressly defined otherwise, status is considered to be that of the husband's family). The sixth mediator is one who will be discussed later under the heading of those making individual responses to the mediating experience.

In combining education and status and considering it in relation to the centrality of position of women in their husband's families, the following clustering appears.

Table 5: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL STATUS IN RELATION TO CENTRALITY OF POSITIONS OF WOMEN

Education and Social Status

		High Education-Status	Low Education-Status	Total
Centrality of Position	High	5	10	15
	Low	5	-	5
	TOTAL	10	10	20
Non-categorized individual response		-	4	4

Nascent forms or clusterings of patterns of behavior which may or may not be trends of the future appear in three general groupings, with four mediators who do not seem to cluster together, not do they seem to be similar to the other patterns that appear to be emerging.

The first type of mediator are those five women who have low centrality of position in their husband's families, and are educated. Their husband's families also have relatively high prestige in comparison with the other families in the sample. Their economic condition is such that the husbands are either working out of the village in high prestige occupations such as Inspectors of Police, or in other positions for the government. In one case the husband is overseeing his land in the village, and has no formal outside occupation. In regard to family size, these families are larger than the other families in the sample, with the mediators having less responsibility within it. One of the mediators in this category is divorced, but her father's family is of sufficient prestige and status in the village so that she does not suffer from the loss of status involved in divorce. Four of these five mediators are teachers. They all are educated. The one mediator that is not a teacher is an organizer. One other woman in this grouping has held both positions of teacher and organizer. In her own words she comments on her efforts in both positions by saying

> "I haven't done very good work in education. I have only had seven students receive their certificates. But I have done other work of the organizer for a longer time and I do this much better, so my name can sit on the top step for this."

For the five women in this type, their work in the village is a way of maintaining the already established status of their husband's or father's family. That is, as teachers they work in the village on comparable levels of established families, but allow and concentrate on women of other lower positioned families as students. Because of the high esteem that is attributed to teaching, these women are not jepordizing their husband's or father's position in the village by teaching literacy to village women. By having classes in baris of similarly advantaged families, the teaching mediator does not lose status by going to these baris. Also by having the students come to her, and by the teacher not going in the village to the baris of the students, she is reiterating a pattern already known in the village of higher status people not going to the baris of those not as advantaged.

A second type that appears is composed of five mediators who although educated and from families having status in their villages, have positions of high centrality in their families. As mentioned earlier, the cause of this high centrality in the family of procreation for three of these mediators, is due to the outside village employment of their husbands. Because the men of the family are not home except during leave, the women have to assume much more responsibility for the day to day management of their bari affairs. In cases of major decision-making the husband continues to make decisions, but the women probably also have some say in the matter. In these three families, there are

parents or in-laws living in the same bari, or in the same village. In other words, these are fairly large families, with many kinship ties. For two of these mediators, the death of their husbands makes them of high centrality in their families. In general, the economic conditions of these families is not as advantaged as those families of the first type mentioned.

Among the five mediators in this second type, three are teachers and two women work both as teachers and organizers. One of the widows is an older woman; two of the women are of middle age, and two of the mediators are young wives. For these five mediators, the work in the village is primarily a way of building prestige or contributing to that which the family already has. The three teachers follow much the same pattern of instruction as do the teachers of the first type mentioned, in that they go to relatively the same advantaged families in their villages to open centers. The students in their classes come from neighboring baris, and some from other paras to attend class. The teachers however only rarely goto the baris of their students. In the case of these teachers, the position of their families is such that the uniqueness of their efforts in the village will add to the status of their families. Their families are not so well established that their own work and earnings will not enhance their general position in the village. The two women who work both as teacher and organizer follow somewhat of a different pattern, but in general much of the instruction that is given is done in the context of

the literacy classes. Part of the variation that occurs in their work is that they travel more in the villages, seeing the work of the women in their own baris.

By far the largest grouping are those mediators who are uneducated and who have relatively poor economic conditions before becoming mediators. They also have high centrality in their families. There are ten mediators who come within this grouping. Six of these mediators are widows, one woman is separated from her husband. Of the remaining three women who have husbands, only one of them is working, the other two husbands are unemployed. These are families which would be defined as being poor by the village, before their women begin working for the Academy. Generally they are landless, or with very little land. There is not enough food, and little resource to rely on in case of need. Part of the reason for the high centrality of the women of these families, is that their lack of economic affluence is matched by a dirth of kinpeople. That is, the families are without many or strong extra-nuclear family ties. On an economic basis there is little to support relational ties as these are subsistence families. Within the family each of these mediators has the majority of the responsibility for the household affairs, and in some cases, for the entire support of the family. Before joining the Academy's work, four of these women worked in other baris. Without exception, these women are old.

The mediators in this group are all organizers. Their work requires that they teach other village women about health and economic subjects related to the bari and family. In contrast to the teachers, the work pattern of the organizers is that they go from bari to bari in the village working and socializing with the women. The mode of instruction is by demonstration and interpretation given by the mediator in terms that are meaningful to other village women. Most of the baris in which work is being done are of comparable condition to those of the mediators before they began working for the Academy. The organizers tend to seek out women of the same economic base and social status. The majority of their work therefore is focused on the lower strata of the village population.

There are four women whose adjustments to the role of mediator are such that they fit none of the categories discussed above. Two of these women are Hindus, which sets them apart from the majority of the population in Comilla. Many of their adjustments to the role of mediator are made in terms of being minorities in a society. One of the Hindu women is the woman whose husband's family has some status in the village, yet she is uneducated. She also has worked with many different types of families in her village, and has not just sought her own equals to work with. The other Hindu woman comes from a particularly conservative family, in which the husband is only irregularly employed. Although educated, the economic conditon of the husband's family is poor. Their status in the village is not high. The former Hindu woman is an organizer, the latter is a teacher.

The two remaining women are Muslim. Both are married. Both seemingly have made relatively disadvantageous marriages from the prior status of their respective father's. That is, both are married to day laborers, of little education and economic means, while their fathers were clerks, educated. The two mediators themselves are educated. Both of these women are organizers, and live in or fairly close to the town. One of the women is somewhat unreliable in her interpretation of events as there seems to be an attempt going on of trying unsuccessfully to match the experience in her father's bari to what she is experiencing now in her husband's. For the other mediator, a generally unhappy home life gives a certain impetus to work for the Academy as a way of seeking some security that is otherwise lacking.

CHAPTER 4.

The Identity of Mediators: In Relation to the Academy

Recruitment

The initial selection of women to represent a village at the Academy was left up to the local cooperative society in each village. In the beginning of the women's program it had been decided to work only within those villages having an already established cooperative program. A cooperative society, being a new phenomena itself, was thought to already include villagers with a certain propensity to change. Hence it was deemed expedient to capitalize on this interest in establishing a women's program. Throughout the existence of the program this association and linkage between the local cooperative men's society and the women's program has been maintained. In a few cases, women's work began in villages where there was great interest among the women for the program before a men's cooperative was established. It is within the local cooperative society that village women are making some of the first attempts at mutual participation with men. As discussed later, this is not without problems, and it offers an illuminating backdrop in which to observe new patterns being created, modified, and maintained.

Within the traditional society of Pakistan, religious, institutional, social and economic factors tend to coalesce in what manifests itself in a largely heterosocial world. That is, there are such few areas outside of the home in which men and women have legitimate interacting roles, that

the men's world is quite exclusive of the women's. This separation is enhanced by the system of purdha, by the agricultural basis of the economy, by the illiteracy, poor health and low levels of living. For example, village women do not work in the field helping to cultivate and care for rice; unless of low social status, or advanced age, they do not go to bring water from a distant tube well, nor do they tend goats, or bring leaves for the cooking fires. It has already been pointed out that few girls go to school. After puberty they are to remain in the bari. As the women observe, "the young girl that gets into trouble is the responsibility of the village. The wife that gets into trouble is the responsibility of her husband and family." This is one reason why, upon marriage, whatever freedom that was enjoyed in the father's bari is further curtailed. The young wife is to remain in the bari, and not go in the village. The mediators mention that it is only after having two or three children that the restrictions lessen regarding a woman's movements in her husband's bari. By breaking social convention a woman may damage her reputation, but more seriously may lessen the family name of her husband.

In terms of the village and larger society, village women have little active part. They do not go to market, or engage in business. They hold no official posts, nor have official functions to perform. The only exception is the village midwife, a role usually filled by a destitute woman who has no other means of livelihood. In regard to the larger social

world, it is truly a man's world. For village women other than the mediators, the cooperative society is perhaps the first possibility for them to join in what is primarily a man's organization. For the majority of the villages, there has been no village-based institution such as the cooperative society attempted before. For the women, the cooperative offers an opportunity to save regularly and to reap dividends from saving in the form of small capital loans, and food loans. Part of the difficulty in the woman's association with the cooperative society is that there are no precedents to follow in determining how the women should be treated. There is a tendency on the part of some of the village men to allow the women to get loans in return for becoming members, and buying shares. Other villages however, have difficulty in taking the participation of the women seriously; and are willing to allow the women to save through the cooperative society, but not to reap the benefits of membership. On the women's side, the lack of previous experience in such a situation makes them hesitant and reluctant to stand up for their rights, if only because they are not sure just what exactly their rights are. There are virtually no women who have had the previous experience in talking or working with men. It is one of the functions that the mediators are having to learn, and it is presenting difficulties. However, it is in just this type of situation where diverse interests come together that new patterns of behavior, and social norms will develop.

Within the confines of the bari and in matters relating directly to the family, women do have a part to play. As mentioned in connection with the centrality of a woman in her family, a woman has considerable influence particularly as she advances in age, and becomes more responsible for the decisions made regarding the women's concerns. Also with age and children a woman increases in prestige within the family, and acquires the right to speak in some decisions. In families where there are few people, the woman plays a greater role in everyday concerns, simply because there is no one else.

In this context, it is not surprising to find that much of the initial impetus for the recruitment of village women for the women's program came from men. In asking the mediator's how they first heard about the Academy, thirteen of them indicated that it was through a male contact, either father, husband, cooperative manager or school master. In some cases, the contact was also a relative; a husband, uncle, or father who was the manager of the cooperative society, or an uncle who was the village leader. For the mediators who are teachers, three of their main contacts were through the local school master. These mediators indicated that because they had had some education the school master contacted the mediator's guardian in an attempt to enlist the woman in work. Five of the educated mediators were contacted by the cooperative manager, or some other village man. The contact is not a direct one, but through the guardians of these women. None of the uneducated women were contacted

by school masters. However, five of them reported being approached by the cooperative manager or a village man.

Other sources of information about the Academy came from village women who were already associated with the Academy in some way, i.e., as midwives, or family planning agents. Generally speaking, those who were first to join the women's program were most often contacted by men. However, those who joined later heard about the Academy through other women. For nine of the mediators, this was the source of their contact. Two of the mediators first heard about the Academy from a member of the women's program staff. One other woman reported that she came on her own to the Academy, that no one told her to come.

The only criteria given by the Academy for the selection of women was that they be intelligent and educable. Some of the main factors at work on the village level for the selection of women were based on economic need and a certain degree of marginality. As perceived by the women themselves, the most often stated reason for their selection was that they were in great economic need. Six women who reported being selected because of economic need were also of low social status as well; three of them being widows, two with sick husbands, one mediator separated. Three other of the economically disadvantaged mediators asked the manager of their local society for work. That is, two were widows, the sole support of their families, the other an extremely poor woman. One of the mediators was simply told to go by her husband who was the

cooperative manager. One woman came because no one else in the village would, and her husband allowed her to come.

Again the factor of relative marginality comes in, as women of families who can maintain themselves, although not well, would many times not allow a woman to participate in such a program because it was unheard of for women to behave in such a manner, also because such participation, being non-traditional, could cause a loss of family prestige and status. On the other hand, these are not entirely marginal women as they have to meet the Academy's criteria. That is, being intelligent and educable excluded village "expendables" of the aged and defective from being sent. Also as already mentioned, the women are still within the general framework of the village society in terms of observing village purdha, having and living within a family context, and being within the more active, responsibility bearing age-grades within the village.

For the educated mediators the nature of their function in the Academy's program means they represent a different stratum of village society. Their perceptions of why they were chosen emphasized more the factor of being qualified, that is educated. This was particularly the case of the six higher status teachers (not including the widow of lower economic condition). Their families or guardians were asked by school masters or guardians to send them. Three of the women thereupon were told to go and see what it was like; three were asked by a village official to go. Four others of the educated mediators, of lower socio-

economic status, asked for work and were themselves interested in joining the program. One mediator said that she was chosen because she was poor and because no other educated woman would go from her village. For only one of the educated mediators was poor economic condition the reason for selection. One teaching mediator reported being selected because she was a relative of the cooperative manager.

Attendent upon going was having the permission of the guardians of the family involved. Besides the factor of a woman's selection not being self-selection in most cases, going for a visit depended on the permission of the men in her family, father-in-law, uncle, brother, husband, son or step-son. Nineteen of the mediators reported having to gain the permission of the guardians in their family. In at least half of these cases there was disagreement among the men of the family about the woman's going. In cases where father and sons disagreed, the greater status of the father decided the issue. In general, the decision was made in terms of the status hierarchy of the family, i.e., if the head of the household gave his permission, the women could go, even if the husband disagreed.

Three of the women took the permission of their mother and then came. Two came on their own. One said, "There is no father, husband, or father-in-law. So I came on my own." In another instance, a woman came in spite of the disapproval of many of the men in her family.

> "First I came out of my own from the bari. All were against it. I came anyway...(only) husband's younger brother said to go and see. The older brother of my husband said not to go. He said, 'It is not necessary for you to go to the Academy.' My husband didn't want me to go."

Self-Orientation

For the majority of the women, their personal interest in coming was larely related to economic concerns. Three-quarters of the mediators said they came in order to make money, get a salary, have some profit, or receive economic aid. Only six indicated non-economic concerns; two of the teachers were interested in teaching, two in "fame," one teacher wanted to learn sewing and one woman came "just to see."

In general, the mediators did not come to the Academy with the ostensible purpose of themselves undergoing, or causing in others, significant changes. The purpose in coming was in response to the possibility of this being an alternative that had not existed before, that might make a difference to them. It is only through continued experience that the Academy has come to have personal meaning to the mediators, beyond familial concerns. Their attachment to the Academy is the case in point. So is the fact that as the mediators work for the Academy they build or maintain family rank, but at the same time they are creating for themselves their own prestige, which may equal or surpass that of their husband's family. The association with the Academy has given the mediators a new dimension of self which is individually based, which is outside the village structure and patterns in terms of a refer-

ence base, yet which is dependent on village ties for its continued development and support. That is, the new dimension of self is that of the processes and elements involved in being a mediator; the experience with other women at the Academy, the learning of new techniques and ideas, and the translation of this experience and knowledge into usable commodities in the villages, not only within the confines of the mediator's bari, but as extended to other village women, in other village baris. In terms of personal orientation the mediators were originally looking for ways to improve the condition of their families. Only gradually has this desire expanded to become something more, the commitment of the mediator as an individual, to a continued association with the Academy. When commitment becomes a personal desire and interest, the individual involved becomes quite open to the teaching and thinking of the institution involved, and change becomes more rapid and possible.

Reaction to Mediator's Going to the Academy

When the women first began going to the Academy, the reaction in their baris was predominantly one of disapproval. No matter what the economic need, no family wanted a member to be the one to break standard conventions. Sixteen mediators reported there was disapproval to their going for a variety of reasons: that is was "sinful" to do so; that "purdha would be ruined and the women would go bad"; that it was not "done that women work with men." Some of the disapproving villagers felt that the Academy was a "bad place." One mediator mentioned that

her family told her the "for eign shaebs at the Academy would carry her off to America or Japan." On the other hand, three mediators said their bari people did not disapprove about their going as they were poor and in need. Five women said there was approval of their going.

Adjustment of Mediators to the Academy

Although economic need was mainly the structural factor bringing women out of the villages, it was not done easily or without fear and trepidation on the part of the mediators. That is, they were enough a part of the village society to feel acutely the peculiarity of their actions. For the teaching mediators, economic need was offset by a reluctance to "only be at home and do nothing." Four of them mentioned an interest in using their education as an additional reason for coming. When the mediators came for the first time to the Academy, sixteen said they liked it; six said they were afraid and shy; two said they did not like it at all. Two of the mediators made no response to this question. Many of the women also mentioned working at the Academy as a way of making money that could be used for their children, either for their food or for education. Whatever their initial response the mediators returned to the Academy for training. One of the major ways of circumventing family opposition to their continued participation was by using the Academy as a "scapegoat." For example, sixteen of the mediators allege saying to families, "The Apas have told me to come every Wednesday for training. They will give rickshaw fare. I will come and go in one.

It would go right to the door where there are no men." However, the actual coming to the Academy on a regular basis found the majority of the mediators fearful, nervous and shy. As one woman said, "When I first came I did not like it much because I had never seen any place like this before. I did not understand it. I was afraid. I could not speak. Gradually I learned. My courage increased and I began to like it more." Only eight of the mediators maintained they were not afraid in coming. This fear and nervousness extended from the mediators to the staff as well, "the Apas." Many of the women reported feeling like the woman who said, "With the Apas I sat quietly and did not say anything. If they asked me, sometimes I would give an answer. But I was afraid I would make a mistake in speaking."

This is one of the more interesting observable changes in the self that occurred in regard to the mediators. For the vast majority of the women, when they first came to the Academy, they were painfully shy and afraid. As they mentioned they were hesitant to speak more than a few words. In the beginning, the women's response to the Academy was best exemplified by their behavior. That is, at one time it was thought that the women came early to the meetings not to maximize their time, but because the early arrivals got the corners of the room to crouch in, and from this protected vantage point could then hunker behind their burkhas, hoping no one would talk to them. In these early times, not only would the women not talk to the staff, they would not talk to the wo-

man next to them, unless their neighbor happened to be from the same village. Gradually however, over the course of time, this changed. At first the tentative approaches were to the staff, asking them about who they were, making sure they were really Bengalis, finding out about the families of the staff, and about the foreigners. The village women gradually began to talk to one another, asking the same kinds of questions about children, family, village. Over a period of time the social bonds linking these women become so strong that it is for this reason perhaps more than any other that the women enjoy coming to the Academy so much. Without exception the mediators all commented on how attached they were to the Academy, the other village women, and to the staff of the women's program.

Part of the changes in the mediators that has been quite observable is that occuring in their style of dress and deportment. Where once they wore the only saris they had, which were usually dirty and ragged, this has been replaced with clean new cotton saris and blouses and petticoats. The burkha is no longer borrowed, but the mediator has bought her own. The mediators now walk around the grounds of the Academy going in pairs, singly, or small groups to the bank, the cafeteria, dairy, or to one of the government offices. They now can, and do, answer questions put to them by the staff, visitors, or even men. Their poise is ample proof of the increase in their own confidence. As the woman said, their fear has greatly decreased.

Gradually with the continued coming to the Academy, the association with the staff is less fearful, and more close. The mediators observed that the Apas taught them manners, correct speech, etiquette, good behavior, how to wear clothes, keep themselves clean and neat. From the association with the Apas, the mediators said their "fear and shyness decreased," "intelligence," "courage," and "good qualities" increased. They learned "by seeing and being trained." One mediator aptly summed up this relationship by saying, "First I stayed separate from them. I did not know them, there was no attachment between us. Slowly the attachment grew. I began to feel closer to them. Now I have learned unity from here."

Contemporaneous to the development of the relationship with the staff, came the association and interaction with other mediators. Sixteen of the women had not known any of the other mediators before coming to the Academy. "I was a village wife. I had not gone out of the bari. I did not know which village was which. Now I know." Nine of the literate and seven of the illiterate mediators came in this category. For the eight remaining mediators, two had known women in near-by villages, the remainder knew only the women in their own villages.

Upon investigation it was found that all but four of the mediators have particular women with whom they associate while at the Academy. By and large, women of relatively the same age-grade and socio-economic level tend to associate together. For the four remaining women, one

aptly summed up her position by stating, "It is not right to have preferences. I am the same with everyone." One is a teacher who has just recently joined the program, the other two feeling this way are older women.

In an attempt to trace the extension of this relationship among mediators outside of the Academy situation, the mediators were asked which villagesof other mediators they have visited. Among the educated mediators, five have not been to any of the other mediators' baris. Four have gone as supervisors or have been taken by the Apas to see the work in some of the villages. Three commented they have been to other villages by invitation or in the course of traveling back and forth to the Academy. It seems that over a period of time the women have found out who lives near them, form "rickshaw pools," and come together to the Academy, thereby saving extra money. There is no response to this question by one woman. Among the non-educated women the pattern is about the same, only three mediators have not been to any other village. Five have gone on Academy work or have been taken by the staff to see other women's work. Two women have gone, another has only been to the same village in which she previously had been employed.

As mentioned before, the attachment of the mediators to the Academy is quite great. In contrast to their initial fear or shyness, all twenty-four of the women said that if they could not come to the Academy they are upset, and dislike having to stay home. They observed that

they would "come even when sick because the children bother me when I am home." Others report being in "bad moods" if they cannot come. "If I come I have peace. If it is closed I cannot see all the women and the apas; there is no one to talk to." Or as another woman said, "I don't like to stay in the bari. I think when will I be able to leave the house. I don't like to eat rice. If my husband says anything when I can't go, I get angry inside but I don't say anything to him as he would also get angry."

As much as the economic and health facilities available and the training the mediators receive, the social factors are significant in the attachment of the women to the Academy. This is expressed by the fact that all twenty-four of them gave social reasons for disliking having to stay away from the Academy or why they would miss it if it were permanently closed. This is in contrast to the largely economic impetus originally encouraging their coming. Also in terms of the restrictions on their mobility and associative patterns in the villages, the Academy offered to the mediators the heretofore unexperienced freedom and opportunity to socialize. Given the narrowness of their world and the limited opportunities within it, the relationship with the Academy becomes understandably important, if for no other reason than it is the only alternative pattern of behavior available. Also this continual and close association with the Academy, as discussed later, is crucial in not only instituting change, but in providing the atmosphere necessary for continual support and encouragement for those who change.

Socialization

Through the training classes given at the Academy, the meetings and the association with the Apas, and by meeting the criteria necessary for qualifying for loans and economic aid, the mediators are gradually socialized into new ways of behaving and thinking. As mentioned before, the basic instruction dealt with fundamental elements of health, grooming, behavior, personal care besides the more formal subjects taught in classes.

To supplement that which is taught at the Academy, the staff also regularly visits the villages to see the work of the mediator, help with problems, and talk with other village women. The supportive element for the mediator is in this way carried into the villages.

That is, in the process of a mediator's building a new position for herself in the village, her ability to bring high status people into the village to see her, to be concerned with her work, and to take tea in her bari are also ways by which the local mediator increases her status and influence. Before the advent of the women's program, it was unheard of for a village woman to have recourse to any outside facility. Through the association with the Academy, this is gradually changing as the mediators become resource people for loans, injections and medicine for chickens, spray, machines, cloth, and a variety of other facilities available to them because of their association with the Academy. It is even happening that village men are also beginning to approach mediators asking for possible jobs at the Academy, or for money, or for some

technical aid. This functional link to the facilities at the Academy where none other are available to the village, is one of the ways by which the mediators are creating new roles for themselves in the villages.

The ability of the mediators to qualify for economic loans and facilities for themselves and for other village women also adds to their status and position of strength in terms of their work in their villages, and in meeting opposition in these villages. For example, the mediators were asked what the reaction was in their village when they began to go and work on a regular basis for the Academy. In the majority of the cases there was strong elements of disapproval in the villages to the women leaving the villages. In general, the greatest objections came from the para (neighborhood) people. The most support came from the bari people. The results as reported by individual mediators are summarized in the following table.

Table 6: REACTION OF BARI, PARA, VILLAGE PEOPLE TO MEDIATOR'S WORKING FOR THE ACADEMY

	Bari	Para	Village
No objection	11	5	6
Objection	11	14	12
Mixed Reaction	2	5	4
No response	-	-	2

After the initial period of disapproval and sometimes strong opposition, twenty-one of the mediators said that the objections have become

less as the villagers saw changes occuring in the mediator and in her economic condition. The mediators began to earn a regular income, secure loans at low interest rates, grow gardens and fruit trees, raise chickens and goats, buy and wear new clothes, even buy land or send a son to school. Not as was feared, the mediators did not "misbehave" but continued to act within the range of acceptable behavior within the village, except for some differences: such as leaving the village regularly to go to the Academy, and as going regularly around in the village. However, these movements are legitimized to a large extent by the salary the mediators receive and by the money they earn from their own labor in their baris. As the mediators improve their own condition, and as this is spread to other village women with similar results, the opposition in the village gradually subsides. It would appear that tradition can be modified as long as the results of change make significant contributions to the most pressing problems in the village situations. It is not only a matter of introducing new alternatives into the village milieu, but also that of justifying them in terms of pressing problems in the village that leads to more permanent change. If change can be shown to be effective without being at high cost, the chances of its being accepted is greatly enhanced.

The exceptions to these women are three of the mediators who say that opposition remains and that a hard core of resistance will never disappear. As one woman put it, "Twelve annas (worth of the people) approve of my work or will come around, but the four annas remaining will always be there."

CHAPTER 5.

Village Work Experience

Types of Villages

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a combined element of "accessibility" was developed and used as a means by which to categorize the types of villages in the women's program. The criteria of accessibility included "distance from the town," and types of communication link with the outside world. Within each category variables of occupation, per cent literacy, presence or absence of primary schools, and maddrassa (religious schools), and numbers of children in school were used to capture the variation within each category.

Upon reappraisal, it was found that while differences in villages do in fact exist, the criteria is not sufficient or significant in explaining it. On the "hunch level" the distinction of accessibility seemed to make sense, and perhaps could be empirically verified with data other than that on hand. One possible explanation for this is related to the general difficulty in relating causal explanations to specific variables. In the case of Comilla, those villages in the cooperative association are, by fact of membership, different from the majority of the villages in the thana. There are roughly 435 villages in total in the thana with approximately 150 of them in the cooperative movement at the time the study was done. The relative comparability of these cooperative villages with the remainder is not known. Also it is not known how the villages allowing a women's

program to develop are different from other cooperative villages. Therefore given the information available, it is difficult to know the range of villages types that the forty-three program villages represent.

As mentioned earlier as well, before the Academy's program began, the villages were not static entities. Therefore, it is difficult to select out and assess the most significant variables producing change, as there is no way of knowing the full range of previous events and influences working on the village situation. The relation of this to the study of mediators is that there is not available now the knowledge sufficient to yield indications of village propensities to change, particularly in regard to the mediation process. One cannot predict given the type of village, the relative efficiency of a mediator in the mediation process.

A further test was done using a simple chi-square technique in attempting to assess the relationship of education of mediators to types of villages. That is, because education is thought to be one way of distinguishing types of mediators, a test was done to see if education also was relevant in relation to educated mediators in types of villages. The question is whether or not there is a relationship between types of villages and the distribution of educated women by types of village. Due to the smallness of the total N and following another "hunch" the end categories were collapsed and considered as one, as were the middle two categories. The same test was done then to determine the expected value assuming equal proportions of educated mediators in each cell. The results were

nonsignificant. That is, while education is important in determining types of mediators, it is not significant in indicating educated women in relation to types of villages.

Part of the idea behind collapsing the first category of town villages with villages ten miles or more away, is also related to the general idea of there being types of village even though not explainable given the present data. In a traditional, developing society a number of factors are at work providing impetus to change. One is the factor of communication, both the media and transport. The impact of new roads or the absence of them, greatly influences the flow of information, techniques and knowledge to and from the distant villages. Also the factors of decreasing amounts of land, increasing population and growing numbers of landless, unemployed encourage a certain amount of migration from the villages to the town. It could be argued that those people forced to leave the village for the town are by and large from lower socio-economic village levels. They leave the village most often because they have to; there being no alternative ways of maintaining life other than agriculture. In the town, these dispossessed villagers tend to re-establish village type settlement and behavior patterns. They live much the same as in the village only on less land, huddled together on the edges of the town. The menfolk take on daily-wage earning jobs of low status and low pay--such as rickshaw pullers, day laborers, carpenters or mason's helpers, shop helpers, cigarette makers. These are typically nontraditional and low

status jobs, which means that exvillagers remain marginal people, marginal from the pattern of agriculturally based village life. Only over a period of time and association do new patterns and traditions develop that would be different from village patterns. That is, a man may become quite sophisticated about the town but take home or apply little of this new knowledge in his own bari. Or in terms of maintaining security where there is little in the occupational world, his wife may still be expected to observe a village type purdha, hence limiting the influence of the town on her and her children. Also the imbibment of town values and patterns may be limited by a lack of funds, and differential perceptions and usage. That is, gambling and tea drinking may become habitual to a man and not some of the other values represented by the town.

In distance villages a different set of circumstances yield basically similar results. That is, poor communication, both roads and the mass media isolate a villager, and conspire to keep him traditionally conservative. The old ways are best because there is little information about new possibilities. In these villages there are fewer villagers who go out to the town. Those who go, go more infrequently than those who live closer to an urban center. Not only do villagers go out less, fewer people travel from the town to the village. There is less communication also as carried by mail and newspapers. This has only been slightly changed with the advent of transistor radios. The adherence to traditional patterns extends over into the bari and women's world as well.

That is, in the distant villages, the women are rigorously controlled. Purdha is more strictly observed, and women have fewer chances to get out, and fewer sources of information. Because of distance, women leave the village only at irregular intervals, perhaps only once a year to visit their father's bari. For these reasons there seems a certain sense in considering the end categories more similar to one another than similar to the two middle categories.

The middle categories, represent villages more accessible to the towns in terms of distance, and more open to and possibly selective about communication of techniques, knowledge and change. These are villages in which there remains a certain degree of economic support and advantage from traditional life styles fashioned around agriculture. However the data shows that men who leave these villages for work outside, go for employment in relatively high status occupations such as clerks, military men, police men or officials and so on. This means that the links of these men back to their villages are of a different nature than what exists for the town exvillager of lower socio-economic condition. The clerk or policeman brings new ideas back into the village of a different type than does the town poor. Also, and perhaps more important this type of "man on the outside" provides direct links from the town to the village which encourage a whole range of things, from the education of girls, to the introduction of the burkha, or the radio.

In summary, the village categories as developed did not contain the most important or differentiating criteria by which to substantiate the categorization as designed. However, there are differences in villages on an observable basis, but further study is necessary before the significant factors delineating these differences are known. Out of all the elements used, that of distance from the town in miles is perhaps a basic criteria for differences, but what is missing are the discriminating elements within the village to manifest these differences.

Functions of Mediators

As mentioned earlier there are two main functions of mediators. One is a position as literacy teacher. After a training period at the Academy these women are then to organize and teach basic Bengali in their villages; working with wives, young girls, or older women. There are six of the women in the sample who are teachers and two women who function both as teacher and organizer in their villages. These represented eight of the thirteen educated women in the sample.

The other position for the mediators is that of organizer. Except for five of the eleven organizers these were illiterate women as represented in the sample. The job of organizer included taking training at the Academy in basic skills and subjects such as gardening, poultry, home sanitation, child and mother's health, handicrafts. On a village level the organizers were then to carry their knowledge back to their own villages and teach interested village women. The staff at the Academy

went to the villages regularly to help the mediators with their work, and often the local cooperative manager lent his support as well.

In this way the mediators are engaged in a two-ended process, both complementary and linked, i.e., they are given specific formal training at the Academy and are supposed to pass this knowledge on in their villages. They are regularly and continually brought out of the traditional village milieu as a way of encouraging and reinforcing their association with change. They are paid for their efforts which serves as compensation for their efforts at the Academy, and takes partial pressure off their financial need, yet provides legitimation also for their work in the village. Receiving a salary for their work provides the mediators with a certain status that was nonexistant before. Of course, they are earning salaries for positions that heretofore were also nonexistant, and the salary has the effect of assuaging the dire predictions of those who disapprove of women leaving the village and working. That is, the opposition engendered by women leaving the village for training is balanced by the fact of their getting paid for going.

This is the formal aspect of the mediating process; the women leave the villages and go regularly to the Academy for training and meetings; in their own villages they utilize that which they have learned in their own baris and are also responsible for teaching however they can, other women as well. In exchange for the work done in the village, the mediator is paid a regular salary if she meets the standards for the

work as established by the Academy. The mediators have to account for their activities to the staff of the women's program each week. They have to come each week, give a report, turn in the savings of the women, and attend class. The mediators are given responsibility and are expected to follow through in their villages. The salaries are earned, in other words, and are not handouts. Besides a monthly salary, the mediators are given a transportation allowance to help meet the cost of transportation into the Academy and back to the village. A number of mediators work in other areas of the women's program either as Family Planning agents, midwives, or hand spinners. During the course of time they have established more than one tie to the Academy, as a partial means of protection in case one part of the program closed, they will still have some employment at the Academy.

In the village, on the formal level of the mediation process, the mediators are responsible for encouraging and teaching other village women the same sort of things that they themselves have learned--health, home sanitation, gardening, poultry, sewing. Besides this, the mediators are supposed to be resource people for items and facilities available through the Academy. This includes things like the child and mother's health clinic, family planning information and contraceptives, sprays, fertilizers, seeds, and loans available from the Academy or from the local village cooperative society. If a woman joins the village society, saves regularly, and buys at least one share in the cooperative, she is then

supposed to be qualified to receive a loan from the cooperative if her plan for the utilization of the money is approved. In relations with the cooperative society, the mediator is to represent the women and take any grievances to the cooperative manager, or to the staff of the women's program in cases where the matter is serious.

Besides the more formal aspects of the function of mediators, there is the whole range of covert influences and developing informal patterns as well. One notices from the data that much of the most crucial developments in the mediation process comes on the informal level. For example, not only are formal classes organized and taught in the villages, but visiting patterns are being established resulting in some increase in mobility for all women in the villages. Not only are the mediators establishing a new formal role by their work either as teacher or organizer within the village and between village and Academy, they are also establishing informal linkages and channels of influence and communication within the village situation as well. Within the women's world, the first beginnings are being made at some organization beyond that found just in the bari unit.

Innovative Process: Organizers

The initial form of organization most used in the villages was class situations for teachers, or meetings for organizers. However, the two followed different patterns of organization varying with time, village situation, and the mediator involved. In and of itself the process of ini-

tiating action among village women by a village woman is unique. As the mediators were originally shy and reluctant in leaving their villages, so were they also reluctant in moving initially in their villages. Ten of the sixteen organizers observed that they were frightened and shy in going in the village. One woman summarized this feeling quite well by saying:

> "When it first started I thought it was difficult. I was a wife. I had not done this before. I had to walk from door to door. I had difficulty in getting women to join. I didn't like it. When I heard the people talk, I didn't like it. They would say, 'She goes to town and comes back. If she comes to you then lock the doors, because if you talk with her or see her it will be a sin for you.' Some also said, 'R. has gone to Hell and wants to send others there.'"

Two of the organizers registered having no problems in initiating their work. Four commented they liked it and were happy.

The procedure for initiating contact by the organizers in their villages was by first doing the work in their own baris, as a model for other women to see or hear about. Seven mediators worked in their baris from anywhere from a few days, weeks, or for many months. Then they went to a near-by bari and began to encourage other women to also work. Eight women used a more joint approach of both meetings and work in their own baris. Only one mediator went to another bari first to begin work. It happened to be her father's bari as her husband's family in the neighboring village were against her working.

The reaction of the village women was not always positive or open to suggested changes. Their reaction many times was, "Why are you doing

this? If we don't do this then what? In the old days we didn't do this, now we have to do it?" Local village men such as the cooperative manager, or an interested villager sometimes helped the organizers. One mediator reported going to a particular bari because it was a respected family. If they listened, she thought, others would as well. Also the women's staff from the Academy came to village organized meetings and explained to the women about the program. Perhaps most important however in the legitimatization of the work of the mediator in the village was the observed benefits and improvements of the women involved. Most of the organizers mentioned that support for their work developed as people saw the "improvement in their condition." This was crucial particularly for the organizers. Coming from economic conditions involving great need, and from generally lower social status positions in the village, any change in the conditions of these women was quite apparent. At first many of the women saved part of their travel allowance and with the extra money bought more rice for the family. Gradually through persistent savings, they saved enough to buy a goat. From the sale of the kids of that one goat, more food was purchased; such items as meat, fish, eggs, vegetables besides the main staple rice. Chickens were acquired, and from the sale of eggs and chicks, more goats were purchased, or a cow. Small gardens near the bari were planted, or as women become more ambitious, potatoes are grown in rice fields lying fallow. The income from the gardens or potatoes goes for additional items for the bari, usually food,

then livestock, clothes, and finally the entering of a child in school, and the first down payment on land. Also part of the produce is kept for home consumption. When a woman, largely by her own actions can bring this much improvement to her family, it is no surprise that opposition to her work diminishes in the village. This has been the experience for all of the organizers, not just an exceptional few. Some of the organizers have not been reluctant to display some of their new found affluence. One woman neatly summarized her position by saying, "I am no longer the recipient of village donations. Now I contribute to the "pieta" for others." Another woman spent Rs 250/000 on the circumcision of her sons, and had a big feast inviting many of the villagers. When she was asked why she spent so much money, she replied, "I may have spent Rs 250/000 ($50.00) but my sons received Rs 300/000 ($60.00) in gifts."

Of the organizers, five noted that village women have been most interested in poultry. Eight reported gardening as capturing the main interests of the women. Only three said home sanitation. It seems to be the practical, short term, income-producing subjects and skills that have most interested the majority of the village women, and the mediators themselves. Given the nature of the economic problems faced by the majority of the mediators, which are shared in varying degrees by other village women, the greatest chances for lasting innovation are in those areas of greatest need. Also this related to how and what women learn. That is, those skills that are thought to be the most useful in meeting current problems

are more sought out than others. Also if the experience of the majority of the village women has been in physical tasks and not those requiring high degrees of intellectual endeavor, what they are most likely to learn will be techniques and skills most related to their previous experience. In effect this would find them experientially equipped to assimilate information regarding manually-oriented subjects such as gardening and poultry rather than more "theoretically"-centered subjects such as child care or home sanitation. These latter subjects will be utilized more as the village women develop the frame of reference for their use. It so happens that in terms of the initial interests expressed by the village women, child care and mother's health were recognized as being crucial problems. However, there is a difference in cognizance of a problem and utilization of its solution, and it seems that while the women "recognized" health as being of central concern, it has been only after a period of time that this recognition has been followed through by implementation.

After the initial stage of village meetings of the women and working in their own baris, the mediators work gradually evolved to another stage. From meetings, the work pattern changed to bari visits by the organizers to help and assist women in the work in their own baris, showing and introducing new techniques and methods that the mediators had used themselves in their baris. Commensurate with this stage in the development of the village work went greater degrees of organization and planning by the organizers for the coverage of the village. Most of the organizers go at

least once a week to other baris. The average is two or three times a week that the organizer goes to different baris in their villages to help other women. Only one organizer does not go with any great regularity. Another organizer, who has been in the program only for six months, works only in her own bari and still is not going out to other baris.

Besides establishing a regular routine of village work, the organizers have also expanded the limits of their mobility in the village, besides outside of it. Nine organizers report being able to go "everywhere in the village," to other villages, or as one woman put it, "I could go even to Dacca if the Apas told me to." Three of the organizers have limited mobility, that is, going to some paras and not to others; because of distance, because of there "being new people there"; because "people don't want to listen"; and perhaps for reasons not covered in the data. Four organizers said they went to some areas more than to others because of insufficient time to go everywhere; or because of wishing to finish in some areas before starting in other paras.

In general, the organizers have followed a pattern of beginning the work in their own baris, both out of need and as a way of diminishing opposition of others to their work. Once proving to themselves and to others that that which they have learned is useful, the organizers then began going to other baris in the village to help other women. The baris selected for visiting were generally of the same strata as the mediator, chosen perhaps because the same forces were present in these families as had

been working on the mediator. This was not always the case, however, as a few women mentioned going to prestigeful families first because if they listened to the mediator other villagers would also. To date, this phase of the organization of and working with other women is just catching hold. This varies of course with the length of time the mediator has been in the program. Some of the mediators have organized their villages except for a para or two. Other newer women have just begun to venture out into other paras.

Innovative Process: Teachers

In the sample there were eight mediators whose primary function was teaching. The mode of village organization focuses on centers in which classes are held are regular times. Of the eight teachers, five of them have two centers, one center usually in her own bari, the other in some other area of the village. One teacher reports having four centers, one has three centers, one teacher has only one center.

In asking the mediators who are teaching how the places were selected for the classes a variety of answers were given:

1. one teacher had the cooperative manager, village leader and one other man to dinner and enlisted their aid and support in organizing classes;

2. one went around in the village convincing men and women;

3. one teacher talked with the female organizer and got her to help;

4. some villagers asked the teacher to open a center in their baris;

5. the teacher asked permission to teach in some baris of somewhat prestigeful families, or where she had some previous connection, usually kinship;

6. three teachers reported choosing centrally located baris for centers where all women could come together.

The reaction of the teachers to their first going around in the village found that they also found it difficult as had the organizers. The reactions of these mediators varied from three teachers who said it was difficult because they were unused to it; to two women who mentioned they were shy in the beginning; to another who found it difficult in getting women to join the classes; and to another who did not like the small number of girls in the class. The eighth teacher said she just did not like the work but gradually has come to enjoy it more.

Support for the teacher's work has come in six out of eight cases from the Manager, or members of the cooperative society, or from the village leader. Two teachers allege having no help but have done the work on their own.

The general pattern is that class is held two days a week depending on the work season. In addition to class meetings, three of the teachers also visit the students in their homes one day a week. Two of the mediators report going more often; three mentioned going only when called, at night, or seeing their students only in class situations.

In terms of the interests of the village women, the subjects of poultry and gardening, home sanitation, and goats have been the most sought after. The teachers, although not specifically designated by the Academy as responsible for economic subjects, have this included in their training. However, the class situation is the context in which the teachers pass on new information, not the same pattern as that used by the organizers. One can perhaps infer that since the teachers go less often in the village, theirs is a more indirect mode of instruction, based less on direct demonstration and more on the formal classroom situation. Also one might say that this mode of instruction is more in keeping with the status of the teachers, as they are expected to and do observe purdha, and therefore have a certain number of restrictions built into their role as teachers.

Coming from generally better placed, and economically better off than the organizers, the teachers are working to provide depth or additional items to an already established life style. For the organizers, their work is a way of building or increasing their level of living, making substantive additions in areas where items had been missing before. For example, in the case of food, the organizers report that the money they earn from their jobs goes first of all for the purchase of basic staples. More rice, dhal, vegetables, staples in the Bengali diet were purchased, and families began eating twice a day rather than every other day as was the case for many of the organizers before they began working for the Aca-

demy. Other kinds of changes have been that organizers grow gardens, raise chickens, and take loans which were not available or possible before. In this sense, the money that they earn from their endeavors for the Academy represents the difference between total absence and possible ownership. These are necessities of life that have been out of reach of many of the organizers before working for the Academy, but which become possible as they continue to make regular salaries. For most families, it is a rare occurrence when a woman contributes to the income of her family. It is partially for this reason of an additional source of income, that the families of the women have rallied around and support them finally in their work.

For all the mediators, organizers and teachers, the village representative to whom they turned in case of difficulty is the cooperative manager. Not only was he instrumental in bringing the women to the Academy in the first place, the manager continues to be a resource person for the mediators in village affairs.

Whatever the initial response of the mediators to their work, they are now all favorably impressed by it. All twenty-four of them remarked that they like the work, but with a number of qualifications. Eight women mention liking their work now but had been shy and afraid at first. Two of the mediators observe that if they "Didn't like it they would not be doing the work now." One mediator liked the work, but thought it took "lots of effort." Three mediators thought that by doing this work they "are making

names" for themselves. Three mediators like their work because "they are learning." Another mediator said specifically there was less "need" now than previously in her bari. Three of the women like the work because it makes them "happy" even though it was difficult in the beginning. One woman's reaction was that now things are "nice and pretty" where they had not been this way before. This is why she likes her work. Two of the women observed they "don't like it if women don't listen to us." In summarizing, the general feeling of the mediators about their work, one woman nicely stated it in this way: "I used to sit dumb in the corner of my house, but now I have learned many things."

For the majority of the mediators, that which they learned was first utilized in their own baris, either by design or change. That is, whether the Apas told them to begin their work this way or not, the mediators captured the attention and interest of other village men and women by demonstrating supporting proof for the new ideas, techniques and knowledge they had learned. By establishing the work first in their own baris, the mediators accomplished a number of things. 1) They gave visible proof that new techniques, if correctly utilized, could yield positive change. 2) They demonstrated that their own economic condition was improved. 3) They set a precedent for village women in that they deviated from the tradition concept of "officer" by working and utilizing themselves what they were telling other women to use. 4) They were putting into practice what they had learned, thereby taking risks themselves in

deviating from traditional methods. 5) By not using their positions at the Academy to flaunt village norms, the mediators began to establish new patterns of behavior for women within the village structure that differs quite significantly from traditional patterns. Mediators are proving, in effect, that village women can be educated in Bengali and practical subjects without being "corrupted," or becoming un-Islamic. 6) In regard to the mediators themselves, working in their own baris was a means for further testing and consolidating that which they learn from the Academy, before advocating such things in the village. 7) Mention was made earlier of the non-programmed but essential background learning that occured when the mediators first began coming to the Academy. This included learning such things as "manners, correct speech, etiquette, good behavior, how to wear clothes, sit in chairs, use flush toilets, keep clean and neat." The mediators talk about this learning as some of the most important knowledge they have acquired from the Academy, along with attendant changes in personality characteristics; "increase in courage," "less fear," "my good qualities have increased." This is their way of describing the changes in self they have undergone. The changes in themselves serve as a foundation or frame of reference for them in their village work.

Interpersonal Relations

As discussed in Chapter 3, the traditional patterns of interaction for village women is contingent upon purdha, kinship, age-grade, and socio-economic condition. The purdha system defines the ideal model of what

a "good Islamic woman" should be. As it is observed in the villages, purdha is the context in which women's activities are defined and restricted mainly to the bari. Purdha also sets the consequences for those who, for one reason or another, defies standard norms.

Variations in the purdha system and consequent patterns of interaction are found to depend on whether the woman is in her father's bari, a daughter of the village, or in her husband's village, a daughter-in-law. It was noticed that for many of the mediators, friendships occured or are maintained with childhood acquaintances in their father's bari, but only rarely in their husband's village. The relevance of age-grade is apparent also within a traditional context, as with restricted movement within the village, the women are largely dependent upon the women of the household for interaction. As one wo man put it, "When women have free time they talk with their husband's brothers' wives. They can't go to other baris, or talk with the mother-in-law. Because of purdha they can't do these things."

The observance of purdha and the interplay of these other items of kinship and age-grade are influenced also by socio-economic conditions. A family that is fairly well-off economically can afford to emphasize the social accoutrements of equivalent social status. One of the more obvious ways of doing this in the village milieu is the relegation of women to a strict observance of purdha. For destitute families or widowed women there is not this option, and necessity requires an obviation of observing the general norms of purdha.

Before coming to the Academy most of the mediators reported scant association with or knowledge of other women in their villages. Exceptions were the low socio-economic women. Even these women, however, had few or no friendships. With the development of the Academy and the mediator's role, the women have gradually become more mobile and knowledgeable within the village situation.

Contributing factors to the greater interaction among village women now is the position of the organizer or teacher, created solely for the dissemination of knowledge and techniques, the fact that this position is legitimized by village support of the cooperative society, and by salaries for the mediators from the Academy.

The mediator's position represents a break from traditional patterns but is seemingly considered by the village men as a non-consequential, although salaried position within the women's social world, and hence not a threat to traditional patterns of heterosocial organization. It seems that reluctance of the men to cooperate with the women occurs in areas of the cooperative society itself, where women are coming forward to join the society, making savings, and demanding the equal rights of membership. In this area of the society, patterns of heterosocial organization are being called into question. For one thing, to allow women to apply for and receive loans, to receive dividends and to enjoy other rights or membership means the public recognition of women as individuals, not in the traditional pattern of someone's mother, or daughter. In the larger social con-

text, there are not the patterns for interaction between the men's and the women's world, and the context of the cooperative society is one of the first areas where this will be worked out.

The gradual lessening of opposition from extreme disapproval of a woman's going to the Academy to gradual acceptance was noted in the mediator's comments. As the women themselves benefitted and prospered, others became interested. As was also noted above, under the guise of classes or bari visits, the mediators have established a pattern of regular contact with and among other village women. This is the beginning of more and stronger channels of possible communication, utilizing already present but uncoalesced elements of change in the village. Not only have the mediators served to open up, to some extent, patterns of communication and interaction in the village, they have also expanded their own social worlds to include the Academy and the women there. Mention has already been made of the mediators reaction to the Academy and the women gathered there, both initially and now. The point to be emphasized is that this expanded extra-village social world of the mediators serves as a source of attachment, support, and confidence for them in ways that have not existed before. On the one hand, it stimulates their own learning and development; on the other, it serves as a source of support for village work.

Personal Influence

Within the process of teaching formal classes, or specific subject techniques, an informal system of communication is developing in the vil-

lages. That is, all the mediators report that other women have begun coming to them for things other than class or subject relevant information. That this has not been the usual procedure is summarized by one mediator who said, "Before, I was just a housewife and no one came to me. Now they do." Most of the mediators have taken on and expanded this element of their position, as well as the formal level. That is, they accept money from various women and purchase cloth, saris, jewelry, and other items for them from the town. In some instances, mediators take items with them to the Academy to sell there for the village women. The mediators also become resource persons for health problems, information and advice. They are called for emergencies or where there are problems in other baris. In regard to the more formal aspects of their positions, the mediators are called upon to bring seeds, spray, fertilizers, clothes, eggs, and vegetables for the village women from the Academy. As mediators they also become recipients of small short-term loans, not only for themselves but for other women as well.

In this way, new patterns of communication are gradually becoming patterns of leadership as well, as mediators begin having access to scarce resources and thereby elements of power. This is also reflected in comments that three or four of the mediators made that "if the people wouldn't work or save then I dismissed them," or "I get angry if the women don't keep things nicely as they should." This is in contrast to the earlier stated desire to "speak softly and nicely with the women otherwise they will become angry and not come again."

Coverage of the Village

Due to the variance in the size of the villages and in the women's limited knowledge of the actual size of their village, an attempt was made to assess the kinds of contacts the mediators had in villages in terms of the families involved in their work. That is, the women were asked to describe the kinds of families they worked with mostly; those who were "poor," i.e., didn't have enough food, those who had food but had to purchase some during the year, and those who had food in sufficient quantities to sell some.

The teaching mediators conveyed the following: Four of them observed they work with families that are poor or laborers mostly. Three teachers remarked that their classes are composed of women from families having food, with few poor families represented. One did not respond.

Table 7: NUMBER OF CENTERS, STUDENTS, RELATIVES OF TEACHERS AND LOCATION OF BARIS OF STUDENTS

Teachers	No. of Centers	Number of Students	Number of Relatives	Location of Students' Baris
#12	2	16 wives, 14 girls 4 young, (15-35 years old rest from 12-16) total= 35	6 or 7	10 from bari 15 from para
#22	2	8-25 years, -16 30-40 years - 31 total= 47	5	4 baris, 2 para 9 wives from 2 baris
#23	2	8-12 years -10 15-30 years - 4 total= 14	0	1 para most from 1 bari

-continued-

Table 7: continued--

Teachers	No. of Centers	Number of Students	Number of Relatives	Location of Students' Baris
#10		No response		
#16	4	8-14 years -44; 40-50 - 2: 20-35= 6 total= 52	some	3 paras
#24	1	7 wives, 13 girls total= 20	11	bari & near-by villages
#11	3	40 wives, 25 girls total= 65	2 or 3	3 paras
#15	2	most 9-15 years old 7 or 8 wives total= 25	some	3 paras

From the table it is possible to get a general idea of the trend in class composition. That is, in comparison with the total number of students, only one teacher is working with students over half of whom are her relatives. Students come from the immediate bari or from the same para in which the classes are held. Only one teacher mentions students coming from other villages.

In three of the classes one notices that half or more than half of the enrollment is composed of wives. However, on an overall basis there are more young girls (under twenty, non-wife) in the classes than wives or older women.

In regard to the organizers, one finds that the locus of their movement in the village is more diffuse, and because it is not formally organized in classes as is the teachers, more difficult to pin-point. The pattern

of work for the organizers was to go from bari to bari, in one para and then on to other baris in other paras, or to go from selected baris in a number of paras.

For the organizers the focus of their work seems to be concentrated on families that are poor, as reported by five of them or on a combination of poor, some with food, some in good conditions. Six reported this position. Only one organizer said she is not working with any poor families. This may represent the mediators own relative standing. That is, teachers, being of higher socio-economic status tend to draw on families from the same relative stratum in the village. The organizers, being of lower socio-economic status, also tend to seek out and work within families of nearly the same socio-economic condition. Also, this is in part due to the nature of the subject matter as well. People who have enough to eat, or are on more than a starvation level can consider the education of their girls or women folk, and utilize the opportunity when it presents itself. In many other cases, however, the overwhelming necessity of food and great economic need, makes lower socio-economic status families less able, and perhaps less anxious to have their girls and women fold educated.

Homosociality - Heterosociality

As has already been mentioned, the cooperative manager, society members, schoolmaster, and village leader all played important parts in initially contacting the women about the Academy, and in encouraging their families to let them work. After once deciding to have a women's

program in the village, these same men were instrumental in helping the women begin their work. For the majority of the teachers, as mentioned before, the schoolmaster played a part that he didn't for the organizers. For the latter women, the cooperative manager, headmaster or sardar (village leader) for help. Eight of the organizers said they handle difficulties themselves without help, or would call on some other women in the village, either a friend or another woman working for the Academy. Still others of these women observe that they would ask the "apas" for help. One woman said she had no difficulties.

In regard to the patterns of influence in the village, it was mentioned by six women that men also came to them seeking loans, seeds, or information. While relatively an infrequent occurence, it nonetheless points to a possible trend whereby the mediator will become a resource person for the men as well, in regard to facilities available at the Academy.

Reaction of Villagers to the Mediator and Her Work

As mentioned before, for most of the mediators, the reaction to their going to the Academy and to workin g in the village initially was one of strong disapproval and pressure against it. Opposition centered on the Academy as a bad place "where men and women go together." The Academy was part of the "ses zemina" (end of the age). "It will destroy the Islamic religion." It was a place where there are "foreign sahibs." Another object of disapproval are the women themselves. Some people said, "This woman goes without purdha. How can this girl have class with men? Purdha will be ruined." Para neighbors made comments such as...

> "Those who go to the Academy are prostitues. All who work at the Academy are prostitutes. Other bad women go there. What they teach she has learned.... If other women talk with her it would be a sin."

Or as some of the village women said, "You get a salary. I f we take this class what profit is there for us?" Or as a mother-in-law of one family remarked, "From all this village wives don't go out of their baris, and here this wife is going around in different paras teaching. This is not good. Her daughters won't be married."

An indication of the degree of opposition in the villages is shown by two threats frequently made to the women going to the Academy. One is expulsion from the village itself--a harsh threat for women who have few other sources of security and support. The second is in regard to burial after death. In Islam it is mandatory that all dead be buried within twenty-four hours after death. The mediators were told that they would not be buried until three or four days after their deaths.

A third kind of attitude that was manifest was in regard to learning in general. The village people said, "they (women) have gotten old. If they are educated, what profit will there be?" "Old people educated, what will that be? In a short while they will die. After four days they will become dust, after that what?" Others said, "We are farmers. Why should we have centers? What will we do with reading and writing?"

But, as also mentioned earlier, this kind of disapproval gradually subsided for twenty-one of the twenty-four women as the mediators main-

tained "their character," developed positions of resources and leadership, and made observable improvements in their own economic conditions. As reported by the mediators, village opinion swung to a more positive orientation in the following instances: "profit was shown," "because of visible progress; now children are being educated"; "educated women make better wives," "because they know a little education at least," "because she is working for people's benefit," "her condition has improved," "she has learned and is teaching others."

Some ambivalence remains, however, in the families. For one mediator, her husband's younger brother refuses to eat in or visit her bari. For another woman her husband's older brother "did not like my going to the Academy, but about my work he said it was good." But, by and large, there was a gradual denouement of opposition.

Another indication of this changing village situation is manifested in the fact that the mediators are beginning to be called by job-related titles, such as "master," "doctor," "officer," "manager." This is an indication perhaps not only of the previous isolation of these women, but also of the changing esteem in which mediators are now held.

In this chapter an effort has been made to make evident some of the elements of the mediator's role as it developed, particularly in the village situation. Of special interest is the increase in mobility and social boundaries of the mediators. That is, some of the most important influences of the mediation process came from the ability of mediators to transcend both

social and physical space. As a mediator, a village woman is encouraged, helped, and required to move in heretofore unprecedented ways through physical space, i.e., around and out of the village. Contingent upon this moving also is the transcendence of social space. By assuming salaried positions of responsibility, and by learning and becoming resource people, the mediators are breaking standard patterns of behavior but in such a way as to not antagonize or totally disrupt the village. Some of the reaction of the village to the mediators going to the Academy and to their working in villages has been mentioned. From this, one gains some insight into the strength of the opposition and initial reactions of the village. Opposition declined as mediators proved able to balance the demands of traditional village norms and the alternatives presented by the Academy. Closely linked with all this is the heightened mobility and accessibility of mediators.

CHAPTER 6.

Summary and Implications for Wider Theoretical Concerns

The primary interest of the study is how new patterns of behavior, influence and communication develop and are maintained in new situations which bring together heretofore unrelated social units. The units in question are Bengali villages and a development institution: The Academy for Rural Development, Comilla, East Pakistan. The situation bringing these disparate units together was the opening of a wo men's program by the Academy for training village women in subjects and techniques closely related to health, economics, and education.

The focal point is on a sample of village women, called "mediators" who represent their villages at the Academy and the Academy in their villages. They are considered to be mediators as the nature of their work requires relating two systems; one, the village with its traditional patterns and norms, and second, the Academy with its techniques and organization which represents change and modernity. In order to perform these functions, they must bridge both systems in such a way as to mediate between the expectations and patterns of tradition and the pressures for change. This study is concerned with the development and maintenance of the mediation patterns and the new modes it represents.

During the empirical field study, the mediator was examined in relation to her identity and behavior with respect to the Academy, to the various segments of the village, to her family, and lastly in relation to

changes in self. The last two areas of family and self are not explicitly depicted in this thesis.

At the time of the field work (1966), the women's program was working in forty-three villages with cooperative societies. Within these villages, fifty-seven women function in some mediating capacity, either as literacy teachers or as organizers. Twenty-four of the total fifty-seven mediators were sampled. The sample was proportionally drawn from the varied types of villages manifest in the women's program. Distance from the town was used as the primary basis for the categorization of the villages into types. It was found to be of little significance in the analysis of the mediation process.

General limitations of the study which prevent overgeneralization are that there is no comparison of the villages used in the sample with villages in which there is a cooperative society but no women's program. It is not known whether the comments made regarding women in the sample villages would apply to women in other cooperative villages. Also there is no comparison of mediators from sample villages with women from villages in which either the cooperative society, or the women's program was discontinued.

The mediators differ from some of the prevailing norms and values of their villages. While fifteen of the twenty-four women have marital situations which do not correspond to the predominant mode, all of them have full adult woman's status accrued through marriage. All except two of them

meet the additional traditional requirement of adult status by having children. Also, the mediators fall within the age range in which women traditionally have the greatest amount of responsibility and work in their families.

The factors creating the marginality of the mediators prior to their entering the Academy's program were structurally derived, and were not the results of personal behavior stemming from deviance from standard norms. Life chances, in the sense of forces over which they have no control, have made mediators somewhat marginal. Their husbands are dead or worsening socio-economic conditions in their families have precipitated these elements of marginality.

Three patterns of behavior and adjustment seem to have been created by these women in response to shared characteristics and conditions. Twenty of the women fall in one or another of these patterns. A fourth category contains four women who have created individualistic and unique adjustments to the mediation process. Although they share similar characteristics and conditions to the others, they do not exemplify similar types of behavior found in the other nascent patterns.

Factors which are significant in precipitating the patterns are: social status of the husband's family, (or father's family if women are widowed or divorced); education; and the "centrality" of their position in their husband's family. "Centrality" of position of a woman in her husband's family refers to the amount of responsibility carried by the media-

tor for family members. In families having more advantaged socio-economic status there are more family women members, who share responsibility for the household affairs. In larger families the duties are shared and each woman has less to do. The oldest woman has the greatest and more centralized authority over the actions of other women. In small, nuclear type families there are fewer extended kin ties, and there is greater necessity for each family member, including women to contribute to the family subsistence. For example, families in which the husband is unemployed and the family is nuclear in type, the woman of the family supports the entire small group. In contrast, for larger more economically advantaged families, the illness of a husband can collectively be absorbed by other male family members or kin, rather than having the full brunt of household duties carried by the wife.

Inherent in centrality also is the idea that those who are poor economically in comparison with other villagers, are poor also in terms of kin and kinship ties which provide security and help in times of crises, and share also in the obligations connected with ceremonies and other social occasions. Degree of centrality provides some indication of the general economic condition of a family, and gives insight into the possible influence of a mediator in her family. Centrality is one way of explaining the differential impact of the mediator in their families. In families in which women have higher centrality, their chances of influencing or creating change is greater than in families in which the media-

tor is one of many women who share responsibility under the direction of the oldest woman of the family.

The first type of mediator consists of five women who have low centrality of position in their husband's families. All five of these women are educated. Their husband's families have relatively high prestige in comparison to other families in the sample. The husbands are employed out of the village in high prestige occupations, or remain in the village as landlords. One woman is divorced, but her father's status and position is high enough in the village so that her loss of status is absorbed by her father's. Four of the women are teachers. One is an organizer, who comes from a conservative village that refuses to establish Bengali instruction for its girls. In general, the work of these mediators is a way of maintaining an already established position of their husband's or father's family.

A second type that appears is composed of five mediators who although educated and from families having status in the villages, have positions of high centrality in their families. This is due to the employment of husbands out of the village, and to somewhat smaller families, which places greater responsibility on the woman. For two of the women in this group, the death of their husbands precipitated their high centrality in their families. There are extended kinship ties in these families. However, the economic condition of these families is not as advantaged as those families of the first type. Three mediators are teachers, two work as

both teacher and organizer. For mediators of this type, the work in the village is primarily a way of building a position or contributing to that which the family has already.

The third and largest grouping are of those mediators who are uneducated and who have high centrality in their families. Before joining the Academy's program the economic condition of their families was poor. That is, they could be defined as being poor by the village as they are landless, or with only very little land. There is no regular income, and few resources. There are ten mediators who come in this grouping. Six of them are widows, one woman is separated from her husband. Of the husbands of the remaining three women, one is working, the other two are unemployed. Lack of economic resources is matched by a dearth of kin folk as well. There are few extra-nuclear family ties. The women in these families carry a great deal of the responsibility, if not the total support for their families. Before joining the Academy's program, four of the women worked in other baris. All the women in this group function in the mediating process as organizers. Their work in the villages is a way for them to regain lost status for their families, and or build a new position.

There are four women whose adjustments to the position of mediator are such that they fit none of the categories mentioned above. A combination of unique factors in their identities have resulted in individualized responses to different situations. For example, one woman has married into a family having some status in the village, but she is uneducated. She

also has high centrality of position within the family, as there are few family members. Three of the other women are somewhat educated, but have married into economically disadvantaged and low prestige families. They have highly central positions in their families. For these three women, their father's family is of higher prestige and better economic condition than their husband's. Three of the women are organizers, one is a teacher.

In their interaction with the Academy, the mediators were initially fearful and extremely anxious both in coming to the Academy and in associating with the staff and women from other villages present at the Academy. They entered the program primarily because of the pressures of economic need, and because the Academy offered a possible alternative for economic privation. During the course of their association with the Academy the ties among the village women themselves and between the women and the Academy's staff have strenthened and deepened. These social bonds are primary in keeping mediators attached to the Academy and working in their villages. For most of the mediators, it has been an opportunity for becoming friends of and associating with non-kin women. For the first time, they have positions which enable them to have regular and continuing contacts outside of the village. They are earning salaries through their own efforts, contributing to the family income. Without fulfilling this aspect of the mediation process, i.e., of expanding the family income, there would have been nothing to offset the opposition to the activities of the mediators

in their villages, and hence no opportunity to explore other facets of the mediation process. An entirely new dimension is being added to village life in that the women, by establishing their work in the village have created new village positions and attendant role behavior for women, separate and apart from the reflected status which they gain from their father's or husband's family.

In establishing work patterns in the villages, all mediators reported great opposition to them from all segments of the village. For many of the women, both family members and bari people were against their going to the Academy as this deviation from the predominant pattern threatened to weaken the family position and status in the village. For families that have only small operating margins in terms of status and economic position, any deviation looms large and there is little room for variation from a strict interpretation of the norms and customs of the village milieu. In families having minimal status and economic affluence there is no room for variation from predominant village patterns.

For women who are very poor, bari members usually did not complain nor did the para or other village people, as the great need in her family was known and exempted her from having to observe the general customs and norms. The opposition of the para (neighborhood) people, was encountered by mediators more than opposition from the bari or from the village at large. A partial explanation is that the para is the immediate social world in which a significant part of the lives of the mediators is spent. The

restricted mobility of the women has the para as the boundaries beyond which they only rarely go. For the men, the para serves as a base for informal organization and attachment (called the "rhei") and paras usually develop around householders whose land is contiguously arranged. More importantly, the para is the basis for greater objection through the men to the work of the mediators because the collective identity of the para resides in the men, and is threatened by women venturing out. The opposition of the village at large was centered on having a village member transgress the customs of the village. The para people however, being more closely associated with the women in question, reacted perhaps more vociferously because of their increased knowledge and involvement with her. Any difficulty that she caused would reflect on her family, and also on the para people. The members of the para, as a structural unit of the village, used general societal and cultural norms in voicing opposition to the mediators. Opposition centered around the fact that it was un-Islamic for women to leave their villages, and to work in the villages was considered to violate the norms of purdha. Dire predictions were also made regarding the new knowledge as having a corrupting influence on women.

The cooperative society in each village having a women's program played a major part in the establishment of the women's work in the village. The local cooperatives society often served as the arena for the basic conflict regarding women and the possibilities of their working in and regularly leaving the village. One of the reasons for requiring the prior

existence of a local cooperative society in villages before beginning a woman's program was the need of having village based support for such an undertaking. The assumption was that villages having cooperative societies were already somewhat change oriented, at least among part of the male population. The cooperative society itself underwent its own fight in the villages in getting established, overcoming opposition, and legitimizing new forms of social organization. The cooperative society was a model in many ways for the women's work later. For example, one way that the cooperative society legitimized its position was by offsetting village opposition with economic gains. Similar to the experience of the women later, the men's cooperative was able to establish a position in the village and gradually win the support of reluctant high prestige men, and conservative religious leaders by creating their own links with the outside world which yielded the techniques and knowledge necessary to increase rice production, and introduce winter cropping and water facilities, and which established pathways along which new information and ideas could come.

The establishment of the women's program while occasioning acrimony among villagers was still somewhat anti-climatic. In the initial stages of the women's work there was tremendous resistance, but this gradually lessened as mediators evidenced economic gains which captured the interests of other villagers. After the gradual amelioration of much of the opposition, the mediators increasingly enjoyed high access and easy entree into village baris. However there remains remnants of resis-

tance in the villages which are either hostile to the mediator's work, or just indifferent. The latent antagonism which exists among these segments is not sufficient to be mobilized against the mediators unless they drastically transgress the limits of tolerance within their villages. Change in the status of women does not threaten the power or control of the village society which is in the hands of the men. The work that the women are doing in the villages, and the changes they are making in their own conditions can be tolerated or ignored by the village men until such time as the actions of the women bring the name or honor of the village, or segments within the village, into question.

Part of the limits existing for the women is their relation to the Academy. If the Academy closed, pressure from within the villages would be for the cessation of the women's activities. As long as the mediators are working within some observable context, with visible signs of legitimacy, such as salaries, transportation cost, regular schedules, and a specific known supporting institution, the work is tolerated, if not supported. The mediator is gradually establishing the legitimacy of her position but it has not been fully institutionalized as yet. The continuing structural support of the Academy remains essential, as the mediation process has not as yet, altered the basic role of women.

Extraneous to, yet closely associated with the specific functions of the mediators position are various other consequences of the mediation process. As mentioned earlier, the mediation process is essentially

the creation of pathways from the traditional village milieu to an outside modernizing institution. The village woman who serves as the village teacher and organizer is one of the contributors to the building of these pathways. That is, by undertaking activities that were previously not connected with the women's world, the mediators are becoming part of the impetus for and the representatives of change in their villages. In the process of going to and from the Academy regularly, the mediators bring back into the villages new ideas and techniques that were heretofore unknown or unused. In the attempt to influence other village women about new procedures or in the communication of new ideas, the mediators interpret their new knowledge in light of village customs and norms. In this sense, the mediation process is a selective interpretation of what the mediators themselves have learned and what they think the village can assimilate.

Within their own baris the mediators first utilize that which the Academy teaches them. The process of home experimentation makes the mediators cognizant of some of the problems inherent in the utilization of Academy knowledge. Based on their own experience the mediators can and do speak with authority to other village women about how best to innovate. In selecting other baris to work in the mediators seem to follow one of two patterns. Some of the mediators seek out like-minded village women of other baris to approach. These are women who live in families having problems similar to the mediator before she began working for the Academy.

This pattern is such that the mediators go to any bari in the village in which it might be possible to find a receptive audience. This can and does transcend para lines. The other pattern followed is by mediators who concentrate their work in one para, and then move on to other paras upon covering receptive baris. This pattern is bounded by the ecology of the village in following para lines. Within each para, the mediators attempt to reach as many families as possible. In some cases, the most prestigeful bari is approached first as it is thought that if they would listen to the mediator then other baris would be more easily accessible. Other mediators simply seek out relatives first, or baris having similar economic conditions within a single para. It is in one of these two contexts that the mediator fulfills her role.

In the performance of their jobs, the literacy teachers are helping to create a new awareness and acceptance of the education of girls and women. Within the homosocial women's world in the village, the teachers are giving expression to a new awareness of the need and utility of education. Teachers through their classes, are also building new networks among the women of the village who represent many different families and paras. The organizers in their work role as demonstration agents for economic and health techniques, interprets that which they are learning from the Academy in light of their own knowledge of their villages in order to encourage women to listen and accept what they are teaching. Because of the great economic need present in most families of organi-

zers before they joined the Academy's program, the improvements which the organizers encourage in their own baris are tremendously influential in encouraging others to change. For the organizers in particular, the association with the Academy has resulted in dramatic observable changes in the economic condition of the families of these mediators, and in the organizers themselves. This graphic representation of the possibilities of change serves as a basis for giving authority to women who never had it before on a village level, and also summarizes in observable ways that which some of the organizers have difficulty verbalizing.

Taken as a whole, the changes in the mediators themselves, and their families along with their work in the village with other women, gives to the women of the village an example of possible changes and is the first embodiment of a new perspective. The mediators are new sources of action and knowledge. They bring into the village, new alternatives to traditional problems and to the techniques of coping with them. In this sense, mediators are creating the awareness among other women that there are alternatives to the possibility of total failure in life and that this is beyond their internal control. That is, that the inability of women to manage or have direction of so much of what happens to them is now being gradually ameliorated as the mediators show how change is possible. Mediators are themselves embodying alternatives to the system that before was assumed to be without any. The mediators also exemplify another element of change in assuming the responsibilities and rewards

inherent in the belief in the prerogatives of choice. With the increase in alternatives in a system there develops also the possibilities of choice. Part of the willingness to make choices is the willingness to assume responsibility for the results. That is, where there are no alternative ways of action within a fixed environment, there is no choice, nor is the individual bound to feel responsible for the outcome of a situation as it is determined in ways over which she has no control.

Part of the new perspective that mediators signify is the increase in aspiration and ability to empathize with their children and the younger generation. That which was never thought of in the context of their own lives is now being projected for the future life of their children. Indicative of this are the increased efforts and interest in educating at least one child from every family. It is inherent in the belief that some knowledge of Bengali is now essential in arranging good marriages for daughters. A daughter or son who is educated is thought able to "be happy, eat well, wear good clothes, and live in a good house."

The experiences of the mediators and the changes in themselves represents a deepening and extension of a position already established in the village. That is, the mediators are not becoming "new women" in the sense of embodying that which is foreign or not heretofore present in the villages. Rather, mediators are using the traditional concept of "good Muslim women" and are enlarging and building on it. The mediation process is actually the balancing of the new within the larger context

of traditional village society. The legitimation for new behavior is not based on the image of the modern woman, but rather on the ideal Muslim woman.

The visibility of the mediation process in contrast to the establishment of the enterprise, is anchored in the family rather than in the cooperative society or village. The cooperative and village are important in initiating the program, but notin sustaining it. The family is essential because it is the basic unit of village social organization in setting life styles and changes, and in handling the major aspects of life. There are differences in the families represented by the mediators. Some are regaining a lost position through the work of the mediator. Other families are simply reinforcing their established status in the villages through the work of their mediators. It is not known if the families represented, or the patterns of response that are evolving are the result of this generation's life chances. The question must remain open-ended whether or not this pattern will be passed on to other generations. As yet, the mediation process is achieving legitimacy in the villages, but has not become an institutionalized role for women.

On a theoretical level, the study focuses on a minute aspect of a larger world process of communication and exchange. The concern of national developmental institutions of modernizing countries for their own village people, and the attempts made to bring about change are representative of the final denouement of world-wide cultural, societal, and

institutional linkages and exchanges. On a national scale, the products of technology and science are being used to assist nations in their own development and in the development of each other. The linkages of nations and societies, one with another, on a variety of different levels, requires new commensurate forms of behavior and communication patterns, which are representative of neither nation or society in question, but which stand as new aggregations in themselves.

The mediation process is one aspect and a miniature representation of this process of the development of patterns of behavior and communication which are new to the parties involved. The maintenance of pathways and the continuing functioning of the mediation process depends on the continued existence of links with an outside institution. If the Academy closed, bringing to an end the women's program and the work of the mediators, that which has been well internalized by the mediators such as economically oriented practical skills, or technical knowledge will probably continue to be used in the villages. However, the status and position that the mediators have and are creating in the villages would cease as the external validating force for their work disappears. The position of mediator depends on not only internal village support, but on continuing external contacts as well. There can not be mediators without there being pathways that link two or more functioning units. The women now involved as mediators would probably continue to be known as "those women who used to go to the Academy." But the status attendent and

deriving from such activity would no longer be given to the women in question. "Balancing" in this sense of being dependent on and working between both village and an outside institution is embodied in the mediators themselves. The women actually function in this way. Hence the necessity for viable and continuing base institutions. There is nothing within the village structure that can continue to support such a position as mediator. This is not to say that something could not be established to continue the work of the women, but this would be a position other than that known as mediator.

The careful balancing on a village level of tradition and modern change is a small replica of that which occurs on the larger world scene. This process of balance and change is happening not only within all levels of societies, nations, or villages, but is occuring between and among levels as well. The feedback from small gains on a village level work back to higher institutional levels, making future exchanges easier, quicker, and more productive. It is through such a process of the development of bridges and articulation points between different social units that social change occurs.

This study is an attempt at exploring such a societal process within the context of villages and a single outside institution. The development and maintenance of a mediating process joins with other factors of change in the villages. That is, the villages are not static and the mediators in many instances have acted as catalysts for coalescing previous ele-

ments of change into a new social pattern for women. Indicative of previous change in the villages is embodied in the increased numbers of children that are being sent to school. Another example is the formation of the village cooperative society which stresses the development of new forms of group action, and new leadership. While the work of the village mediators has specific meaning for village women it also has meaning for village men. Change within the women's world adds a new dimension to the conception of men of what is possible within the village context. While considered a threat by some, the ability of women to contribute to the economic earning of the family encourages men to evaluate change within the larger context of the total family, not just in the context of agricultural concerns.

Women are the particular concern of the study as they do not seem to be the focus of much development planning, which stresses work with men in the vital concerns of raising agriculture production, the building of national infrastructure, tapping and harnessing natural resources. However, development work is two way, not simply an emphasis on the world of men. Within the area of family and child rearing the role of the woman is essential in providing motivation and aspiration for children. This study endeavors to explore the female mediating roles which are part of the network of mediating functions which are coming into being in villages in developing societies. If we are to understand the total process of change and development, we must take into account both gender roles and their consequences within their own respective worlds, and in connection with each other.

APPENDIX I

Glossary of Bengali Terms

apa - Older sister; used by the village women as a mode of address for the staff members of the women's program.

alim - A village person who prepares bodies for burial.

bari - A living unit of a single kinship group, including dwellings, kitchens, cow sheds, trees, gardens, and ponds. A bari contains four to ten houses built around a central rectangular compound.

basuer - Husband's older brother.

bou - New or young wife, with none or only infant children.

burkha - The veil worn by Bengali women, flowing material covering head to knee with a piece covering the face that can be raised.

chula - Sunken earthern cooking stove.

dhal - Pulses, such as green peas, a primary element in the village diet.

dower - Husband's younger brother.

ghor - Individual living unit, combined with other buildings to form a bari.

haj - Name for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

maddrassa - Religious school, teaching the precepts of Islam, Arabic, and other subjects of a religious nature.

memshaeb - Married foreign Caucasian woman.

misshaeb - Unmarried foreign Caucasian woman.

morhana - Bride price settled at the time of marriage negotiations, paid by girl's family to groom, to be returned in case of the dissolution of the marriage.

pan - Betel nut and leaf.

para - Geographically distinct unit within a village, similar to a neighborhood in a Western context. A para is composed of baris.

peon - Office functionary messenger and handy man.

pieta - Collection of money by villagers for their village destitute.

palki - A covered wooden box, large enough for a woman, carried by four to six men. One of the means of conveyance before roads made the rickshaw or bus possible.

purdha - A cultural pattern, the observance of which excludes women from extra-familial social roles.

sardar - Traditional village leader.

sari - The main garment of Bengali women; four to six yards of material wrapped around the waist, with one end draped over the left shoulder.

sasur - Father-in-law.

sasuri - Mother-in-law.

ses zemena - The end of an age, or the end of the world. Family planning, the education of girls, and the lessening of purdha are thought by older village women to be indicative of an end of an age in the villages.

shaeb - Foreign Caucasian male.

tank - A man-made pond, located close to a bari; the source of water for cooking, washing clothes, dishes, livestock, and people.

thana - A governmental administrative unit, similar to a county in the United States.

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONNAIRE

Number_____

I. General

G-1. Father's house.

G-2. Family: (Include number of members of a) woman's family, their education, occupation; Also as regarding b) her father's family, brothers and sisters, their education and occupation; and ask regarding the c) family of her husband, his brothers and sisters, his parents, their education and occupation. a), b), c).)

G-3. Before beginning your work at the Academy, what was your condition like in your family? (economic and general)

G-4. Before your going to the Academy, about what things did your husband ask you?

a) daily bazaar
b) giving sari to sasuri
c) husband's going to town
d) buying land
e) taking loan
f) "hat" marketing
g) buying cloth for children
h) buying goats or cows

G-5. If you wanted to visit your father's house how was it arranged?

G-6. If your children went to school, how was it decided? Who discussed it? Who decided to send your children to school?

G-7. When children were naughty how were they disciplined?

G-8. What things did you and your husband discuss? (about land, bari, farming, children?)

G-9. Before going to the Academy how was it possible for you to save money?

G-10. How often did you go to Comilla town? a) For what things? b) Who went from your family? c) How often did someone go?

G-11. Who were your friends in the village at that time? a) Where did she live? b) How often did you see her? c) What are the qualities of friends? (for each one).

G-12. How did you behave with other village women? How did they behave to you?

G-13. Where could you go in the village at that time, before going to the Academy?

II. Academy

A-1. How did you first hear about the Academy? What were you told about it?

A-2. Why were you chosen/told to go and not someone else?

A-3. To go to the Academy the first time, whose permission did you have to get?

A-4. When you went to the Academy for the first time, what did the sasuri and other bari people say about your going there? (what else? etc)

A-5. When you first went to the Academy how did you like it? a) What did you do there that day? b) What do you remember most about that visit?

A-6. When you returned from your first visit to the Academy who did you tell about your visit there? a) Who else?

A-7. How was it decided that you should go regularly to the Academy? (begin working).

A-8. Who in your family did you gain permission from in order to work? a) husband, b) sasuri, c) basuer, d) chacha, e) sasur.

A-9. Who in the village did you get permission from in order to go?

A-10. When you first started going regularly to the Academy what did your bari people say? a) What objections were there? What did they say?

A-11. What did your para people say about your going to the Academy?

A-12. What did other villagers say about your going?

A-13. What do they say now? a) What brought about this change? (why less)

A-14. How did you feel when you first started going to the Academy?

A-15. When you first came for the beginning of your training at the Academy what did you think of the apas? How did you decide what to call them?

A-16. How has your deportment towards them changed since you first began going there?

A-17. What training have you taken?

A-18. When you go to the Academy which women do you spend most time with, (friends?) a) What do you talk about with these friends?

A-19. Which of these women did you know before? (How? relatives, neighbors, etc.) a) How often had you seen them?

A-20. Which other villages of your friends have you visited? On what occasion?

A-21. What are the qualities of a good teacher/organizer? What else? a) Who is a good teacher/organizer among the women you know?

A-22. When you need help to whom do you go at the Academy?

A-23. What difficulties do you have now in your work? a) What can you do about them?

A-24. When the Academy is closed and you can't come how do you feel?

III. Village Work

A. For Organizers:

VWO-1. How did you begin your work in the village? a) Which bari did you go to first? b) Who helped you? c) Whose permission did you ask in order to work in the village?

VWO-2. What did your bari people say about your doing this work in the village?

VWO-3. What did your para people say? a) other villagers?

VWO-4. How do you do your work in the village? a) teabh class, b) go to bari, c) go to women? (Systematically or not)

VWO-5. Where can you go in the village? a) Where can you not go?

VWO-6. How did you feel when you first started going around in the village?

VWO-7. How many women have you given training to?

VWO-8. From what kinds of families do they come from? a) laborers, b) land and food, c) land, food and profit?

VWO-9. What have the women been most interested in?

VWO-10. What kind of profit has there been for them?

VWO-11. If a woman's husband is not willing to have her learn, what do you tell him?

VWO-12. How many women are there in the cooperative society?

B. For Teachers:

VWT-1. In the village how many centers do you have? Where are they?

VWT-2. How were the places for these centers selected?

VWT-3. How did you start/organize your classes?

VWT-4. What did the village people say when you began this work in the village? a) family? b) para people?

VWT-5. How did you feel when you first started going around in the village?

VWT-6. Who helped you organize the centers? Who else?

VWT-7. Who did you get permission from in the village in order to open the classes?

VWT-8. When you first started your classes what difficulties were there? What did you do about these difficulties?

VWT-9. How many students are there? Of which type: a) girls, b) wives, c) older women?

VWT-10. Where in the village do the women live who are your students? a) same bari? b) another bari, same para? c) another para? d) another village?

VWT-11. What kinds of families do they come from? a) laborer/poor, b) enough land to support family, c) enough land to support family with profit besides.

VWT-12. How were the women selected for the centers? Did they ask to join, or did you tell them to come? How many?

VWT-13. How many of your students are relatives of yours? Name them. Where do they live? a) same bari? b) same para, different bari, c) different para, d) different village.

VWT-14. How many of the women in your centers are society members?

VWT-15. Which of the women in your centers did you know before the classes began? a) when did you see them before classes began? b) Are they relative, neighbor, or friend of yours?

VWT-16. To which paras in the village can you go to now? Where can't you go? Why?

Relationship with village women for both Teacher and Organizer. Those parts of the questions marked with (T) are for teachers only, those with (O) for organizers.

VW-1. What else do you talk about in your classes besides the Academy material?

VW-2. How should one teach a class? a) talk to women who come to you for advice?

VW-3. How often do you visit (T) students (O) women in their homes?

VW-4. Out of all the things that you have taught, what have the women used the most? What has been the most profitable for them?

VW-5. How do you like this work?

VW-6. What benefit has it been to you to do this work? (economic and self)

VW-7. For what things do women come to you now that they didn't before? (e.g., for buying things for them from the town markets?)

VW-8. Among these women/students that you have worked with, what changes have you seen in them? (the women themselves) What changes have you seen in their baris?

VW-9. How does this make you feel, when you see someone profit from what she has learned from you?

VW-10. What do the people of your bari say now about your work in the village? Para?

VW-11. If you have trouble in your work to whom do you ask for help in village?

VW-12. By what name do the village people call you?

IV. Family

F-1. On days that you go to the Academy how do you manage your housework? a) Who helps you? b) Who looks after things while you are gone?

F-2. On days that you have (T) classes/ (O) work in the village, how do you manage your household work? a) What work do you do before you go out? b) At what time is it necessary to be back?

F-3. In going around the village when are the women most likely to be sitting together talking, have some free time?

F-4. Since going to the Academy what changes have you made in the food you feed your family?
   a) How is this a change from what you ate before?
   b) When you first made some changes what did your family members say?
   c) What do they say now? (Go by family member, husband, sasuri, etc)

F-5. In what ways are you taking better care of your children's health? What else? a) When a child is sick how is it decided to bring a doctor?

F-6. How has learning to sew been of benefit to your family? (If she knows sewing) a) How has this influenced what is purchased for the family? (before and after) b) Are you asked now about what is to be purchased, more than before? How so?

F-7. What profit has there been for your family from the gardening you have done?

F-8. What do you do with the crops from the garden; a) sell, b) eat, c) give away?

F-9. From the money you have earned from gardening how has it been spent? a) Who decides how it should be spent?

F-10. Did you take a loan for the garden? Yes, No.
a) How was it decided in the family that you would take the loan? Who discussed it?

F-11. What other loans have you taken from the Academy?

F-12. How have you earned the money to repay the loans that you have taken? a) How long were loans given?

F-13. How do you keep your chickens? a) How is this different from before?

F-14. When the chickens need injections how is it arranged? a) Who decides? b) Who goes and brings whatever medicine or help that is necessary?

F-15. In what ways do you keep your ghor/bari neat and clean now that you didn't before? a) What did you have to do to make these changes? Whose permission did you have to ask? What reasoning do you give when asked?

F-16. (For newly literate women) How was it before not to be able to read and write? a) What profit/benefit is there for you in knowing this?

F-17. Which para women have come to you about learning about chickens, sewing, coil, things like this? a) Who has come? (name) Where does she live? b) How have you helped her? c) What did she come for? d) How many times has she come to you?

F-18. Who in your family praises your work? What do they say? Who else?

F-19. What do family members not like about your work?

F-20. Who decides how the money that you earn should be spent?

F-21. About what things are your words more listened to now in your family than before? What else? a) How does this make you feel?

F-22. What things do you discuss with your husband now that you didn't before? (economic, about the children, family affairs, general topics, society)

F-23. What has been the most difficult part of your work? a) getting permission to go to the Academy, b) going around in the village, c) teaching other women, or d) making changes in your own bari? e) other?

F-24. What does your husband say to you about your work now? How does this make you feel?

V. Self

S-1. When you first began your work when did you think that perhaps this work would lessen your family name?

S-2. In what ways has you work in the village improved your family name?

S-3. If your sasuri was talking about you, how would she describe you?

S-4. What is purdha? Have you always thought this way about purdha or have your ideas changed? If so, how have ideas changed? a) Have you spoken to others about this or not?

S-5. Which is best, the past or the present times? Why do you say that?

S-6. Which do you think plays a more important part in life, a) education, b) luck, or c) hard work? Why do you say that?

S-7. How will the lives that your daughters live be different from your own? How else?

S-8. Is it better for a girl to a) stay at home and help her mother, b) go to the school and learn Bengali, or c) go to the maddressa and learn to read the Koran? Why do you say that?

S-9. What advice would you give to someone who wanted to know how to handle opposition in their village to their moving about and going to the Academy? (i.e. how to handle opposition to doing the Academy's work?)

S-10. What foreign countries do you know of? a) Who is the leader/king of Pakistan now?