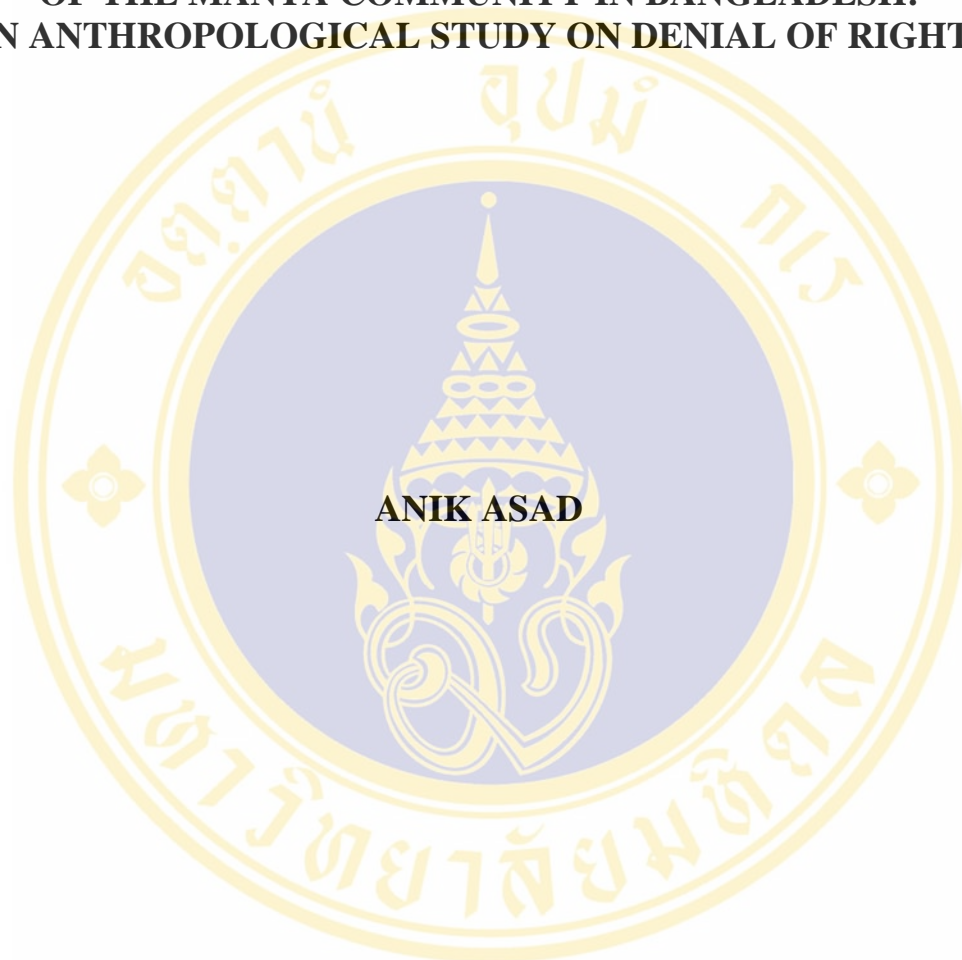


**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF EXCLUSION  
OF THE MANTA COMMUNITY IN BANGLADESH:  
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY ON DENIAL OF RIGHTS**



**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
(HUMAN RIGHTS)  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
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Thesis  
Entitled

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**Anik Asad.**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Manta are one of the oldest occupational minority communities living in the southwest coastal region of Bangladesh, having their own socio-cultural and occupational status. Their social solidarity, occupational uniqueness, religious beliefs, and traditions as a distinct culture are at stake today. The mainstream Muslim community discriminates against the Manta for two reasons. Firstly, because of women's engagement in fishing and work outside of family, and secondly, because of the worship of some non-Muslim natural deities. Because of these two behaviours the Mantas are segregated as lower class Muslims. These prejudices cause powerful social stigmas and taboos against the Manta community. Social stigmas have negative effects on their beliefs, perception of rights, traditions and life styles. This social and cultural stigma also provokes the denial of several economic, political, cultural and other institutional rights of the Manta by forcing them into social exclusion. The social and cultural construction of the Manta's exclusion in the stratified rural Muslim society is the major focal point of the present research. This generation-long collective exclusion of the community also limits their capacity to understand rights, and their ability to claim their rights. This research was conducted by ethnographic interviews with three Manta communities in the Galachipa area of Potuakhali district, and key-informant interviews with non-Manta people who are in contact with the Manta communities. The present research examines the context and the perception of the Manta's view of the rights and the state of overall human rights violations against the community.

**KEY WORDS: SOCIAL EXCLUSION/ OCCUPATIONAL MINORITY/  
MANTA COMMUNITY/ HUMAN RIGHTS-BANGLADESH.**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

A	ASA	Association for Social Advancement (A national level NGO in Bangladesh)
	ADC	Additional District Commissioner
B	BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (A national level NGO in Bangladesh)
	BRBD	Bangladesh Rural Development Board
	BSCIC	Bangladesh Small And Cottage Industries Corporation
C	CODEC	Costal Development Committee
	CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
	CERD,	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
	CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
D	DFID	Department For International Development
E	EPI	Expanded Program for Immunization
I,	ILO	International Labour Organization
	ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Rights
	ICESCR	International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
M	MP	Member of Parliament
N	NGO	Non Governmental Organization
	NFPE	Non-Formal Primary Education

### LIST OF ACRONYMS (Cont.)

S	SAP	South Asian Partnership (A national level NGO in Bangladesh)
T	TNO	Thana Nirbahi Officer
	TLM	School For Adult Literacy
U	UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
	UN	United Nation
	UNESCO	United Nation Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization
	UP	Union Parishad (Lowest unit of Local Government).
V	VGf	Vulnerable Group Feeding
	VGd	Vulnerable Group Development
W	WCEFA	World Conference on Education for All

## LIST OF LOCAL BANGLA TERMS

### A

<b>Arzal</b>	Lowest Class Of Muslim (this segregation is socially determined)
<b>Ashraf</b>	Upper Class Muslim
<b>Atraf</b>	Middle Class Muslim
<b>Aagunmukha</b>	Name of a river
<b>Apobad</b>	Defamation, Social Stigma

### B

<b>Bedey</b>	Snakecharmer (Community)
<b>Babijja</b>	People of illegitimate birth. Local people often use this term as alternative of the term Manta
<b>Bahr</b>	Fleet of boat, one cluster of Manta Boats
<b>Ban</b>	Flood, Cyclone (Natural Calamity)
<b>Bashat bati</b>	Homestead
<b>Bighas</b>	Measurement or quantity of land
<b>Botica</b>	Medicine made from herbs
<b>Beel</b>	Lake, other large water bodies
<b>Bedhormi</b>	Non-Believer
<b>Bohubibaho</b>	Polygamous marriage
<b>Babija Magi</b>	Unchaste (Prostitute)
<b>Bajaira Mayamanus</b>	Cheap girl
<b>Bejattia Mayya</b>	Fallen women,
<b>Besha</b>	Prostitute

### C

<b>Churi</b>	One kind of bracelets made by glass
<b>Char</b>	Riverin Island.
<b>Chasha</b>	Marginal cultivator

## LIST OF LOCAL BANGLA TERMS (Cont.)

**D**

<b>Doam</b>	Person who works dissecting during post-mortem, a Hindu caste having the assigned duty of burning the dead and looking after the crematorium. (Community)
<b>Dhopa</b>	Laundry Cleaner, Washerman (Community)
<b>Dhibor</b>	Segment of fisher folk community by caste of hindu religion
<b>Dharma Marga</b>	Religious Dogma
<b>Dingi</b>	Small Tiny Boat.
<b>Dhala Joba</b>	Low Tide
<b>Daktar</b>	Untrained Village Doctor
<b>Din Jama</b>	Tax (fixed amount of money collected by the Ijarader in daily basis)

**E**

<b>Eid</b>	Biggest Muslim Pilgrim
------------	------------------------

**F**

<b>Fakir</b>	Holy Man (Religious Leader)
--------------	-----------------------------

**G**

<b>Grihosto, (Gerosto Bari)</b>	Mainstream community people who have permanent settlement on land and economically well-off.
-------------------------------------	--

**H**

<b>Hijra</b>	Eunuch, Hermaphrodite (Community)
<b>Hajam</b>	Professional Circumciser (Community)
<b>Haor</b>	Lakes

**I**

<b>Ijara</b>	Lease
<b>Ijaradar</b>	A lease or a tenure hold by lease

## LIST OF LOCAL BANGLA TERMS (Cont.)

<b>Imam</b>	Religious leader
<b>J</b>	
<b>Jele</b>	Mainstream Fishermen Communities.
<b>Jolodas</b>	One segment of fisher folk according Hindu caste
<b>Jatis</b>	Sub-caste
<b>Jalmohal Act</b>	Water Body Property Right in Bangladesh
<b>Jhar</b>	Storm
<b>Jupri</b>	Hut
<b>Jautuk</b>	Dowry
<b>K</b>	
<b>Kulu</b>	Oil Presser (Community)
<b>Kumar</b>	Clay modeller, one who makes earthenware, Potter (Community)
<b>Kamar</b>	Blacksmith (Community)
<b>Kaiborto</b>	Fisher Folk
<b>Kancha Rasta</b>	Mud built road
<b>Khas Jami</b>	According land policy of Bangladesh government, all abandon land and newly emerged land from river is treated as khas land.
<b>Kali Puja</b>	Worship of goddess of destruction and evil
<b>Kartik</b>	One of twelve Bangla months
<b>Khana</b>	Household, Settlement on land
<b>Kabiraj</b>	Traditional Herbal Medicine Man
<b>Kaffir</b>	Atheist, Non-believer (People Who Don't Believe In Allah).
<b>Khajna</b>	Tax
<b>Kuicha</b>	Inferior people, another alternative word of manta
<b>Kuli</b>	Who Carry Goods Of Others
<b>Khanki</b>	Prostitute

## LIST OF LOCAL BANGLA TERMS (Cont.)

**M**

<b>Mathor</b>	Sweeper, Sweeper's Job (Community)
<b>Mangta</b>	To Beg, People Who Live By Begging.
<b>Mishigari</b>	Bebey women who sell goods from door to door, or work as spell makers and witches.
<b>Malo</b>	Lower Caste Hindu Fisher Folk
<b>Maimol</b>	do
<b>Mohajons</b>	Middleman, informal money lender.
<b>Monsha Puja</b>	Worship Of Goddess Of Snake
<b>Moiya Jal</b>	Hand Made Fishing Net.
<b>Momins</b>	Lower Muslim in West Bengal (India)

**N**

<b>Napit</b>	Barber, (Community)
<b>Nomoshudro</b>	Lowest Occupational Caste
<b>Noyrit</b>	North-East Corner Of The Sky

**O**

<b>Ojha</b>	Traditional healer who cures snake-bites or other morbidities by means of incantation
-------------	---

**P**

<b>Potita</b>	Commercial Sex Worker
<b>Purdah Protha</b>	Women seclusion, According Muslim Sharia Law.
<b>Peer</b>	Holy Religious Leader
<b>Panipora</b>	Holy Water
<b>Patua</b>	Lower Muslim in West Bengal (India)

**R**

<b>Rishi</b>	Cobler, a sage, a composer of vedic hymns (Community)
<b>Raag Joba</b>	High Tide

## LIST OF LOCAL BANGLA TERMS (Cont.)

### S

<b>Sarder</b>	Headman of the Manta Community.
<b>Sonatomy Aachar</b>	Traditional Customs s
<b>Shirni</b>	Sacrifice food and sacred goods towards goddess.
<b>Shitla Puja</b>	Worship Of Goddess Of Diseases
<b>Sabar</b>	Instruments And Means Of Fishing
<b>Sapra</b>	Hut
<b>Sanman</b>	Honour, Social Fame
<b>Sharia Aain</b>	Muslim Religious Law
<b>Shalish</b>	Arbitration, local level mediation body
<b>Shah</b>	Lowest Muslim Classes In West Bengal (India)
<b>T</b>	
<b>Thana</b>	The Lowest Administrative Unite In Bangladesh.
<b>Torer Manush</b>	Mainstream Community, people who have permanent settlement on land
<b>Tabiz</b>	Talisman
<b>Tufan</b>	Cyclone

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study**

A large section of people in Bangladesh is born in poverty, brought up and die in poverty. About 35.6 percent of the population lives below the poverty line or find themselves on the threshold of famine and death (Kamal 2000)<sup>1</sup>. The majority of the people of Bangladesh, especially the disadvantaged, the poor, and the marginalized are systematically denied their basic rights to food, health, education, shelter, and security, and this is caused by the government. With very little access to the decision-making process and with the continual denial of basic economic and social rights, their life is concentrated around meeting their daily food requirement (Ahmed 1999). The overall scenario found is that the per capita calorie intake of the poor people is only 2266 calories; 82.3% households remain without of water supply and sanitary facilities; infant mortality rate is 81.4 per 1000; the adult literacy rate is below 50%; 79% are not getting any access to government health facilities; 85% are not living in proper housing facilities (Aminuzzaman, 2002). Although the implications for the denial of several rights and exclusion are the same for poor people, still it is more acute for those who are the poorest of the poor as social prejudices and the customs that prevail in the society tend to degrade their positions even lower.

Over the last three decades in Bangladesh, development intervention both from the public and private sector gained significant success in alleviating poverty and the country achieved remarkable progress in human development indicators (Task Force, 1990). However, despite the success on a macro level, there is a large group of people who are not only still left out from the development intervention but also from policy attention as well. Hossain Zillur Rahaman stated the situation this way:

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<sup>1</sup> Kamal is quoting from the World Bank's *World Development Report on Knowledge for Development*, 1998/99.

The preceding decade has seen important breakthroughs in the fight against poverty in Bangladesh. However, despite the modest decline in poverty levels over this period, poverty is still the overwhelmingly single most important development challenge for the country with nearly half the population still remaining in poverty. Among other things one of the major problems is policy concern. Multidimensionality of poverty is now well-recognised not just as a measurement issue, but also as a matter of policy concern. But Bangladesh lacks this dynamic in any policies regarding development approaches. (Rahaman *et al*, 1998, 1).

This poverty of a large group of people is not simply because of their relatively less visibility, but also because of their limited capacity to raise their voice, less political activism, the negligence of policymakers, and the absence of appropriate institutions who can bring about influence on their behalf. Most excluded groups suffer exclusion because of less economic capability, but exclusion also can result more from other socio-cultural factors rather than just economic factors. These socio-cultural factors have been overlooked by the policymakers (Jahan, 1991).

For example, social stratification on the basis of cultural and religious hierarchy, social stigmatisation, religious seclusion, and institutional segregation has a great influence on overall social exclusion. These non-economic phenomena have serious negative impacts on the marginalized occupational minorities who are living by traditional means of livelihood in several part of Bangladesh.

### ***Exclusion of Occupational Minorities in Bangladesh***

There are several traditional occupational minorities living through out the country. Among those are: “Rishi” (Cobbler), “Mathor” (Sweeper), “Hijra” (Eunuch), “Doam (Person works for dissection during post-mortem), “Napit” (Barber), “Dhopa” (Laundry worker), “Potita” (Commercial sex worker), “Bedey” (Snake charmer), Kulu (Oil presser), “Kumar”(Pottery maker),“Kamar”(Blacksmith), and “Hajam” (Male traditional circumciser). Some of them are occupational minorities and some are minorities based on both religious and occupational matters (Khandakar, et al, 1994). These minority people suffer discrimination in all arenas of political, economical, cultural and social participation in public life. They are underrepresented in all public offices and experience

discrimination in access to educational and employment opportunities. The racism of the majority community is exemplified through every means in the society. Many of the minorities such as “Potita”, “Hijra”, “Mathor”, “Rishi”, “Doam” can never sit on a chair before an upper-class person, they are restricted from wearing footwear in many places, or cannot afford to wear footwear, they can never drink or eat with the same glasses or dish used by upper-class people. Their children are deprived from attending the government school as they are socially excluded and not allowed in a social assembly with the majority. They face double discrimination: on one hand they are discriminated against as absolute poor, and, on the other hand, they are segregated because of their inferior occupations. This state of exclusion also keeps them beyond the development assistance of the government. A few NGOs are providing some assistance but this is very insignificant in respect to their actual needs. First of all they need social recognition to be identified as human being.

In most cases these occupational minorities face the problem of lack of social acceptance, and to change this situation some of them converted to the Muslim religion. They lost their cultural heritage, but they cannot change their social maladies (Rahaman, 1994). The “Bedey”, “Kulu”, “Kumar”, “Manta”, “Kamar”, and “Hajam” groups have already lost their cultural heritages, and they are becoming less visible day by day as they lose their traditional occupations. This situation of lack of social acceptance proves that the exclusion of occupational minorities does not only come out of the economic and political denial of rights. The barriers of social and cultural factors and the attitude of the mainstream community, in other words the socio-cultural construction of the dominant culture, is a major factor of exclusion. In a traditional, stratified rural society, the social and cultural construction of minority groups by the mainstream society is one of the major social factors for the exclusion of a specific cultural group like the Manta. Social scientists and Anthropologists have offered a number of definitions of social and cultural construction. I define the concept “social and cultural construction” as the culturally unique ideological and material set-up of a society, that makes sense of how a society runs. This fits with the definition given by James L. Peacock. In his article: “Durkheim and the Social Anthropology of Culture” he states:

Social and cultural construction means the integrated pattern of human interaction, knowledge, belief, and behaviour. These patterns being determined by the mental

and material needs of the society and define particular behavioural norms for the groups and individual. Every human society has its own particular culture, or socio-cultural system. The attitudes, values, ideals, and beliefs of the individual or groups are greatly influenced by the culture in which he lives. That determines the structure and function of social organization, economic systems, education, religion and belief, and custom and law (1981, 996).

All these marginalized people, according to the constitution, are citizens of the country and have the right to exercise their cultural and social human rights. The exclusion of these communities from the greater society has occurred systematically. First, these groups were uprooted from their livelihood and resources and consequently left out from other aspects of opportunities. Barakat & Jaman state:

Most of the occupational minorities of Bangladesh are directly related with the agro-based economy. In the past, most of the indigenous people had a subsistence economy, but with the intrusion of the state they have now been integrated into the market economy. They have already lost their land and are being separated from their subsistence livelihood. Of the indigenous and occupational minorities living in the various parts of the country, an estimated 60-70 percent are landless (1998, 14).

Article 42 of the Constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to acquire, hold, transfer, and dispose of property. Article 13 (c) guarantees the right to private ownership. However, appropriation of the property of minorities through harassment, threat, and force is common. In some instances, Muslims use the land for a mosque or other religious purpose to prevent their claim for return. In such cases local law enforcement officials are unwilling to protect the right to property, and the community at large appears disinterested in preventing the occurrence of such incidents. Local elites have occupied the land of minorities either with the use of forged documents or by force (Barkat & Zaman, 1998).

Therefore, these occupational minorities, being separated from their subsistence mode of production, fall into the trap of the endless chain of poverty. Because of their lack of skill in other jobs they are unemployed and turn into daily wage-labourers. Even some public policy and government projects hamper the livelihood options of the poor. As Vandana Shiva writes:

The main objective of development policy is to draw the indigenous, peripheral functional groups and peasants away from subsistence and replace traditional mode of production or agriculture by commercial agriculture, and treat the countryside as a hinterland only (Shiva 1987, 22).

If we carefully observe the development projects of the Bangladesh government we can find that the projects like “Green Revolution”, “White Revolution”, the Social Forestry Projects, the Integrated Rural Development Programme, and the Dam Projects all are established in rural areas and, hence, they create more conflicts among rural peoples. As a result, the indigenous and occupational minority groups are moved from their place of origin and have lost their livelihood. Besides this systematic process of pauperisation, social stigmatisation and prejudice act as a powerful phenomenon for the construction of the overall exclusion of these groups. With this brief introductory overview of the occupational minority populations of Bangladesh, I now limit my discussion to the Manta alone.

### ***Special poverty and exclusion of Manta***

In this thesis I have attempted to discuss the state of social exclusion of the Manta who represent one of these largely excluded occupational minority groups. The Manta is a “Traditional Occupational Community” primarily identified as a marginal and excluded group in the southwest coastal belt of Bangladesh in Golachipa Thana<sup>2</sup> within the Potuakhali district. Marvin Harris in his book *Culture, Man, and Nature: An introduction to General Anthropology*, identified the traditional occupational communities this way:

A specialized livelihood of a community that was adapted by the ancestors of that community and which is continuing through generation after generation (1972, 436).

According Shankarlal Shah, a local journalist and correspondent for a national daily, in his “*Nodi O Janapad*” (River and People) the sole feature report written on the Manta so far, and published in a local weekly ‘*Trinomu*’ (2001) it is mentioned that the greater Potuakhali district comprises a population of 3.9 million amongst which 45% are living under the poverty line and earn less than \$ US 1 per day; 30% of the families remain under the extreme poverty line whereby they cannot afford to buy the minimum staple foods needed for two meals per day (Shah 2001). In this region rural people are gradually

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<sup>2</sup> Lowest Administrative Unit.

losing their livelihood options; the environment and biodiversity is deteriorating; agricultural and other agro-based workers are becoming day labourers. Beside poverty this region suffers natural catastrophe because it is downstream, where hundreds of small- and medium-sized rivers cross the land, and there is an estuary from which three of the biggest rivers in the country flow into the Bay of Bengal. Approximately 7000 Manta people are living in several areas of the greater Potuakhali district and working in their traditional occupation as fisherfolk. Their occupational needs compel them to interact with these natural catastrophes.

“*Manta*” is a word created and used by the local mainstream Muslim community of the locality to identify this particular minority group. The local people also use another term “*Babijja*” (people of illegitimate birth) as an alternative to the word “*Manta*”. The Manta people do not want to be called as “*Manta*” and would rather be called “*Sarder*”. All these terms are negative, as this minority community is seen as inferior to the mainstream community<sup>3</sup>. This is an example of social stigma and there are various examples of social stigmas by which the mainstream Muslim communities segregate the Manta communities. The word “stigmatisation” may carry a special significance for people. Social stigmatisation separates people into groups of “us” versus “them”. This involves some lowering of status. In the first component, people identify and label human differences in respect of gender roles, class and social identity, religious differences, ethnicity, occupation, caste and so on within the general field of local values and social structure. The second component involves the existence of a stigma as a physical representation of difference, which is discrimination. People discriminate against stigmatised people in various ways, such as they do not want to acknowledge them, share food with them, intermarry with them, and so on, because of the stigma.

This social and cultural stigma, the social and cultural construction by mainstream dominant society, and the denial of economic, political and institutional rights are not

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<sup>3</sup> In Chapter two I discussed the origin and the meaning of the word “*Manta*”. Though *Manta* is a word that implies negative meanings (people who live by begging or by asking help from others) in my thesis I used this local term “*Manta*” as major key word instead of “*Sarder*” to identify the specific community because this particular term “*Manta*” is very much familiar to local people and all over the country. The term *sarder* may mislead readers to understand that I am not talking about Manta community specifically because in Bangladesh there are several occupational groups who are also acknowledged as *sarder*. So in order to avoid confusion and to be more specific I used the term “*Manta*”.

only excluding the community from the mainstream society but also constructs intra-community segregations, which I will discuss in Chapter five. As an example, from the field research, it became known that the male household head of some Manta families out of those ten Manta family groups which I interviewed are reluctant to allow their women work outside because of the social stigma and social pressure of *Purdah Protha* (Seclusion of women) by the mainstream Muslim people. Though this example is rare in the Manta community, it has a strong overall impact on the community, especially on women in the Manta family because it restricts the movement of Manta women and their income earning capacity.

The Constitution of Bangladesh pledges eighteen fundamental civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including equality before the law, the right to life and personal liberty, the freedom of occupation, the right to property, the right to ensure a livelihood, the right to education, health and free access to every sphere of institutional activities.<sup>4</sup> But as far as the issue of Human Rights is concerned, especially regarding a vulnerable occupational minority group like the Manta, those aforesaid constitutional safeguards do not work at all. The Manta people are identified as traditional occupational minority. Who has a specific and unique cultural identity. According to the Cultural Relativism theory of Anthropology, culture is transmitted through a highly complex process comprising a mixture of mental and material components (Kuper 1975). The uniqueness of culture reflects through the mode of production therefore, the livelihood patterns, type of housing, food pattern, and pattern of dressing, it can be also expressed through the relationships with members of the community in the kinship pattern, belief systems, religion, customs, and traditions etc. All these material and mental means of a culture are infused with high values that are transmitted from generation to generation which create a worldview of a particular cultural community. According to Rosas (1995), the socio-cultural construction of a community is intimately related with their mental and material means of livelihood and that generates the sense of identity. The Manta are being treated as lower class Muslims, they have no land, their occupation is being threatened by several interest groups, they have no voting rights, their children are not getting schooling opportunities; as the extreme poor they are not getting any

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<sup>4</sup> See Constitution Of Bangladesh. Art. 27-44.

governmental relief efforts, have no access to governmental health facilities, and they even have no right to bury their dead in the public burial grounds. Besides these problems and governmental ignorance no NGO is concerned about the problems of this community (Shah 2001).

### **Objectives and Research Questions**

The broader objective of this research is to expand knowledge about the experience and perception of the Manta people regarding their rights and the state of their social exclusion as an outcome of social stigmatisation and the multiple denials of several rights. The specific objectives are:

- To detail the perception of the Manta people regarding their rights, and livelihood in their particular socio-cultural settings.
- To examine the socio-cultural construction that determines Manta's perception of rights.
- To analyse socio-cultural stigmas, segregations and stratification of the Manta community that are working as primary causes of exclusion.
- To detail the economical, political and other institutional dimensions of the socio-cultural stigmatisations and segregations in the denial of rights.
- To detail the intra-community segregation and the denial of rights (according to gender, generation, age, etc) as the result of overall exclusion.

In the given socio-cultural context of the south western coast of Bangladesh, how is the Manta's perception of rights being constructed? In order to know the Manta's perception regarding rights, and how they categorise and prioritise those rights, the focus of this research clarifies their socio-cultural construction of the community and their livelihood, traditions, and experiences. In order to know to what extent these cultural barriers are constructing their social exclusion, attention has been paid to the social position of the Manta in a stratified Muslim society, the attitude of other people towards the Manta, and the social taboos of the mainstream Muslim community towards them. These social and cultural stigmatisations and segregations have economical, political, and institutional dimensions in the denial of rights. These prejudices restrict the upward social

mobilisation of the community and thereby influence intra-community segregations according gender, age and generation.

To examine these objectives four major research questions were developed:

- How is the Manta's perception and understanding regarding rights determined by the socio-cultural context?
- What particular socio-cultural constructions of the "Manta" community act as major causes for the social stratification, stigmas and prejudices that segregate the community from the society?
- How have social stigmas, stratifications and segregations lead to the denial of the Manta's rights?
- How and to what extent does the overall social exclusion and denial of rights construct the intra-community segregation and human rights violations regarding gender?

The present research is the outcome of fieldwork undertaken for a short period in three Manta settlements (Purba Dacua, Pantotti, and Nayapara) in Galachipa Thana of the Patuakhali District. These three villages were selected purposively because of the availability of a sizeable number of Manta people. Anthropological techniques of observation and in-depth interviews among Manta family groups were used for collecting data. In addition two key-informant interviews were also conducted for overall information regarding the Manta. Emphasis was given to collecting qualitative (rather than quantitative) information in order to understand the processes of exclusion. Intensive interviews of some randomly selected respondents and subjects, reports of the key informants, informal discussions with the non-Manta people and my own observations in the study areas were the major sources of primary information collected for the present study. Secondary sources of data were also used while writing this paper. The fieldwork for the study was extended for eighteen days (from March 24 to April 10, 2003). In Chapter II the methodological part is thoroughly discussed.

### **Scope and Significance of the study**

The study of all processes of social exclusion of the Manta community in the given locality was not feasible in a single study, and also it was not possible to investigate the immediate and ultimate causes of social exclusion. The focus was on how the Manta society formulates their perception of rights given their livelihood and socio-cultural context. The study also looked at the creation of social and cultural barriers, and other societal, economical, political, and institutional disadvantages that result from the existing social and cultural stigmas, prejudices, and attitude of the mainstream community. These stigmas, taboos, and segregation are created because of the Manta women's work in fishing and outside of the household, which are violation of *Purdah* and also because of their worship of some natural deities.

These two phenomena are directly associated with women's activities, so the activities of Manta women were examined as an important factor in the community's exclusion. Most of the social and cultural stigmas are directly associated with women's work yet this is not the root cause of the overall exclusion of the Manta community. Rather, as I described in Chapter III, women are held in high esteem in the community because of their earning capacity. Besides this, women's rights is a broad and complex issue, particularly in a stratified traditional rural society. Given the limited scope of the thesis, Manta's women rights cannot be the part of broader scope of the thesis. I only discuss the views and the attitude of the mainstream Muslim community towards the Manta women for their activities outside the family as a significant cause of social stigma.

Several academic studies regarding poverty and exclusion have been done and these studies identify several dimensions of exclusion and poverty. According The Asian Development Bank<sup>5</sup>, more than 200 studies so far have been done addressing the Urban Poverty Agenda in Bangladesh that cover more than 50 million poor. One Grameen Bank report shows that most of the rural poor are not getting adequate opportunities of life because of low-income, less income generating factors and acute poverty<sup>6</sup>. These examples reveal that these groups are poor because of lack of income or a low-income

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<sup>5</sup> ADB, *Recommended Ways To Tackle Urban Poverty In Bangladesh*. No. 098/97. 16 October 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Grameen Bank, *An Evaluation study on Poverty, Social Development, Domestic Finance, Long-Term Impacts of Micro credit Programs*, GB Publication, Dhaka, 2000.

capacity. In addition, there have been exclusion studies that focus on a particular issues, for example, exclusion from education, exclusion from housing, exclusion from property ownership, exclusion from democratic participation, exclusion from access to health services, exclusion from public goods, terms of gender-based exclusion, exclusion of the old and infirm, and exclusion of the physically handicapped (Rahaman, 1998). Each of these issues deals with a special form of exclusion and deserves exploration for its own sake. But the social exclusion of a particularly marginalised “traditional occupational community” like the Manta is an outcome of social stigma and prejudice of a stratified society, that is more powerful than the so called economic factors of exclusion. This dynamic of social exclusion has not yet been addressed when looking at poverty in Bangladesh. The thesis aims to produce new understanding of social exclusion and human rights problems in Bangladesh.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

The details of the fieldwork techniques including the data collection methodology and procedures that followed throughout the field study is narrated in Chapter II. The theories and the conceptual issues regarding social exclusion in general have been discussed in Chapter III. Some attempts have been made to critically analyse the existing theories on social exclusion and find new definitions according to the research findings. Since this is an explorative research on social exclusion of the Manta community, the origin and the development of the community demands to be described.

The Manta’s perception of rights and the state of social exclusion of the Manta community, in the particular socio-cultural context, is discussed in Chapter IV. Specific socio-cultural and livelihood conditions determine the Manta’s perception regarding rights. How the mainstream Muslims create barriers to the Manta in fulfilling these rights by segregating them as non-believers, and how social stigma holds them back from receiving other economic, political and institutional rights are discussed in this Chapter. Chapter IV also describes the Manta’s perception of rights and their denial of those rights. This Chapter also discusses the mechanism of denials of their necessary rights.

Social stigmas and prejudices that are starting points for the exclusion of the Manta from the right to livelihood, right to land, and other rights, are discussed in Chapter V. The social and cultural barriers of the mainstream culture are exposed in several ways. The religious orthodoxy and the sense of superiority of the mainstream Muslims are the foundation of these social stigmas and prejudices. In addition, the social exclusion and the negative influences which the dominant culture imposes creates intra-community segregations and violation of rights. Chapter V also looks for the intra-group violation of rights and segregations in respect of gender, aged persons, children, adolescent girls, and generational mobility among the Manta.

In Chapter VI an analysis has been made between the findings of the research and existing theories on social exclusion that could generate a critical overview of social exclusion. There are several occupational minorities living in various parts of Bangladesh. They face the common curse of poverty and the exclusion that all poor people face. But some of the occupational minorities face double exclusion; they are excluded because of their extreme poverty and at the same time their exclusion results from social and cultural barriers because of differing socio-cultural constructions. The Manta as a traditional occupational minority community represents this double state of social exclusion.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

The major objective of this study was to identify the state of social exclusion and the denial of rights of the Manta population with a special focus on the social and cultural construction of exclusion and the Manta's own perception of rights. So it was an explorative anthropological research of a particular cultural group. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology was followed for data collection. The qualitative method emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning of human behaviour and the socio-cultural context of social interaction, their values, rituals, perceptions, symbols, and beliefs (Patton, 1987 & Nachmias, 1987). Field research is the central strategy of data collection associated with qualitative methodology. Field research can be defined as the study of people acting in the natural courses of their daily lives which means what people do and what people say is the major source of qualitative data, and field research is carried out in *natural* settings. The particular approach to field research is called *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Patton, 1987, Nachmias, 1987). The strength of naturalistic inquiry is that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the information for the evaluation. The researcher has to be engaged in naturally occurring activities and processes, which are not planned. This research benefits itself by adopting qualitative research methods and using naturalistic inquiry, because it was not possible to carry out accurate information regarding the Manta's state of social exclusion without considering the realities of their socio-cultural construction of life and geographical setting of the locality. This naturalistic inquiry was particularly useful for finding out the variations of exclusion in a given locality. Patton says:

Naturalistic inquiry can capture whatever significant outcomes occur because the design is not locked into looking at only predetermined variables and out come (1987, 14).

From the above discussion, it can be said that qualitative methods are particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic. The researcher attempts to make sense of the situation without imposing pre-existing expectations of the results and inductive designs begin with specific observations and build toward a general pattern. In

this research, the conclusion or result regarding the perception of rights of the Manta communities and the state of exclusion are drawn after examining the individual perceptions and experiences of the communities. Categories or dimensions of analysis emerged from open-ended conversations and observations as the researcher came to understand the existing pattern of the exclusion processes. This contrasts with the hypothetical deductive approach of experimental designs.

As a focus of the research is how the Manta people construct a perception of rights so this research also adopted the research methodology based on grounded theory. The goal of the qualitative methods for the field research is to develop a theory, which is “grounded” that is, closely and directly relevant to the particular setting under study. Nachmias (1987) said that using the grounded theory approach the researcher first develops conceptual categories from the data, and then makes new observation in order to clarify and elaborate these categories. Newman says:

While in the field, the researcher continually asks questions as to fit, relevance and workability about the emerging categories and relationships between them. By raising questions at this point in time the researcher checks those issues while he still has access to the data. As a result, he continuously fits analysis to the data by checking as he proceeds (2000, 420).

This research took full opportunity of “grounded-theory”. During the field investigation the open-ended interview questions were asked to the Manta and non-Manta interviewees at relevant points of time. None of the interview questions were pre-fixed, rather flexibility and an inductive analysis was followed. The three data collection techniques, namely in-depth open-ended interview, observation, and key-informant interview, were adopted in this research. These techniques are used frequently in grounded-theory, and the three pillars of qualitative methods. In this chapter in the data collection techniques section I describe in detail how I used these three techniques as major data collection techniques.

Eighteen days of fieldwork were conducted for the qualitative data collection of this research (from 24 March 2003 to 10 April 2003). Among the 18 days, 10 days were spent exploring for information in the several locations of the Manta community. During these days I did not spend only interviewing Manta people, rather at the same time direct observations were made of their day-to-day life, the household activities, division of labour in household, interaction with other people of the locality and institutions, activities in the market place. Furthermore, in order to get firsthand data from the ground some participation in their activities was undertaken, such as participation in their fishing activities, participation in some of their religious activities and social gatherings. The schedule and the period of data collection was flexible to the need, reality and the availability of Manta people. This flexibility of data collection was adapted in order to attain the objective of the research; hence to observe the activities and interactions of the Manta people in their natural setting and to find out the real state of denial of rights constructing their magnitude of social exclusion. The following pages describe the detail of the data collection techniques, which I explored in the three Manta locations.

### **Selection of Study Area**

The Manta “family boat” was the basic study unit. But Manta boats are not always available because of the frequent movement that their occupation demands. So the field research among this community was dependent on the availability of reaching them. Because of this problem after my arrival in Galachipa on my first day there, the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003 I made contact with Ainali Matobbor the supreme Headman of the entire Manta community of Galachipa. This was accomplished with the help of Shankarlal Shah a local journalist who has vast experience and is knowledgeable regarding the local society in Galachipa and the Manta community as well. From the discussion with Ainali Matobbor we selected three villages as study areas based on the availability of the Manta people during the fieldwork period. These three different areas possess differences on several points that may generate different experiences of the Manta people regarding exclusion. These three villages were: *Purba Dacua*, *Nayabari* and *Panpatti*. All these three villages are in Galachipa Thana. After selecting these three villages we spent two days, that is the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of March, in these three areas to collect general information

and observe the practical situations of the Manta communities living in these areas. We found three different situations in the three different areas.

*Purba Dacua* is a village situated 8 km from Galachipa Town. There is a road from Galachipa Town up to the Union Council Office of the village, but as this road is made of earth (*Kancha Rasta*) it remains unsuitable for any kind of transportation and during the rainy season most of the road becomes submerged by floodwater. Because of this insufficient communication infrastructure, the village center has not developed to even a minimum level. In the center of the village there is a marketplace and around that marketplace there is a mosque, one primary school, one BRAC School and some other establishments. Here I found 11 Manta families who have lived on Government *Khas* land for 30-35 years. This settlement was chosen because I found that these 11 Manta families have some sort of settlement on the land. They have built houses on the land and are fighting to get government allocation/ entitlement of the land. They have more communication with the mainstream community and they are much nearer to other social and cultural activities of the mainstream society. This Manta settlement is an exception in the context of the overall situation of the Manta community in the Golachipa area. As they have been living in this area for more than three decades and have homes on land these 11 families can be considered as permanent residents. I chose to include this group, because the social conditions, perspective of rights, magnitude of exclusion, and the denial of rights should be different from that of the Manta who have not settled on land. This helped me to compare and differentiate the experiences of exclusion of the Manta living in different settings.

*Nayabari* village is near to the main boat terminal of Galachipa Thana. It is only half a kilometer away from town. Compared with *Purba Dacua* village, *Nayabari* is in a better position regarding infrastructure benefits, and other administrative facilities. Here I found that most of the time one cluster of Manta boats (7 boats in this cluster) gathers together often. Though these Manta families are near to the urban facilities they still have no home on land. These 7 Manta families are living on boats and they have no settlement on the land like the *Purba Dacua* settlement. For the last three years this cluster of Manta people are living in this area. They go fish during the daytime and come back in the evening and go to town's marketplace, and sit in the tea stall. I also found in this area

Manta women who often spend time in market areas. So unlike the other two areas the Manta people here are nearer to urban facilities and other people, but they have no home on land. It was fascinating to me that though these 7 Manta families in this area are living near urban facilities they are more deprived of rights, such as land rights, than those who are living far from these facilities. The reason for selecting this area was I wanted to discover what kind of mechanism of exclusion operated here.

*Panpatti* village is situated near to the estuary of the Bay of Bengal. It is 12 km away from the Galachipa Town. No road communication has been established between Galachipa town and *Panpatti* village. Actually *Panpatti* is a riverine *Char* (island) situated downstream of the *Aagunmukha* River. The only mode of communication is by boat and usually it takes 35 minutes to reach from Galachipa town. After reaching *Panpatti* village in the afternoon it was difficult to find any Manta boats because at that time the Manta people were fishing, so we had to wait until their return in the evening. *Panpatti* is an isolated village; I found not a single brick-built house. Among the inhabitants of this village most of them are fisherfolk, with a good number of cultivators, and some run small grocery shops. A village center has developed around the boat terminal of the village, and after 7 pm all communication is cut off from Galachipa Town. Approximately 5-6 clusters (on an average 6 boats are in one cluster) of Manta boats stay in this area. All Manta boats go to fish early in the morning. They fish all day long and in the evening they return. As they have no settlement on land, during the night they anchor their boat near to the land. They never leave their boats and after 2-3 days they go to the market to sell fish and buy food. The Manta people of this area are totally isolated and are far from any facilities, unlike the Manta of *Nayabari* and *Purba Dacua*. Here the village is physically remote, and cut off from the minimum facilities. Here an occupational minority group of the Manta lives without getting any of the amenities of life, so it gave me another dimension of exclusion, and this was the logic in choosing *Panpatti* village as one of the study areas.

### **Selection of the Informants**

Approximately 50 Manta families live in these three areas. Eleven families in *Purba Dacua* village, 7 families in *Nayabari* village and 30 families in *Panpatti* village. Among

these, a total of 10 Manta family groups were interviewed. These 10 Manta families were selected by convenience sample on the basis of availability at the time of data collection. The sample size of this study constitutes about 20% of the total number. In *Purba Dacua* among the 11 families 5 families were interviewed, in *Nayabari* village among the 7 families 2 families were selected. Among these 2 families one household was chosen purposively because it is headed by a widow who catches and sells fish on her own. Her life struggle is more difficult and experiences are more bitter than any other Manta family of the Bahar. In *Panpatti* village, out of 30 families 3 families were interviewed. To reach the Manta people in the remote village of *Panpatti* in the daytime is hard and time-consuming because most of the time they remain busy with fishing in the deeper part of the river. There was a limitation getting them in daytime. Therefore, three families were selected on the basis of availability. In addition two key-informant interviews were also conducted. One was with the supreme Headman of the entire Manta community of Golachipa region, Ainali Matobbor, who has an overall understanding of the Manta community throughout the locality. Another key-informant was Shankarlal Shah, a local journalist and knowledgeable person (previously mentioned). The selection of these two key informants was intentional in order to gain more understanding about the Manta community and their state of exclusion.

For their day-to-day affairs the Manta people are obliged to communicate with other community people: *Mohajons* (middlemen) from whom the Manta people get loans, shopkeepers, administrative people from Thana Health Complex, Policemen, Land Officers, NGO workers, Court officials, and people in the fishery office. In order to have a better understanding about the Manta's problem, and what mechanisms operate within these institutions, and how they perceive the Manta's problem, I also interviewed some of these people. The interview topics were fixed on some particular problems that were developed after interviewing the Manta people. The list of Manta and non-Manta interviewees is attached in Appendix A.

### **Data collection Technique**

I started data collection on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2003, and my first area was *Purba Dacua* village. I spent one day in this Manta settlement because people were available in

this settlement and I could easily reach them. The next two days, the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of March, I collected data from *Nayabari* village. Though there were only two families I interviewed in this area, I had to expend a lot of time because on the first day it was difficult to reach them during the first half of the day; in the afternoon I managed to reach one family. The rest of the boats did not return that night, so the next day I interviewed the other family. In this area I not only conducted interviews, but I also visited the nearby market place with these Manta people in order to observe their activities and to observe other people's attitude towards them. I also participated in one of their religious events as I went to the temple with some of the Manta women. *Panpatti* was the last village of my data collection. Though among the 30 families I only interviewed 3 families, I still had to visit that area on two different days and at a different time. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March on the first day when I reached the boat terminal of the village early in the morning I found only one boat was preparing to go fishing. As it was not ethical to ask them to cancel their work and give an interview to me so I became a partner in their quest. All day long I stayed with them, observed their fishing activities, shared food with them and also interviewed them. There in the downstream of the Aagunmukha River I found six Manta boats busy fishing. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2003, I hired a boat from Golachipa boat terminal and directly went to that particular area of the river. There I interviewed two Manta families. Besides the interview from this visit I observed more of their fishing techniques, their food pattern, their household management within their tiny boats and so on. These data collection practices that I used in the field were based on naturalistic inquiry. The variations of fishing, struggles and day-to-day affairs of the Manta people could not be understood without observing their natural settings.

In the first phase, a short questionnaire was administered to obtain the necessary information about a family to keep the record of their socio-demographic characteristics, informant's background including age, gender, educational level, occupation, income, family size, and so on. The 10 families that I interviewed are living in these three areas on average for 50 years. Fishing is their only means of income, and their average income figure is 60 Tk per day, the average family size is 5 persons, none of the family members have ever gone to school or to any formal educational institution. Out of the 10 families, 6 evolved into becoming a Manta after losing their land from river erosion, as they were cultivators two or three generations ago. The remaining 4 families succeeded into this

occupation through heritage. But the interesting thing is that among the 4 families who are Manta through heritage 3 families are living in *Panpatti* area and the other family lives in the *Nayabari* area. After this information was gathered from the first phase, in second phase I conducted in-depth interviews among family members. Husbands and wives were interviewed as key persons of the families.

As this research is qualitative, and the objective of the research is to examine the Manta's perception regarding rights and their experiences of exclusion. I used an in-depth interview to collect data from the Manta family groups. A primary focus of in-depth interviewing is to understand the significance of human experiences as described from the actor's perspective. Minichiello states:

In-depth interview requires that the researcher have personal interaction with the individuals and their behaviour *in situ* (Minichiello *et. al.* 1997, 12).

In-depth interviews with the Manta family groups generated their collective experiences regarding exclusion and their personal experiences as well. Moreover, face-to-face interaction and careful observation enabled the researcher to discover contradictions and ambivalences within what may seem to be a simple reality (Reinharz *et, al.* 1988).

The people of the Manta community who were interviewed were selected randomly but some priorities were followed such as: the head of the household (10 households), age (for seniority, experiences, and knowledge). Wives of Manta family groups were also interviewed because they are similarly engage in the occupation like their husbands. Moreover in order to collect information regarding the segregation of gender, the role of a female person and intra-community exclusion, female members were selected to interview. Throughout the interview I asked open-ended questions. But those questions were structured by the pre-set research questions. Each questions may not have been asked to every person I interviewed. Some questions asked to the male persons were not asked to the female persons, some questions those I asked in one location were not same when I conducted interviews in another location. Basically all questions have been developed in the field according to the need in the moment of time. Many supplementary

questions have also been asked where needed to get the total information and to achieve the objective of the research. As I mentioned in the earlier part of this Chapter that I made a short time survey among the Manta community beforehand as a consultant of ActionAid of Bangladesh research team (from January 02 to January 12, 2002), and at that time I interviewed some Manta people in preparation of a baseline survey regarding their socio-cultural status and occupational problems. During this time I developed some idea and knowledge about the community and their fishing occupation. This background information helped me a lot to formulate interview topic and to fix up the questions that I asked in the field. Though all the interview questions that are asked in the field were not pre-fixed but the knowledge and experiences that I gathered during 11 days of conducting survey helped me to formulate some questions in some specific areas. The previous survey and the flexibility of data collection technique based on naturalistic inquiry worked as a framework for formulating research questions that were appropriate to the situation.

As the aim of this study was to discover the social and cultural construction of manta's exclusion in particular social structure that composes their perception of rights, the interview questions were not locked into looking only at predominant variables. Question formulation was based on the grounded reality. For example, in *Panpatti* (where I made a participatory observation of Manta's fishing activities on the Aagunmukha river) I discovered that Manta people are not interested in fishing the channel that runs through forest though they informed me that comparatively fishing is plentiful there. This grounded situation made me inquire into the reality and formulate questions regarding the problems of fishing the channel which are referred to later in the thesis under income earning activities. Like this example most of the interview questions have been formulated based on naturalistic inquiry.

The two key-informant interviews generated details on history of socio-cultural conditions, the position of Manta in the greater community, and the political and institutional state of exclusion of the community. The combination of these two techniques helped to cross-check the data and also to collect in-depth information.

Interviews of the non-Manta people and people from governmental institutions such as people in the market place, Thana office, fisheries office, land office, health complex, UP office, school teachers and NGO workers were conducted because the Manta people are related with these institutions and people. To know views of these institutional people regarding the Manta's denial of rights and in order to cross-examine the information I also conducted interviews with these non-Manta people.

The data those I got from interviewing 10 Manta family groups, from 2 key-informant interviews and from some knowledgeable non-Manta people were translated and analysed qualitatively. The previous base-line survey (mentioned on page 32) generated ideas and knowledge in formulating objectives and subsequently the research questions to a greater extent. Though interview questions developed instantly in the field according to necessity, the questions were asked in a way so that the objective(s) could be achieved. To avoid doubt and misinterpretation, supplementary, subsequent, and follow-up questions have been asked on a single issue. As an example, the questions on Manta's perception of rights contains a series of supplementary, follow-up and subsequent questions. This technique successfully worked to find out Manta's perception of rights and how they categorized those rights according priority. After interviewing 10 Manta family groups on "perception of rights", I made a comparative analysis of this information and discovered similarities among their imparted information on the "perception of rights". I found that they mentioned three categories of rights as "Haque", "Dabi" and "Pauna" rights (chapter- 4, page-48-50). In all sections of questions I followed the same technique for more clarification.

### **Validity of Data**

The validity and reliability of qualitative data depends to a great extent on methodological skill. Patton (1987) said that: "the verification and validation of qualitative analysis depends on four kinds of triangulations" (Patton 1987: 464). In this research two kinds of triangulations have been used to verify field data. Firstly, I used methods triangulation by using three key techniques of qualitative data collection methods: in-depth interview, observation, and key-informant interview. This helped me check the consistency of findings generated by the three data collection techniques.

Secondly, I used the triangulation of sources. I collected data from three sources: the Manta family groups, non-Manta people, and key-informant interviews of two knowledgeable persons.

All interviews and given information were written down instantly in Bengali and recorded by tape recorder. Later the information was written up and translated in to English. All these interviews were conducted and recorded separately and individually. Due to the demand of a situation sometimes the sequence of the interview questions were changed. Specific research questions or interview topics were defined with the aim of achieving the objective of the study.

#### **Limitation of the Study:**

The Manta communities are living in these areas for nearly about 300 hundred years. No research has been conducted among these groups before. So it was noticed that they are to some extent conservative about providing information. This is because they fear that the giving out information might be harmful to them. From this point of view the study might have some limitations regarding the necessary information.

Social exclusion is a process incorporating many factors. In order to get appropriate data it was necessary to explore many social factors and the people who are somehow related with the exclusion of a particular group. This process takes time and all sources were not available. Beside this many other factors also exist, which reinforce the exclusion process and these could have not been covered due to the time limitation.

### CHAPTER III

## THEORIES ON SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL INFORMATION OF THE MANTA COMMUNITY

This chapter discusses theories and literature regarding social exclusion and deals with the origin and development of the Manta community, in particular its uniqueness of social and cultural identity on which their social structure is based. The uniqueness of their social and cultural constructions also determines the Manta's social position in a stratified, rural Muslim society. For these reasons, social stratification in the locality is also discussed in this chapter as an indicator of the state of exclusion of the Manta.

### **Theories & Definitions of Social Exclusion**

Social exclusion emerged as a concept in the 1980s to describe the rupture of the social bond between the individual and society (which was seen to undermine state legitimacy). The term can cause some confusion, because it has been used subsequently in different ways in other contexts<sup>7</sup>. Manuel Castells (2000) in *End of Millennium* narrated that the social exclusion concept first was brought to attention by the policy of the European Union Commission, and adopted by the International Labour Office (ILO) in 1996. According to the European Commission's Observatory on National Policies, the idea of social exclusion in the 1980s and 1990s examined the growth of poverty, inequality, the numbers of people excluded from prosperity, and social security changes. Further, it addressed how poor people fared worse under conservative policies on education, housing, health, and unemployment<sup>8</sup>. Recently, the exclusion paradigm

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<sup>7</sup> See the Urban chapter in the World Bank's *PRSP Sourcebook*, (online), available: [www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/chapters](http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies/chapters). Accessed on 22 December, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> The first EU resolution to combat social exclusion was passed by the Council of Ministers for Social Affairs in September 1989; it was reaffirmed by the European Commission in Towards a Europe of Solidarity, COM (92) 542, Brussels, 1992.

included social factors as a major area of focus. According DFID's paper on social exclusion:

The concept of social exclusion is useful because it emphasizes multiple and reinforcing aspects of deprivation, process and relational issues, and the role of institutions. Earlier emphasis has been shifted, because only the economic factors of exclusion are not enough to realize the magnitude of social exclusion. It has greatest analytical value when lack of membership in a collectivity is clearly a major cause of poverty, as is the case for excluded minorities, rather than the analysis of 'mass poverty'. (DFID, 2002, 01)

The earlier approaches to exclusion focus mainly on particular areas of need and disadvantages. More specifically, economic exclusion only dealt with economic factors of exclusion, such as exclusion from the labour market, exclusion from production, redistribution, and exclusion from a mode of production. The exclusion from political rights focuses on exclusion from power, exclusion from freedom of opinion and association and so on. But exclusion is a phenomenon that cannot be understood by separating the exclusion process into different parts.

In its holistic nature, social exclusion cannot be understood by separating it into different categories. Therefore exclusion from political rights and exclusion from the economy cannot be realized fully by conceptualising them as separate. Every social factor, such as socio-cultural, political, economic, religious, and gender, are related to each other and contribute to the total range of the exclusion process. A person who is excluded from political rights is also excluded from economic activities and vice versa. Hence, social exclusion incorporates all aspects of exclusion and is a holistic approach that refers to a comprehensive consideration of the full range of the indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated denial of rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social. Social exclusion should not be seen as cause and effect, for exclusion never occurs due to a single factor.

To identify the concept of social exclusion, it needs to be said that social exclusion is multidimensional and sometimes ambiguous. It depends on a particular situation and

context. As determined by the particular context and situation the boundaries of social exclusion may shift, and who is excluded and included may vary over time depending on the multiple factors of exclusion. Cheria and Edwin (2000) wrote that to understand the idea of exclusion, is to cover the state of being excluded and the process of becoming excluded.

One may identify several dimensions of exclusion. For example, generally all those who are poor are necessarily socially excluded in a fundamental sense. Therefore, several dimensions include exclusion from education, exclusion from housing, exclusion from property ownership, exclusion from democratic participation, exclusion from access to health services, exclusion from public goods, to name but a few. In addition to these, one may think in terms of gender-based exclusion, exclusion of the old and infirm, exclusion of widows, and exclusion of the physically handicapped. Each of these deals with a special form of exclusion and deserves exploration for its own sake but what exactly exclusion means, however, needs to be clarified. In the article “The Political Economy of Exclusion and Inclusion” Cheria and Edwin state:

When we say minorities are excluded from social securities, what does it mean? It means having social securities are the rights of minorities and the state has the obligation to provide that right. So when we say minorities are excluded from social securities it means they are denied their rights (2000: 5).

From Cheria and Edwin’s discussion we get the sense that social exclusion means to not get rights which are due, and to be denied these rights. This denial may occur by the state, by the society, or by economic and political factors. Additionally, the denial of rights also may come from cultural factors namely social stigmas, religious segregations, language differences, ethnic differences, occupational hierarchies, gender segregations, and so forth.

***Social Exclusion and Social Isolation is not same:***

Social exclusion can be distinguished from social isolation. Social isolation can be defined as the phenomenon of non-participation (of an individual or group) in a society's

mainstream institutions; while social exclusion is reserved for the subset of cases in which social isolation occurs for reasons that are beyond the control of those subject to it. The familiar form of social exclusion affects those who are unable to participate in the institutions patronized by the majority. On the contrary, isolation does not always mean the violation of rights; the difference lies in the phrases ‘non-participation’ and ‘inability of participation’ (Atkinson 2000). A group that is socially excluded and isolated belongs to the ‘inability to participate’ criterion. This inability to participate is a violation of rights and the demands of social justice. Social justice can be violated in two ways: it conflicts with equality of opportunity and is associated with an inability to participate effectively in politics. A group that belongs to the ‘non-participation’ criterion is more or less voluntary. Voluntary social isolation has the same effect, but is less likely to have such adverse consequences (Barry 1998). Poverty and unemployment often isolate people making it difficult to participate in social institutions. But it does not mean all poor people are socially excluded. Similarly, Harris noted:

Some ethnic and religious minorities appear to be more likely than others to benefit from the preservation of their traditional culture patterns and to live in separate areas, because these patterns are associated with definite advantages and solidarities. For example the Jewish in Germany and Poland, the Hindu Indians in East and South Africa, the Chinese in Indonesia are not an excluded group, but isolated (1971: 435).

Further, it is rare that exclusion from a minimum standard of living or from the labour market is randomly distributed; it tends to be concentrated among particular social groups. Insiders may exploit cultural solidarities, transforming social boundaries that exclude outsiders into inequalities. (Raymond 1988).

***Exclusion as a “Condition” approach:***

The British Social Exclusion Unit identified social exclusion as a “Conditional and Process” approach. The concept of the “conditional aspect of social exclusion” is that social exclusion is very much focused on outcomes, and the outcomes depend on conditions of society; people are being excluded because of their collective inability to demand rights on their own, and it is their common fate (Percy-Smith 2000, Silver 1994,

Barry 1998). This theory explains that ‘conditional’ also means the specific context of being excluded or the denial of rights. The poor are excluded, and here poverty is an outcome and the condition is economic vulnerability; there could be many conditions like this. These conditions may vary or depend on a particular context of a society. Here, poverty can have several causes and it creates the collective inability of the poor to demand their rights. The collective inability is also a condition that excludes them from their rights.

***Exclusion as a “Process” approach:***

Atkinson (1998) and Randolp & Judd (1999) said that social exclusion refers not only to “condition” but also “process,” and there is a relationship between conditions and processes. Some social agents run the process. This idea of process approach is also reflected in the writing of Castells (2000) in “*End of the Millennium*” where he stated that social exclusion is a process where certain individuals and groups are systemically left out from getting access to positions that would enable them to have an autonomous livelihood within the social standards. Several agents compose society. Economic, social, cultural, political, and religious standards all work as social agents.

According to Charia and Edwin (2000), in a society the dominant groups control power relations and other groups are left out from the power relations. Though in this social structure every agent is related to each other and creates a process, some groups who have no control over resources become excluded. Because of the control over social agents by dominant groups, some people or groups become disempowered. These situations confine a particular group with social disadvantages. These denials of opportunities cumulatively form an exclusion process. The process of exclusion requires an act by an agent or agents (Atkinson 1998).

***Exclusion is Multidimensional:***

Social exclusion is Multi-Dimensional. This theory is a further extension of process approach of exclusion. Under the process of social exclusion various factors actively contribute. These different factors and actors are neither the same nor static. They

depend upon on the societal context and have a multi-temporal nature. For this situation, social exclusion is a dynamic process. According to Castells (2000) social exclusion is unique because of its multidimensional nature. Marsh & Mullins (1998) give a similar point in their study “The Social Exclusion Perspective and Housing Studies”, where they find that particular migrant urban communities are excluded from housing opportunities not only due to low-income factors but also because of a lower educational status. Because of their lower educational status they cannot get any jobs in the government, and their upward mobility is less. These theories propose that the exclusion phenomenon is not a single agent, a single process or the deprivation factors; rather there are several factors working to creating exclusion.

***Exclusion is a “Cyclical Process”:***

This dynamic nature of the exclusion process leads to the idea of connectivity. The scholars who argue for this point mainly recognise that the processes and the result of exclusion are connected; these two components result in exclusion operating cumulatively and in a compound form. The multitude of causes and factors are joined up and create a cycle (Murry 1998, Randolp & Judd 1999, Byrne 1999, Percy-Smith 2000, Kilmurray 1995, Kabeer 2000). Therefore, the cause and resultant join-up cumulates so that exclusion creates extreme disadvantages.

Hunter (2000) in his study *Social Exclusion, Social Capital, and Indigenous Australians*, and Kabeer (2000) in his book *Social Exclusion, Poverty and Discrimination* described this situation as a series of denial of rights. The denial is a vicious cyclic order and creates overall disadvantages.

***Exclusion is a breakdown of Social Relationships:***

In a society most groups interact with each other through cultural means, political and economic activities, religious practices, through education, and through other formal and informal institutions. When a group fails to incorporate with the broader society through any of these means it is seen as the breakdown of social relations (CESIS 1999). The breakdown of these social relations stops people from participating in society (Blend

& Hanson 2000, EU 1999, Hague et al. 1999, Plymouth HAZ 2000). Generally, exclusion refers to the breakdown of social relationships, leading to the segregation and separation from the mainstream of society so that they are not able to participate in society and societal activities (Sliver 1994, Hauge 1999, Marsh & Mullins 1998, Somerville 1998, Spicker 1997, Beland & Hanson 2000, Barry 1998). Social participation can be defined broadly as the ability to participate in the economic, institutional, political, social and cultural activities of a society, or as the ability to participate in decision-making processes of institutions. So when a community becomes unable to participate in any of these social activities or does not exist in the social network, it is excluded (Barry 1998).

### ***Social & Cultural Construction of Exclusion:***

In many approaches to social exclusion, emphasis has been mostly given to economic aspects or to factors other than to the socio-cultural factors. Particularly, with regard to the exclusion of a marginalised occupational groups, religious minorities, ethnic minorities, gender minorities, disabled people, or indigenous people, it is true that they are excluded because of their lesser economic capability, but their exclusion from society also results from other powerful socio-cultural factors more than just economic factors (Sheth & Mahajan 1999). Marvin Harris says that:

One feature of underdevelopment is a lopsided distribution of income and the continuation of an exploitative relationship between a relatively small resource controlling upper class and a broad mass of illiterate. On the other hand social stratification that is based on cultural differences between class that establish 'superior' and 'inferior' values is another feature of underdevelopment (Harris, 1971, 475).

From Sheth's, Mahajan's and Harris's arguments it can be said that in addition to the economic factors of exclusion the socio-cultural and the ideological factors are also great actors of social exclusion. Harris (1971) said that people with substantially different cultural background are stigmatised in stratificatied systems. He mentioned examples such as black Africans who were brought to America, the peoples of India who were taken as indentured labourers to East Africa and the Caribbean Islands, and non-white

migrants coming to England from various parts of the former British Empire. In all these cases the substantial cultural differences involving language, family structure, religion, occupational differences, generally segregated them from the host population. This example proves that economic inequalities are not the only cause of exclusion. Social and cultural prejudices of the dominant culture have power to make a minority groups socially excluded as well. In a stratified rural Muslim society where religious hierarchy determines the social status for a community, these socio-cultural factors of exclusion are sometime more powerful than economic factors for the minority classes of people who possess cultural and religious differences from the dominant culture. The causes and the magnitude of Manta's state of social exclusion is analysed in Chapter VI,

The exclusion of the Manta community has its root in their history and development as a separate cultural community. Without knowing the origin and development of the Manta community as a traditional occupational community the process of their social exclusion cannot be understood well. Discussion on the origin and development and the socio-cultural constructions of the community clarifies the process of exclusion that the Mantas have faced for generations.

### **Origin of the Manta community:**

According to Shah (2001) and from the interviews of the Manta people it is known that the Manta people live within several areas of Galachipa Thana for about 300 hundred years. They gradually settled in this part of the Galachipa Thana. The Manta of Galachipa claim that their ancestors came to this area at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though it is difficult to find out the exact date of their arrival as no authentic document has been found regarding the origin and historical background of the Manta community. There is even no adequate information regarding this community in the District Gazette of Potuakhali, which provides a topographical picture of the entire region<sup>9</sup>. Only one source can be mentioned here regarding the origin of the word "Manta". According to Choudhury (1996) when the ancestors of the *Bedey* community arrived in North India

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<sup>9</sup> See *The Bangla District Gazetteers: Barishal and Potuakhali* .

from Persia, they earned their livelihood by begging and hence they were referred as “*Mangta*” (one who ask or begs) and that become their title. The name of the community “Manta” is very much similar with *Mangta* but no authentic evidence can be produced in the support of this assumption.

From the interview of several knowledgeable Manta and non-Manta people it can be said that Manta is an offshoot of the *Bedey* community. *Bedey* can be identified as nomadic groups who roam around the country who trade as peddlers chiefly by boat (Sachse, 1917). So the Manta and the *Bedey* are both similar communities in that their livelihood and life cycle is intertwined with boat and river. It is worthwhile to mention that one of the Manta headman said that the word Manta was derived from one segment of the greater *Bedey* community that gradually gave up the snake business<sup>10</sup>, assimilated through marriage with land-people or “*Torermanush*” and settled down in a particular place which brought an end to their nomadic life. Khan (1962) who studied the caste system of a village community in the Dhulandi in the District of Dhaka has observed that some segments of the *Bedey* community changed their occupation, settled down in a place and married women of other lower caste communities and were referred to as one of the “low Muslims”. The most significant similarities are that Manta women work outside of the family sphere together with men for income-earning activities. And this is also the significant characteristic of the *Bedey* community. In the study of a *Bedey* community in 1962, Ahmed observed that in the *Bedey* community women were held in high esteem, particularly because of their earning capacity. In addition, the Mantas use some words, for example they use the word *Sarder* (headman of the community), *Bahor* (fleet of boats) to identify a cluster of the community. From these observations it appears that the Manta is an offshoot of the *Bedey* community. These observations might not be correct but it shows the most potentiality for finding a root for the Manta community. In the study areas, it was found that most of the Manta families have become Manta from *Grihosto* (cultivators). Their ancestors withdrew from the land due to river erosion so they were compelled to start fishing. In this way they came into close contact with Manta and married among the Manta and started to live within that community as Manta people. So

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<sup>10</sup> The main occupation of the *Bedey* community is the snake business, meaning all the income and activities which are related with snake charming. Therefore they display snake play, sell snake’s poison, work as medicine man to recover a person from snake bite.

it can be said that the Manta community is assimilation between one segment of the *Bedey* and marginal groups of village communities. Over the course of time these groups were acknowledged as Manta. Therefore, the Manta is a “traditional occupational community” not a biologically determined group.

### **Division of the Manta community**

The Manta community is divided in two groups. One is named *Lauwa Manta* and the other is named *Gawsa Manta* (Shah, 2001). In the three study areas from the interviews of several Manta and Non-Manta people this division has been found.

*Lauwa Manta*: This group of people live exclusively on boats and earn their livelihood solely by fishing. They have no permanent households on land or any other livelihood options. Six to eight boats make a cluster group. Each cluster is called a company or *Bahor*; there is a leader in every *Bahor*. Locally, the leader is called *Sardar*. Selection of a *Sardar* is hereditary with a special descent line. Though they move as a group, a single boat belongs to a single family. About 5-6 members live in a boat. Irrespective of whether they are male or female both genders work hard for livelihood and have no settlement on the main land.

*Gawsa community*: On the other hand, the *Gawsa* community is not exclusively based on the river and fishing. This group has alternative livelihood options and maintains a permanent residence on the mainland. Their most important characteristic is that the women of this group do not work outside of family. The fact is that when *Lauwa* people become well off and can manage a permanent settlement on land they convert to *Gawsa* and are able to maintain a status much closer to that of mainstream people. They do not want to be represented as a Manta. Changes in economic conditions and occupations bring changes in the tradition and culture of the Manta. In fact, the *Gawsa* group is closer to the mainstream people; this group can access social facilities more than the *Lauwa* group. For these reasons, it is difficult functionally to include *Gawsa* as a component of the traditional Manta community. In the study areas it was found that only two families of

the Manta community have transformed into *Gawsa Manta*. The remaining 50 families in the three study areas are remaining as *Lauwa Manta* for 35 years. The two families who are living in Galachipa town managed to change their conditions three decades ago<sup>11</sup>.

### **Social and Cultural Construction of the Manta Community**

Though the Manta community has emerged from one segment of the *Bedey* community, and some similarities still exist, now this community has no association with the *Bedey*. They are reluctant to acknowledge any contact with the *Bedey*. All of the Manta strongly asserts some fundamental differences that reveal their identity as *non-Bedey*. *Bedey* have snake charming as their original business. *Bedey* women also sell herbal medicine, talismans, *Churi* (a kind of bracelet) from door to door; they work with spells and witchery, which is called *Mishigari* work. The Manta peoples do not do these things, they only engage in fishing for their subsistence needs. The *Bedey* community is highly mobile, a trading nomadic people who never live in one particular place for long (Taylor, 1840), but the Manta people, though they roam across the rivers for fishing, they return to a particular place after a short break.

In the study area there is another large community known as *Jele* (Fishermen). They are also known as *Dhibor*, *Kaiborto*. There are four groups of traditional fishermen in Bangladesh. They are called *Malo*, *Koiberto* or *Jolodas*, *Nomoshudro* and *Maimol* (Pokrant et al, 1997). But the Mantas have never been identified as fishermen; even in the district Gazette of Potuakhali the name Manta has not been identified as fishermen. Though the Manta people live only by fishing for small types of fish, they are not included in the mainstream fishermen community. From the interviews of the Manta family groups it was discovered that the major cause of their exclusion from the greater fishermen communities is that the *Jele* communities do not allow their women to fish and work outside of the family. On the contrary, Manta women do fish and work outside together with Manta men. The other Muslim fishermen communities do not accept this status of the Manta women, so the Mantas are segregated from the mainstream fishermen community.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Shankarlal Shah. Galachipa, 01/04/2003.

Under the leadership of a headman, the Manta group is united in their livelihood and fishing. The headman is called *Sarder*. The Manta community live in a cluster that is called *Bahor*. Both male and female (husband and wife) members of the family are engaged in fishing and all kind of the livelihood activities. This high mobility of Manta women places them in high esteem in the community, particularly because of their earning capacity. The importance of women is mostly a common characteristic of a non-agricultural functional group like the *Bedey* that creates a different socio-cultural structure of that community in comparison with the neighbouring agricultural mainstream community (Ahmed, 1962).

Another unique aspect of the Manta is that the fishing directly depends on nature, and they have to face natural calamities. So, they traditionally worship some natural deities. It was already mentioned that though the Manta people are Muslim they practice some traditional customs or *Sanatoni Aacher*. They sacrifice some gifts to several goddesses that they call *Shirni* (offerings), most of them are related to natural deities. Among several *Sanatoni Aacher* some of the important and major festivals are *Monsha Puja* (worship of the snake Goddess) for the safety from snakebite as they face the danger from snakes while fishing; *Shitla Puja* (Goddess of Seasonal Diseases) in order to be free from several seasonal diseases and epidemics; *Kali Puja* (Goddess of Destruction and Evil) to remain in peace and prosperity and to save them from natural calamities during fishing. In spite of their being Muslim they are traditionally closely related to the worship of natural deities because their fishing occupation demands them to interact with nature day to day. This uniqueness of the Manta's social, cultural and occupational nature determines their social position within the stratified rural society.

### **Social Stratification and “Manta” Community**

Before describing the Manta's social position in the locality I like to discuss Reuden Levy's ideas. He refers to the census report of 1901 that classifies the Muslims of Bengal into three classes, the *Ashraf* or upper class, the *Atraf* which includes functional groups, and the *Arzal* which consists of the very lowest class including among others the *Bediya* (*Bedey*), with whom no other Muhammadans would associate, and who are forbidden to enter the mosque or the public burial ground (Levy, 1957). Levy gives us a clear picture

of the status of *Bedey* in the locality and also reveals the prejudice of villagers against them. As the Manta originated from lower class Muslims and still resembles some varieties of these associated traditional groups, they are part of this stratification and suffer the prejudice of the mainstream people. The particular social and cultural structure of the study area, the difference of the Manta from the mainstream people, their economic position places them in the lower strata of the society. From this observation it can be remarked that the livelihood prospects of the Manta stand out in sharp contrast to the mainstream rural Muslim society. In interviewing two Manta *Sarders* and some knowledgeable persons of the non-Manta community it was found that because of the particular socio-cultural construction of the Manta the mainstream people address them by several pejorative names. One Manta *Sarder* who was interviewed for this research states:

We along fish with our women so we are Manta. But we like to be called *Sarder*, not Manta or other names. So other people who do not take to us easily are using the name Manta or Babijja or Kuicha, they do not like that our females are working with us<sup>12</sup>.

The Manta's fishing occupation shapes the social and cultural construction of their lifestyle. Their specific lifestyle is constructed by their belief system, intra-group interactions, solidarity, equal division of labour, religious traditions, customs, and survival mechanisms. All these dynamics of the community life directly effect their perception of rights. Fishing is not merely an occupation to the Manta; rather, the life of the community and all aspects of their life are inseparably related with fishing. This uniqueness of the Manta's culture is suppressed by the stratification, segregation and stigmatisation by the dominant culture in all aspects of social life. This social stratification and segregation has a great impact on Manta's livelihood. By this stratification, their cultural right is being denied. In the next chapter I examine how this socio-cultural construction of the community determines the Manta's perception of rights and how this social stratification, stigmatisation and prejudice work as powerful factors

<sup>12</sup> Interview of Ainali Matobbor, Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa Shadar, 28/03/2003.

for their social exclusion through economic, political, institutional and societal dimensions.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **MANTA'S PERCEPTION OF RIGHTS AND THE STATE OF EXCLUSION**

The domination of the larger Muslim society that the Mantas have faced for generations act as powerful forces limiting their perception regarding their rights. In this Chapter I discuss how the Manta's perception of rights are constructed by the particular conditions of livelihood, how they categorise the rights according to their own priorities, and what social stigmas impede the assurance of their rights through economic, political, institutional and societal dimensions.

#### **Perception of Manta people about rights**

The perception of rights of a given community depends on their adequate knowledge and information that they have access to. It also depends on the socio-cultural context of the community. Moreover, when rights are interpreted as sanctioned by the authorities it also depends on the relationship of that community with those actors believed to be responsible for ensuring their rights. The social mobility of the community, relationship with mainstream peoples, accesses to institutions and information act as variables to the development of the perception of rights. The perception is complex and also based upon contingencies of social, cultural and economic factors. Perceptions also vary according to age, gender and the intra-community hierarchy. They also vary according to decision-making processes, prioritisation of needs in relation to household dynamics, resource demands, intra-community mobility and the domain of one's world (Jalal, 2000). In Chapter III, I discussed the social stratification between the Manta community and the mainstream Muslim community, and how this conflict is informed by social stigma associated with the Manta, and lower social mobility of the Manta. It can be presumed that where the society and state mechanisms fail to meet the basic entitlements of mainstream people then the situation for the marginalized group like Manta can only

be worse. These people are not exposed to the justice of human rights and do not know even the meaning of the word.

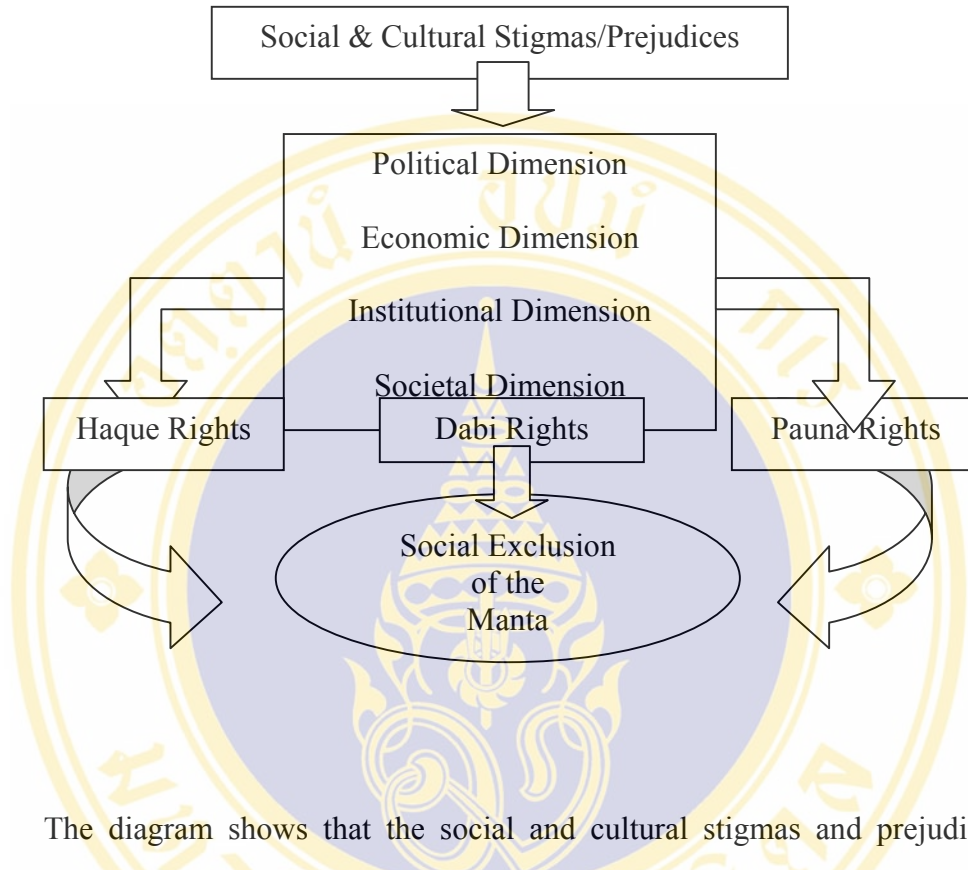
When it was asked by the researcher how do the Manta people think about and perceive rights, to express their ideas they used several local words that are synonymous with the word “Rights”. It was also asked what rights do they consider most important and, how do they categorize them. The respondents identified three categories of their essential rights as “*Haque*”, “*Dabi*” and “*Pauna*”. The Manta uses these words according to the importance and priority of rights that they perceive. According to the Manta *Haque* stands for the first priority rights, which are very much related with their survival, such as fishing, because it is the only means of their survival. Getting an allocation of government land or *Khas Jomi*<sup>13</sup> is also *Haque*, because they are landless. *Dabi* stands for second category rights, which are important but not directly related with physical survival, such as getting government relief goods, as they are extreme poor and vulnerable. And thirdly, *Pauna* means their rational demand, for social recognition as human beings, such as a demand of receiving respect from other people. These are the three categories by which they define their rights and within these categorisations they prioritize among several rights. This categorization also reveals their pattern of thought processes and interpretation of needs. It also reveals where the Manta see their social position, vulnerability, marginalization, and exclusion from the greater social domain of their locality. It also shows the limitations in thinking regarding rights, due to their generation-long social segregation.

Social stigmas and prejudices work as powerful causes of denial in three categories of rights of the Manta. This process of the Manta’s social exclusion can be presented by the following diagram:

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<sup>13</sup> Khas Jami or Khas land is land whose ownership rests with the government. It may be forestland, newly created land through siltation, land, which had never been transferred to private ownership, as well as land just being held by the government. The law states that in leasing such land for private use, landless people must receive the first priority.

**Figure: 1 The Dimensions of Social and Cultural Stigmas and Prejudices in Denial of Three Categories of the Manta's Rights**



The diagram shows that the social and cultural stigmas and prejudices of the mainstream Muslim community of the locality has four dimensions: economic, political, institutional, and societal. Through these dimensions the social and cultural stigmas effects the Manta's *Haque*, *Dabi* and *Pauna* rights. Now I discuss how this process works in these three categories of essential rights.

### **The perception of “Haque” as the first priority rights**

Literally, *Haque* is a word that means legal and essential. Manta people define rights as *Haque* because these rights are essential and foremost in their need for their livelihood and survival. They have defined two major activities as *Haque*. One is fishing which is, therefore, the right to livelihood and another is the right to have *Khas* land. The first activity is their only means of livelihood so it is for their physical survival, and the second one is for communal identity as inhabitants of the locality and for physical shelter

and security of the community. They also mentioned that these two *Haque* are intertwined, they should not be treated as separate. Other rights are subject to the fulfillment of these two essential rights. One Manta remarked:

Without fishing we cannot survive and without land we cannot have social reorganization as humans, and without social reorganization how long will we survive in the locality<sup>14</sup>.

These two *Haque* rights of the Manta, “fishing rights” and “right to *Khas* land” can be classified as “right to livelihood” and “land rights”. Both of these two mentioned rights are cited as basic human rights under the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights<sup>15</sup>. Now I will discuss how and why the Manta perceive these two rights as first priority or *Hague* rights.

#### ***Fishing as the Right to livelihood:***

Mantas perceive fishing as a first priority *Hague* right, because as it has been already mentioned fishing is their only means of livelihood. In the three Manta locations of Galachipa Thana (*Purba Dacua, Panpatti and Nayabari*) approximately 50 Manta families are living in boats. According to Ainali Sarder (the supreme headman of the community) no Manta family is engaged in any other income earning activity except fishing. In the entire Ptua khali district 7000 Mantas are living hand-to-mouth by very small-scale fishing (Shah 2001). If a Manta family cannot fish one day that family has to starve for that day or beg food from their relatives. So the right to fishing is their foremost need.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview of ‘Motahar Kha’ age: 60, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacua, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

<sup>15</sup> See The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted 16 Dec. 1966, GA Res. 2200, (XXI), 21 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49. UN Doc A/6316 (1966), 993 UNTS 3, entered into force 3 January 1976, art. 6 and art. 11. And Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. res. 217A (iii), U.N.Doc A/810 at 71(1948), art 23 and 17.

It has been already mentioned that the Manta's fishing occupation shows some uniqueness in comparison to other fisherfolk. Fishing requires daylong engagement and hard work, so women need to work together with men. The engagement of women in fishing is essential and cannot be separated from their livelihood. This factor determines the Manta's perception of rights. Ainali Matobbor said:

Our women have been working with us from generation to generation. They also have some special duties in fishing that men cannot do. As an example, they collect *Adhar* (bait) for the fish; weave the *Moiya Jal*, put *adhar* on the fishhook, so we need their help. As long as we do this fishing we will need their help<sup>16</sup>.

Another unique attribute, as was mentioned in Chapter III, is the *Sonatomy Aachar*-the worship of goddesses. According to the Manta's belief, fishing totally depends on nature. They have to interact with this nature in the rivers for fishing even in adverse situations. Certain deities control the natural forces, so if they can make these deities satisfied, they will save the Manta people from calamities and from diseases. To do this, the Manta gives *Shirni* (offerings) in the temple. As fishing is the only means of their livelihood they need to make it secure and to do so they engage in the worship of goddesses. In their belief system, fishing and the worship of deities intertwine to determine the perception of religion.

Fishing does not merely represent their sole livelihood option but upon the fulfillment of this right other necessary rights are the subjects to be ensured. According to the ICESCR Part III on Specific Rights, Article 6 cites in the provision of the right to work that livelihood opportunity includes "the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work". Article 23 of UDHR also ensures the right to work as "nobody is excluded from the economic sphere". This right is also guaranteed under article 1 (2) of the ILO convention<sup>17</sup>. So the right to work or livelihood becomes the starting point for the rights contained in the ICESCR, because the right to livelihood not only implies to ensure one's livelihood, but it is also foundational for the fulfilment of other essential rights.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview of Ainali Matobbor.

<sup>17</sup> See International Labour Organization, Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (ILO No. 111), 362 UNTS 31, entered into force 25 June 1958. Art 1 (2).

Therefore the right to food is directly related with the right to work. And the right to food is a part of the right to an adequate standard of living. An adequate standard of living is a result of economic activities, which is the right to work<sup>18</sup>. The Right to work also ensures the right to social security. According to the Article 25 of UDHR the right to security is seen as a means to alleviate the lack of livelihood under specific circumstances and is also connected to the right to an adequate standard of living. Therefore, the right to work or livelihood is a primary right especially for an occupational minority community like the Manta, because fishing is their only source of income and their only means of their right to food, their standard of living and social security.

***Obstacles to fishing:***

The first and foremost problem that the Manta community are facing with fishing is that they do not have appropriate and sufficient tools that the Mantas call *Sabar* (means of fishing). Most of the Manta in Galachipa use small fishing-hooks for fishing, use handmade fishing nets called *Moiya Jal* to collect the *adhar* for the catch. Some fish by using fishing-nets and all of them use a small handmade country boat for fishing that they call *Dingi*. The *Dingi*, fishing-hook, fishing net, and *Moiya Jal* all together are call *Sabar* (Shah 2001). With these tools it is mostly impossible to catch fish in adequate numbers to create good income stability. From the field investigation it was found that most of the Manta families of these three areas use old boats for fishing. They repair the old boats and old nets. They only buy or build a new boat when the old one becomes badly damaged, and buy a net when it is entirely ruined. This shows that they have not enough capital to invest for adequate and sufficient logistics. When old *Sabar* are totally unfit to use they usually purchase those in credit from the shopkeepers and pay the money back in partial payment on a weekly basis from the income that they earn after selling their catch. To meet their financial needs they need to go to the “*Mahajons*” (informal moneylenders) who lend money at high interest. One Manta of Panpatti Bahar said:

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<sup>18</sup> See Article 11 (1) of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The *Mohajons* try to benefit by virtue of giving loans. We have nowhere to go without going to them. Who will give us a loan? We have no rich relatives who can give us loans or have the power to go to a bank, so only the shopkeepers and the *Mohajons* are our sources for loan<sup>19</sup>.

They do not have any opportunity to get a loan from banks as other big fishermen communities do. Only 7.8 % poor in this region managed to get access to a loan provided by the government banks or institutions such as “Krishi Bank”, BRDB (Bangladesh Rural Development Board), BSCIC (Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation). A significant number of poor people are deprived of the government-provided loan facility, because they do not have enough land or other resources to maintain a mortgage even though they have the constitutional right to get financial assistance from the government<sup>20</sup>. To meet their financial needs the poor are forced to borrow money from the *Mohajons*. Moreover, from the field investigation it has been found that presently in the study area several groups of poor people turn to NGOs for obtaining a small loan, but no NGO is running any credit programme for a community like the Manta (Shah, 2001).

The second important constrain of fishing is the Manta people have to pay illegal taxes or bribes in various areas of the river to different interest groups. According to the interview of Ainali Matobber the supreme Headman of the community, and Shankarlal Shah, a local journalist, Manta need to fish near to the forest in the middle of river, the forest guards demand money for fishing near the forest. The forest guards say that if the Manta fish within the forest territory then they need to a pay tax which the government has instructed them (forest guards) to collect. The Manta pays the money because they need to go those areas, as it is from those areas they can get comparatively more fish than other areas. Each boat has to pay 200-300 Tk per month to the guards. If some of them do not pay money, the forest guards put pressure and some times they even lock up one of

<sup>19</sup> Interview of Habib Matbor, age 50, one *Lauwa Manta* of *Panpatti Bahar* who has taken a loan to buy a new boat from Mohajon, Galachipa, 02/04/2003.

<sup>20</sup> See the report by SAP Bangladesh “*Poor people's perception on contemporary governance*”, November 20, 2002, (South Asian Partnership) Galachipa.

the family members until they pay the money.<sup>21</sup> Ainali Matobber expresses his grievance this way:

Last year, probably, in the month of “Kartik” (the name of a Bangla month) my elder son Shukur Ali with his family was fishing in a channel in the forest of “Char Aagunmukha” (one island of the river Aagunmukha) and I was with them. It was just before noon when two guards of that forest came and demanded money. My son who was young did not agree to pay the money, and at one point in the quarrel the two guards hit my son and took him away by pulling his t-shirt. For two days they kept him locked, and I had to pay 200 Tk to them for the release of my son<sup>22</sup>.

According to the *Jalmohal Act* (water-body property right) of Bangladesh the fisheries and other food and non-food resources are traditionally regarded as common property. Direct access to certain waterways is open to the public throughout the country, and the State owns the navigable rivers, tidal estuaries and rivers running through certain forest areas. These areas are not limited by *Ijara* (lease) (Ahmed, 1997; Pokrant, 1996). But the fact is that though the river area within a certain forest territory is common property the Mantas have to pay money for fishing to the forest guards. This is a violation of their rights and a threat to their livelihood. Besides this, the Mantas also have to pay a tax for fishing in non-navigable rivers, the *Beel* (lakes), Ponds, and *Haor* because the Ijaradar, according to the government *Jalmohal Act* of 1994, owns these water bodies, and only registered fishermen can get *Ijara*. According to the government fisheries and *Jalmahal Act* 1994, *Jalmahal* will be distributed through fisheries officers by a tender committee headed by the DC, along with ADC revenue, the District Fisheries Office, the District Cooperative Officer and the Deputy Revenue collector. The tendering is restricted to the fishermen’s cooperatives and the lease of *Jalmahal* has to be settled with the registered fishermen cooperatives, who makes the highest offer of lease money (Wood 1994, Pokrant 1997, Ali 1997). The situation reveals that the Mantas have no right to get *Ijara*

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<sup>21</sup> This information has been found from two sources. The Interview of Ainali Matobber, the supreme headman of the entire community of Manta of the locality, Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003, and from the interview of Sankarlal Shah editor of “Trinomul” and Local correspondent for *The Daily Janakantha*. Galachipa, 28/03/2003.

<sup>22</sup> Interview of Ainali Matobber, Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

as they are not registered fishermen, because of this they have to pay money anywhere they fish. This is far beyond their capacity. In order to know more about this situation, I interviewed Thana Matsho Karmokarta (Thana Fisheries Officer) and according to him:

It is not possible to enlist the Manta as registered fishermen, because they are highly mobile and do not stay at any place long. So it is not possible. Only those fishermen can be registered who are permanent in the locality. Actually, we register fishermen cooperatives not individual fishermen groups; if the Manta can become member of a cooperative then they could be registered as well. Without being a member of a cooperative it is not possible to get a lease<sup>23</sup>.

In the leasing system of water bodies, all non-navigable rivers, channels, and *bills* are controlled by the fishermen's community. The Manta people have to pay tax or *Khajna* or *Din Jama* for fishing within these areas. The small fisherfolk of the inland fisheries of Bangladesh have, in general, failed to establish property rights over the water bodies. Toufique, 1997 in his study of "Property Rights Over Water Bodies" mentioned that in Bangladesh property rights over water bodies are transferred to socially powerful agents coming from outside the fishing community.

From this information it is clear that the Mantas are not getting any facilities from the fisheries office because they are excluded from greater fishermen cooperatives, and they have not enough money to participate in the tender process. This exclusion is an outcome of the social and cultural differences between the greater Muslim fishermen community and the Manta that I mentioned in Chapter III. Here again it can be said that social stigmas and prejudices act as powerful factors of the Manta's exclusion.

The Manta's fishing access is continuously constrained due to the involvement of different interest groups. A similar instance of exploitation was narrated by Ferguson and Derman in the case of African societies:

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<sup>23</sup> Interview of Sharif Ahmed Sikder, Thana Fisheries Officer, Golachipa. 04/04/2003.

In a growing number of cases throughout Africa, communities' resources are exploited by outsiders, the continuation of local cultures and livelihoods are seriously threatened. In this case the community members find themselves powerless to prevent the expropriation of the resources over which they previously had legal customary control. The several interest groups combined with an authoritarian political context lead to human rights violation (Ferguson and Derman 1995, 132).

The Manta in this locality also face the similar consequences. As a result their livelihood right is in constant threat as they are losing their customary control over resources. The right to work, according to ICESCR, is the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain a living by work and the state must prevent this opportunity from being destroyed by third parties.<sup>24</sup>

The third and the most difficult situation for fishing that the Manta people face are the severe natural calamities. The Manta's fishing in the river depends on the blessings of nature. According to Habib Matbor one *Lauwa Manta of Panpotti Bahar*, they usually face two natural conditions in the rivers: *Dhala Joba* (low tide), and *Raag Joba* (high tide). During *Dhala Joba* they cannot fish in the upper stream of the river. The region is near the river mouth and many small and medium sized rivers cross the land. All the time these rivers show tide<sup>25</sup>. Within the course of time the riverbed in the upstream areas became elevated because of siltation. For this reason the manta need to go to the deepest part of the river near to the estuary and even in the sea during *Dhala Joba*. When they go downstream in the rivers, it is not possible to return within a short time, and even sometimes they are compelled to stay the night in the middle of the river. But they have no access to get a timely weather forecast (Shah, 2001). From the field investigation and the interview of Bakan Sarder of *Panpatti Bahar* it is known that among the 30 Manta boats of this area only one or two families have a radio, but that does not work, because it cannot reach the frequency of transmission in the downstream area of river, and so they do not receive the danger signal and cannot get back or take shelter in a safe place.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Article 6 of international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

<sup>25</sup> "Rivers of Bangladesh", available from [www.discoverybangladesh.com/meetbangladesh/statistic.html-26k](http://www.discoverybangladesh.com/meetbangladesh/statistic.html-26k). Accessed on 10 July 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Interview of Abdur Razzak, age 32, Lauwa Manta, Panpotti Bahar, Galachipa. 02/04/2003.

Being separated from getting information they must use their experience and knowledge to determine the condition of weather. Bakan Sarder said that:

We observe the condition of sky and wind; we feel the temperature, notice the sound and colour of the water. When the river's water turns hot, changes its colour and makes sound then we understand that a "Tufan" (Cyclone) may come. When the clouds gather at "Noyrit" (Northeast corner of the sky) and get red and black in colour the "Jhor" (Storm) will come<sup>27</sup>.

They use their indigenous perceptions to decide whether the weather will turn bad or not and plan their coping strategy for the storms. Bakan Sarder also informed that during a natural calamity they take shelter in a nearby small channel, near to the char or the forest, put all their things in a basket or in a bag and tie it to a tree so that it will not be sweep away. They turn the boat upside down and also tie it to a big tree so that it will not sink. They hold the big branches of a tree tight until the storm is over.

The Manta's access to fishing rights, that is their livelihood, is complicated with several financial, logistical, institutional, and natural problems. Day by day it is becoming impossible for the Manta to cope with this difficult situation. They are not getting any government support, as they are not registered fishermen. Newly emerging interest groups are obstructing their free movement in the water bodies, and they are getting no information regarding natural calamities. The social stigmatisation for engaging women in fishing makes them a suspect group. They are worried about what is going to happen to them in the future.

***Right to have "Khas" land:***

The state of landlessness of the Manta can be defined in two ways. Firstly, Because of the very nature of their livelihood originating from the distant past they have to move where they can get an adequate amount of fish. So they need to roam around different

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<sup>27</sup>Interview of, Bakan Sarder age 59, Lauwa Manta, Panpotti Bahar, Galachipa. 02/04/2003.

rivers; they only need to return to a particular area of the main land to sell fish and to buy daily necessities. With their traditional occupation they were self-dependent; they had no need to explore resources on the mainland and they had no need to settle on the mainland. But their situation has changed. Nowadays their livelihood is at stake. They do not get sufficient fish from the rivers due to several causes and day-by-day this problem is increasing so they cannot live only by fishing. For this reason now they need to settle down on land and need to do additional income activities besides fishing, but the problem is that due to generation-long detachment from the land the Manta cannot establish a customary right to land. And because of their generation-long isolation from the mainland people they remain out of consideration of the land office and have never been listed as landless people of this area.

Secondly, the marginal functional groups who became landless by a combination of natural, social, economical and political factors and had no other alternatives, took up fishing, married among the Manta, adopted the custom of the community and became culturally Manta. Islam (1985) in his study on the “Nature of rural landlessness” showed that due to defective land ownership patterns, economic breakdown and due to various constraints, the marginal cultivators are becoming landless people. Severe poverty and unemployment has cropped up among these landless groups and by this process of pauperisation a new class is emerging in rural society, and this new emerging class can be identified as landless day-labourers. This observation can also apply implicitly to the present study areas. A good number of growing landless people of the Galachipa area engaging in subsistence patterns of fishing are subsequently merging with the Manta. In the study areas, out of 10 families 4 families were found who became Manta from cultivators. From the field interviews it was found that most of the marginal cultivators and peripheral occupational groups who became Manta after being landless became landless mainly due to river erosion. Therefore, the Manta who once had land, have the customary and legal right to claim entitlement of “Khas” land.<sup>28</sup> Both historically and circumstantially the Manta is a landless community.

These two categories of landlessness prevail among the Manta community. The Manta also perceives land right as *Haque*. This land problem is being perceived as one of

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<sup>28</sup> See “The land Policy of Bangladesh Government”, 1994.

the major problems of the community, because they cannot ensure their livelihood by being landless. Subsequently, they are also deprived from getting other facilities necessary for them due to landlessness. Land rights, particularly in the context of developing countries, are inextricably linked with the right to food, the right to work, and a host of other human rights. Land rights are also bound up with the community's identity, its livelihood and thus its very survival. For farmers, peasants, and fisherfolk land is a vital component of a particular way of life. Fisherfolk are usually opposed to large infrastructures along rivers, lakes and coasts because of the increasing population, dispossession of land, limitations on access to traditional livelihood, and other disruptive changes that threaten their survival. So land rights are considered a substantive right that has been explained in UDHR and ICESCR: everyone has the right to own property and no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property<sup>29</sup>. From the interviews with the 10 Manta family groups and from the 2 key-informant interviews the following curtailment and denial of rights or opportunities were pointed out.

#### ***Problems Related with Land Rights:***

As the Mantas have no home on land they are being treated as floating people. In three Manta settlements only 11 households of the *Purba Dacua* settlement have their home on land but in the other two areas, the *Panpatti* and the *Nayabari* settlements, where about 40 Manta families live, they have no residence on land. They live living in a tiny boat with adults and children.<sup>30</sup> They must sleep together, cook on the boat and do every thing in daily life. So they have no privacy. Moreover, because of landlessness they are somehow compelled to do only fishing and because of the intensive labour of the job they have to engage women in fishing which creates a bad image to the mainstream people. If they could have land and a home they might not be compelled to engage their women in fishing. From the interview of Rawsanara Begom:

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<sup>29</sup> See Article 17 of UDHR and Article 11 of ICESCR.

<sup>30</sup> From the field survey this statistic has been found and it has been already mentioned in Chapter 2 in methodological part of the thesis.

A *Gawsa* family who settled down on the land are living better than us. They no longer have to fish, their women do not need to go outside of the family for earnings, their children to school, they can mix with other people, and no one calls them *Babija*.<sup>31</sup>

Having no land is at the same time a threat to the livelihood of Manta. As it was been mentioned earlier, in order to manage a suitable boat and other essential instruments for fishing the Manta need a loan from the governmental, but they cannot access that opportunity, because they have no land of their own<sup>32</sup>. So in their changing situation the land problem has become a priority for the Manta.

From the interviews in three study areas among the 10 Manta family groups it was found that they are also left out of some essential entitlements from the government facilities. As they have no land they are not getting registration from the fisheries office as registered fishermen; they are not counted in the population census, they lack voter registration; they are excluded from getting VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) and VGD (Vulnerable Group Development) cards (discussed later in this chapter). In order to be listed to get all these entitlements this landless people need at least a location on land that is called *Khana*. Being excluded from these essential entitlements their names are not listed in any government records, so officially they are not on record as a vulnerable group.

In the village of *Purba Dacua* where the Manta people live on Government *Khas* land it has been found that though 11 Manta families live on *Khas* land this land has not been allotted to their own names. They are trying to get government allocation/entitlement of this land. They are wary about their settlement because it is not their own, and they do not know how long they can stay here. Among these 11 households, 5 family groups were interviewed, and they said that as they had not gotten a land allotment from the government any powerful man could up-root them from this land. And in the near future they are going to be evicted because the government is going to make a new road on this land. Then they will have nothing to do but go back to the boat. If they had the

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<sup>31</sup> Interview of Rawsanara Begom. “*Lawa Manta*” women of Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

<sup>32</sup> See the report on *Poor people’s perception on contemporary governance*, November 20, 2002, by SAP Bangladesh (South Asian Partnership) Galachipa.

legal entitlement with documents they could claim compensation from the government. So as they have no legal entitlement on the land the government or any powerful people or groups can uproot them from their settlement. Ainali Matobber, the supreme Headman of Manta community described his experience this way:

I had a *Sapra* (hut) beside the road that goes to the boat terminal. One morning a group of people came and destroyed my *Sapra* and took away all my things. They said “You cannot build house on this land, because this is government land and there is no rule to built house on government land. Later, I found that one *Gerosto* family built a home on that place, because he is under the shelter of one powerful member of UP. But if I was not a Manta, if I was a *Gerosto* they might not have been harsh to me. So anyone can make us withdraw from anywhere because we have no land in our own name<sup>33</sup>.

***Obstacles to get land entitlement:***

In interviewing 5 Manta family groups of the *Purba Dacula* settlement it was found that every year the land office updates its list, and some of the Manta are on that list, but they do not get an allotment of land, because a circle of influence works behind the scenes. Though only landless people are entitled to get *Khas* land the political leaders and influential people such as the UP Chairman, members, and MPs get the allotments by giving bribes to the corrupted land office officials. They steal *Khas* land by producing false certificates and papers. So the actual landless people do not get land of their own. Only those who can give money to these influential people can receive entitlement in their own name. Later I interviewed the Assistant Commissioner of Land (A C Land) who said:

<sup>33</sup> Interview of Ainali Matobbpr, Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

We cannot do anything. We distribute Khas land among those who have their name in Shikosti (Delluvian land) list, in the Khazna (land tax) list, land records, and Land mutation documents. I cannot say anything about other landless people.<sup>34</sup>

From this information the conclusion can be drawn that different interest groups take opportunity with the land registration system. These groups, with the cooperation of the corrupt officials of the government land office manipulate the database of *Khazna* (land tax), land records, change documents and as a result the actual landless people remain off the record. Moreover the landless people are not getting allotments of *Khas* land due to the defective land policy of the government.<sup>35</sup> Another defective rule is that to be enlisted in land office records, landless people have to get a certificate from UP Chairman first. The UP Chairman and his circle demands money to provide certificates but the Manta people do not have not much money to give, so they do not get a certificate from UP office. Some of the Manta people who somehow managed that bribe money received the certificate<sup>36</sup>. Thus, the influential people and landlords, UP Chairman, members and local political leaders, continually deny poor people's access to *Khas* land.

***“Land politics” and Manta people:***

From the fieldwork observations an interesting situation was found in that an occupational minority group like the Manta and other landless people are being used as a means to achieve political gain by the local-power structure and elites. One of the major reasons that the UP Chairman and members are not willing to provide certificates is because they capture all *Khas* land with false certificates, and they corrupt the land officers by bribes, and those officers allocate *Khas* land to the political leaders. After that,

<sup>34</sup> Interview of A.C Land Officer, TNO office, Galachipa. 30/03/2003. In order to respect the privacy of A.C Land officer I am not mentioning his name.

<sup>35</sup> There are so many contradictory and defective policies adopted by the Bangladesh Government in the Land Policy 1994. The land policy of the government was not able to release land from the big landlords, the present policy is another obstacle for the landless poor to get back their “Shikosti” (delluvian) land. Due to the “Shikosti-Poyosti” (alluvian-delluvian) law the actual landless people are constantly constrained from rescuing their land.

<sup>36</sup> Interviews of 5 Manta family groups of Purba Dacua settlement, Golachipa. 27/03/2003.

the Chairman, members and political leaders settle landless Manta people on that land in order to get their vote during elections. Motahar Kha, a Lauwa Manta said:

Every Chairman and member of the UP had given us their word that after the election, if they would be elected, they will transfer the *Kash* land to be our own. Yet nobody has kept their word. Moreover, if we move for the land entitlement on our own the powerful groups also threaten us that we will be uprooted if we try to get land entitlements on our own bypassing them and if we do not cast our vote in favour of them. They also threaten us by saying that no one will protect us because we are *Babijja*<sup>37</sup>.

By producing false papers and documents and with the help of the corrupt land officers these interest groups are turning into big landlords possessing 100 *bighas* of land. And, by entitling the land to their near relatives and then by settling the landless people on that land they are developing a client class. This class works as a vote bank during elections. Kamal states:

Social scientists term Bangladesh society as a neo-patrimonial system dominated by a pervasive patron–client relationship where state resources are allocated through patronage networks reaching down into the village. Most of the destitute poor are excluded from the client-list based forms of welfare and safety nets. To cope the poor usually look for a patron (Kamal, 2000. 4).

According to the information of Nurul Islam Sikder some people among the Manta are voters. Though they are voters they cannot cast their vote by their own choice. Because, only those Mantas are voters who live on land or settlements that are controlled by powerful people. Actually those Manta live under the shelter of the Chairmen or members of UP. If they cast votes against them then they will be kicked off that land<sup>38</sup>. A similar observation was made by Mokammel (1987) the local elite class in rural areas manipulate the system and land officers and steal *Khas* land. As a result a landless class is emerging

<sup>37</sup> Interview of Motahar Kha, age 60, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacua Bahar, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

and that landless class gets shelter under the political domain of the same political elites who made them landless.

The picture regarding the land right of the Manta people shows the systematic violation of their basic right that they define as *Haque*. Without land they cannot have any housing. Housing is one of the basic human necessities recognized by the UN human rights charter.<sup>39</sup> It provides shelter, safety and a sense of belonging to the owner. It also provides privacy, promotes health and comfort, and provides a basis for employment and a livelihood option. But in the present study, it was found that the Manta people are so deprived and excluded by the state and society that they can never think of a piece of land for their homestead. Subsequently, they are deprived of all other essential rights and live in extreme poverty. According to the CESCR general comment 4 on “the right to adequate housing” the state party must give due priority to those social groups living in unfavourable conditions by giving them particular consideration.<sup>40</sup> The APT project of Bangladesh shows that among the several non-income indicators of extreme poverty access to basic clothing and access to basic housing are the manifestations of acute poverty.<sup>41</sup>

From the above discussion on the perception and the denial mechanism of Haque rights it should be mentioned that the right to fish and the right to land are intertwined, and these two rights combine to construct the Manta’s right to livelihood. Social and cultural stigmas and prejudices work as major factors through economic, political, institutional and societal dimensions in denial processes of Haque rights. For more clarification, the following diagram can explain this denial process:

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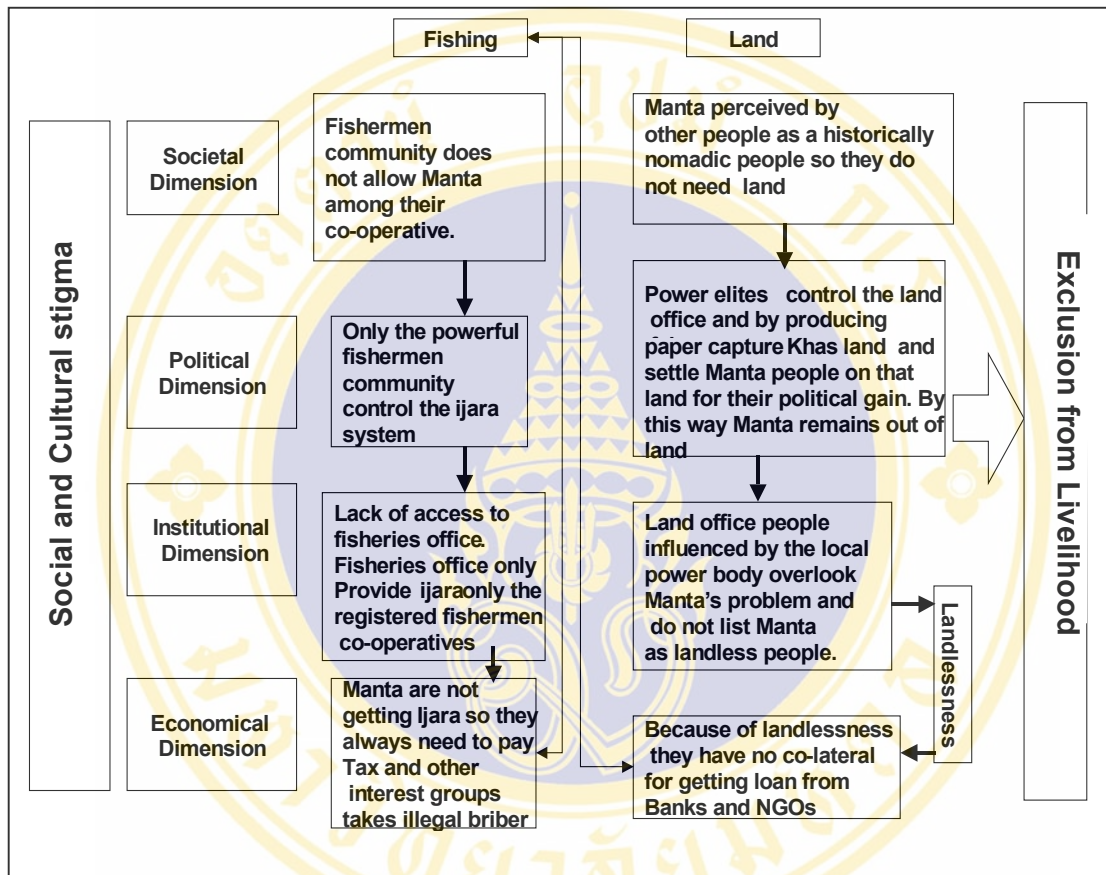
<sup>38</sup> Interview of Nurul Islam Sikder, age 25, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacuc settlement, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

<sup>39</sup> See Article-17 of UN Charter of Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

<sup>40</sup> CESCR, General Comment 4, The right to adequate housing (Article 11, Para. 1 of the Covenant) (Sixth session, 1991), Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations, Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, UN Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev. 1 at 53 (1994).

<sup>41</sup> “Poverty issues in Bangladesh: A Strategic Review.” Commissioned by the Department for International Development (DFID), Bangladesh.

**Figure: 2 How The Social and Cultural Stigmas and Prejudices Obstructing The Fishing and Land Rights**



The diagram illustrates that social and cultural stigmatisation effects the Manta's fishing rights through economic, political, institutional, and societal dimensions. The societal dimension is that mainstream Muslim fishermen's community treat them as *babijja* and *bedhormi* and segregate them. Being segregated by the mainstream Muslim fishermen the Manta always remain left out of the fishermen's cooperatives, and that is the political dimension of exclusion. Only the powerful fishermen control the *ijara* system and the fisheries office. As the Manta is always left out of the fishermen's cooperatives they do not get any help or opportunities from the fisheries office and that is the institutional dimension of exclusion. Lastly, because of less access to *ijara* they always need to pay tax and other interest groups take illegal bribes from them which shows the economic dimension of exclusion. This fishing right of the Manta community is also effected by the condition of landlessness. The diagram also shows that fishing right and land right of the community are interlinked and exclusion from the land right creates an obstacle to the fishing right. The societal dimension of exclusion from the land right is that other people perceive the Manta as historically landless, so they have no customary right to land; this societal perception leads to the political dimension of exclusion from the land right. The Mantas are always exploited by the local power elites. This exclusion from institutional assistance is the major cause of their landlessness, and because of their landlessness they have no collateral to get a loan from banks and NGOs. They are compelled to go to the Mohajons for loans with high interest. This economic constraint creates an obstacle to fishing. As the Mantas have no opportunity to get a loan, they cannot manage capital to invest in fishing. As a result, their total livelihood is at stake by this process of exclusion.

**“Dabi” second priority of rights:**

*Dabi* is the word that translates basically as logical demand. The Manta people define these as opportunities that other community people are getting but which they are not getting. These demands are not directly related with their physical survival but are related to social opportunities. *Dabi* also incorporates those opportunities that are sanctioned by the government and the Mantas are eligible to get those because they are an extremely poor and vulnerable group. One of the Manta women said: “Sarkari subidha

paua amader dabi” (to have government facilities is our right)<sup>42</sup>. They defined several rights or opportunities as *Dabi*. Some are social, some are economic, some are political, but the fulfilment of those rights are somehow related with the fulfilment of the first category *Hague* rights and for this Manta consider *Dabi* as second priority rights.

***Right to vote:***

The Manta people have lived in these three study areas for about 30-35 years but with few exceptions most of them are not registered voters so they are so far not able to use their voting rights. My research found, as mentioned previously, that among the approximate 50 families in these three localities, only 11 families of *Purba dacua* settlement are voters. The reason is that to be a voter it is essential to be a member of a *Khana* (household or residence). But most of the Manta people in these three study areas have no *Khana*. Shukur Ali said:

Most of the time we stay on the river on boats so when the officer from the election office comes we do not know about it. Among us there were some who went to the election office by their own initiative, but the officer said that we were not eligible to be listed, as we have no *Khana*<sup>43</sup>.

From the above observation it was found that as the Manta people have no land and no *Khana* or settlement on land they do not receive voting rights. Some of the families who are voters live on land which means they have *Khana*. But the reality is that though they got voter registration they cannot cast their vote by their own choice. Those Mantas who are voters live on land but powerful people control the land or settlements. Actually, the power elites and leaders take initiative for the enrolment of the Mantas as a voter because they have their own interests. It is not the election office people who made voters of the Manta, nor the Manta themselves. Rather the political representation of the poor through the electoral process in today's Bangladesh remains set in a patron-client framework which tends to mitigate against any independent political assertion by the poor

<sup>42</sup> Interview of Rawsanara Begom, age 40, Lauwa Manta woman, Nayapara Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

<sup>43</sup> Interview of Shukur Ali, age 38, Lauwa Manta, second Headman of Nayabari Bahar, Galachipa. 30/03/2003.

(Kamal, 2000). Their voting right is not being fulfilled because of landlessness and because of some interest groups who are using them as a means of political gain.

***Right to get Government allowances and relief:***

Though there are not sufficient government subsidies and allowances for the vulnerable poor groups, still some measures have been taken by the government as a safety net to reduce the vulnerability of the marginal poor throughout the country (BIDS, 2001). Among these measures some common initiatives are: VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) and VGD (Vulnerable Group Development).<sup>44</sup> The Manta people think that they have the right to have VGF cards, but no family in the community is getting these facilities. The UP Chairman and members of the respective areas distribute this card among the poorest people. Several informants said that they have not received the VGF card yet, because they don't have a good relationship with UP Chairman and members. Only those who have a good relationship and some influence with the above persons are getting those facilities. But unfortunately in the study area most of the Manta people are left out of these facilities. Moreover, the Mantas who have the card do not get the actual allowance of the government that they are supposed to get. Mongoli Bibi said of her experience:

I have a VGF card, but I do not get the government wheat properly. If I am allowed to get 4 kg wheat by the government, in the actual situation I get only 3 kg. The people of the UP Chairman steal the remaining one kg, because they distribute wheat. So they do whatever they want to do. Once I questioned them, “why do I get one kg less”? In reply they scolded me as a “*Babija Magi*” and threatened me by saying if I try to bargain, then they will cut off my name from the list.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> VGF & VGD programs are targeted to provide food and development services to the poorest women in rural areas. It attempts to improve their economic and social conditions so that they may raise above the absolute poverty level. The women from landless households owning less than 50 decimals (0.5 acre) of land, women with irregular (less than taka 300 per month) or no household income, women who are daily or casual labourers and women from household lacking ownership of productive assets, are selected. Additionally preference is given to female headed households (widow, divorced, separated, deserted women with disable husband).

<sup>45</sup> Mongoli Bibi, “*Lawa Manta*” women of Nayapara Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

Another interesting point is that the Manta only knows about the VGF facilities, but they still have no information about other common initiatives of government, such as VGD, food for work during the lean period, test relief, widow allowance, and old-age allowance. During the Interviewing of the TNO (Thana Nirbahi Officer) of Golachipa it was found that all those aforesaid programmes are going on in his area but the TNO is not sure whether the Manta people are getting these facilities or not.<sup>46</sup> Basically not a single Manta person is informed about these facilities.

### ***Health rights:***

While interviewing the Manta people it was found that their health behaviour is complex and based upon personal contingencies of mental and economic significance. The health seeking behaviour of the Manta community can be divided in three categories: first, they seek a solution at home, usually from a close kinship member, second, some go to a traditional healer or to a biomedical doctor, and third, some go to the local dispensary. Additionally, go to medical practitioner only when they suffer from severe diseases. The Manta perceives the health right as one of the essential *Dabi* rights. This is because they frequently face health complications due to the conditions of their livelihood. The nature of their occupation, hard labour, malnutrition, unhygienic living, and working condition are the causes of their poor-health condition. One of the Manta said:

We spend most of the time in rivers. All day long we burn with the heat of the sun, we cook in boat using river water, we sometime drink river water, and wash our dishes with that water. We use that same water for cooking, and we eat cheap and insufficient food. We can't provide sufficient food for our children. For all this our bodily condition is the very worst so who else would get the disease but us.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Interview of TNO, Galachipa Thana Nirbahi Officer, TNO office. 30/03/2003. To respect the privacy of him I am not citing him by name.

<sup>47</sup> Interview of Joynal Kha, age 40, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacua, Glachipa. 27/03/2003.

The above articulation of one Manta person represents the general health condition of the community. Moreover, the observation in the *Panpatti* area has seen that as they have no home nor sanitary latrine they pass urine and defecate in the river or on the riverbank. Then after a while they take water for cooking from the same river. Such is the health condition prevailing among the Manta community. Most of them seek family treatment, treatment from traditional healers and at best go to the local dispensary and buy medicine without consulting with any medical practitioner. When asked why they do not go to the government hospital one Manta woman said:

Once I was admitted to the government hospital, but I did not receive proper treatment. Rather they released me and cut off my name from the registrar. Now I usually go to *Kabiraj* (herbal/magical healers)<sup>48</sup>.

Though the health-seeking behaviour of the Manta is determined by their beliefs, views, understanding, and knowledge about the causes of diseases, they have a pragmatic approach to the efficiency of treatment. They assess, through testing and evaluating the healthcare alternatives, with regard to their economic capabilities and they use a cost-benefit analysis, not only in economic but also in social terms. The reason why they are much more dependent on traditional health-seeking practices that is determined by the accessibility of services which has to be understood in its local context.

#### ***Accessibility to government health services:***

Bangladesh inherited a poor state of health and health services. The government health sectors and services are in a most vulnerable condition; government expenditure on health and family planning has never exceeded 3% of its budget including donor support. The low allocation of the budget causes great suffering to the general people, especially in the rural areas where the mass of people depend on unscientific traditional methods of treatment (Ahmed 1999). In the Galachipa Thana, the Manta people point to the improper medical service due to the inadequacy of necessary medicine and medical appliances in the Thana hospital. Additionally, they also mentioned the corruption of the government

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<sup>48</sup> Interview of Alia Bibi, age 40, Lauwa Manta woman, Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa. 02/04/2003.

officials, and the rough attitude of the hospital staff towards the Manta people. From the field interviews it was discovered that they very often do not get free medicine from Thana hospital. The staff of the hospital usually sell the medicines to the local dispensaries. They have to purchase these same medicines from local pharmacies. The doctors and staff do not behave well as they cannot pay money for medicines. Another constraint is that the Thana hospital is situated in a place that is too far from their locality, so it costs much money to go to the hospital. On the other hand the untrained doctor, traditional sources, midwife, *kabiraj*, *fakir*, *ojha*, *peer*, and *imam* (religious leader) are easy to reach as they are available in their locality, and also they get *Botica* (medicine made from herbal), *Panipora* (holy water), *Tabiz* (talisman), free of cost or very cheap rate from them. This is more convenient for Manta people.

***Access to health information:***

As the Manta people have no access to government health facilities; they also have no access to the preventive medical programs of the government, such as free family-planning advocacy by the Thana health complex. According to the information of Manta females, the female workers of the family-planning office come once every three or four months to talk about family planning and supply tablets (birth-control pills) but most of the Manta females do not follow these methods as they think that the pills are bad for their health and could cause them to be permanently infertile. Sufia Bibi expressed her view:

I do not take the pill because I heard that the contraceptive pill makes women infertile subsequently and does harm to the ovary. If I am not able to conceive it will cause great misery to me. My husband will divorce me<sup>49</sup>.

Most of the Manta people in the study areas go to *Kabiraj* (local traditional healer) and *Huzur* or *Fokir* (priest) and according to their advice the Manta women keep a *Tabiz* (talisman) on their body. So the fact is that though family-planning workers give

contraceptives free of cost they do not teach them how to use them, how they work, and their effects on their body. This is one side of the picture. Another problem is that the family-planning workers hardly come to give the pills and they never go to those Manta people who live solely on the boats. Thus, those who have no settlement or home on the land do not get contraceptives and advice from them. In this situation the Manta women's husbands go to a quack doctor that they call *Daktar*. The *Daktar* lacks the appropriate educational qualification and they only consult with the *Daktar* when they purchase contraceptives. Their wives take these pills without knowing about the proper use. They are also denied access to other government health facilities, for no health worker comes to their locality for the immunization program for children's health and no health worker has yet to come and advise them of this program<sup>50</sup>.

From the above discussion, it can be said that though UDHR and ICSCR recognise the right to health as an inalienable right of all persons to an adequate standard of living, including guarantees for health and well-being<sup>51</sup> the Manta people face health-related problems and are on the receiving end of the decisions or prejudices of others, be they health professionals, traditional healers, religious leaders, family members, or neighbours. This shows the Manta's capacity to achieve "the right to health" is very limited. Their exclusion from health rights is caused by a combination of personal experiences and circumstances, on the one hand, and by the social and political context on the other hand.

### **“Pauna” the third priority right:**

Besides the two essential rights *Haque* and *Dabi* the Manta people categorise another type of right that they define as *Pauna*. According to them this category, though it

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<sup>49</sup> Interview of Sufia Bibi, gae 22, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacua, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

<sup>50</sup> Every year, over two million children worldwide die from health problems that could easily be prevented by vaccines or other simple measures. Many of these children live in Bangladesh. Bangladesh focuses on vaccinating children against preventable diseases like polio and measles, and it also works to control childhood killers like acute respiratory infection (ARI) and diarrhoeal diseases, Vitamin A supplementation—two simple interventions that prevent a number of childhood health problems. This government health programme also emphasizes the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), a strategy for reducing the mortality and morbidity associated with the major causes of childhood illness. The aim of this project is to enhance the quality and to improve vaccination coverage in urban, semi-urban, and hard-to-reach rural areas.

is not directly related to survival, is important for their social recognition or acknowledgement from society that they are human beings. Motahar Kha of Purba Dacua village said:

We do not have enough food, which is distressing, but what is more painful is when people scold us by using abusive language. Other people never behave towards us with good manners.<sup>52</sup>

The Manta also defines this right as *Sanman* (social honour). So it can be said that *Pauna* refers to the right not to be socially discriminated against or stigmatised. This is the cultural right of the community. Though they define *Pauna* as the third category of rights, it bears significantly similar importance like *Haque* and *Dabi* rights, and some times it becomes more important than those two rights because social stigmas and prejudices appear as powerful obstacles in achieving other rights. The *Pauna* right of the Manta expresses the sense that a particular culture, community and tradition have a right to exist and a right to be protected from disintegration. The Manta as a minority community has the right not to be discriminated against by the dominant culture. Article 27 of the ICCPR explains this right as follows:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, person belong to such minorities shall not be denied the rights, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or use their own language<sup>53</sup>.

Though this article does not say clearly about the rights of occupational minorities like the Manta, yet this article has a non-discrimination provision. The rights of a

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<sup>51</sup> See art 25 of Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and art 12 of International Covenant of Economic Social and Cultural Rights.

<sup>52</sup> Interview of Motahar Kha , age 60, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacua Bahar, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

<sup>53</sup> See the article 27 of ICCPR.

minority community found in article 27 of UDHR and article 15 of ICESCR<sup>54</sup> provide some safeguards of cultural rights and non-discrimination because of cultural differences. The Manta as a traditional occupational community has its own socio-cultural construction that reflects special traditional religious practices, high intra-community mobility of women, a system of intra-group justice, and so on. It has been already stated in several sections of this thesis that this unique socio-cultural construction of the Manta community plays a most powerful role affecting discrimination and the denial of rights. *Pauna* rights and the mechanisms of denial of this right reveal how the Manta's social exclusion is being constructed by these powerful social prejudices.

In this thesis I described Manta's *Pauna* rights by dividing it into two parts. First; in this section I discussed the criterion of *Pauna* rights as perceive by the Manta, and the denial of these rights. In Chapter V, I discuss the reasons for these social prejudices and how these social prejudices work in segregating the Manta community from all institutional facilities and the mainstream of society, thereby leading to the Manta's overall social exclusion.

***Right to be socially recognised:***

The Manta as a occupational minority community are excluded because of the constraints they face in achieving the right of livelihood, land rights, institutional opportunities, and political rights. In this part, the focus has been on why the Manta people perceive this social stigma as hindrance to getting other opportunities and how this social stigma is being institutionalised. Besides adding to their poverty, this social stigma also acts as a great actor of exclusion. This situation is a great obstacle for their social recognition as human beings.

***Exclusion from getting fair judgement from Thana and "Salish":***

According to the Manta, when any dispute arises among the community or families the *Sarder* takes over. The Manta people follow their traditional *Sarder* system for

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<sup>54</sup> See The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted 16 Dec. 1966, GA Res. 2200, (XXI), 21 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49. UN Doc A/6316 (1966), 993 UNTS 3, entered into force 3 January 1976, Article 15. and see the Universal Declaration on Human Rights

dispute settlement. When any dispute arises among two persons or families of the community the group leader takes over and according to his judgment the disputed persons or families come to solution with mutual understanding<sup>55</sup>. But when a dispute or feud breaks open with outsiders the Manta people first go to the *Sarder*. The *Sarder* discusses it with the local elites and they arrange a *salish*<sup>56</sup> (Arbitration) and according the decision of that *salish* the problem comes to an end. But the reality is that from this *salish* the Manta never gets fair judgement. Every time the *salish* judgement goes to the favour of non-manta people. According to the statement of one Manta:

The head people of the *salish* always take the side of other people though they (non-manta) are the perpetrators. The judges of the *salish* can not think that other people can cheat us. It is always as if that all fault is ours<sup>57</sup>.

Headman Aainali Matobber said that most of the time they try to avoid interaction with non-Manta people especially those activities that can break out in a feud, because they know that they will be humiliated if any kind of tussle occurs. They also remain quiet and calm even when any non-Manta exploits them. They also do not get fair justice from the Thana people. If any Manta goes to the Thana (police station) to complain against any non-Manta the Thana people neglect them, demand money, and most of the time drive them away and scold them by using abusive words. Like other extreme poor people the Manta people do not get fair justice from these bodies. The study reveals that public servants and public representatives play the major role as key actors for violating the rights of the poor and marginal people.<sup>58</sup> The rights of fair trial and equality before the law has been ensured in ICCPR<sup>59</sup>, this right of these underprivileged people are violated

<sup>55</sup> Interview of Aainali Matobber, Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

<sup>56</sup> A centuries-old alternative dispute resolution or trial held by village elders. binding arbitration by the village elders and Union Parishad Chairman. *Salish* by village elders who are easily available for quick and effective dispensation of justice. UP Chairman is less expensive and justice by him is prompt and also effective. That has been institutionalised by the government.

<sup>57</sup> Interview of Abdur Razzak, age 32, Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa. 03/04/2003.

<sup>58</sup> Aminuzzaman Salauddin M (2002), in his book "*Politics, people and governance*", states that public servants, therefore police, UP Chairman, Members and other political leaders of rural areas are found as key actors for violation of poor peoples right.

<sup>59</sup> See the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR], G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, U.N Doc A/6316 (1966), 999 U.N.T.S. 171, entered into force Mar. 23, 1976, art 14 (1).

with the denial of their access to the decision making process, and withholding their access to basic necessary services like social and institutional justice.

***No access to public burial ground:***

The Manta people are excluded from the use of the facility of the public burial ground; they are not allowed to bury a Manta's dead body in the public burial ground. According to several interviews with the Manta individuals it has come to be known that some religious leaders of the mainstream Muslim community do not allow them to bury their dead in the public graveyard because these people think that though the Manta are Muslim by religion they do not possess the real Muslim religion and so restrict the opportunity to bury their dead in the public burial place. As it was also mentioned in Chapter V about the religious stigmatisation, still some practical situations should be further mentioned here that really states the inhumane condition of the Manta people. Sukkur Ali Sarder states:

We bury the dead body where we can manage a piece of land; it could be a roadside, a riverside, or any abandoned place. Sometimes we beg a piece of land from our rich neighbour who has plenty of land. When by no means we can manage a piece of land we rap it with the bark of the banana tree and float away the dead body in the river. Such is our misery! We cannot bury the dead body in the public graveyard, because some religiously powerful people don't allow us, because we are the poorest of people and practice some form of worship of some goddesses. For that they treat us as *Bedhormi* and think that the holiness of graveyard will be disturbed. Several times we went to UP Chairman and requested him to manage a graveyard for us, but it did not work.<sup>60</sup>

This social condition shows that the Manta people are not only economically, politically and institutionally excluded, but they are also excluded by the social and cultural norms of the mainstream Muslim community people. This denial of *Pauna* rights

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<sup>60</sup> Interview of "Sukkur Ali Sarder"- one headman of Manta community, Panpatti Bahar , Galachipa. 30/03/2003.

also proves that their social exclusion is not only due to poverty but also that the cultural construction and perception of the mainstream people of the locality who cannot accept the equal status of the Manta who possess different socio-cultural construction and values.

### **Exclusion of the Manta community from other institutional and social rights:**

The three major categories of rights that the Manta people perceive as most important are already discussed. But besides these three categories of rights and opportunities the Manta people are also excluded from getting access to some essential institutional and social opportunities that are not mentioned as necessary rights by them. Even though they do not mention these institutional and social opportunities as rights, as a member of the society and being extremely poor they have priority to get these rights. This situation reveals that the generation-long exclusion and economic, political, institutional, and societal humiliations limit their capacity to express their wants. They only think of those wants, which are directly related, and essential for the livelihood or physical survival as rights. Institutional and social opportunities that are not directly related with their livelihood the Manta do not identify as rights. Their lack of information and lack of participation in institutional and social activities limit their perceptions regarding rights. In this part of this chapter, I discuss some of the institutional and social opportunities from which the Mantas are left out.

### ***Opportunity to get free primary education:***

Education is a basic need for the socio-economic transformation and advancement of a country. It is the prime ingredient in developing human resources and generating a skilled work force, Bangladesh is a signatory of the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA).<sup>61</sup> The right to education is also ensured by the Bangladesh constitution, but Bangladesh educational development is not adequately geared to meet this human need. Though there are many free education projects going on such as: Food for Education, Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE), School for Adult Literacy (TLM)<sup>62</sup>,

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<sup>61</sup> WCEFA held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990 agreed on the framework for action to meet basic learning needs. As a follow-up GOB (the Government of Bangladesh) prepared a comprehensive education for all plan.

<sup>62</sup> See "National Education Policy 20002- Government of Bangladesh.

none of these educational promotion measures reach a marginal group like the Manta. During my fieldwork I visited three primary schools in the three study areas and interviewed the Headmasters of those schools, they could not say anything about the Manta people and no Manta child has been admitted to those schools. Even the Manta themselves do not know about the government education projects. So because of this information gap, the Manta children are excluded from getting their right to free primary education from the government. According to UDHR, ICESCR and CRC everyone has the right to education, and it shall be free at least in the elementary and fundamental level. It shall also be compulsory and the state party has a clear and unequivocal obligation to draw up a plan of action for ensuring this right.<sup>63</sup> But the reality in the study area is that one Manta family and one single Manta child was once enrolled in primary school under the Food for education project. However that child's schooling stopped. Being asked the reason the mother of that child said:

They (the teachers of the school) did not even provide wheat or rice incentives for my child, and I complained to the Headmaster, but nothing happened. The Headmaster told me to give him Taka 100 for getting the food.<sup>64</sup>

Because of this corruption of the school teachers and their lack of information regarding free education systems the Manta people are reluctant to send their children to school. Also it is strategically fruitful both from the economic and security aspects to engage their children in fishing. All day they spend in the river for fishing and as they have no home or residence the children have to go with them. And their children also do a lot of help during the fishing. So it is not worthwhile to send their children to school. But according General Comment 11 on article 14 of the ICESCR, the element of compulsion means that neither parents, nor guardians, nor the state are allowed to treat as optional in making the decision whether a child should have access to primary education<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> See the Article 26 (1) of UDHR, Article 13, 14 of ICESCR and Article 28, 29 of CRC.

<sup>64</sup> Interview of Rawsanara begom, age 26, Lauwa Manta, Nayabari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

<sup>65</sup> See CESCR, *State obligations, indications, benchmarks and the right to education*, background paper submitted by Paul Hunt, UN Doc. E/C.12/1998/11/at 3 (16 July 1998).

***Left out of the population census:***

This problem of the Manta is related to their land right issue and citizenship status. Because the Manta is a floating population and most of them have no home or residence so they are always left out of the population census of the government. Only those Manta people who have residence have the opportunity to be listed, but most of the Manta population live on the river and have no settlement on land or *khana* left out of the population census.

***Manta denied benefits of NGOs activities:***

In Bangladesh, NGOs have assumed a unique role in complementing the governmental activities in service delivery and have achieved recognition as a positive force in national development (Task Force, 1990). NGOs operate in more than 50 percent of the villages in Bangladesh benefiting over 3.5 million families (ADAB, 1994)<sup>66</sup>, but in the study areas it has been found that several NGOs are working on several issues but the Manta as a socially excluded group still remain out of any NGO's helpful intervention. Most of the Manta people are hardly cognisant of NGOs activities. For example it would be worthwhile to mention that ASA (Association for Social Advancement), SAP (South Asian Partnership), BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) and CODEC (Coastal Development Committee) are four NGOs who provide micro-credit financing among vulnerable groups, but the Manta is left out of these NGOs development reach. At the community level there are long-term poverty alleviation programs going on, called the NGO-Local Government Collaboration on Poverty Alleviation Program,<sup>67</sup> but this type of development programme never addressed the needs of marginal people like the Manta. When asked why the Manta people are not getting loans from NGOs they said that NGOs give loans to only those people who have land of their own or any other property, actually *grihosto* people can get loan from NGOs. According to Mongoli Bibi:

<sup>66</sup> See ADAB, Annual Report 1993.

<sup>67</sup> See Center for Social Studies "Decentralized Government in Bangladesh: The case study of several Districts" November 12, 1996,.

They (NGO people) never have come to us. When we went to them asking for a loan they said “You have no *Bashat bati* (permanent settlement/home) so how will you refund that loan?”<sup>68</sup>.

Whereas other poor people are getting micro-credit help from these NGOs; according to Shah (2002) 38.8% of poor people are receiving micro-credit facility from NGOs in Galachipa, but unfortunately the Mantas are totally left out from this opportunity. As a result they are taking loans from *mohajons* with high interest.

The right to livelihood and right to *Khas* land, in other words the *Haque* rights, have a particular importance for minority people like the Manta. Fulfilment of these rights also guarantee the other two essential rights, namely *Dabi* and *Pauna* rights. The right to vote, right to get government relief and benefits, to have health facilities from volunteer health services of the Thana health complex, directly depend on the fulfilment of *Haque* rights. The categorization and prioritisation of rights in this way reflects the perceptions of the Manta people regarding their understanding of rights. In the last part of this chapter are mentioned some institutional opportunities not identified by the Manta as their essential rights. This situation reveals that the Manta perceive only those things as rights which are essential for their survival. Limited access to information, generation-long exclusion and collective inability to raise their demands limit their understanding regarding rights. It is a fact that the Manta people are not getting those rights because of poverty and powerlessness and yet this state of poverty and powerlessness also derives from social stigmas and prejudice. Thus, social stigma and prejudice is one of the most powerful social and cultural phenomena of Manta’s social exclusion affecting every aspect of their lives. In the next chapter I will examine the nature and the mechanisms of these social stigmas as the most powerful weapon of Manta’s exclusion.

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<sup>68</sup> Inter view of Mongoli Bibi, age 35, Lauwa Manta, Nayapara Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

## CHAPTER V

### NATURE OF SOCIAL STIGMATISATION AND INTRA- COMMUNITY SEGREGATION OF THE MANTA

In the previous chapter the Manta's categorizations of rights, and the state of denial of those rights were discussed. From the discussion of the denial mechanisms several causes were identified: economic, political, institutional, policy issues and informational limitations are identified as causes of denial. In Chapter IV, it was shown that social stigmas and prejudices work as powerful causes of denial in all three categories of rights. Particularly, with *Pauna* rights it was shown that the social stigma and prejudice is one major factor and, in some aspects, is more powerful than the economic, political, and institutional denial of rights. In some cases the denial of the cultural rights through social segregation, stigmas, and prejudices initiate the denial of other rights. In this chapter I will describe and analyse the causes and the nature of these social prejudices and how they work as a powerful means of social exclusion for the Manta. I will also emphasise that social prejudices and stigmas not only exclude the Manta community from the broader society but these social and cultural phenomena also initiate intra-community segregation and violation of rights.

#### **Nature of social stigmatisation:**

In the study areas it was found that only the Manta women work outside of the family; they fish with men, and sell fish in the market on their own. The non-Manta people do not like this action of the Manta women, and for this non-Manta people address the Manta people as *Babijja*, which means "bastard people". This notion works everywhere, every place they go, and for this they have to live separately from mainstream people. In asking the reason why to the different respondents at different times it was found that the Manta people are Muslim by religion, yet according to the Muslim religious regulations women should not work outside of the family, but Manta women do this and the Manta men allow it. The mainstream Muslim community people

think that a woman who passes most of her time outside of her family cannot be a virtuous one, so they think the Manta women have not any chastity, because being a Muslim women they are bound to maintain *Purdah*<sup>65</sup>. But when the Manta women break this law it is a sin. They are considered not faithful and they are called *Bajaira Mayamanus* (prostitute). Here I cite a statement uttered by a Manta man:

Our women work outside the family sphere, for that we have to face *apobad*. For this *apobad* we cannot get *sanman* from other people<sup>66</sup>.

*Apobad* means ill reputation or defamation that is related to social stigmatization. So this *apobad* and *sanman* actually represent Manta's perception about *Pauna* rights. There are several types of *apobads* that diminish the *sanman* of Manta people.

#### **Women seclusion and stigmatization:**

The Manta women make significant contribution towards the family livelihood. As such, women are allowed freedom of movement and association that is vital for their economic activities, which is also common in non-agriculturist trading and service rendering nomads (Choudhury, 1996). But the dominant Muslim class looks down on the freedom of women's movement of the Manta because the dominant Muslim class of the locality advocates *Purdah* or seclusion for women. Describing this situation the CEDAW Country Report on Bangladesh says:

Status of women in Bangladesh in rural areas is much lower than that of men. Traditional cultural and Muslim fundamentalist social and religious values and practices have reinforced the lower status of women through the *Purdah* system (CEDAW/C/BGD/3-4, 1997, 11)<sup>67</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> *Purdah* is the practice that includes the seclusion of women from public observation by wearing concealing clothing from head to toe and by the use of high walls, curtains, and screens erected within the home. The limits imposed by this practice vary according to different countries and class levels. Generally, those women in the upper and middle class are more likely to practice all aspects of *purdah* because they can afford to not work outside the home. For most rural families the importance of women's labour makes full seclusion impossible, although the idea remains.

<sup>66</sup> Interview of Shukur Ali, sub headmen of Nayapara Bahar, Galachipa Sadar, 30/03/2003.

<sup>67</sup> Consideration Of Reports Submitted By States Parties Under Article 18 Of The Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women. Third And Fourth Periodic Reports Of States

This social stigmatization can be understood more if we observe and analyze the words that are used by other people when they address Manta women. Other people use abusive language to them. From the interview of Mongoli Bibi, a Manta widow of Nayapara Bahar who cares for her family alone, said that the outsiders call them *Bejattia Mayya*, *Bessha*, *Khanki* (prostitute) and try to get opportunity to sexual harass them. This situation shows the direct hatred of the mainstream Muslim community towards the Manta. The treatment of mainstream people towards Manta women does not only affect the women the community but also affects the whole community. Their husbands and children are also criticized as bad because the Manta women are allowed to work outside.

Thomsen (1991) argues that society is divided into two fundamental spheres: that of employment, which is male, and that of housework, which is female. Women's work outside of the family is, therefore, a kind of incursion into the structure and ideal as set up by a male dominant society. Therefore, the division between the "public" and "private" spheres constitutes the foundation for all forms of discrimination against women. In the Manta community women's self-identity is closely connected with the culture within which they live. Women possess special skills and knowledge, which are needed for fishing. Women's work is the major source of income for the village non-farm occupational group. A comprehensive study undertaken by Hossain and Sen (1992) attempted to identify women's contribution to the incomes of poor households in rural Bangladesh. They say:

In poor households, the income of the female workers is 52 percent lower than the income of the male workers, because women's work is confined within the family sphere. But the income of women of non-farm occupational groups is 13 percent higher than that of the average agricultural worker (1992, 1-34).

This finding shows how much women's work is essential for these kind of occupational groups. But the cultural practices of the larger community in which the Manta people live restrict the self-identity of Manta women and for the perceived

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Parties. Cedaw/C/Bgd/3-4, 1 April, 1997, (online), available: [www.bayefsky.com/reports/bangladesh\\_cedaw\\_c\\_bgd\\_3-4\\_1997.php](http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/bangladesh_cedaw_c_bgd_3-4_1997.php) - 101k. Accessed on 22 July, 2003.

violation of working outside they have to live with a social stigma. To put this in context, women's capacity to enjoy economic and social rights and thereby the over all rights of the Manta community are often constrained by the social attitudes of the mainstream society. In the light of Article 16(1)(h) of CEDAW this kind of social prejudice, stigma or discrimination is a violation of human rights. The article guarantees women equality with men before the law. The rights to enjoy financial independence, to earn a livelihood are some of the rights that are guaranteed by CEDAW. But Manta women are oppressed by the religious laws of the mainstream Muslim community of the study areas.

### **Religious stigma:**

As was already mentioned the Manta people are Muslim, by religion but they perform some traditional rituals that they call *Sanatony Aacher* which are very much related with fishing and the river since their livelihood depends on fish and the river. Because of those *Sanatony Aacher* the mainstream Muslim communities consider the Manta people as *Kaffir*, or *Bedharmi* (non-believers). Several Manta mentioned that because of these activities the mainstream Muslim people raised the question: "If they are real Muslims then why they do worship several Hindu goddesses?" So according the dominant Muslim community Manta has no *Jat* (Identity). Some Manta women shared their experiences that when they go door-to-door for a donation in order to meet expenses for the festivals of *Shirny* (offerings/sacrifice towards the goddesses) the housewives of the mainstream Muslim families say "*Magira Aaisay*" (bad girls have come). Mongoli Bibi explained the following:

Some housewives of the *Grihosto* Muslim family asked whether we are Muslim or not. "Why do you worship Hindu goddesses if you are Muslim?"<sup>68</sup>.

It is clear that despite being Muslim by religion the Manta have fallen to the social bias and prejudices of the mainstream Muslim community. Yet equality and nondiscrimination are fundamental human rights. Though the Manta people are Muslim

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<sup>68</sup> Interview of Mongoli Bibi, lauwa Manta woman, Nayabari Bahar, Galachipa, 01/04/2003.

they are discriminated against, because of their traditional practices which are related with their natural habitation. This is a violation of their cultural rights. Article 27 of the ICCPR, CERD, and the general mechanisms of ILO conventions 107 and 169 state that “the specificity of a particular culture” should be respected. In those states in which different types of minority groups belong who possess a “specific nature of culture” shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of the group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion<sup>69</sup>. This has been specifically defined in Convention No. 169 of ILO that the right of minority peoples to use their own customs and customary law to deal with their own affairs. They have the rights to preserve their own customs and institutions and traditional ways of belief<sup>70</sup>. Article 27 of UDHR and Article 15 of ICESCR provide some safe guards of the cultural rights also. According to these two articles everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests of the community<sup>71</sup>.

### **Social attitude of the mainstream community towards the Manta:**

From my observations and interviews among the Manta community it can be remarked that this social stigma and cultural construction of exclusion inevitably constructs the functional exclusion of the Manta from the greater community. Because of the above social and cultural construction of the Manta community that is a sharp contrast with the mainstream Muslim community, who belong to the *Arzal* group like other peripheral non-agriculturist groups. Even the *Gawsa Manta* who somehow managed to change their socio-cultural position also shows prejudice towards the *Lauwa Manta*. In order to examine the above contention I will focus on some attitudes and behaviors of the mainstream people towards the Manta.

<sup>69</sup> See World Council of Indigenous Peoples, UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, (Ottawa, 1994, mimeographed) and United Nation Development programme, *Human Development Report*, 1997, 43.

<sup>70</sup> See International Labour Organization, Convention No. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 1989, article 1.

<sup>71</sup> See The Declaration of the Principles of the International Cultural Co-operation. Proclaimed by the General conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organization at its fourteen session on 4 November 1966.

See The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted 16 Dec. 1966, GA Res. 2200, (XXI), 21 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 49. UN Doc A/6316 (1966), 993 UNTS 3, entered into force 3 January 1976, art 15.

Because of women's work outside of the family and because of the *sanatony aacher* the Manta people are not allowed to participate in social occasions with other people. Actually they are ostracized, people hate to meet them and even are not considerate to the Manta children. One Manta explained:

If some of our children enter into other people's houses out of curiosity they (non-manta) scold them as *Babijar Pola* (son of babija) and drive them out of their house  
72.

The Manta people can take part only in two major social occasions with the greater community. These are the two *Eid*, the biggest pilgrims of the Muslim community, but only to a certain extent. A Manta said to me that during the *Eid* festival if any Manta goes to a *Grihosto Bari* (rich man's house) for a courtesy visit they make him sit outside of the house in the yard. From the interviews it was noted that the mainstream Muslim community sometimes receive incentives from government for the Muslim festivals, but the Manta community never has received such help or incentives, rather they are treated as *Bedhormi* by the mainstream community.

There are so many consequences that are directly related with this situation. As the Manta are socially stigmatized and at the same time their economic condition is so pitiable they can't establish any marital relationships with other community people. Even the *Gawsa Manta* who were like the *Lauwa* not long ago are not willing to marry among them. The Manta has marital relationships only with those people who belong in *Arzal* class. Most of the cases the Manta people establish marital relationships with *Chasha* (peripheral cultivator) families who are the most vulnerable and marginal with no capacity to fulfill the demand of dowry for marriage. From the interviews of several non-Manta people and from the analysis it was established that other people do not intermarry with the Manta people because Manta women travel over the rivers, to villages and marketplaces, so they have no *Purda*. This is the common general attitude of the neighboring mainstream Muslim community towards marginal people such as the Manta. Similar observations are made by Bhattacharya (1973) when he observed that in West Bengal the Muslims of the upper strata deny equal status to the *Shah*, *Patua* and *Momins*

who are identified as the lowest class by the local Muslims for the failure of these communities to restrict their women in *Purdah* and for this the communities are excluded from marital relationship with local Muslims.

### **Less social mobility of Manta:**

The social stigmatization of the mainstream Muslim community towards the Manta restricts the overall social mobility of the Manta community in the locality. Consequently, this situation gradually excludes the Manta from all opportunities and rights. The mainstream people's behavior restricts the social mobility of the Manta community and gradually causes them to be excluded. Srinivas (1970) introduced the term "*Sanskritization*" as a tool to signify the social mobility of people from one class to another in India. He emphasized the upward mobility of lower-caste Hindus to a higher social position. The lower-caste Hindus stake a claim to a higher position with changes brought in their lifestyles. Examining this situation among the Manta community it can be said that the social mobilization through the Sanskritization process is to some extent true for the *Gawsa Manta* who somehow changed their lifestyles, yet these people are very few in number. The *Lauwa Manta* who are the majority and in a very vulnerable position are sliding downward. Being humiliated and socially stigmatized there developed an inferiority complex in the mind of them. A Manta people remarked:

Amader meyera mas dhore, nou baay, bazare jay haijonney amra nichu jat. Amra ki vhave aadhikar pamu" (They look down upon us because our women fish, row boats, and go to market. So how do we get our rights?)<sup>73</sup>.

The cultural construction of the mainstream Muslims and social stigma limit the scope of social mobility for the Manta community. They are just confined to themselves. It is not that the Manta people have no desire to climb upward, but *Purdah* and the patriarchy of the stratified society obstruct their social mobility. In some instances this

<sup>72</sup> Interview of Mongoli Bibi- a Manta widow who is runs her family alone in Naya Bari Bahar Lawa Manta, Galachipa Sadar, 01/04/2003.

<sup>73</sup> Interview of Sohorab Haulader, Lauwa Manta, Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003.

stigma is also directly effecting women's freedom of movement. From the interview of Mongoli Bibi it was found:

In the recent past every woman was free to be engaged in fishing, even an unmarried girl. The more she could earn, the greater was the demand for her marriage, but now an unmarried girl does not engage in fishing, it is only after her marriage if her husband permits<sup>74</sup>.

Because of their reduced mobility the Manta communities gradually receive less information and do not get any institutional rights. Further, they are deprived of their right to livelihood.

#### **Intra Community Segregation and violation of Rights:**

Besides this general denial of rights and exclusion there are segregations and hierarchies of duties regarding gender, children, elderly persons, widows, and generational mobility among the Manta community. These replicate the influences of the overall denial of rights at the community level. Some labour differences between Manta men and women, the changes in marriage practices and the dowry system that was absent among Manta community before, demonstrate that the uniqueness of the Manta's cultural and social construction is breaking down due to the social and cultural influences of the mainstream Muslim community. While all these segregation practices are somehow related to the general denial of rights and exclusion, yet behind all of this are very particular dimensions that reveal the magnitude of intra-community exclusion.

#### ***Women's work:***

Within the Manta community women are also segregated from men and by the division of labour. In fishing, Manta women have to do some additional duties that Manta men do not. Traditionally, the Manta woman performs some special women-only duties, such as a Manta woman collects fodder (bait) for the fish by using a *Moya* net, and she

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<sup>74</sup> Interview of Mongoli Bibi.

put bait on into the fishhook. So when a Manta man a takes a rest, a woman searches across small channels to collect bait or puts bait on fishing hooks. In addition to these activities a Manta female has the duty to take care of her family, prepare food, do all household work, and collect firewood for cooking. Though it is true that previously the Manta women were held in high esteem, particularly because of their earning capacity, the situation has changed. Nowadays Manta men hold all the authority, enjoy more freedom, and make decision on their own. One Manta woman expressed her grievance this way:

We put our labour together (with males), sometimes we work more than them (male) but in terms of enjoyment only they have the rights<sup>75</sup>.

Aainali Matobber, the supreme headman of the Manta community, said that in the past household duties, including taking care of children were shared by a couple. Presently Manta men think in line with the mainstream Muslim society that considers women to be mainly responsible for the home. So they do not want to share household tasks with their wives.

***Men's control over property and Income:***

From the interviews of Aainali Matobber and Shankarlal Shah it was found that in the past Manta women owned and controlled property. Presently men control the property even if women acquire it. Moreover, women of the Manta often relinquish their rights to their parental property in order to maintain good relations with their brothers. In a family the husband owns the child, boat, and all other *Sabar* of fishing. So the women of the Manta are appreciably poorer than the men in community. Socio-economic changes triggered by increasing rates of landlessness and impoverishment has had a profound impact on women's lives. While poverty affects the household as a whole the women bear a disproportionate burden of attempting to manage household production and

<sup>75</sup> Interview of Safura Bibi, age 45, Lauwa Manta , Purba Dacua, Golachipa. 27/03/2003.

consumption under conditions of increasing scarcity. A similar sense of the situation is in the CEDAW Country report on Bangladesh (1997):

Greater numbers of women than men are among the poor. The Poverty Trend Analysis in 62 villages found that 76 percent of women fell under the category "poor" in terms of income and resource endowments. Women are discriminated against in intra-household allocation of resources as well as in terms of food, education and health care (CEDAW/C/BGD/3-4, 1997, 11)<sup>76</sup>.

***Domestic Violence:***

According to the field study information, a Manta girl marries from the age of 8 to 11 years old. After marrying she starts work in the boat with her husband. All day long she is engaged with fishing and other household work. Their husbands also physically suppress them sometimes. Their husbands beat them at the time of a family quarrel. Mongoli Bibi says:

Our sorrow knows no bounds! When we go to market people call us *Magi*. We hear and consume sorrow again in our home when our husband beats us. Here we have also nothing to do but cry alone and curse our fate. Nobody here cares for us<sup>77</sup>

***Dowry problem and Polygamy Marriage:***

Generally a male child gets more care, preference and opportunity as a male child is considered as a future dependency. On the other hand, a female child is seen as a burden because parents always worry about *Jautuk* (dowry) for her marriage. For a girl's marriage a family needs at least 5000 Tk as dowry money. The Manta people do not have the ability to arrange dowry money, so a female child is not wanted. Another oppression that Manta women face often now is "*Bohubibaho*" (polygamous marriage). According to Aainali Matobber the supreme headman of the Manta community, polygamous marriages were totally absent in earlier years. Polygamy was once a matter of hatred and

<sup>76</sup> CEDAW/C/BGD/3-4, 1997.

<sup>77</sup> Interview of Mongoli Bibi.

taboo; the man who did it had been treated as a worst type of male and was isolated from the community. But that social value and tradition changed and polygamy is increasing among the Manta community. From the field study it has been found that Manta men and women mentioned different causes regarding the increasing rate of polygamy. Motahar Kha says:

If a male marries more than one wife then it might be helpful for fishing; then the man can distribute duties among the wives, and he can engage himself with other business<sup>78</sup>.

But Joygun Bibi wife of Mothar Kha holds a different idea:

Day by day Manta people are getting closer to *gerosto* people, and, the Manta men are being influenced by some bad people. They (manta male) do polygamy practice<sup>79</sup>.

Here I would like to say that the *joutuk* and the *bohubbaho* practice in the Manta community are a result of their interaction with the dominant society. The values and ideologies of the former exert considerable influence on their social and cultural life (Choudhury, 1996). So the extinguishing of traditional values due to the cultural influences of the mainstream community is one of the major reasons of female decrease in equality. Most of the time a husband does not feel the need to take permission from his wife to marry again. If a husband marries again without his wife's permission she has nothing to do but to adjust to the situation, because no one will give her support or shelter if she wants to take any measure against her husband. From the field investigation it was also found that *jautuk* and *bohubbaho* are related to each other. As Manta families do not have that ability to arrange dowry money, they are in a way compelled to give their daughters in marriage with already married men because then they do not need to pay dowry money. Manta women also do not have the information that *Bohubbaho* is a crime and the government has prohibited these practices.

***Segregation of elderly people and the widows:***

<sup>78</sup> Interview of Mothar Kha, age 60, Lauwa Manta, Purda Dacua settlement, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

<sup>79</sup> Interview of Joygun Bibi, age 45, Lauwa Manta, Purda Dacua settlement, Galachipa. 27/03/2003.

Most elderly people also are compelled to fish because they have no alternatives for survival. In the study area where I interviewed the people of two Manta boats in the river Aagunmukha, it was found that the males of those boats were very old, being over 60, and suffering from asthma and bronchitis. Only the elderly who are totally unable to do physical labour anymore get shelter with his or her son's family. It was also found in the study area that some old people who have no relatives or son live by begging in Galachipa town. Others work as day laborers in other Manta's boats.

Widowed women who have their own boats fish only with their children; those without boats work as day laborers in other Manta's boats. This group is the most vulnerable. They live on the pity of other people. In *Purba Dacua* settlement it was seen that one widow was living in a *jupri* (Hut), she has no relatives, nor a son or daughter and cannot do any work because she suffers from asthma and a gastric problem. Other Manta families give her food and shelter, but there is nobody to take her to doctor for treatment. So this is the way she is living. In *Naya Bari* one widow woman said:

I did not get a VGF card, because my name is not listed. As I am widow nobody has taken any initiative to enroll my name at the government office. Several times I requested them (UP Chairman's people) to provide me with a card but nobody listened to me<sup>80</sup>.

***Problem with the adolescent girls:***

A Manta girl gets married at the age of 8 to 11. So in the community the number of unmarried adolescent girls is very few. But if for any reason a girl does not get married within this age that creates a lot of problems for a family. If the girl becomes an adolescent she loses the demand of marriage, parents need to pay a dowry or to marry her with a married man. Sometimes the family also feels fear because of social security. Young people often tease unmarried girls; they are also sometimes victims of sexual harassment. For these problems the child marriage rate is high in Manta society. Although the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance specifies the legal age of marriage as 18 years for women, this provision of the law has been constantly violated, by the Manta community.

***Child Labour:***

From direct observation in three Manta settlements a general picture was discovered that Manta children are busy working to help their parents. In most of the cases children go fishing with their parents. In the *Aagunmukha* river of *Panpatti* area it was found that children pull out fishing nets from the water, and sort fish. They were also found washing dishes, and clothes in the river on boats. In the *Nayabari* area it was seen that children bring drinking water, carrying heavy water vases on their heads, some go to the market with his/her mother for selling fish. Other children were seen working as *kuli* (one who carries goods of others) at the Galachipa boat terminal.

This situation of intra-community segregation and rights violations reveals that the Manta are now adopting the values of the mainstream Muslim community. Social restrictions, prejudices and influences gradually made them depart from their separate cultural identity and thereby infringe upon the rights and freedom of the Manta women. As a unique cultural group they are losing their social capital due to the negative influences of the mainstream culture that is constantly leading the community towards more exclusion.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview of Rawshona , age 40, Lauwa Manta, Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa. 28/03/2003.

## CHAPTER VI

### SOCIAL EXCLUSION, AND HUMAN RIGHTS APPROACHES

From the discussion on findings in the previous chapters it is clear that the Manta's social exclusion results from various social factors. Most precisely, the poverty, political constraints, institutional negligence, policy limitations, and exploitation by several interest groups are the major factors of their exclusion. The most important one, however, is the social and cultural stigmas and prejudices that segregate the Manta from all societal opportunities. In this chapter I will try to analyse this finding in the light of existing theories and literature on social exclusion. To do so, I divide this Chapter in two sections. In the first section I re-examine the social and cultural construction of exclusion of the Manta with a critical analysis of some existing literature on this issue, and in the last part I attempt to discover how inclusion of this kind of traditional occupational minorities should be addressed in light of international Human Rights standards.

#### **Theoretical Analysis of the Manta's Exclusion**

Manta, as a traditional occupational minority community, is ensnared by a double exclusion. On the one hand, the Manta people are excluded by poverty, an economic factor, and, on the other hand, the Mantas are excluded because of the social prejudice of the mainstream Muslim community. Several factors compound this, such as their occupational difference, different socio-cultural structure, and different religious practices that bring social stigmas and prejudices. The theoretical discussions on socio-cultural stigmas as powerful causes of exclusion in Chapter III and discussion in the findings in Chapters III, IV and V provide enough grounds to say that social exclusion is the denial of respective rights. Among the several theories on social exclusion, that I discussed in Chapter III, here I will discuss some of those which fit the analysis of the research findings on social exclusion of the Manta community.

#### ***Manta facing a social process of exclusion:***

The mainstream Muslim community control the political, economical, socio-cultural, and institutional factors in the Manta's locality. These social agents are related to each other and constitute the social functions through a combined process. When a particular group remains out of this social function process that group automatically finds itself excluded (Charia & Edwin 2000). Because of the complicity between social agents and the dominant groups the Manta people have become disempowered and lose their cultural identity, and they are without access the legal systems, they lack education, health, political and civil rights, and also do not get justice and institutional opportunities. Their social relationships are breaking down, and they are removed from access to local resources.

***Manta's Exclusion is Multidimensional:***

In Manta society it was found that exclusion arises from various aspects. They are excluded because of their poverty. They are excluded for violating *purdah* or women's seclusion. Their exclusion also results from the deviation from the Muslim religion. While the Manta people are excluded from fishing facilities, land rights, voting rights, government relief, health rights, they are denied NGOs activities, their children do not have schooling opportunities, they have no right to bury their dead in public graveyards, and so many on. Each of these specific exclusions has special dimensions.

***Cyclical Process of Manta's exclusion:***

The Manta community has no permanent settlement on land. Every year the government land office allocates *Khas* land for the landless people but the Manta never get allocated *Khas* land (Shah 2001). To get *Khas* land, first, the Manta needs to be identified as landless people. But they have never been identified as landless people because they have no permanent settlement on land and they live in boats and roam throughout the rivers for fishing. Because of this, they are left out of the census of landless people with the result that they are never identified as landless people. Unless they are identified as landless people they do not have the right to claim *Khas* land. So the landlessness of the Manta community has the result of stopping them receiving the right to *Khas* land. The cause and result are connected through a cyclic process. Because of

their landlessness and poverty they are further excluded from other social and economic, and political rights. All these disadvantages cumulatively construct their exclusion.

### ***Breakdown of Social Relationship:***

The Manta people are a traditional occupational minority community. This occupational minority status of the Manta by itself means this community has already been excluded from the mainstream social, cultural, political, institutional, and economic activities. Thus this group has lost social relations. Though the Mantas are Muslim, they perform some non-Muslim religious activities and do not maintain *pardah* system, so they are also a religious minority. In a similar way, they are also left out from the political, institutional and other social functions of the greater community. These breakdowns of social relations are the causes of Mantas social exclusion. There are several communities in the study area such as the fisherfolk, potter community, small handicraft businessman, and small farmers. Among these communities, the Manta people are the most marginalized and vulnerable. The aforesaid communities are getting loans from the government bank, and several NGOs are operating micro credit programmes among them (Shah 2001). The other communities can send their children to school, can sell their wage labour in the market, and they have some relations with institutes. That means, these communities also have some relationships with organizations. While on the contrary, the Manta community cannot achieve any of these rights, because their community has no control over those resources. Because of their social and cultural construction the Manta people are excluded from this social network.

### **Social & Cultural construction of the Manta's Exclusion:**

Little research has been done on the social exclusion of such types of minority communities by addressing the cultural prejudice issue of the dominant culture. Because of that, the intensity of the degree of their exclusionary status remains unseen. In the definitions of academic discourse these marginalised traditional occupational groups are included under the definition of minority people (Sheth & Mahajan 1999). Minority in the modern state are being excluded from the greater civil opportunities of a nation. Minority is also a concept where by a number of people are different and discriminated against by

the majority group because of their ethnicity, religion, language, customs, occupation and social structure (Tripura 1994). Minority people become powerless, vulnerable and excluded due to a lack of control over resources, and at the same time their powerlessness and marginalisation also derives from the diminishment of their cultural uniqueness through aggression by the dominant culture (Kymlicka, 1997). The most important fact to consider is this: minorities enter the arena of social life under disadvantageous circumstances. Each minority holds a unique socio-culturally defined life style. When the existing class structure of the social system does not permit the life style to be practiced, even the state organs do not patronise the minority's cultures. Under most circumstances, these minority cultures remain in ghettos, which are the result of the prejudice, and discrimination of the majority culture, and these minorities are physically left out within segregated areas (Safa, 1967). Brown (1981) also expresses the same idea as Safa; according to him social and cultural ghettoization is a system that comprises the sense of a distinct group, which should therefore be the subject of separate treatment. Their life style should be kept as distinct as possible, and they should live in different areas.

Safa's and Brown's concept of 'ghettoization' is synonymous with the concept of social stratification. Being segregated and stratified by the social and cultural prejudices of the dominant class a minority community becomes excluded from all aspects of society. Especially in a traditional society like Bangladesh where cultural homogeneity is developed through an Islamic religious ideology that encourages a stratified hierarchy and regulates social life. There a minority culture is always considered as inferior because of socio-cultural and religious differences. The Manta as an occupational minority group possesses difference from two sides. One is engagement of women in fishing. The second one is worship of some natural deities. For these differences the mainstream Muslim community imposes certain taboos on them such as in regard to marriage, eating together, forbidden to enter and use public burial ground, and physical proximity. This is a certain form of ghettoization as Safa has pointed out.

This cultural and social stigmatisation marginalizes a minority group, and as a result that very group becomes confined within their own culture, limiting their livelihood options and losing control of resources and remaining as a sub-cultural group within the broader society. (Richardson & Grand, 2001). This discussion implies the systematic

disempowerment of a group over their resources and rights. Brown (1981) also says that this ghettoization primarily involves colour prejudice, religious stigma, occupational inferiority and the practice of racial discrimination, which consequently creates social, cultural, economic, and political separation. And these social prejudices in some societies could be so powerful that if some segments of a particular minority group achieve upward social mobility through emancipating their economic status, still they might not be able to get out from this social stigmas or prejudices. Harris (1971) mentioned examples in several parts of the world where the dominant culture still maintains some social taboos with regard to those minority groups who have gained social mobility through developing their economic status. The Eta of Japan, the Blacks of the United States, and the Coloreds of South Africa must face intermarriage blocked largely by the hostility of the rest of the population. The Manta community of Bangladesh faces the same social prejudice or taboos. The *Gawsa Manta* a small segment of the Manta community who became economically well-off to some extent than many of the mainstream Muslim families of the locality are still blocked from intermarriage with mainstream Muslim families.

These social prejudices and attitude of other people towards an occupational minority community like the Manta lock them in a particular social structure and restricts their social mobility. Srinivas (1971) in his book *The Social system of a Mysore Village* stated that in the Hindu caste system there are enormous discriminations towards the lower castes by the upper-caste Hindus. Low-caste Hindus are segregated as *jatis* (or subcastes) according to the occupations that are defined by the religious dogma of the “*Dharma Marga*” and they are the subject to certain social and cultural taboos by the upper-caste Hindus. This stratification restricts their “Sanskritization” (social upward mobility) process. The same situation was found regarding the Manta community, though as they are Muslim they are segregated as lower class or *Arzal*, as I described in detail in Chapter III. Each and every minority group has a common character and a common culture that encompasses many varied and important aspects of life and defines their types of activities, occupations, pursuits, and relationships. Through this pervasive culture the members of that group are socialized. But because of the restriction of upward mobility when the customs, the laws, and the traditions of a particular minority group comes into conflict with the majority culture, the minority people become uprooted from their cultural origins (Johnston 1995). Smith (2000) also reveals the same idea as Johnston that

the minority people have to fight harder on a variety of fronts to ensure their cultural rights and survival. Being uprooted from their cultural identity, they are losing control over land, knowledge, livelihood, and self-determination. Rex (1977) expresses the same opinion. He mentions that the occupational minority groups, because of their occupational differences, possess a great variety of socio-cultural practices and in this way they are classified in relation to other groups. Among the dominant political and economical circumstances their culture and social system cannot survive, and they are forced into poverty, degradation, and dependency.

This cultural and social segregation leads not only to the community's exclusion, but at the same time it makes for intra-community segregation. Mies (1991) in her book *Social Origin of the Sexual Division of Labour* has examined how exclusion of a marginal community from its cultural determination results in the breakdown of labour distribution and the mobility of gender. She argues that, generally, it has been found that in indigenous people, traditional ethnic minority groups, and subsistence occupational minorities, the extreme sexual division of labour is absent. The emergence of male dominance over women is due to the historical fact that the notion of private property arises from what she calls the "predatory mode of appropriation". According to her, this predatory mode of appropriation is absent among the aforesaid minorities, but eroding change begins when the indigenous or minority group initiates this predatory mode of appropriation to separate women from public work and to confine women to the private sphere. In the Chapter V, I examined how the Manta women are losing their intra-group freedom of movement and other equal rights with men. Choudhury (1996) in her research on the *Bedey* community of the village of Rupsa found that in the *Bedey* community the women's intra-community social status enjoyed high esteem because of their high economic contribution, but the situation totally changed when they came into close contact with the mainstream Muslim community of the village. In the mainstream community the women are expected to stay at home in conformity with religious social norms. Mies also has some examples in her research work *Pauperization and Marginalization: the Case of Tribal Women in Andhra Pradesh*. The poor tribal agricultural labouring women are struggling both against sexual oppression by their husbands and exploitation by the landlords. This illustrates the fact that exploitation and oppression is closely linked to the patriarchal structure of the mainstream community.

Because of their exclusion from their cultural heritage, the tribal community has lost their traditional value of equality of gender.

Through this exploitation process a particular society loses its identity and cultural heritage and becomes a subcultural group and remains as an excluded minority (Barth 1987). This loss of identity, less social visibility, and less self-esteem and mobility paves the way for social exclusion. If we carefully analyse the overall state of the Manta's social exclusion we can clearly see that because of their marginality, their traditional cultural and occupational conditions, this group stays physically in a comparatively remote place. Groups in less developed areas cannot compete with other occupational groups due to the absence of institutional opportunities and other disadvantages arising from their traditional means of production. For these reasons, the particular group excluded from the labour market loses their economic control, which restricts their capacity to take off economically. When this group loses their control over their economy and resources and when they have no wages, social security, savings, or assets, they become dependent upon other groups and as a result the group becomes poor, inferior, and minor in the social order. Consequently, their social inferiority restricts the excluded group from entitlements in the legal systems, restricts their social and cultural rights, their education, health, political and civil rights, and justice and from administration. These non-entitlements again make that group of people powerless through a vicious cycle of exclusion.

Waldron (1997) in *Minority Rights and Cosmopolitan Alternatives* argues that in different ways through cultural assimilation people can pick and choose cultural fragments without feeling any sense of membership or dependence on a particular culture. In the modern world people are moving freely amongst the products of innumerable cultural traditions. The globalisation of trade, the increase of human mobility, and the development of international institutions and communications have made it impossible to cut off one culture artificially from the general course of human events. So the idea of the specific cultural determination of minorities could be altered by the cosmopolitan alternative. Here Waldron's argument is limited because it is an 'idealistic' view. In reality it is proven that in homogenous traditional societies assimilation between minority cultures and the dominant culture is rare. Hierarchy, discrimination, stigmatisation, hatred and segregation that are already existing in the social structure cannot allow equal status

with the minority culture, because the minority's culture is perceived as traditional, superstitious, obsolete, and uncivilized. Waldron's idea can be criticized in several ways. First, the argument that a member of a decaying culture could integrate into the dominating culture is difficult because the dominant culture shows intolerance and does not appreciate the value of that particular minority culture. As a result the dignity and the self-respect of the members of that particular minority culture always remain in threat (Kymlicka, 1997). Secondly, the assimilation process is a very slow and lingering process. Also it is a political process where one particular cultural group cannot attempt to pursue the opportunities already occupied and controlled by the majority group. Waldron's ideas of opportunities in modern world, namely the opportunities of globalisation of trade, the increase of human mobility, the development of international institutions and global communications are beyond the limits of excluded cultural groups. Another limitation of this model is that assimilation could be possibly be positive on an individual level, whereby a person or persons of a minority community may be socially mobilized through achieving educational status, economic advancement and so on. But minority rights are not "individual rights". Glazer & Walzer (1997) say that minority rights are "group rights" and they incorporate language rights, regional autonomy, land claims, voting rights, and livelihood rights, and they cannot be realized separately because they effect the group's self-determination.

Margalit & Raz (1997) define every minority group as 'cultural groups' and state that in rethinking the issue of minority rights, the first task is to come to a clear understanding of nature of that cultural groups and the value of belonging to such groups. Therefore, without considering the particular cultural heritage true development is not possible. Margalit & Raz also argue that cultural membership provides people with meaningful choices about how to deal with their lives, and solve their problems. Hence if a culture is discriminated against, the options and the opportunities open to its members will shrink and their pursuit of equality is less likely to be successful.<sup>82</sup>

### **Inclusion and Human Rights Approaches:**

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<sup>82</sup> Similar arguments are made in Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition", in *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition"*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993), and Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993).

From the above theoretical discussion it is clear that social exclusion covers a broad area. It is still very difficult to define. No statistics use social exclusion as an official category. Moreover, the manifestations of social exclusion, and how it is understood, vary across countries and context. Yet while different societies have experienced social exclusion from different angles the concept, nevertheless, shares some common aspects of exclusion. Virtually all agree that exclusion is multi-dimensional. Disadvantage is simultaneously economic, social, cultural, political and so on. In addition to its multidimensionality, exclusion is considered a dynamic process with several actors and their integration and interaction, which may result from a lack of resources or denial of several social rights. Social exclusion also refers to the failure of one or more systems regarded as fundamental for the functioning of the society. Similarly, the “social systems” are seen as an apparatus from which people are excluded or unable to participate in. So the study on social exclusion helps to understand the interrelations and interactions between several social actors and how these interactions and interrelations create the exclusion process. For an example, the breakdown of one social relation or ‘inability of participation’ within the mainstream socio-economic framework can lead to exclusion from cultural uniqueness, from livelihood, from neighbouring communities, and from community in its greatest level. This has the consequence of increasing the denial of other rights such as denial from land rights, legal systems, from education, health, political rights, justice and so on. This holistic nature of social exclusion can never be understood by the conventional idea of development.

If inclusion of these excluded groups is the aim of true development then inclusion is not possible without ensuring their rights, but these rights cannot be achieved or an inclusion strategy cannot be defined without a clear understanding about the degree of vulnerability and the state of exclusion. And this degree of exclusion cannot be measured only by the economic growth and progress (Korevaar, in EU 1999). Development rhetoric on poverty reduction mostly emphasises economic growth. Leys (1996) in *The Rise & Fall of Development Theories* stated that most of the present dominant development policies both by the government and development organizations have proved to be

incompatible. The salient feature of these policies is the “growth model”<sup>83</sup> which aims to attract the funding of donor agencies and attend to the prescribed rules of those agencies. If exclusion means the denial of several rights then social inclusion calls not only for rapid poverty alleviation but also for putting people at the centre of development with economic growth as a means and not an end. It also calls for protecting the life opportunities of future generation as well as the present generation and respecting the natural system on which all life depends (Karunan & Kort 2000). Moreover, the inclusion process has to focus on basic human rights rather than needs. While most of the development policies emphasize aggregate growth in wealth, production, public services, and consumption, as the goal expressed is poverty reduction, but the poverty concept cannot be realised fully apart from its human rights aspects. According to Amartya Sen (1981) the concept of poverty is defined from three perspectives: firstly, a person is poor if his income is below the defined poverty line, an income perspective. Secondly, from the basic need perspective, poverty is the deprivation of material required for minimal acceptable fulfilment of human needs. Thirdly, poverty represents the absence of some basic capabilities to function. Where the poverty of life lies not merely in per-capita income or in material needs, but also in the lack of real opportunities due to socio-cultural constraints, and the personal conditions necessary to lead a valuable and valued life.

Poverty reduction policies or inclusion policies should address the actual and basic rights from the beneficiaries’ point of view. How rights are being denied and how the denials of these rights make them vulnerable should be addressed from humanitarian aspects. What roles social, cultural, political, economic, religious and institutional factors play towards vulnerability could be more significant than economic and material denial of rights. The right of a person should not be separated into two spheres that of civil and political and that of economic, social and cultural rights. Besides economic growth, its focus should also be concentrated on equitable distribution, enhancement of people’s capabilities and widening of their choices. Priority should be given in poverty elimination, to elimination of all kind of gender, ethnic, minority, religious, and class discrimination. In several declarations and treaties the concept of inclusion is present. In the Declaration on the Right to Development (Article 1) the inclusion concept is incorporated as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process. Article

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<sup>83</sup> W.W Rostow, *The stages of economic growth: A non-Communist manifesto*, Cambridge University press,

2 of UDHR states that there should be the equality and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Any basis of discrimination i.e. the race, colour, sex, language; religion, political, ethnicity, property, is to be phased out. These rights are non-derogable. Articles 3, 4 and 21 proclaim freedom of movement and residence, right of nationality, right to property, freedom of thought and religion, right to take part in the government and to equal access to institutions and service. Articles 22, 23 and 27 ensure the economic, social and cultural rights, therefore the right to social security, right to work, right to education, right to an equal wage, right to participation in the cultural life of the community. Besides these documents, there are several treaties such as ICCPR, ICESCR, CERD, CEDAW, and CRC standing to ensure the elimination of all kinds of inequality. And the UN Declaration of Right to Development (1986) strengthens the idea of equality of opportunity for all in access to basic resources, education, health services as well as food, housing, employment, and fair distribution of income together with the full participation of every person of the society (Lawson 1996). The concept of inclusion is also addressed by several other international human rights instruments, with general and specific contents such espoused by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention, United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention. These human rights instruments mean that particular attention is given to discrimination, equality, equity, for vulnerable groups. These groups include women, minorities, indigenous peoples, traditional occupational groups and other marginalized and vulnerable groups. An important aspect of the approaches to inclusion is the incorporation of expressed safeguards in development instruments to protect against threats to the rights and the well-being of prisoners, minorities, migrants and other marginalized groups (Morton, 1999). But though these several instruments ensure inclusion, for the development of marginalized groups nevertheless the result has not been achieved so far.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Manta's segregation occurs specifically from two stigmas: First, because of their traditional composition of fishing, women need to work outside of the family together with men. Secondly, though the Manta community is Muslim in religion, they also practice some non-Muslim religious activities, therefore they often worship some natural deities related to the Hindu religion. These are the two unique characteristics of the Manta community that are associated with their livelihood pattern. For the very nature of their traditional occupation the Manta people are a minority in their locality. This uniqueness and specific characteristics of their fishing occupation are despised and denigrated by the mainstream Muslim community. In a certain respect these social stigmas put them in a ruthlessly inhumanitarian situation, Therefore, the Manta's social exclusion is expressed two ways: First, the social prejudices of mainstream Muslim community and secondly, the extreme poverty of the community. These two realities combine with each other to make the community vulnerable and continually keeps them apart from the essential economic, political, social, and other institutional rights.

These particular socio-cultural constructions and livelihood conditions of the Manta community shape the way of their life, thoughts, their interactions with other people. It defines their social status in a stratified Muslim rural society, determines women's position, and creates their values and their perception of rights. In a traditional rural community with acute poverty and a different social and cultural index, the Manta's perception and understanding of rights is totally different. This understanding and perception regarding rights is very much related with their livelihood conditions. Therefore their basic need for survival, freedom from poverty and social recognition are how they discern and understand their rights. The Manta people clarify and categorise these rights, namely *Haque*, *Dabi* and *Pauna* rights, according to their wants, and the priority of needs. This categorization also reflects their level of understanding regarding rights, access to institutions and information. It also reflects that due to generation-long

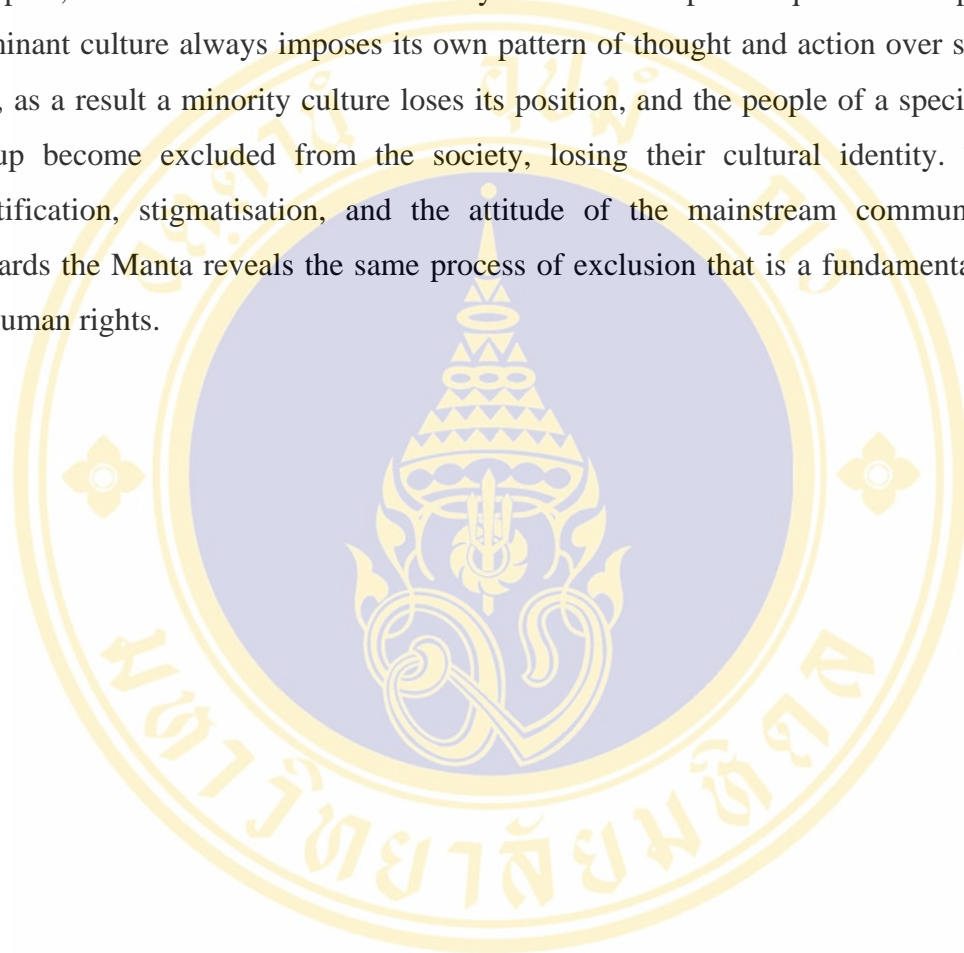
exclusion and deprivations they have lost the ability to think of those opportunities as rights, which are not directly related to their survival.

The social stigmas and prejudice, work as a major cause for the social exclusion of the Manta community. The violation of *Purdah* and the label of *Bedhormi* work as a powerful means of segregation against them everywhere in the locality and this segregation composes their collective vulnerability and inability to demand their rights, and as a result, they are denied the three categories of essential rights which they defined. This collective vulnerability is the root cause of their overall exclusion.

On one hand Manta people are systematically left out of the society but, on the other hand, some influences of mainstream culture have a negative impact on the Manta culture. The polygamous marriage, dowry, division of labour between men and women, and exclusive male ownership of property enforces the deteriorating situation of the Manta's culture. They suffer a state of exclusion not only from the greater society, but also from their own social and cultural heritage.

This research was undertaken during the time when Bangladesh had achieved significant success in poverty alleviation. However, notwithstanding the modest decline in poverty levels over the three decades, this kind of study shows that poverty remains overwhelmingly the most important challenge. The development initiatives still suffer from policy concerns. In Galachipa Thana the government and some NGOs address this issue from an income-dimension of poverty. Their target groups are only those people whose poverty or vulnerability is directly related to income factors. Yet, a large number of people like the Manta are excluded not only by the economic dimension but also by a non-income dimension, which is equally important for their poverty and social exclusion. The access of the Manta community to the right of livelihood and other essential rights has been denied and this denial has long historical roots. The Manta who once led an easy life are now socially excluded by social restrictions and stigmas. As a result of segregation from all spheres of life they are gradually losing their cultural rights. The focus of development should shift to the analysis of exclusion and the poverty processes to better assist groups such as the Manta.

The perception of rights, prioritisation of those rights, social structure, interactions, religious values, the values of women's work, customs and laws of the Manta community are constructed from the material and mental means of livelihood, namely the fishing. So fishing is their cultural right. In most cases all over the world, addressing cultural rights is complex, because culture has historically been bound up with questions of power. The dominant culture always imposes its own pattern of thought and action over subcultures, and, as a result a minority culture loses its position, and the people of a specific cultural group become excluded from the society, losing their cultural identity. The social stratification, stigmatisation, and the attitude of the mainstream community people towards the Manta reveals the same process of exclusion that is a fundamental violation of human rights.



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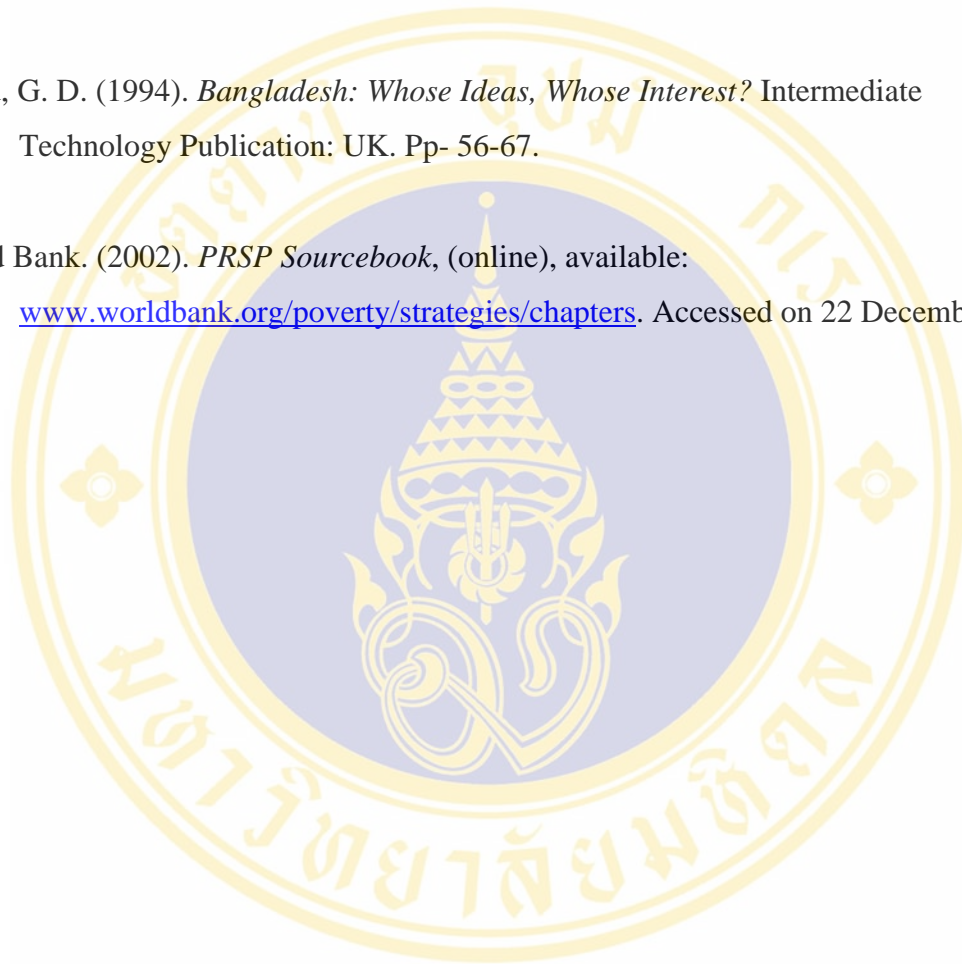
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**Table-1****List of Manta Interviewees (Purba Dacua Bahar).**

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Social group	Place and date of Interview
Motahar Kha	60	Male	Fishing	Manta	PurbaDacua,Galacha chipa, 27/03/2003
Sufia Bibi	22	Female	Fishing	Manta	PurbaDacua,Galacha chipa, 27/03/2003
Sohorab Haulader	30	Male	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003
Joygun Bibi	45	Female	Fishing		Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003
Chandana Bibi	30	Female	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003
Chunnu Mia	40	Male	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003
Baby Bibi	17	Female	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003
Joyal Kha	40	Male	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacua, Glachipa, 27/03/2003
Nurul Islam Sikder	25	Male	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacuc, Galachipa, 27/03/2003
Azibunissa (Widow)	45	Female	Fishing	Manta	Purba Dacua, Galachipa, 27/03/2003

**Table-2****List of Manta Interviewees (Naya Bari Bahar).**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Social group</b>	<b>Place and date of Interview</b>
Aainali Matobber (Headman)	85	Male	Fishing	Manta	Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa, 28/03/2003
Rawsanara Begom. (Widow)	40	Female	Fishing	Manta	Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa, 28/03/2003
Rawshona	26	Female	Fishing	Manta	Naya BarBahar, Galachipa, 28/03/2003
Shukur Ali	38	Male	Fishing	Manta	Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa, 30/03/2003
Mongoli Bibi (Separated from Husband)	35	Female	Fishing	Manta	Naya Bari Bahar, Galachipa, 28/03/2003

**Table-3****List of Manta Interviewees (Panpatti Bahar).**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Social group</b>	<b>Place and date of Interview</b>
Alia Bibi	40	Female	Fishing	Manta	Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa, 02/04/2003
Habib Matbor	50	Male	Fishing	Manta	Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa, 02/04/2003
Abdur Razzak	32	Male	Fishing	Manta	Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa, 02/04/2003
Sukkur Ali Sarder	37	Male	Fishing	Manta	Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa, 30/03/2003
Bakan Sarder	59	Male	Fishing	Manta	Panpatti Bahar, Galachipa, 02/04/2003

**Table-4****List of the Non-Manta Interviewees.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Social group</b>	<b>Place and date of Interview</b>
Sankarlal Shah	40	Male	Journalist	Bangali Mainstream Muslim	Galachipa Sadar, 28/03/2003 and 01/04/2003
Fazal Ahmed	46	Male	Teacher	Bangali Mainstream Muslim	Panpatti Primary School 03/04/2003
Sharif Ahmed Sikder	35	Male	Fisheries Officer	Bangali Mainstream Muslim	Golachipa Sadar, 04/04/2003
TNO (Requested Confidentiality)	40	Male	Thana Nirbahi Officer	Bangali Mainstream Muslim	TNO office, Galachipa. 30/03/2003
Ranjit Mallik	33	Male	NGO people (SAP)	Bangali Mainstream Muslim	Adalat Para, Galachipa, 04/04/2003
A.C land Officer (Requested Confidentiality)	34	Male	A.C land Officer	Bangali Mainstream Muslim	TNO office, Galachipa. 30/03/2003



**APPENDIX B**

## **Interview Topics: Questionnaire**

Knowledgeable representatives of “Manta” family groups and community were interviewed using open-ended interview topics. The interview topics covered areas appropriate to attaining the objective and hypothesis of the study. The following questions are the total number of questions asked; however, not each group was asked all these questions. These questions were prepared during the field research as they were during the interviews according to the objectives of the interviews. The major interview topics are:

### **How the “Manta” community understands rights and entitlements.**

1. What do you think is a right?
2. Among these rights, which do you consider the most important and why?
3. Would you explain more about these rights?
4. Why are Fishing and Land rights the most important?
5. You are saying that land rights and fishing rights are your Hague, but don't you think that other opportunities say as, health, vote, government relief etc are not your rights?
6. Then why health right, voting right, government facilities and relief your consider as Dabi?
7. Do you think is that the Manta community is in vulnerable situation because of not getting facilities and rights?

### **Why the “Manta” community is not getting the social facilities or getting less compared with other local communities.**

1. Are you getting necessary government and social facilities?
2. Mention some government facilities that you consider as your rights.
3. Why are Manta people not getting facilities?
4. Are other communities of the locality getting those rights, if they are then why?
5. Do you think poverty is the only one obstacle?

6. Why do people hate you as Babijja?
7. What causes the differences so that Manta people are not getting the rights that the other communities are getting?

**What particular social and cultural constructions of “Manta” community act as major constrains to the incorporation within the greater community? What do other people think about the “Manta” community.**

1. What are the social and cultural differences between Manta and non- Manta people?
2. Does the Manta community perform any particular, special or unique social and cultural activity or ceremony? What are those? How do local people treat these activities? Do they cooperate with these occasions? If not, why?
3. Are these differences making any social problem? If so, what kind?
4. Manta women are working outside simultaneously with men – to extent does this situation creating social problem?
5. Do the Manta women only face this problem or is it a problem for whole community?
6. Do you think these problems and the particular social structure of Manta community is one of the major factors to not achieving the rights?
7. Do you have any exchange of marriage with non-Manta or other community people? If no why? What are the hindrances?
8. What are the other Aapobad you face?
9. Do you think if you become rich how will other people treat you?
10. Are Gawsa people getting Sanman from other people?
11. Why cannot Gerosto people let their daughters marry with Manta?
12. How do the Gawsa people behave towards you?
13. Do Manta people participate in all social and cultural activities of the community?  
If not, then what are the causes?

**How access is being denied by the process of exclusion, more specifically the entitlement of land, voting rights, access to health facilities, participation of local**

**governmental activities, access to education, access to market, access to information etc.**

**(Land and voting right)**

1. Say details about the land problem that Manta community faces.
2. Why do you think having Land rights is your prime need?
3. Why are you not getting entitlement of government “Khas” land?
4. Have you ever applied for that? If yes, what was the result?
5. Why Manta people are not getting the help of the UP Chairman or Members?
6. Some of Manta people have their home on Khas land. How did it become possible?
7. Did you vote last election? If no, why?
8. Why is most of the Manta people non-voter?
9. Have you ever applied for voter registration? If not why and if so, what was the result?

**(Health and education)**

1. Where do you get treatment when you are sick?
2. Why do most of Manta people go to the Kabiraj or Fakir, or dispensary rather than going to the government hospital?
3. What kind of discrimination do you face from the government hospital and why?
4. There are many government health promotion activities, say free family planning advocacy, mother and child health programme, the immunization programme of children etc. Do you know about this? If yes, have you ever used these facilities? If no, what are the reasons?
5. Do you have any idea about the birth registration of your children? If no why?
6. Do your children go to school? If no what are the problems?
7. Do you know about the free primary education programme or NFPE of the government?

**(Income Earning Activities)**

1. How do you fish?
2. How do you manage capital to have these instruments?
3. Are these Sabar sufficient for fishing?
4. What are the problems that you face for fishing?
5. What are the problems with the loans that you are getting from “Mohajon” (middle man)? Why you are taking loans from mohajon in spite of so many problems?
6. Do you have any opportunity to have a loan from Government bank, like other communities who have that opportunity?
7. Why are these people are getting the opportunity and the Manta is not?
8. Is fishing sufficient for your livelihood?
9. Where do you sell fish?
10. Do you have access to go to market for sale?
11. Do you get a good price for your fish?
12. Do you know about the government fisheries office?
13. What do they do for you?
14. What are the other problems with this livelihood?

**(Information about Natural calamity)**

1. When you fish in the deep river, how do you get weather forecast?
2. How do you know or decide that the weather will turn bad?
3. What do you do then?

**(Other institutional opportunities)**

1. Have you any idea about the population census?
2. Had any government officer ever came to enlist your name in that census?
3. Why you are always not listed on the population census?
4. Have you ever been enlisted in any government development scheme?
5. Have you ever participated in any union parishad (lowest unite of local government) activities? If no why?
6. Where do you get your nationality certificate if needed?

7. Is there any discrimination you observed between you and non-Manta people seeking certificates from UP? Why this discrimination?
8. When you go to any government office, how do the officers and people behave with you?
9. Have you any idea what is an NGO?
10. In this locality several NGOs are working. Have you got any help from them?

### **Information regarding Thana (Police Station) and judicial system**

1. When any feud arises between Manta individuals or between groups how do you solve this?
2. Do you go to Thana or court for your internal group feud?
3. What do you do when a feud arises between Manta and non-Manta people?
4. Why don't you go to Thana or court for justice?
5. Do you get justice from Shalish?
6. Why Shalish people take the side of Grihosto people?

### **Identify segregation and the denial of rights (intra-community) regarding gender; what is the role of women in the “Manta” community, and vulnerabilities of age and mobility.**

1. What do Manta women do in the family and fishing?
2. Do they have any special work regarding fishing?
3. Is there any discrimination in the household, or basically who hold the authority in family? And why?
4. Who makes the major decisions of family?
5. Who owns the property?
6. Do you think men are enjoying more authority or liberty than women though both are working simultaneously? If so why?
7. At what age does a Manta girl get marry?
8. Why do you arrange early marriages for girls?
9. Do you need to pay dowry?
10. Does the husband seek permission from the wife if he intends to marry again?  
What do you do if your husband will marry again without your permission?

11. Why is Polygamy increasing?
12. Do you know about the marriage registration? Where do you get married?
13. Does Manta female face any harassment by non-Manta people as they work outside? If so why and what kinds?
14. Do you face any other social problem regarding adolescent girls of the community?

### **Interview of the non-Manta people**

The Manta identified several institutions important to fulfill their rights. Representatives from these institutions were interviewed. Interview topics on selected problems were fixed after interviewing the Manta people. These questions emphasize the institutional and administrative problems that are being raised by the Manta people.

#### **Thana AC land office:**

1. What do you know about the Manta community?
2. Who are the landless people eligible to get Khas land?
3. Manta people are not getting Khas land even though they are landless, but as you said Manta community is not identified as landless, can you brief me why?

#### **Thana Health complex:**

1. What do you know about Manta community?
2. Do they come to the health complex for treatment?
3. Most of them rely on the local dispensary and traditional healers rather than coming to hospital, what do you think about this situation?
4. Some people say the health complex is short of necessary medicines, doctors are being absent and the staffs demand illegal money for medicine from the Manta people – what do you think about this?
5. Manta people say they are not getting other health facilities such as free contraceptives, essential immunization facilities of children, and no health officer visits the community- what is the exact situation?

**Primary education: (interview conducted with 3 primary schools of the three localities)**

1. How many Manta children get admitted in your school?
2. Why do the Manta children not take admission in school?
3. Most of the Manta people do not know about the compulsory primary education programme- why do they not know? Have you taken any initiative regarding this issue?
4. The Manta is a highly mobile community and have you any special thinking for the education of the children?

**Fisheries office**

1. Which communities are enlisted as fisherman with this office?
2. What does this office do for the promotion of fishing?
3. What benefits the Manta community gets from this office?

Manta people say they do not get any help from this office, and all benefits go to the big fishermen – what do you think about this?

**Thana police office and court office:**

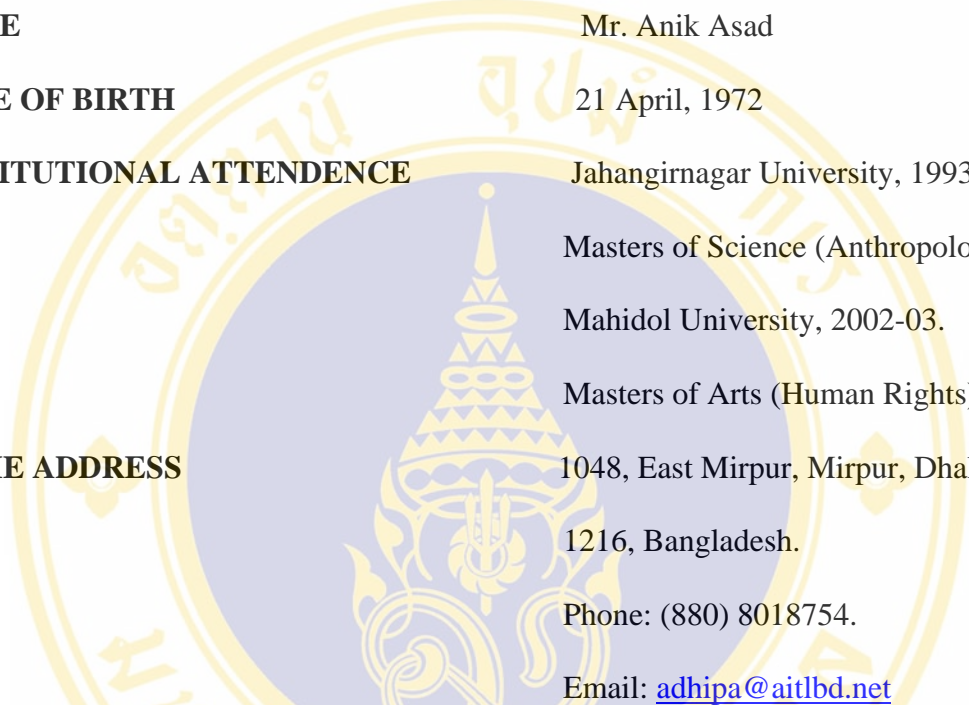
1. What you think/know about the Manta community?
2. Do they come to Thana if any problem arises?
3. Do Thana representatives go to the Manta community if any feud or problem arises?
4. Most of the time the Manta avoid Thana/police/court if any problem arises? Why?
5. Manta follows traditional headman system for the settlement of feud among themselves, why they do not come to Thana or court for their problem?
6. The Manta says the police take advantage and demand bribes, and most of the time show biasness to non-Manta people. Do you agree?

**NGOs (three NGOs area officer have been interviewed. Priority has been given to those who are most prominent and working with grass root level people for several years)**

1. What kind of development programmes are you running?
2. Who are the target groups of these programmes?
3. What do you think about Manta people?
4. Do you have any programme especially for Manta community, as they are highly mobile group?
5. No Manta community has ever been a target group for the development programme by NGOs, why?



## BIOGRAPHY



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