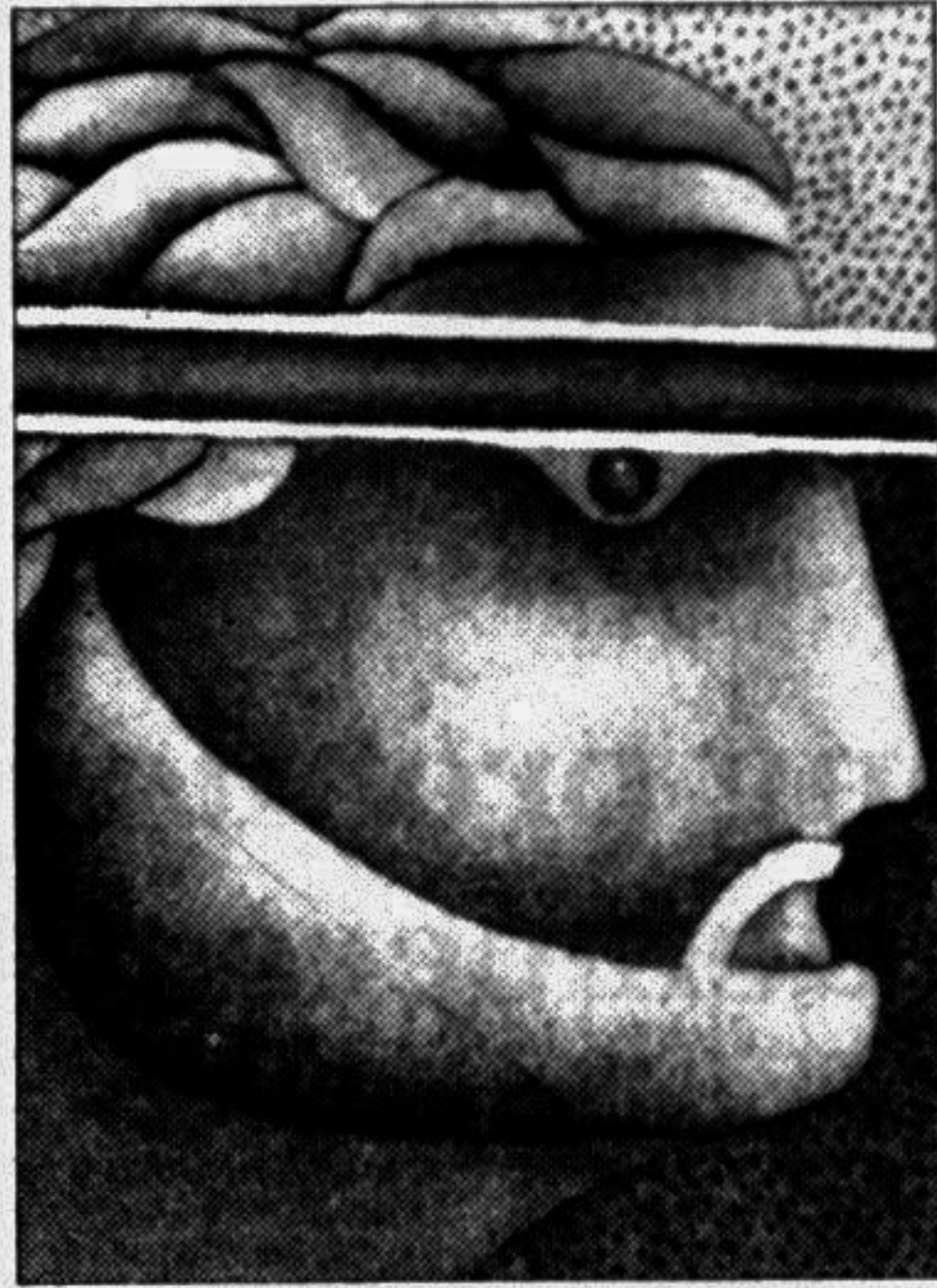


## art Goutam's Homage to Our Liberation War

by Syed Manzoorul Islam

**M**INIATURE painting is something else. It is not, as is popularly believed, a miniature version of a "standard sized" painting — everything remaining in the same while the scale gets diminished, and so on. Miniature painting rather has to do with choosing a limited space to work on and going for compactness, while the vision adjusts itself to a more intense expression. It is more an exercise in intensity than miniaturization. Sometimes, a miniature painting, ironically, expands our vision — as in Goutam Chakraborty's miniature, particularly the series he has titled *The Red Hot Iron Bar* — since the compactness with which he accommodates an emerging vision, a history or legend only challenges our ability to interpret them



in the light of our experience. *The Red Hot Iron Bar* takes as its theme nothing less than the war of liberation whose dimensions are epical and timeless. Yet, they are accommodated within the space of a few square inches. As we look at the paintings we are devastated, saddened, elated, or inspired — and all these emotions interact to expand the range of our experience. For a good many of us, it is revisiting a time that was, to use a Dickensian description, the best and the worst of times, but for Goutam and the young men and women of his generation, it is a reconstructed trip to a history which will forever inspire them. Goutam was too small to remember anything of the war, except may be a vague recollection of a fear or a shock. But he has seen Jahanara Imam, and has shared her dream and her vision of a Bangladesh where war criminals and the merchants of death would not roam the street free, taunting our

independence and the liberation war itself. Goutam has also felt mother Teresa's compassionate hands reaching across borders of human misery and heal the wounds of a traumatized people. He mixes up their vision with his reconstruction of war and comes up with splendid works that recreate the turbulent time and beyond in poignant details.

These miniatures, twelve in number, were meant to be a year round tribute to the war of liberation — each for a month, and would be ideal material for a calendar.

Their appeal lies in their emotive composition, their sense of history, tragedy and pride. The series opens with an eye — the eye of history or destiny, and ends with a tribute to Jahanara Imam, the eternal mother who best captured the spirit of our liberation war.

An interesting aspect of Goutam's series is the presence of a red hot iron bar across each composition, sometimes straight but often bent. This iron bar is his symbol of the state of mind of the Bengalees in 1970 and 1971 — burning intensely with a red glow, hot and glowing, ready to be bent into any shape. The war was the shaping agent and when the bar cooled off it became hard, like the erect spinal card of the people. The paintings themselves however show the bar in its red hot state — and apparently it creates such a contrast with the pregnant figure, with the three women who had lost their honor during the war but not their dream, with Mother Teresa who is grace itself with a human face. But ultimately the bar is not really a contrast — it is a part of the whole structure of the Bengali nation. It is the essential element of its composition.

The twelve paintings contain some of

the favourite images and motifs of Goutam — the banana leaves, elephant trunks and legs, faceless figures. They combine in newer configuration, however, in keeping with the leading themes and concern. The same colours predominate — green purple, blue; only here they are highlighted because of Goutam's treatment of space. In these twelve paintings, he leaves some white, empty space around the edges. This white space draws attention to the figures and images, perhaps because of their blankness.

It is a refreshing experience to look at Goutam's *The Red Hot Iron Bar* paintings, but reassuring too. For, one realizes that emotion remains, memories remain even after such a lapse of time; therefore the earlier expectation, the dreams and visions — they too, remain. And we can go on building on these dreams and memories.

## music A Journey with Stringed Instruments

by Fayza Haq

**S**TEVE Hancoff and Buddy Wachter, who presented their music with historical vignettes about the lives and times of America's greatest musical legends at the National Museum Auditorium, chatted with me over breakfast at a Banani guest house.

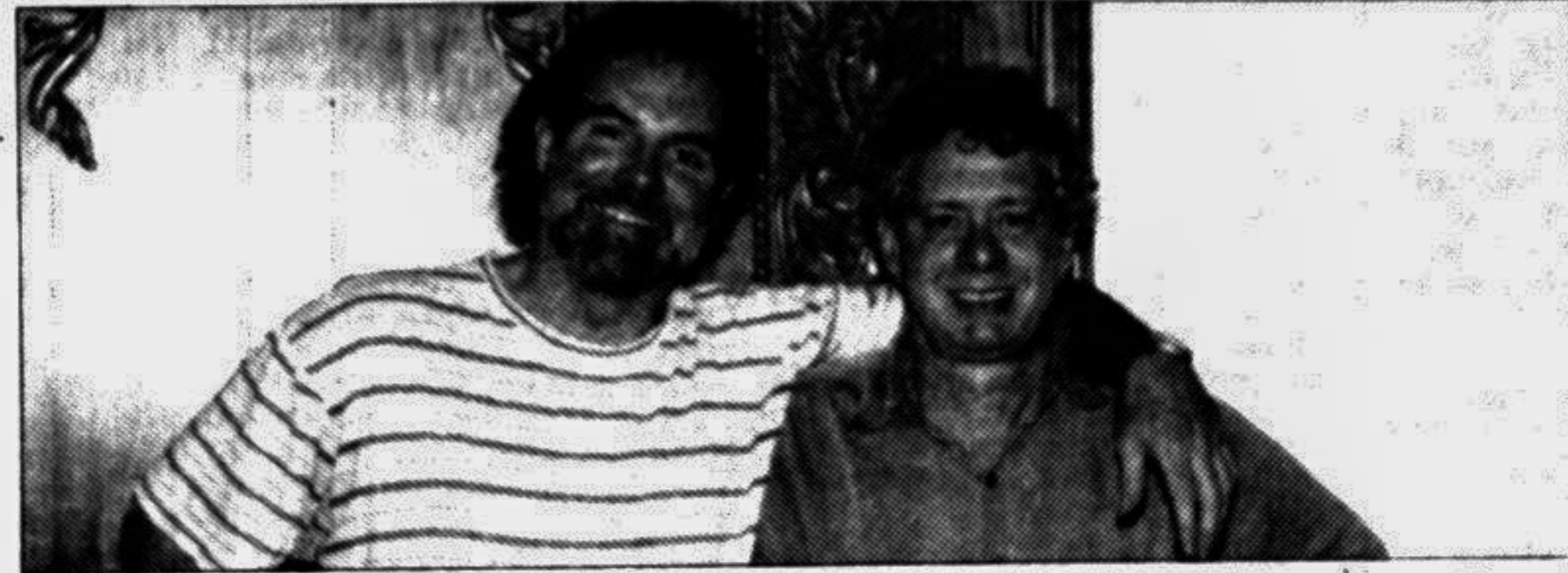
Steve says, "I'm playing the acoustic guitar which is different from the Spanish guitar and the Hawaiian guitar. The guitar goes back thousands of years to the lute among the Greeks and the oud in the Arab world. In the United States, about a hundred and fifty years ago, we developed the acoustic guitar whose neck is narrow and whose strings are closer together. The strings are not made of gut or nylon but of steel. It is from this that eventually the electric guitar came. The steel strings are louder and sweeter and better for accompanying a singing voice. It swings more. It can also be heard better in a crowd. I fell in love with it as a child and I've kept playing it."

Asked what type of music he likes to play, Steve says, "I begin my practice every day with 45 minutes of Bach. I love to play folk music, authentic jazz and swing. I like to 'mess around' with anything I hear, such as Arab music and ragas."

Dwelling on whether eastern and western music could be combined, Steve says, "They can be combined but they develop separately. Eastern music, to my ears, copies the human voice. Western music is more technical. East-

ern music plays the same melody as the voice or a note called the drone. In western music a second and a third melody are added, which is called polyphony which later developed into harmony. Eastern music is entirely the expression of the heart. Western music is more the expression of the mind. I feel eastern music is very powerful and spiritual. We played with a group that is the descendant of Fatch Ali Khan in Pakistan, and I felt that the music entered the body right through our chest."

Buddy, giving his opinion of eastern music, says, "I've been studying the sitar. The motives behind eastern and western music are different. The drive behind eastern music is a spiritual awakening. For the listener it is more of a cosmic voyage, in which you can find parts of yourself that you haven't seen. Western music is more intellectual in the way it is structured. When I listen to sitar and tabla I don't think. I just go into a spiritual voyage. The music takes you to another place. This does not happen with western music. The potential in eastern music is literally to transcend one's spiritual sense of self. Western music is not similarly spiritually evocative. In the east the music goes back to at least three thousand years. Western music is constantly evolving and mutating. In traditionally jazz, swing and be-bop music is constantly branching off into new forms whereas in eastern music there is a strong commitment to preserving the tradition. There are rules that you must follow. The music does not evolve. It simply is, and within certain set of perimeters you



Buddy Wachter and Steve Hancoff standing at their guest house at Banani

play with it. I have been acquainted with Indian classical music for twenty years. I enjoy Indian classical music which is like a journey in which I find new parts of myself."

Steve did some teaching as it is difficult to earn a living just as a concert player. "I needed a job so I took up teaching", he says. Steve combines his playing with his career as a psycho-therapist.

What attracted Steve to the guitar? "When I was 13 years old I went to a concert of a group called 'The Weavers'. The leader was Pete Seeger. This was in 1961 and it was folk music. I went out the next day and bought a \$15 guitar and one 'Weavers' record. I sat down with this record for a couple of months and tried to make my playing like this record. That's how I started. I don't think I've mastered the instrument as yet. I think I'll be satisfied with my playing only in the next life time. There is no end to learning. It is the easiest instrument in the world to play poorly

and the most difficult instrument to play great," Steve replies.

Asked to name some of his favourite guitarist, Steve says, "The greatest of jazz guitarist was Django Reinhardt, who was a gypsy from Belgium. He had an injury so that he only had three fingers on his left hand. Andres Segovia was the grandfather of the modern classical guitar. John Williams is another classical guitarist."

Steve informs me that the duo has played in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and India, giving 30 to 35 concerts. Steve and Buddy not only performed on their own but played with the musicians of the Middle East and South Asia.

With the influx of video music and rock concerts where does their type of concert stand? To this Steve comments, "We do everything that you will not see on MTV. We do not play electrical instruments. We are putting forth a programme that gives people a chance to

hear the roots of our music. The United States is an experiment: it's a new country. Bangladesh is a new country too but people have been here for thousands of years. People in United States came from all over the world. Each group had a contribution to make to folk music which is the beginning of rag time jazz, blues and pop music." To this Buddy adds, "Success in music in times gone by used to be based on talent and ability. Take a writer who is not very good. You syndicate him and he is all over the world. He is horrible but people read him everyday and everybody loves him. This is exactly what happens in music. In MTV there are a bunch of men who are peddling what will easily sell. Meanwhile, the really talented people you don't even hear of. A lot of what you see and hear is 'garbage' but popular. America has a large array of music: jazz, country and western music, concert music, and folk music but you don't see this on TV, sitting at home. Commercial music does not always present this. For our type of concert music we have a regular audience. My commitment is to understand my own instrument and having a grasp of all types of music. A good musician plays everything. I play serious classical music, old jazz, new jazz, and country music. I bring the instrument to the world."

Buddy has been playing since he was nine years old and Steve since he was 13. They have each been playing for 30 to 40 years. Steve is 49 while Buddy is 44.

The banjo goes back hundreds of

years to Africa and was brought to the United States by slaves in the 1600s and 1700s. It has now developed into something sophisticated with steel on it. The banjo is similar to the guitar as it works with strings only it is louder. The two sounds of the guitar and banjo blend very well. It is like the blending of the sarodh and sitar. The banjo is popular in traditional jazz, blue grass music, and country music. In the United States one in every 200 persons plays the banjo." Buddy adds about his musical instrument.

Steve and Buddy came together about five years ago. Neither Steve nor Buddy studied music formally. Buddy studied chemical engineering but today he plays in concerts. They both practice for six hours for six days a week. What is more fun for them is developing new music.

Steve's approach is to translate the rhythms and polyphonies of band jazz into the techniques of the guitar. Steve has performed all over the United States, South America and Europe. He has recorded two LPs and two CDs and is currently working on a CD of Duke Ellington's music.

Buddy has brought the banjo, America's native instrument, to the world's concert stages with unprecedented virtuosity. He has given more than 2,500 performances to audiences in 27 countries, performing a variety of musical styles from jazz to pop, as well as his own adaptations of virtuoso classical works. He has five solo recordings and has appeared on 18 others.

## book review

### Infusing Legal Awareness Among the BRAC Members

by Monirul Khan

**T**HAT rural poor are defenseless in Bangladesh is not a fact one may label unique. The insecurity of the poor we are talking about is rooted in social structure. Their economic uncertainty is perpetual hovering day and night, political and cultural deprivation are institutional reflected in their absence from the coveted spaces like *salish* (village court), union *parishad* (local level elected body) or the high school's class room. This would be too simplistic to assign poverty the singular casual status for the suffering of the poor. Whatever the causal complexity, the end of this predicament was extremely needed. This call was resonated by a host of developmental organisation in Bangladesh including BRAC. This was a multi-pronged effort by BRAC linking the efforts of the poor. One may call it a package too. The report reviewed here focused on one aspect of this package — the Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE). Its title is *Impact Assessment of BRAC's Human Rights and Legal Education Training*. The joint authors are Mohammad Rafi, David Hulme, Shah Asad Ahmed and Nurul Amin and very recently published by Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC. This bears a special feature what one should mention. It deals at length with the HRLE training and its effect at different levels. The combination is somewhat noteworthy. The impact study has been done by the Research and Evaluation Division of BRAC. In other words it also indicates BRAC's concern to learn about

the efficacy of its programme. One may assume that the outcome of the report is important for BRAC particularly to strengthen its strategy and programme.

Let's turn our attention to the report. This study is a step to answering the question, what is the impact of training on BRAC programs and its recipients. There is more to it and the results of a detailed investigation of Human Rights and Legal Education is embodied here.

The issue of human rights is something beset with social confrontation and conflicts. Why so? Largely owing to the lopsided nature of social structure. BRAC intends to infuse awareness among the rural poor about certain aspects of their existence — human and legal rights. And to that end the HRLE. Those who have some knowledge about the activities of non-governmental organisations in rural Bangladesh already know it that it is diverse and wide-ranging with the fundamental goal of creating enabling environment for the poor. For example, BRAC's intervention package includes income generating and life skill development activities, non-formal education programme, health and hygiene education, sanitation programme apart from human rights programme.

The rural poor who are organised by BRAC through Village Organisations (VO) are taught on Citizen's Right Protection Law, Muslim Family Law, Muslim Inheritance Law as well as Land Law. From the very theme it is apparent why these are chosen. Authors say in this respect, The HRLE program was implemented because BRAC observed that the poor in the village are not aware of their rights. This ignorance al-

lowed the rich to exploit them. Verbal divorce, dowry, child marriage, cheating land, *salish* verdict are the instances of social injustices against the poor. The poor are defenseless against these atrocities, what is needed is their own resistance. HRLE is a step towards that goal.

How useful what is delivered as HRLE 'cascade'? This study dwells on this pertinent question. Hence the investigation. As a part of BRAC's larger training program HRLE is operated. It engages trainers, Shebok/Shebika and the rural poor. This is a sort of chain, progresses step by step requiring proper synchronising. CDM (Centre for Development Management), TARC (Training and Resource Centre) and RDP (Rural Development Programme) area office are the individual layers of the 'cascade' delivering HRLE training. What was needed for this study was to design an appropriate methodology to review training impact. It chose four issues to assess the outcome of the training: (1) the extent of training; (2) the execution of training; (3) the content of training; (4) the impact of training. HRLE's ultimate clients are VO members but it goes through CDM trainers and Shebok/Shebika.

The report consists of eight separate chapters, case studies and other supporting information. Chapter two and three incorporate methodology and study design. Four and five, a review of the training impact imparted to the HRLE trainers and Shebok/Shebika. Training given to the poor members is in chapter six. Chapter eight incorporates the results of a comparison be-

tween the poor people with and without training.

One important query this study made was what changes or no changes wrought to the KSABO of the poor by HRLE training. KSABO stands for alphabetically, knowledge, skill, attitude, behaviour and organisation. Employing a set of qualitative and quantitative research techniques this was ascertained. Information were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Analytical model included experimental and control groups. Trainees at different levels and VO members with different background were subject to examination. Male and female, altogether there were 253 respondents.

Efficacy of the trainers training was examined by looking into training hours, training process, environment and performance. The evaluation ended with positive notes in most cases. For example, the proportion of correct answers in the post-training test was 83% compared to 3% in the pre-training test.

The training for Shebok/Shebika is important from the point of view that it is they who impart knowledge on human rights and laws to the rural poor. Their training is exhaustive consisting of four parts with theoretical and practical sessions. Both the training process and environment were reported satisfactory. Impact of the training for Shebok/Shebika was examined by different laws taught to them. They gained significantly from the training except the laws on land. However, gender differential was reported to exist with a male bias with regard to prior knowledge and gain from the training.

What motivated the rural poor to

take part in HRLE training? Acquiring legal knowledge surfaced as a significant motivator. Time spent on different parts of the curriculum was more or less evenly distributed. However, with regard to training environment discipline was not adequately found. Muslim Family Law and Land Law drew BRAC members' attention most. On the other hand, Muslim Family Law was not always easily understood by them. Such partly went for Land Law too. One thing was significant that the prior knowledge of the trainees was considerable. Of course, training raised the level of legal knowledge of the BRAC members.

How effective the legal education was? It was probed by comparing rural people with and without any exposure to legal knowledge training. It revealed significant difference. For example, the proportions were 81% and 40% respectively with regard to the mean test scores between the groups with and without training. But the fresh trainees were found to retain more knowledge than the trainees trained in the past. Authors contended that the best assessment of the training would be derived from the actions. BRAC members who received training resisted injustices against them in society. They fought against the trivial way divorce takes place. Multiple marriages, oppressive dowry or the harassment of the police were not gone unchallenged by the BRAC members. Nevertheless, the situation is more complex than it is perceived. A BRAC member in one case was inspired to challenge the oppression to her by her husband. She went to court to seek justice. The elite of her society estranged her because her husband

took her back after verbal divorce without complying with the norm of society what required another marriage and subsequent divorce of that woman. Her fellow BRAC members did not dare to interact with her but many people who never received any legal training sided with the poor woman. In another case the village court or *salish* stood behind an oppressed BRAC member in a dispute although they did not have any formal legal training. This is the manifestation of folk morality which did not grow out of some formal legal framework rather of social practices.

A set of very useful suggestions and recommendations came up what BRAC should take seriously, but it also calls for more in-depth investigation into the social situations what actually determines the course of social injustices. This is not only legal knowledge that matters to resist injustices against the poor and deprived. Societal values, power structure and economic situation largely determines the responses of the people to a certain moral and legal issue. To go beyond training what would be needed is a vigorous social campaign and movement.

Impact Assessment of BRAC's Human Rights and Legal Education Training

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