

The Story Of Abu

- From *A quiet violence*, by Besty Hartman and James Boyce, 1983.
- A quasi-journalistic account by two economists of life in rural Bangladesh, circa, 1975.
- These were the worst years in the history of Bangladesh. Things have gone much better since.
- This is story of one peasant family.

The First Visit

- Abu is sick. He has not been able to work for the last three weeks.
- His children are hungry.
- His oldest daughter, who is still a child, is the only earner in the family. She gets $\frac{1}{4}$ kilo of rice for husking rice all day.
- Abu cannot afford the Rs.100 (\$6 or so) that he needs to pay a doctor

The past

- Abu used to have enough land to live on, but he needed money to take care of his mother who was sick, and sold some of the land.
- She died any way.
- They had a number of children and the land they had was no longer enough to feed everyone
- When there was no food, they borrowed from the money lender at very high rates, which ate into their future income
- Abu started working for a landlord who gives one meal and 1.25 kilos of rice a day.
- He could sharecrop and get to keep half of what he grows but he gets it after the harvest and in the meanwhile they starve. Also renting a plough-team costs 2 days labor/day.
- He had to mortgage more land to his landlord.

The future

- At the first visit they are still optimistic.
- Abu had planted a jackfruit tree four years ago
- In a couple of years it will yield fruits that can be sold and bring in good money.

The second visit

- Abu has sold land to pay the doctor.
- His wife has no work.
- In the lean season he cannot find work either, so they are starving.
- Abu cuts down a jackfruit tree and sells the wood for 25 takas. It never got a chance to bear fruit.