

**THE LAND QUESTION: ASPECTS OF CONTINUITY
AND CHANGE IN THE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE OF
UTTAR-PRADESH**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**The Land Question: Aspects Of Continuity And Change In The Agrarian Structure Of Uttar-Pradesh**”, submitted by **Ms. Shilpy Nagalia** is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or other university and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


for **PROF. C.P. CHANDRASHEKHAR**
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INTRODUCTION

The past decade or so has witnessed a deepening, pervasive agrarian crisis in India. In the past few years, farmer's suicides across regions have reached alarming levels. Even an agriculturally most developed state like Punjab with strong inter-sectoral linkages, unhindered capital flows into agriculture and well developed agricultural infrastructure is in crisis. Productivity and growth are stagnant while indebtedness is rising with a number of farmer suicides being reported. If the most agriculturally dynamic region like Punjab is in a state of crisis, it is equally true that at another extreme, backward regions like U.P. and Bihar are showing a renewed problem of maintaining livelihoods of farmers and labourers.

The present agrarian crisis compels us to take a fresh look at the land question in India and lends an urgent relevance to the issues involved in this question. This study, examining the trends in agrarian structure in U.P. from colonial times upto the present, will attempt to address some of the issues and questions raised by the current crisis in Indian agriculture.

It must, of course be recognized that there is tremendous heterogeneity in the agrarian structure and relations across India, thereby making it virtually impossible and even unwise to generalize from the study of specific regions. However, this study found the choice of U.P. particularly useful in the present context. Uttar-Pradesh, not only is a predominantly agrarian economy accounting for a significant share in India's agricultural production, especially of foodgrains like rice and wheat, but it also offers, within a single state, a view of two major and extremely divergent trends in the pattern of agricultural development. While eastern U.P. allows us to study the trends in a predominantly backward agrarian economy with many feudal, growth-inhibiting features revived briefly by public investment in power, agriculture and allied activities, irrigation etc., Western U.P. offers us a close look at an area benefitting significantly from the "Green Revolution" technology and showing a much stronger tendency of capitalist development in agriculture. Moreover, the agrarian economy of U.P. specifically, has received relatively less scholarly attention. This dissertation attempts to take a step in the direction of a systematic study and discussion of this area.

This dissertation attempts to examine the aspects of continuity and change in the agrarian structure of U.P. from colonial rule upto the present.

The first chapter discusses the colonial exploitation of India's agrarian economy and the far-reaching consequences it had for Indian agriculture. It specifically studies the nature of colonial land revenue settlements introduced in various parts of the country and the resultant agrarian structure and relations.

The second chapter examines the agricultural production and the corresponding agrarian relations in colonial U.P. In the specific context of the predominance of cash crop production and commercialization of agriculture enforced by the colonial rule, we look into the nature and scope of change in the corresponding agrarian relations and the emerging agrarian structure of U.P. on the eve of independence. How far did the techniques of production change or improve under the impact of commercial crop production in U.P. countryside is one of the issues that has been addressed in this chapter.

The third chapter deals with the post-independence period. It attempts to assess the impact of *Zamindari* abolition and land reforms in the specific context of U.P. Examining data on land transfers in the periods preceding as well as following the "Green Revolution", it analyses changes in the agrarian structure in eastern and western U.P. by comparing both regions to identify which sections of farmers emerge as significant buyers of land in the post "Green Revolution" period. Further, this chapter examines the different trajectories of agrarian growth and development in western and eastern U.P. It discusses the favourable impact of the first phase of "Green Revolution" in western U.P. It also discusses the positive role of public investments in the rapid growth recorded in the agrarian economy of eastern U.P. in the nineteen eighties.

The fourth chapter analyses changes in the agrarian structure of U.P. in relation to All-India by looking at certain long-term trends in the pattern of landholdings from nineteen fifties upto the nineties. Specifically, it looks at trends in the pattern of household ownership holdings, operational holdings, pattern of leasing-in, both in U.P. and in India as a whole.

The concluding chapter looks at the overall economic environment for Indian agriculture in the post reforms decade of the nineties. It then goes on to discuss the present slowdown in agricultural production, particularly foodgrains, that has occurred in U.P., explaining the reasons that might account for it.

Throughout this dissertation, an attempt to examine and locate the relevance of the land question, historically as well in the present context, has been a major concern. How far has the colonial impact on land organization and agrarian structure persisted, and how much has it changed? How was the land question addressed in independent India? As the declared objectives of the state increasingly shifted from slogans of ‘zamindari abolition’ and land reforms to the present recommendations to raise the land ceiling, what is the continuing relevance, if any, of the land question? Amongst the various analyses and solutions being proposed to address the present agrarian crisis, does this issue of how to address the land question retain significance?

These are some of the issues, which this dissertation attempts to discuss. Some of the crucial data sources used for this study are the NSS reports on landholdings (ownership as well as operational), the Rural Labour Enquiry, RBI Report on Currency and Finance and Five Year Plan documents. Certain explanations about the data examined are called for. The inadequate and unreliable nature of some of the data, especially on tenancy, compels us to use it cautiously. For instance, the All-India NSS records show an increasing concentration of land ownership and operational holdings in the decade ending in 1991. [Sarvekshana.Oct.-Dec.1995.Pp 61,72,76]. Further, barely 9 percent of the total owned area was ‘reported’ to be leased-in while a mere 5 percent was leased-out. This is however undermined by NSS’ own admission that bulk of the tenancy contracts are unrecorded. The data on land ownership and operation, along with the extent of unregistered tenancy and sharecropping, as well as comparative data on average landsize cultivated by agricultural labour households, all taken together, add a new and necessary dimension to the discussion.

CHAPTER I

The Land Question in India : A Historical Background

The present chapter is an attempt towards understanding the importance of the land question by looking at India's experiences with historical land revenue settlements introduced during the colonial government's regime. It shows how a denial to the tillers of their right over the very lands they till can have disastrous consequences for the bulk of the rural population. This in turn manifests itself, on the one hand, in the growing numbers of the small and marginal cultivators joining the ranks of landless agricultural labourers over time while a frequent recurrence of famines rendering still many more landless and absolutely impoverished on the other.

I. LAND REVENUE SETTLEMENTS IN BRITISH INDIA

With the gradual territorial expansion of the British in India, an assured and a steady supply of revenue resources was needed to preserve the empire thus acquired. Revenue from land being the primary source of state's income in India, formulation of a comprehensive policy of land revenue settlements therefore became the top priority of the imperialists. One thing the British administrators (in the post Warren Hastings era) were sure of was the necessity for a complete overhaul of the existing Indian practice of collecting land revenues. Rejecting the existing practice, which they thought was arbitrary and uncertain, they sought to restore certainty and regularity by introducing a system of permanent and transferable private property rights in land. These property rights vested in a certain class in society were to exist conditional upon the payment of a fixed monetary sum to the state as tax on land (as opposed to the customary tax on the produce of the land). Precisely on which class in society such ownership rights were to be conferred in turn depended on the overall agrarian structure of the area to be assessed.

The total rental of an estate was defined, following the prevalent economic concepts in Britain, as the gross output value less all costs of production and less

return on stock. This rental was to be the source of government's revenue, after allowing the proprietor to retain a portion of the estimated rental. In other words, while a certain part of the surplus produce (the net output over and above wages and normal profits) was to be taxed away by the state, the remaining portion called 'rent' was to be the rightful claim of the landowning class over its property. All this was to be simultaneously accompanied by a strict maintenance of law and order meant primarily to protect such private property rights, which in turn would guarantee a stable and a secured source of revenue from land to the state.

The appropriation of most of the agricultural surplus, was the true motive behind the introduction of all the revenue settlements introduced by the British in India – the Permanent settlement in eastern parts of the country (covering Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa), coastal areas of northern Andhra Pradesh and some parts of modern Uttar Pradesh mainly Banaras districts; *Raiyatwari* settlement introduced in Madras Presidency and the Deccan and finally the *Mahalwari* or the temporary settlement in the Ceded and Conquered Province (modern U.P.), the Greater Punjab, and the Central Provinces (modern M.P.).

The Permanent settlement, introduced first in Bengal in 1793 by Cornwallis, came in as a stiff opposition to the farming system that had prevailed earlier under the East India Company. This was primarily a trading company, which was only interested in short-term profits. It did not bother about the long-term impact of resorting to such practices as public sale of all estates to highest bidders, on agricultural production and revenue collecting capacity of the state. An inevitable outcome of such short term policies inhibiting investments into agricultural lands was the Great Bengal Famine of 1770 in which nearly 50 percent of the agricultural population died of starvation and about 33 percent of the land was rendered waste.¹ The Permanent Settlement was further extended to Bihar and Orissa and finally to Banaras districts in 1795. According to this settlement, private ownership rights in land were granted to the class of landed aristocracy, i.e., the Zamindars in each of

¹ National Commission on Agriculture. 1975. Report of the National Commission on Agriculture. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. p 3.

these areas who in return, had to pay a tax fixed in perpetuity at 91 percent of the estimated rental.² Further, no provisions were laid down for the *raiyyats* for “ the security of the *ryot* was a problem requiring no immediate solution, and any measure that might be necessary could be introduced ‘occasionally as abuses occur’ ”.³ In other words, the landed aristocrat, an intermediary between the state and the immediate cultivator, was the sole proprietor of the land with all the liberty to raise the rents of his estates.

The Permanent settlement not only regularised revenue extraction for the newly establishing colonial British power but also helped them in financing their expenses incurred during various wars and other administrative expenditures. In this regard, it has been reported that of the entire expenditure incurred by the British administrators in India during 1814-15 to 1818-19 i.e., the period when the Maratha wars were being fought, 66 percent was financed out of the gross revenues obtained from Bengal. Further, as much as 44 percent of the entire gross expenditure incurred during this period was paid for out of the Bengal land revenues alone. Not only this, all through the fifteen years from 1795 to 1810, Bengal had shown a surplus while Madras and Bombay had both shown deficits.⁴

Thus Bengal revenues not only helped the British in establishing themselves as a stable political power in large parts of India but very crucially, also provided the British a politically loyal segment from within the local ruling classes.

Temporary settlement, a slight variant of the above *zamindari* settlement of the Bengal type,⁵ was introduced in the northern parts of the country, notably the United Provinces (modern Uttar Pradesh), the Greater Punjab, and the Central Provinces (modern M.P.). It was called *Mahalwari* in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces as the unit of assessment was a ‘mahal’ there. According to this settlement, the revenue demand instead of being fixed in perpetuity was periodically revised upwards every 20-30 years. The northern region of the country was one of the later conquests of the

² Dutt, R.C. , The Economic History of India, Vol. 1 , p. xxiii (Introduction).

³ Guha, Ranajit: A Rule of Property for Bengal, p.126.

⁴ Dutt, R.C. The Economic History of India. Volume 1.

⁵ Patnaik, Utsa. Capitalist Development in Indian Agriculture. 1972.

British, of which Awadh, comprising the districts of Faizabad and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, was the last to be annexed in 1856. By this time, the Maratha wars had long ended and Deccan had already been annexed. Therefore, having consolidated themselves as a political power in India, the British no longer felt a pressing need for securing a stable political base as was the case earlier during the Permanent settlement in Bengal. Therefore, the colonialists could now afford to go in for a settlement whereby they could also appropriate any possible increase in surplus over and above the share of the intermediary. The level at which the initial revenue demand was fixed was so high and rigid that a minimum of one-third or about 40 percent of the *talluqdari* estates changed hands in Northern India. This was equally true of the Permanently settled areas where according to an estimate, between one-third to two-fifths of the old *zamindari* estates had been put up for auction and their land sold owing primarily to the inability of the *zamindars* to meet the high initial assessment of 91 percent of the estimated rental.⁶ However, when faced with the threat from the local ruling classes, the British went in for a policy of appeasement. In Bengal, driven by the political necessity of securing a sound local ally from the ruling classes, they permanently fixed the revenue demand. While years later in Awadh, in the period immediately following the 1857 revolt, they appeased the *talluqdars* through the passing of the Talluqdari Relief Act of 1870.

Raiyatwari, in contrast to the above permanent settlement was however, a direct settlement between the government and the *raiyyat*, thereby eliminating intermediaries in the process.⁷ This was first introduced by Capt. Read in the Baramahal districts in 1792 and subsequently extended by Munro to the whole of Madras Presidency. The *raiyyat* was to be given full proprietary rights in the land he cultivated provided he paid cash payment fixed on land under cultivation. This policy of direct settlement with the *ryots* was however practiced only in areas where there were no *Mirasdars* (holders of hereditary property rights). But, in areas where such

⁶ Patnaik, Utsa. The Long Transition.p. 258.

⁷ Stokes, Eric. The English Utilitarians and India. Pp. 81-93. The main principle behind the abolition of intermediaries was the appropriation of the entire agricultural surplus (including the share of the intermediary) over and above wages and normal profits by the colonial state.

private property rights did exist, notably on the eastern side of the peninsula, the government continued to preserve the agrarian structure as such and made settlements with the *Mirasdars*.⁸ Besides, huge tracts of extremely fertile wastelands, most suitable for cultivation existing in the countryside⁹ were a property of the colonial government. A continuous attempt was made by the government to compel the *ryot* to undertake as much cultivation as possible of not only the land that was allotted to him but also cultivable wastes, which were seen as great sources of potential revenue to the government. Consequently, the amount of revenue to be paid by the *ryot* went up to abnormally high rates¹⁰ and extreme torture was resorted to in its collection. Moreover, relations between the *ryot* and the colonial government were so 'perfectly free' that even after paying exorbitant revenue rates fixed upon the land, the *ryot* neither had the liberty to choose the land he cultivated nor could he give up cultivation altogether and seek alternative employment. Additionally, steps were taken by the government to ensure security of the revenue thus extracted from each cultivator. A system of joint responsibility was introduced according to which failure of revenue payment by any cultivator was to be compensated for by an extra assessment of upto 10 percent imposed on all other *ryots* within the same village.

In short, a settlement whose very essence lay in upholding 'peasant proprietorship' in return for a fixed cash payment on 'his land' under cultivation, was from the very beginning, designed in such a manner that the tiller hardly had any proprietary rights in the land he cultivated. This is more than reflected in his perpetual urge to relinquish 'his land' in search for other inferior lands which, if nothing else, at least had the advantage of being relatively lightly assessed.¹¹ Further, the condition

⁸ Mukherjee, N. *The Raiyatwari system in Madras, 1792-1827*. Pp. 204, 214 – 222.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 256. For e.g., in different parts of the Baramahal district in 1793, it was observed that one-fourth of the total land, most suitable for cultivation lay fallow. See Mukherjee, N. p. 256.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 196. An examination of the *raiayatwari* districts in the first decade of the 19th century clearly brought out the extremely high and unequal rates in almost all the districts of Madras Presidency. This is reflected in the fact that in Dindigul, it nearly doubled the public assessment and in Barandial, it exceeded it by 21 percent.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Pp. 269 –270. Black soil being the finest and therefore being most heavily assessed, no less than 24,751 acres of it in the *taluk* of Gooty had been abandoned. Not an acre of black land had been newly occupied in the *taluk*.

with respect to permanency of state demand was never practiced in reality and remained restricted to theory only.

Similar conditions prevailed in the nineteenth century Deccan, which was also an area under *Raiyatwari* settlement. Whatever little rights the old village community system did reserve for the *kunbis* of Maharashtra were also snatched away from them with the introduction of *raiayatwari* settlement, an inevitable fallout of which was a gradual disintegration of the village community system that had prevailed earlier.¹² Further, the burden of tax borne by the peasantry continuously increased under the new system.¹³

In other words, complete hypocrisy of the repeated claims made by the British administrators in India regarding the settlement being in favour of the *ryots* lay thoroughly exposed. Behind this pro-*ryot* façade lay the real intention of the colonialists to extract as much revenue as possible from the cultivating *ryot* by continuously enhancing assessment rates on land under cultivation.

IMPACT OF BRITISH LAND REVENUE SETTLEMENTS

The land revenue settlements introduced by the British had a profound impact on the agrarian social structure, i.e, the structure of land control and agrarian class relations. While an intermediary class of revenue collectors, starting from the *zamindars* and the *talluqdars* down to *mukaddams*, *mamlatdars* and other village level personnel did exist in pre-British India, their rights were by and large limited to a share of the total revenue and were therefore, not absolute. Land belonged to the tiller who had hereditary occupancy rights and therefore, could not be evicted so long as he paid his revenue dues. This was particularly true of *Raiyatwari* and *Mahalwari* areas where the working of social institutions like *Panchayats* etc., if nothing else, atleast guaranteed a certain bare minimum level of security to the *ryots*. This is however not

¹² Kumar, R. *Western India in the Nineteenth Century*.

¹³ *Ibid*. p.63. Chaplin while surveying Bhannod village to see how Bligg's new settlement had fared was met on the outskirts of the village by an outraged group of 60-70 peasants 'who were loud in their outcry against the new classification and assessment since their burden of tax had been raised by 50-60 percent.

to deny that severe oppression of cultivators did take place in Mughal India, particularly in the permanently settled areas (where the dominant groups of *zamindars* and *talluqdars* were often credited with the right to determine peasant occupancies),¹⁴ the fact remains that the existence of abundant cultivable waste lands did to an extent restrict such landowning groups to exercise this right freely.¹⁵ This situation was drastically altered with the advent of the British in India. On the one hand, absolute rights to such dominant groups were granted by making them “proprietors” of the land, on the other, a virtual breakdown of the old self-sufficient village community system, wherever existing,¹⁶ left the *ryots* with absolutely no rights, thereby reducing them to the position of mere tenants-at-will on their own lands. Moreover, the land-man ratio steadily declined as non-agricultural employment opportunities stagnated and traditional employment declined, leading to increased pressure on land.

The present section attempts to show how land revenue policies of the British led to the absolute impoverishment of the vast section of the cultivating poor, thereby forcing them to throw up their lands and join the ranks of landless agricultural labourers.

In the permanently settled areas of eastern India, particularly Bengal, the conferring of absolute “proprietary” rights in land to the class of landed aristocracy led to the emergence of a chain of intermediaries between the state and the tiller. This process of sub-infeudation reinforced the system of rent exactions. Despite the enactment of the Bengal tenancy Act of 1859¹⁷, a number of policy measures taken by the government such as the abolition of preferential rates of rent on “sir” or *khodkasht* lands reduced many occupancy *ryots* to the status of *pahikash* or non-occupancy *ryot*. Moreover, continuous attempts were made by the Bengal *zamindars* to destroy the

¹⁴ Habib, Irfan. Agrarian system of Mughal India. Pp. 129, 134, section I of chapter 5

¹⁵ Ibid. p 134 . Mackenzie in 1819 in U.P. noted that “land being more abundant than labour in general, the *Zamindar* has greater reason to the desertion of his *ryots* than they to fear expulsion from their lands”

¹⁶ Whether or not such village communities as for instance depicted by Ravindra Kumar in “Western India in the Nineteenth century” existed or not is an issue worth exploring. It however lies outside the scope of the present study. See R . Kumar. Pp.12-30,58,59, 324-27.

¹⁷ K.K. Sengupta. Pabna Disturbances and the Politics of Rent. Pp.14-15. Under Act X of 1859, occupancy rights were to be conferred upon tenants who had been cultivating their fields continuously for 12 years. Under this provision, rents could be enhanced if either (i) the value of land and its productive power had increased, (ii) the rent fell below the *parganah* rate,(iii) the *ryots* had larger quantities of land in their possession.

occupancy rights of such tenants. Further, provisions such as legal eviction of tenants¹⁸ following failure to meet excessively high revenue demand enforced upon them by the feudal landlords ultimately led to disintegration of the utterly rack rented peasantry of Bengal. It was against this background that popular peasant movements directed against the feudal landlords (*be it the indigo disturbances between 1859-62 or the pabna revolts between 1873-85*) took place throughout the nineteenth century in Bengal.¹⁹ Similar conditions prevailed in Awadh where relations between the *talluqdars* and tenants assumed an equally antagonistic form. Soon after Awadh was annexed on 13th February 1856, a three years settlement without any recognition of the *talluqdars*' proprietary rights was taken in hand. At the same time, revenue demand was fixed at an excessively high rate of over 80 percent of the rental, to be revised every 20-30 years. In the event of a failure to meet such a high demand, large-scale eviction of *talluqdars* from their estates was carried out, their lands confiscated and sold to the highest bidders by the state. This was particularly true of all the temporarily settled zamindari areas of the North, including Agra and all the districts bordering Awadh where substantial land transfers had taken place in the thirty years before 1857. However, Awadh *talluqdars* also joined in the great Revolt of 1857 because they resented the British take over and knew the same fate would befall them as in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces.

The scare of the 1857 Revolt led the colonialists to settle for the "Oudh Compromise" in 1866.²⁰ This gave unrestricted rights of ownership to the *talluqdars* on the one hand while it denied the future accrual of occupancy rights to Oudh tenantry on the other. The ultimate hold of the *talluqdars* over the wretched tenantry of Awadh was finally established with the passing of the **Talluqdari Relief Act of 1870** which guaranteed the rescue of any *talluqdari* estate which got deeply indebted through mismanagement or ill- luck by granting them "sanads" or bills of rights. No

¹⁸ Dhanagrae, D.N. Peasants Movements in India: 1920-50. p 38 . In nine years (1863-68 and 1873-77), there were 72,148 notices for rent enhancement only..... with each recorded case of enhancement by "fair" means, there were a number of cases where the villagers were coerced into paying enhanced rates. In each year, the rents of 1,202,880 *ryots* have been enhanced by fair means.

¹⁹ Choudhari, B.B . Peasant Movements in Bengal: 1850-1900. Nineteenth Century Studies. July 1973.

²⁰ Misra ,B.R. Land Revenue Policy in the U.P. Pp. 98-121.

provisions were laid down with respect to security of tenure for the tenants- at-will in all the successive acts that followed. This is more than evident from the following statistics that show the extent to which, a rise in the rents of the tenants-at-will in each district of the Awadh province (comprising Lucknow and Faizabad divisions) took place between 1848-1882.

Table 1
Increase In Rents of Tenants-at-will in Awadh Province

DISTRICT	Percent Increase in Rent
Lucknow	27.1
Unnao	23.3
Bara Banki	19.2
Sitapur	37.3
Hardoi	29.7
Kheri	29.2
Oudh	24.5
Faizabad	21.3
Bahraich	41.2
Gonda	13.9
Rai Bareilly	25.5
Sultanpur	26.8
Pratapgarh	49.4

Source : B.R. Misra. Land Revenue Policy in the United Province. p. 160.

Further, a vast majority of the tenant body in Awadh comprised tenants-at-will²¹ who had absolutely no security of tenure and were therefore, completely dependent upon short-term leases granted by the *talluqdars*.

Under such circumstances, in the absence of any legal restrictions on *zamindars* to increase the rent, the rack-renting and eviction of tenants became a common practise followed by the Awadh *talluqdars*, as was only to be expected. This is borne out by the fact that while the government's revenue demand increased by 15 percent between 1893-94 and 1944-45, the intermediaries' rental demand increased by 42 percent, thereby increasing the surplus taken by the intermediaries by 69 percent.²² Further, we find that in 1944-45, total rental demand in the United Provinces was estimated at Rs 17.53 crores, while the total land revenue paid by the *zamindars* to the government was Rs 6.82 crores.²³ An inevitable fallout of such high rents was a large scale eviction of tenants, which in U.P. increased by over 100 percent in the first two decades of the 20th century.²⁴ The situation in *Raiyatwari* areas was even worse where land revenue rates as a rule were relatively higher compared to the permanently settled areas. A governmental enquiry in nine districts of Madras Presidency in 1950 revealed that the rental was 9 to 33 times more than the land revenue assessment!²⁵ A similar situation prevailed in Bombay Presidency, Punjab and most other *Raiyatwari* areas. Though 50 to 60 percent of the gross produce was normally paid as rent by the *raiyyat*, in some cases, the rents exceeded the rise in agricultural prices and reached the level of three-quarters of the gross produce in the twentieth century. In Tiruchirapalli district of Madras, for instance, while the prices were doubled, the rents tripled between 1901-1926. In Punjab, in the same period, though prices went up by 50 percent, rents increased by 200 percent. Besides rents, the practise of "begari" or labour rent was widely prevalent among the *Pannayals* of Tamil Nadu which further

²¹ Dhanagare, D.N. Peasant Movements in India: 1920-50. p 115. Secured or occupancy tenants in Awadh formed a very small minority, just over 2.02 percent of the entire tenant body in Awadh. The vast majority were mere tenants-at-will.

²² National Commission on Agriculture, 1975. Report of the National Commission on Agriculture. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. p 11.

²³ Ibid. p 11.

²⁴ Dhanagare, pp. 115.

²⁵ Ibid. p 11.

pushed the *ryots* to sub-human standards of living. Under such heavy burden of rental demand, increasing indebtedness and large scale dispossession of *raiya*s from their lands was a widely prevalent practice in all the *raiya*twari areas.

In other words, the breakdown of the old village community system and the emergence of such a class of moneylenders was to be an inevitable fallout of the *Raiya*twari settlement. By making the *raiya*t directly responsible for the payment of revenue dues to the government in cash, credit was now required by each individual cultivator and not by the village community as used to be the case earlier. Further, the timing of revenue payments and the rigidity with which they were enforced left the cultivators with no alternatives but to borrow money at extremely high rates of interest from the moneylenders and often, mortgage their crops at a price below the prevailing market price.²⁶ For example, in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, despite a regulation limiting the rate of interest to 12 percent, cultivators were forced to pay extremely high rates of 24 percent to the *baniyas* (moneylenders). Not only did the then governor- general Mackenzie propose that “ the law limiting the rate of interest be annulled altogether”²⁷ but that the government even in extremely distressing periods denied *taqavi*²⁸ to cultivators clearly shows government’s attitude towards solving the problem of agricultural credit for rural poor. Under such circumstances, revenue payments were realized by passing laws facilitating transfer of property rights into the hands of moneylending classes through sale or mortgage of land for arrears of revenue.²⁹ It has been stated that the moneylending classes in Kanpur extended their hold from 15.7 percent of the land in 1802 to 41.7 percent in 1900 .³⁰

A similar process of dispossession of *Kunbis* from their lands by *vanis* can be observed in nineteenth century Maharashtra where this process of land transfers was greatly facilitated by the setting up of new courts of law. In the district of

²⁶ Siddiqi, Asiya. Agrarian Change in a Northern Indian State: Uttar Pradesh 1819-1833. Pp.124-139.

²⁷ Ibid. p 138, (3n).

²⁸ 'Taqavi' was an advance made to the cultivators each year for cultivation purposes. p 138, (2n).

²⁹ Ibid. p 130.

³⁰ Stokes, Eric. The Structure of landholding in Uttar Pradesh, 1860-1948. IESHR.1975.No. 2.

Ahmednagar, for instance, cases involving *ryots* increased by practically 100 percent (from 2900 to 5900) between the years 1835 and 1839. This “ increase in the civil suits instituted against the *kunbis* proves that the *vani* recognized in these courts a most convenient instrument for furthering his interest”.³¹ This further sharpened the contradictions between the two classes and ultimately led to the famous Deccan riots of 1875.³²

In other words, land revenue settlements introduced by the British in India created a socio-economic environment in which parasitism flourished. Evictions and insecurity of tenancy and rack-renting became a general phenomenon leading to an excessive burden of indebtedness amongst the bulk of the rural masses. As a result, land increasingly passed from the hands of the actual proprietors to the feudal landlords and moneylenders, traders and merchants with the tacit support of the state. This pattern of land transfers, whereby a major portion of the marginal and small cultivators were forced to give up their land under economic duress and join the ranks of landless agricultural labourers, was observed in all areas under British domination, whether permanently settled or settled directly with the *ryots*. The tendency was particularly marked in all the *raiyatwari* areas (including Bombay presidency, Madras Presidency and Central Province), supposedly the ‘ land of peasant proprietors’, where the proportion of agricultural labourers to the total agricultural working population was more than half (53.8 percent) as against one-third in the permanently settled areas of the eastern region in 1931 [Table 1].³³ For India as a whole, the proportion of agricultural labourers to total agricultural population was nearly 30 percent and when ‘general labour’ is added, it raises to approximately two-fifth (38 percent) in 1931. Labourers formed the single largest group within the total agricultural population. [Table 2]³⁴. Owing to the impact of the Great Depression on India,

³¹ National Commission on Agriculture. 1975. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. p 8.

It is stated that in Bombay state (1950), about 5 million acres of land passed out of the hands of small peasants into those of urban absentee landlords, moneylenders, traders etc. between 1917 and 1943.

³² R. Kumar . Western India in the Nineteenth Century. Chapter 5. The Deccan Riots of 1875. Pp. 151-188.

³³ Patel, S. J. Agricultural labourers in Modern India and Pakistan. Chapter 3.

³⁴ Ibid. Pp. 14,15.

reliance on wage paid work in rural areas rose to a very high level in the nineteen thirties but even in the normal times, labourers were one-third of all the workers.

Of particular significance within the southern region (comprising Bombay, Madras and Central Province) is the case of Madras Presidency which has a particularly rigid caste structure and the dominance of unfree hereditary labour since pre-colonial times.³⁵ Under such circumstances, Dharma Kumar has tried to locate the formation and growth of this class of landless agricultural labourers exclusively in social factors like the caste structure of society, to the complete neglect of British land revenue policies that rendered not only the pre-colonial class of hereditary labourers (mainly *Panaiyals*, *Padiyals* and *Adimanis*) landless but primarily bulk of the lower strata of the peasantry who were forced to give up their lands owing to excessive rental demands which were simultaneously realized through strict enforcement of laws facilitating sale of land for arrears of revenue payments under *raiyyatwari* tenure. That she completely ignores the latter is clearly evident from her own estimates of agricultural labourers from early census data on population by caste in Madras presidency.³⁶ According to her estimates, given that agricultural labourers constituted 65-75 percent of the agricultural labour castes, which in turn grew at a constant proportion of 12-20 percent of the total population throughout the nineteenth century, even if one were to assume that all the members belonging to such agricultural labour castes were actually agricultural labourers, a maximum of 12-15 percent of the entire rural population would have belonged to the agricultural labourers category between 1871 and 1901.³⁷ However, agricultural labourers constituted 30.3 percent of the total agricultural population in 1901, which rose steadily thereafter and increased to 52.9 percent in 1931. [Table 1]. In other words, the evolution of agricultural labourers as a definite class must be seen in the historical context of nearly two centuries of imperial relations of domination of one class by the other.

³⁵ Kumar, Dharma. Land and Caste in South India. Chapter 3. Pp. 34- 48.

³⁶ Patnaik, U. Capitalist Development in Indian Agriculture. [1972]. p 26. On the evolution of the class of Agricultural Labourers in India. In " The Long Transition". Pp. 181-189.

³⁷ Ibid.

This increase in landlessness leading to concentration of land ownership in the hands of traders, moneylenders and feudal landlords was further facilitated by the colonial government's deliberate attempts to promote cash crop cultivation at the expense of food grains cultivation. In the permanently settled areas, direct coercion or physical force was used in bringing about such shifts in cropping pattern. This was particularly true of the nineteenth century indigo and opium plantations in those regions. A more subtle form of coercion, viz. economic coercion was however used by the colonialists to promote commercial crop cultivation in the temporarily settled areas of the country.³⁸

As a result of a combination of fiscal, trade and monetary policies pursued by the Colonial State according to which Indian economy was merely looked at in terms of a provider of raw materials for the rapidly industrialising metropolis, there was an overall stagnation in Indian agriculture. The rate of growth of foodgrains output increased at an average rate of barely 0.11 percent for British India as a whole between 1871-1947,³⁹ with Greater Bengal registering a negative rate of growth of 0.73 percent per year for foodgrains while the combined growth rate for other five regions taken together,⁴⁰ registered an average of 0.47 percent per year for the same period. This stagnation was mainly on account of rice output which declined in Bengal at an average rate of 0.76 percent per year in contrast to 0.09 percent for British India as a whole. Further, population grew at an average rate of 0.67 percent between 1891-1947. This implied an average rate of decline in per capita foodgrains output of one percent or more per year between 1911-1912 to 1941 (i.e, the period of declining trend of foodgrains) for British India. In Bengal, this period of decline was thirty years and the reduction in per capita foodgrain output was 38 percent.⁴¹

In sharp contrast to the above figures for foodgrains, average growth rate in foodgrains was 1.31 percent per year between 1891-1947. Per capita non-foodgrains

³⁸ Patnaik, U. The process of Commercialization under colonial conditions. 1999.

³⁹ Blyn. Agricultural Trends in India: 1891-1947. Output, Availability and Productivity. Chapter IX. p 241.

⁴⁰ Ibid. The other five regions include the Central Provinces, Madras Presidency, Bombay-Sind, Greater Punjab and the United Provinces.

⁴¹ Ibid

output had increased by 28 percent between 1893-94 and 1911-12 and further increased by another 14 percent during 1911-12 to 1941-42. This increase in the latter period took place despite a decline in crop output and a slow acceleration in population growth.

Thus, the economy was faced with a situation where a decline in per capita food output was combined with an increase in per capita cash crop production.⁴² This emphasis on cash crop cultivation is particularly important for it was through the export of such commercial crops (mainly cotton, sugarcane, tea etc.) that a major portion of Indian tax revenue receipts, set aside for investments incurred abroad (i.e., the U.K.) or the “Home Charges” could be unilaterally transferred to Britain. These increased from 16 percent of the total revenue receipts to 27 percent in the nineteen thirties.⁴³ The situation was further worsened by falling agricultural prices in India during the Great Depression. Consequently, the International barter terms of trade for India fell by 30 percent between 1922 and 1932. Within the economy, the intersectoral terms of trade declined for agriculture by 33 percent between 1918 and 1929-1930 and a further decline of 17 percent upto 1934- 35. This had a disastrous impact on the rural economy whereby peasants were forced to sell increasing levels of output at declining prices to meet unchanged revenue demands. To this effect, it has been stated that around two-fifths of the rural population was immiserised in the process.⁴⁴ Added to this was the burden of inflationary war financing in which total government outlays added up to 38 billion rupees between 1941-46. Bengal, due to its strategic location was the worst affected. The period between 1941-43 saw a four fold increase in rice prices. This completely devastated Bengal’s rural population and ultimately resulted in the disastrous **Bengal Famine** of 1943-44, which claimed atleast 2.7 to 3.1 million lives.⁴⁵

⁴² Patniak, U. Food Availability and Famine: A longer View. In “The Long Transition” p 327. Per capita food production declined from 200 kg. per head in the triennium ending 1918 to about 150 kg. by 1941.

⁴³ Ibid. p 330.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p 335.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Bengal famine had thus shown how the land question, if neglected, as indeed it had been for almost two centuries of imperialist rule, could lead to disastrous consequences. It had once again brought to the forefront, the longstanding demand of the toiling masses across the countryside of giving 'land to the tiller'. It was against this extremely adverse socio-economic and political background that widespread agrarian unrest and revolt took place against the feudal exploitation of landlords and moneylenders throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Be it the *Tebhaga* movement of Bengal or the peasant struggles in Telangana during the nineteen forties or even the earlier movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were all basically an expression of the long standing agrarian discontent of the ruled against the rulers. U.P. peasantry, which had played so crucial a role in the 1857 revolt, once again came to dominate the agrarian scene during the mid nineteen twenties, thereby making it the first state in independent India in which the most crucial question of the countryside-that of giving 'land to the tiller' had to be taken up.

Annexure

Table 1

Number of Agricultural Labourers and Their Proportion To The Agricultural Population In The Southern, Eastern And Northern Regions; 1901-1931

II. Southern Region		Population Supported		Working Population	
A. Number in millions		1901	1911	1921	1931
Bombay		4.2	3.6	1.4	4.2
Madras		8.2	9.2	5.6	7.6
C.P& Brrar		4.2	4.4	3.2	3.9
Total		16.6	17.2	10.2	15.7
B. Proportion in %					
Bombay		35.2	27.6	27.8	57.7
Madras		30.3	30.7	36.1	52.9
C.P& Brrar		42.2	37.0	43.4	51.7
Total		34.0	31.3	36.5	53.8
III. Eastern Region					
A. Number in millions					
Bihar & Orissa		(3.6)^	7.1	3.8	5.0
Bengal		1.4	(3.4)	2.1	3.3
Assam		0.8	0.8	0.6	0.7
Total		(5.8)	(11.3)	6.5	9.0
B. Proportion in %					
Bihar & Orissa		(14.0)	24.1	26.0	35.2
Bengal		(4.8)	(10.0)	17.7	33.2
Assam		15.2	13.8	19.9	22.2
Total		(9.6)	(16.3)	22.1	32.9
Northern Region					
A. Number in millions					
The United Provinces		7.5	6.2	3.0	4.0
The Punjab		1.2	2.4	0.7	1.0
The NWFP*		0.1	0.1	--	0.1
Total		8.8	8.7	(3.7)	5.1
B. Proportion In %					
The United Provinces		21.8	17.2	15.6	21.9
The Punjab		8.1	16.9	12.9	14.4
The NWFP*		8.3	7.7	--	17.9
Total		17.4	14.9	14.8	19.9

Source : Patel, S.J. "Agricultural Labourers In Modern India And Pakistan" (Pp. 23,26,29)

Note : i) *North West Frontier Province

ii) ^Figures in brackets are under-estimates owing to lack of data on unspecified labourers for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which were jointly covered as one region during 1901-1911.

Table 2

Occupational Composition Of The Agrarian Society In India And The Proportion Of Agricultural Labourers There In: 1871-1931 (In Million)

Occupation	Adult male worker 1871-72	Male Workers 1881	Population Supported			Working Population.	
			1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Total agricultural population	45.7	83.7	200.9	204.1	225.3	106.3	111.0
Of which							
Rent receivers^	---	---	---	---	7.7	3.7	4.2
Owner cultivator	37.5	71.2	175.4	152.7	167.0	74.7	28.4
Tenant cultivator^	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Agricultural labourers of which	8.2	12.5	25.5	52.4	50.6	27.8	42.2
Farm labourers	---	---	---	33.5	41.2	21.7	33.5
Unspecified labourers	---	---	---	16.9	8.3	5.1	7.5
Plantation labourers	---	---	---	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.2
Proportion of agricultural labourers to the total agricultural population in percent	18.0	15.0	13.0	25.1	22.	26.2	38.0

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Source: Patel, S.J. Agricultural Labourers In Modern India And Pakistan. Pp. 14 & 15

Note : ^: wherever separate data are not shown for rent-receivers and tenant cultivators, their figures are included in the numbers of owner cultivators.

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CHAPTER II

Commercialization Of Agriculture In Colonial Uttar-Pradesh

The present chapter attempts to link the changes brought about by the British land revenue settlements in the property rights structure with the process of commercialization carried out under the newly emerging class of traders and merchants.¹ The focus will be on U.P. and in this chapter, we will seek to examine whether the expansion in commercial crops under colonial conditions led to any significant changes in the organisation of production and therefore, in the standards of living of the vast majority of the impoverished tillers in the countryside. We will begin by outlining the primary motive of the colonial state's emphasis on cash crop cultivation in India.

The rationale behind cash crop promotion by the colonial state in Indian agriculture was tribute transfer. It was mainly through the export of such high valued commercial crops like tea, cotton, sugar, etc. that a substantial part of Indian tax revenues set aside for financing investments incurred abroad or the 'Home Charges' were unilaterally transferred to Britain. Further, there were two ways through which a major proportion of the annual agricultural surplus was transferred to the U.K. One was through the direct export of commercial crops from India to Britain, like tea, a coffee, indigo, cotton etc.- commodities which the U.K. was simply incapable of producing. The other was through an indirect trilateral transfer involving countries with which U.K. had a trade deficit. For example, the export of opium from India to China for settling U.K's tea imports from China. The mechanism through which this happened was as follows: The secretary of state for India in London issues Council Bills against sterling to the foreign importers of Indian goods in Britain. These bills are then sent to the Indian exporters who encash them through local exchange banks for rupees paid out by the Treasury from the tax revenues in turn extracted from the very producers of such exportable commercial crops. Thus, "Sterling to almost the entire extent of the 'Home Charges' therefore piles up with the Secretary of State in London, being the foreign exchange earnings from India's export surplus; it does not accrue to the Indians who earn it, who are paid out of the taxes they themselves have

¹Patnaik, Utsa. The Process of Commercialization under Colonial Conditions. The Long Transition. 1999.

contributed. On India's balance of payments, her large merchandise export surplus and hence, exchange earnings from the rest of the world is offset by an even larger deficit item vis-à-vis Britain, constituted mainly by the politically imposed "Home Charges" [Patnaik, U.1999].

The early phase of commercialization in U.P. was marked by a tremendous expansion in area and production of both opium and indigo. It has been estimated that by 1884-85, nearly four lakh acres of canal-irrigated area in the North-Western Provinces was under indigo cultivation [Whitcombe, E. 1972]. These commercial crops were most extensively grown in the permanently settled areas, especially in the Bawana district of Agra province. Cash crop cultivation, particularly in the permanently settled areas, was marked by the use of direct coercion, which became less necessary with the introduction of temporary settlement under which revenue demand was periodically revised upwards. This meant an increased pressure of revenue demand on the landlord, which in turn was passed on to the tillers in the form of increased pressure of their rental demand. This compelled the peasants to grow more commercial crops for meeting their rental obligations [Ibid.]. Hence, a more subtle form of economic coercion through which the system of cash advances came to be used to force the peasants to shift to cash crop cultivation.

The post 1885 period in U.P. saw a declining trend in Indigo cultivation due to the adverse impact of an unviable system of canal irrigation.² This trend was not specific to U.P. alone but more importantly, could be seen in the eastern parts of the country, notably in Greater Bengal where widespread resentment and agrarian revolts against indigo cultivation took place. The revolts spread to areas like Darbhanga of Champaran district in Bihar in 1860s and in the Pabna and Jessore districts in Bengal [Sen Gupta, K.K., 1974 and Chaudhuri, B.B., 1973]. All these factors put together marked a new phase in cash crop cultivation in U.P. whereby the emphasis shifted from the cultivation of indigo towards sugarcane and wheat.

In U.P., especially the Rohilkhand in central and Gorakhpur division comprising the districts of Gorakhpur, Basti and Azamgarh in the eastern region, the expansion in sugarcane cultivation far from developing production relations, further reinforced the

² Whitcombe, E. Agrarian Conditions in Northern India: The United Provinces under British Rule, 1860-1900. Volume 1. p 174.

conditions of dependence of U.P. peasantry on feudal landlords as well as on traders and moneylenders. The widespread agrarian unrest and discontent arising from the above changes introduced by the colonialists resulted in U.P. being the first state in the country to have taken legislative measures for the abolition of intermediaries in the immediate post independence period.

GROWTH OF CASH CROP CULTIVATION IN U.P. UNDER COLONIAL CONDITIONS

U.P. agriculture has always been marked by a high degree of regional diversity and fluctuations with regard to climatic conditions, nature of soil, access to irrigation etc. Faced with a high degree of seasonal uncertainty, the traditional cropping pattern of the cultivator was generally a mix of crops, mainly comprising the staple diet of the majority of tillers, grown on each holding. These generally included staple *kharif* millets like *jowar* and *bajra*, other small millets like *kakun*, *sawan* etc., a variety of pulses (*urd*, *mung* etc.), paddy and oilseeds while the chief *rabi* staples, generally common to all regions included gram and barley, and wheat in places where soils were rich and adequate facilities for irrigation existed. This second harvest of the year namely *rabi* was however grown on lands rich enough to withstand double cropping and was therefore, confined to a very small proportion of the entire area under cultivation.³ This mixing of crops on one field was practiced by the *ryots* not only to reduce the risks posed by seasonal uncertainty but it also provided a means of crop rotation which allowed them to cultivate the soil frequently without overburdening it. Sugarcane cultivation was then an index of prosperous holdings and was usually grown along the most fertile tracts of the Doab, notably Meerut in the north-western districts of the province. This was mainly because of the heavy initial as well as working capital outlay required for growing it. Additionally, sugarcane had a particularly long growing period stretching beyond a single agricultural year, and required frequent ploughing of land as well as long periods of fallow. All this made sugarcane an unaffordable crop for the majority of the toiling masses owning meagre resources and living at the margin of subsistence.

³ Ibid. Pp. 20-28.

The initial boost to commercialisation of agriculture in modern U.P. was provided by the colonial government's drive to promote agricultural 'development' in the province, especially since the late 1850's. This was an immediate post-1857 revolt period in whose struggles, the NWP and Awadh had played a leading role. As a result, their lands (particularly of the relatively less fertile districts in the central Doab, southern and eastern regions of the province) had suffered severely from the devastation caused by the war. Land being the prime source of colonial government's wealth, measures had to be taken in order to tap the great resources from the otherwise extremely fertile and productive lands of the province. In other words, it was keeping in view this "unexplored mine, the wealth of which they (we) had not even begun to enjoy" that massive expenditures were incurred in public works like irrigation, roads, railways etc. mainly to exploit the vast reserve of rich resources that this region could supply. This in turn was achieved by encouraging the cultivation of 'valuable' cash crops, which in the case of U.P. meant primarily sugarcane and irrigated wheat.⁴

Consequently, a network of canal irrigation was developed with the opening up of the Ganges canal in 1850's initially along the most productive region along the upper Doab and was subsequently extended to the middle and lower Doab, the Rohilkhand as well as in a few districts to the south in Bundelkhand. This was further accompanied by the construction of roads and railways between 1885 and 1915 primarily to facilitate the distribution of such primary exportable cash crops to the higher priced distant markets through trade.

In other words, investments in such public works were mainly confined to the most productive areas of the province which, though yielding the highest rate of return on such capital outlays, were however already growing coarse staple foodgrains for subsistence of the majority. The huge expanses of the *usar* and *reh* tracts, especially in northern Awadh, remained untouched owing to adverse agricultural conditions which rendered investments in such lands highly unprofitable. An obvious implication of this was a rapid expansion in commercial crops cultivation stimulated by canal irrigation which increasingly substituted staple foodgrains (which were not suitably adapted to canal irrigation) on which the vast

⁴ Patnaik, U. The Long Transition. p. 263. "Superior varieties of cereals like wheat grown under irrigation for the market can be included in 'commercial crops'."

majority relied for its survival. This phenomenon was particularly true of all the canal-irrigated areas where cash crop cultivation predominated over coarse cereals like millets and pulses, thereby adversely affecting the growth of the latter. This is supported by the fact that of the canal irrigated areas of the Mathura district, 69.4 percent was recorded under *rabi* crops as against 26.4 percent under *kharif* in 1874-75.⁵ While finer grains like wheat alone accounted for 26.2 percent of the area under cultivation, the chief *kharif* millets like *jowar* and *bajra*, constituting the staple diet of the majority, accounted for barely 9.7 percent and 4.1 percent of the total cultivated area respectively. Throughout the Doab, especially in the Meerut and Agra divisions, the cultivation of most saleable high valued crops like cotton, sugarcane, indigo and finer grains like wheat and barley greatly superseded that of other inferior grains in both *kharif* as well as *rabi* harvests. This was in sharp contrast to the traditional cropping pattern where the coarse staples predominated over such commercial crops and also the cultivation of *rabi* crops was confined to a very small proportion of the total cultivated area in each district of the province.

This emphasis by the colonial government on canal irrigated cultivation, commanding an estimated area of almost 1,50,000 acres in the western districts alone at a capital cost of nearly 4,500,000 pounds within twenty years of the opening of the Ganges canal can be fully understood only when seen in the context of the massive revenues that it brought to the government: firstly, by way of a variety of water dues collected by the irrigation department and secondly, by way of a rise in government revenues brought about by an increase in the value of agricultural produce.⁶

It is important to note that though there was a substantial increase in area not only under sugarcane but also under indigo and cotton, it was however the expansion of sugarcane upon which the colonial government concentrated most in U.P. The spread of cotton was restricted due to the extreme fluctuations in export demand, which ceased abruptly with the end of the American Civil war and the consequent discovery of a better source of supply in Egypt. Therefore, it was sugarcane, which was one of the most remunerative and stable sources of revenue for the colonial government in U.P.

⁵ Ibid. Pp. 71-75 for shifts in traditional cropping pattern away from coarse cereals in favour of high valued marketable crops stimulated by canal irrigation.

⁶ Ibid. See figure 5. Also see Pp. 134-136, 171.

With the increase in export demand, there was a rapid increase in sugarcane prices. Such was the extent of increase in its price, especially in Rohilkhand where it was extensively cultivated, that a mere 5.7 percent of the total cultivated area under it yielded a value of approximately Rs.31 lakhs in Bareilly.⁷ This was nearly twice the districts' assumed rental and four times its annual revenue demand. This tremendous increase in sugarcane prices greatly increased the profit margin between the money value of rent obtainable from an estate cultivating it and the fixed cash dues it had to pay as revenue to the colonial government.⁸ According to an official estimate, while the fixed revenue demand increased by 15 percent between 1893-94 and 1944-45, the rental demand increased by 42 percent, thereby increasing the margin of profit by 69 percent.⁹ This made cultivation of sugarcane extremely profitable for all those having the means and resources required to grow it, namely the big landed proprietors, i.e., the *zamindars* and the *talluqdars* as well as those financing the production of such high valued crops namely the traders, merchants and moneylenders. The feudal landlords, however, in keeping with their traditional image of a parasitic class of pure rentiers, tended to farm out the right to collect rent to others in exchange for a fixed payment made to them while themselves preferring a fixed cash income from the cultivation of such a high valued crop. In other words, abandoning all hopes of turning into capitalist farmers undertaking direct cultivation with hired labour and improved techniques etc., the feudal landlords continued to be rentiers to an even greater extent than before.¹⁰

Under such circumstances, commercialization of agriculture took place not under the feudal *zamindars* or the *talluqdars* but under the newly emerging class of traders, merchants and moneylenders who were in fact looking for ways and means to extend their hold over peasant production process. This they wanted to do in order to compel the peasantry into growing a high valued saleable crop like sugarcane which, indeed was a highly profitable crop in terms of income per acre it guaranteed to its growers.¹¹ This

7 Whitcombe. p 177.

8 Patnaik, U. The Process of Commercialization under colonial conditions. Pp. 261-263.

9 National Commission on Agriculture. 1975. Report of the National Commission on Agriculture. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. p 11.

10 Patnaik, U. Ibid.

11 Amin, Shahid, Sugarcane and Sugar in Gorakhpur. p 71. With regard to relative profitability of sugarcane vis-à-vis other *kharif* and *rabi* staples in eastern Gorakhpur at 1913 prices, it has been estimated that an income per acre of Rs.69-8 *annas* from sugarcane cultivation and *gur* manufacture was the highest when compared to any other *kharif* or

meant that bulk of the *zamindari* charges (fixed as a proportion of gross rent) could be met out of the proceeds from cane crop grown on a relatively small proportion of the total area under cultivation, thereby leaving the value of the entire remaining surplus produce in the hands of those controlling its production. To this extent, it has been estimated that of the total cultivated area in Bijnour district in Rohilkhand, a mere seven percent of the area under sugarcane accounted for some 36 percent of the gross rental as against 37 percent of the area under the entire range of *rabi* crops providing only for 2.8 percent of the gross rental.¹²

Therefore, it was keeping in view this above profitability in sugarcane cultivation that the newly emerging trading and money-lending classes altered the cropping pattern in favour of such high income yielding cash crops through the purchase of ownership rights in lands. In doing so, they were greatly facilitated by the various tenancy and other debt and property transfer laws passed by the colonial government in course of the nineteenth century. All such laws facilitating transfer of property into the hands of such classes were only aimed at realizing the excessively high revenue demands fixed by the colonial state through sale or mortgage of lands for arrears of revenue. Throughout the North-Western Provinces, the burden of meeting revenue payments was so high that despite its subsequent scaling down from an initial high of over 80 percent to about 50 percent of the gross rental in 1855,¹³ an average number of registered sales of *zamindari* estates for arrears of revenue was recorded to be 32,188 between 1878 and 1883, 32361 between 1883-1888 and 35,928 between 1888 and 1893.¹⁴

While the dispossession of the rack-rented peasantry from their holdings through sale or mortgage of their lands was a feature widely prevalent in all the districts throughout the province, the process of land transfers from the traditional landed aristocracy (i.e., the *zamindars* and the *talluqdars*) to moneylenders and traders was particularly true of the Doab and western U.P. (including Rohilkhand). These two regions, together with a population of about 45 percent of the state's total population in 1911, accounted for 72

rabi staple. Cane cultivation was more than twice as profitable as wheat cultivation and almost 3 times as profitable as barley. The relative profitability ratio of cane in fact exceeded 2 in almost all cases and reached upto as high as 14.45 percent in the case of *kodon*.

¹² Whitcombe, E. Ibid. p 177.

¹³ Dutt, R.C. The Economic History of India. Vol. I. Pp. XXIII and XXIV.

¹⁴ Whitcombe, E. Vol.I. Pp. 201, 202.

percent of total UP's trade.¹⁵ Such a high share in the state's trade accordingly gave that much more leverage to the above newly emerging dominant groups to exercise a significant influence on the overall landholding pattern in those areas. It has been stated that in Kanpur alone, the moneylending classes extended their hold from 15.7 percent of the land in 1802 to 41.7 percent in 1900.¹⁶

Thus, while public works undertaken by the colonial government in the Doab and Rohilkhand provided the required initial stimulus to sugarcane cultivation, an increasing hold of such a merchants class over landholding rights in those areas led to its rapid expansion, particularly since the 1870's. As a result, there was a marked increase in the area under sugarcane cultivation. This increased from slightly below 1 lakh acres in 1868-69 to around 2 lakh 40 thousand acres in 1896-97 throughout the NWP.¹⁷

This expansion in sugarcane cultivation brought about by shifts in landholding pattern in favour of such traders and merchants was however only one of the mechanisms through which they acquired a greater control over peasant production process. Even in cases where they did not have proprietary rights in land, as in Gorakhpur division in eastern U.P.¹⁸ or in Awadh (where all the above debt and property transfer laws were defined by the imperialists with the passing of the Taluqdari Relief Act of 1870 so as to win the confidence of a politically loyal segment from within the ruling classes in the post 1857 revolt period), they economically compelled the tillers to grow sugarcane through the system of cash advances.¹⁹ This further increased the vulnerability of the already weak and rack-rented peasantry, thereby allowing the traders and merchants to dictate their cropping patterns for maximizing their own profits. In other words, the overall institutional framework within which commercialization of agriculture proceeded under colonial conditions did not leave any space for an improvement in either the existing techniques or relations of production, thus ruling out the possibility of an increase in agricultural productivity and therefore, better standards of living for the majority in the countryside. This has been taken up below:

¹⁵ Stokes, Eric. The structure of land holding in U.P: 1857-1948. IESHR. 1975. No.2.

¹⁶ Ibid. p.120.

¹⁷ Whitcombe, E. Vol. I. See fig.3.

¹⁸ Amin, S. p.131.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 263-267.

II. ON THE PROCESS OF 'FORCED' COMMERCIALIZATION IN U.P. AND THE EMERGING AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

The overall institutional framework within which the above noted expansion in commercial crops cultivation took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century U.P. agriculture was one of a small peasant economy in which mainly coarse staples like *jowar* and *bajra* were grown for subsistence with the help of family labour. Cultivation was carried out with meagre resources using traditional tools and implements. The average landholding size varied across regions [Table 1], with the most fertile districts of western U.P. along the upper Doab reporting a high average holding size of 7.2 acres on the one hand while the relatively less fertile areas along the lower Doab as well as the eastern districts reporting the same to be between 2.5-3.0 acres. In this regard, it must be noted that Gorakhpur division, which had emerged as one of the major cane growing tracts of the province by the end of the nineteenth century (accounting for 15.5 percent of the provinces' cane acreage and 29 percent of its sugar production)²⁰ had the average size of land cultivated by tenants-at-will to be as low as 1.36 acres in the mid 1880's. In other words, majority of the tillers throughout the province either lived at or below subsistence levels. Given this socio-economic background, cultivation of a high valued and expensive crop like sugarcane was unaffordable for this vast majority living in the countryside. Yet, bulk of it was grown on small sized holdings (both owned as well as taken on lease) cultivated by marginal and middle sections of the peasantry. This was true of all the major cane growing areas of the state, namely Meerut district in the west, Rohilkhand in the central region while Gorakhpur in eastern parts of the province. In Gorakhpur, for instance, barely five percent of the cane supplied to the 34 eastern U.P. sugar factories in the 1920's was raised on factory estates,²¹ bulk of the remaining supply coming from small peasant farms of an average holding size of less than an acre which were generally rented out by landlords to petty tenants. Clearly, resources available to an average cultivator growing cane on such a tiny plot were not sufficient enough to enable him to voluntarily shift over

²⁰ Amin, S. Ibid. p. 61.

²¹ Ibid. p. 131-36. This situation in Gorakhpur was in sharp contrast to the one prevailing in Bombay where as much as 85 percent of the cane consumed by nine sugar mills was raised on factory estates.

to the cultivation of cane, which indeed was one of the most expensive crops in terms of both capital and labour input requirements.

In other words, cultivation of sugarcane was economically forced upon U.P. peasantry by means of a system of cash advances.²² This was particularly true of the central (Rohilkhand) and eastern parts (i.e. Gorakhpur, Basti and Azamgarh) where close links between moneylending, landlordism and sugar refining led to the worst possible form of domination of the cane growing peasantry by the above ruling classes. Under this system, the owners of local sugar refineries advanced cash at zero or low interest rates to the tillers specifically for growing sugarcane at the beginning of each year's production cycle. The tiller in return, was however required to sell his entire produce to his creditor at a 'contract' price which as if by rule, was always lower than the prevailing market price, for the lower the contract price, the higher the margin of trading profit enjoyed by the creditor. The cultivator was neither in a position to bargain for higher prices for his produce nor did he have the freedom in marketing it himself.²³ It has been noted that the contract price at which cane growers were made to sell their produce to the *Khandsaris* (local sugar manufacturers in Rohilkhand) fell to a level as low as Rs.16 per 100 *maunds* as against the ruling open market price of Rs.26-27.²⁴ The fixing of contract prices at such low levels therefore enabled these traders to appropriate the entire surplus produce, thereby leaving the cultivator with barely enough for his survival. Despite the 'contract' being highly unremunerative to the tillers, the time at which such advances were made left them with little choice other than to accept such an unequal bargain. This was because loans were deliberately given at a time when the peasants were faced with the utmost need to raise cash to pay their rental installment which in turn was demanded even before their produce could reach the market. A refusal to accept such interest free loans by the tillers would have necessarily meant a forced sale of their early *kharif* staples (essentially meant

²² Patnaik, U. The process of Commercialization under Colonial Conditions. Pp. 264-67.

²³ Amin, S. p.103. It has been estimated that as much as 90 percent of the *raab* (a form of raw sugar used as a raw material in the manufacture of indigenous sugar called *khand* in Rohilkhand) produce in Rohilkhand in the early twentieth century was hypothecated to the indigenous sugar refineries in the villages without passing through any market. A similar situation prevailed in Gorakhpur where only 10 percent of the *gur* produce was estimated to have been directly marketed by the peasants during the nineteen thirties. This was in sharp contrast to the situation prevailing in western U.P., notably Meerut, where as much as 60 percent of the marketable surplus of *gur* was directly sold by the peasants themselves.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.59.

for family consumption) at unremunerative post harvest prices in order to meet their heavy rental demands. This in turn would have necessitated a need to borrow for consumption and seed requirements from local moneylenders at extortionately high interest rates during lean agricultural months later. Therefore, in order to avoid putting themselves into this situation, tillers were compelled to accept an equally grim (if not worse) option of taking trader's cash advance for growing sugarcane. Alternatively, 'it was this importance of sugarcane as a cash raising and debt- servicing crop, rather than its value as a surplus accumulator'²⁵ that forced the peasantry to shift their cropping pattern from coarse cereals like *jowar* and *bajra* etc. towards high valued primary exportable crops like sugarcane and other finer grains like wheat. No wonder then that in Gorakhpur alone, the area under sugarcane increased by over one lakh acres from 1,26,703 acres in 1911-12 to around 2,45,679 acres in 1940-41.²⁶ Moreover, 34 percent of the area under sugarcane in 1942 in this region was accounted for by holdings less than half an acre in size.²⁷ Further, this increase in acreage under cane was accompanied by a decline in the combined area under inferior foodgrains (like maize, barley, small millets etc.) by approximately 78,000 acres. It has been estimated that while the total area under foodgrains in Gorakhpur district alone (which included rice, wheat, barley, maize and gram) declined by 2.9 percent between 1936-37 to 1940-41 and 1911-12 to 1915-16, there was an increase by 88.1 percent in the total cultivated area under sugarcane during the same period.²⁸

Thus, it was this crucial connection between the cultivation of sugarcane and the need for raising immediate cash for paying rental instalments and for meeting seed and consumption requirements that explains its widespread cultivation, especially amongst the marginal as well as small and middle sections of U.P. peasantry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Therefore, far from leading to surplus accumulation, it barely enabled the cultivators to sustain themselves from one production cycle to another, thereby making them ever more dependent on the above ruling classes for such cash advances.

In other words, the overall socio-economic and political environment within which expansion of commercial crops like sugarcane took place was such that no change was

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.70.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p.114.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 269.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 115.

brought about in the existing relations of production. Though the trader's advances did alter the production structure significantly in favour of high valued commercial crops leading therefore to a higher value of both output and surplus, this was not accompanied by a simultaneous improvement in techniques of production so as to result in a higher level of agricultural productivity and better standards of living for the majority. Sugarcane continued to be grown under the increasing hold of merchant's and moneylender's capital on tiny plots of land usually rented from the landlords at extremely high rental rates. The trader merely appropriated the surplus thus produced by fixing contract prices at levels much below the prevailing market prices. In cases where such people also happened to have ownership rights in land, they did not undertake direct cultivation with hired labour using modern techniques of production. Instead, they preferred the alternative option of leasing out land to petty tenants at high rates of rents. Thus, far from turning into capitalist farmers, they reduced themselves to being absentee landlords, probably to an even greater extent than the traditional feudal landlords had been.

An inevitable fallout of the above changes brought about by the British in U.P. countryside was a steady worsening of the overall standards of living of the vast majority, the signs of which had already started showing since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. With the area under exportable commercial crops and other finer marketable grains like wheat steadily rising, there was a consequent decline in area under inferior grains, notably coarse cereals and pulses. In 1873-74 alone, while the area under wheat increased by 39,225 acres, that under pulses – the prime source of vegetable protein for the rural population registered a decline of some 9000 acres.²⁹ As a result, prices of such essentials as fuel and fodder, millets and other staple food of the majority of the province started rising. Such was the extent of price rise of essentials that it was reported in Hardoi district during the 1870s that *kharif* staples like *jowar* and *bajra* were often sold to the poor by the grain dealers at prices actually exceeding the rates at which the wealthy purchase wheat.³⁰ The situation was further worsened with the disastrous failure of monsoon in 1877 which, against the background of declining levels of local production and increasing prices of such essentials, ultimately led to the **grain riots** throughout the province, especially in

²⁹ Whitcombe, E. p. 190,191.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

areas worst affected by the drought namely the lower Doab, Bundelkhand, parts of Awadh and eastern U.P.

Even when faced with such adverse socio-economic conditions of existence, there was no relaxation in rental burdens imposed upon the already starved peasantry of U.P. While the government's revenue demands declined from 80 percent to about 50 percent of the gross rental in 1855 (including all extra cesses etc., this however amounted to almost 60 percent of the gross rent), no relaxation was however made in the extraction of rents from petty tenants by the landed proprietors. Further, the principle on which collection of the above revenue payments was based, notably the early *kharif* dues,³¹ together with the rigidity with which such payments were realized led to increasing indebtedness of the rack-rented peasantry. In an ordinary year, the amount annually borrowed by the cultivators throughout the province primarily for meeting cash obligations like seeds, foodgrains, rent etc. amounted to 15,000,000 pounds and in fact rose to between 20,000,000 and 30,000,000 pounds in years of severe distress.³² Far from providing relief to the indebted peasantry, the cultivators were however sued in civil courts for arrears of revenue, their lands bought up and sold to their creditors. In other words, it only resulted in growing concentration of land ownership in the hands of a tiny minority, a process which had been well underway since the mid-nineteenth century, thereby leading to increasing landlessness and complete impoverishment of a vast section of the marginal as well as small and middle peasantry. Such was the extent of concentration of land ownership that the total agricultural land was found to be in the ownership of barely 3.2 percent (1,710,530) of the entire population (63 millions) of the province on the eve of independence.³³ Further, as much as 85 percent of all those owning lands were marginal and small landholders with an average landholding size of less than an acre paying a revenue of less than Rs.25 and meeting only some 15 percent of the total land revenue demand. These owned no more than one-fifth of the total agricultural land. At the other extreme were a group of landlords³⁴ (paying a revenue of over Rs.250 p.a.) constituting a mere 1.5 percent (30,142

³¹ Ibid. Pp. 155-60 for the system of revenue collection under the British.

³² Ibid. p 193.

³³ Stokes, Eric. The structure of land holding in U.P. : 1860-1948. IESHR.No.2. 1975. p 113.

³⁴ For the classification of different sections of cultivating peasantry based on the criterion of share in meeting land revenue demand in U.P., see Dhanagare, D.N., Peasant Movements in India: 1920-50. Pp. 114-15.

persons) of the population and meeting 58 percent of the total land revenue demand of the colonial state. In between were a group of middle and rich peasantry constituting around 13.5 percent of the population and meeting approximately 25-27 percent of the land revenue demand.³⁵ In short, the agrarian structure of U.P. was characterized by a high degree of inequality in landownership pattern towards the end of British rule in India. This inequality was however particularly marked in the case of Awadh where the *talluqdari* system of land revenue settlement led to an ever increasing hold of the *talluqdars* on Awadh peasantry, constituted primarily by tenants-at-will (landless agricultural labourers) who neither had security of tenure nor protection against rent enhancements. The growing mass discontent and unrest, led in the main by Awadh peasantry, resulting from the above changes brought about by nearly two centuries of British rule in India was fast becoming visible throughout the U.P. countryside, especially since the early decades of the twentieth century. The Indian National Congress, the first all India political body, though formed in 1885, could no longer afford to neglect the growing impoverishment of the toiling masses leading to such mass unrests and was therefore, ultimately compelled to take up the most crucial question in the countryside – that of giving ‘land to the tiller’. This has been taken up in the section below.

PEASANT MOVEMENTS AND CONGRESS POLITICS IN U.P. IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD (1920 – 47)

“ For the Congress, the agrarian question was the dominant social issue and much time had been given to its study and the formulation of policy. The United Provinces Congress was in this respect the most advanced and it had reached the conclusion that the *zamindari* system should be abolished”.³⁶

On the contrary, a look at the history of Congress politics in U.P. and its relationship with the U.P. peasantry in the immediate pre-independence period (1920-47) exposes the ‘double strand’³⁷ in the Congress politics from the very beginning. On the one hand, the strand of co-operation with imperialism against the ‘menace’ of the mass

³⁵ Stokes, E. *Ibid.*

³⁶ Nehru, *Discovery of India*, 349 (1945) -Quoted in Pandey, Gyan. *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh*, 1926-34. p 8.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p 3.

movement; on the other, the strand of leadership of the masses in the national struggle. That the issues raising agrarian class conflicts did not even appear on the agenda of the Congress is clearly brought out by the statement made in its manifesto of 1923 regarding the abolition of landlordism in U.P. The statement declared that the party “ cannot possibly dream of such madness as to undermine the very foundation of society as it has existed for hundreds of years in India by trying to eliminate an important and influential class from it”.³⁸ This statement from the Congress party manifesto came at a time when there was widespread agrarian unrest and discontent against the feudal landlords in the face of extremely adverse socio-economic conditions prevailing throughout U.P., especially in the eastern districts and Awadh. This was a period when the First World War had ended and the people of U.P. were faced with a severe economic crisis. With the closure of several mills and factories, there was a cutback in employment opportunities. Prices of essentials like food grains, especially inferior grains, salt, cloth etc. shot up³⁹ [Table 2]. The burden of rent borne by both the protected and unprotected tenants rose steadily during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the increase being much higher for the ordinary tenant. To top it all, there was a disastrous failure of monsoon in 1918 and finally, a worldwide epidemic of pneumonic influenza in which over 3 million people, i.e., 6 percent of the provinces population succumbed to fever in 1918 alone. This period saw an increase in illegal evictions by over 100 percent. It was against this background that around 200 cultivators, mainly unprotected tenants and landless agricultural labourers in the southern and eastern parts of Awadh, marched for some 50 miles from Pratapgarh district to Allahabad in order to draw the attention of Congress leaders towards the inhuman conditions of existence that they were subjected to.

Recognizing the political implications of this widespread agrarian unrest, the Awadh Rent Act of 1886 was amended in 1921 to include a new category of ‘statutory tenants’. They, by definition, had security of tenure for life, could hold on to their plots of land at an unchanged rental for 10 years (instead of 7 years, as was the case earlier with respect to tenants-at-will) after which the tenants could be ejected and the rent enhanced upto a specified limit. This was, however, counteracted by the Awadh *talluqdars* through

³⁸ Ibid. p 196.

³⁹ Dhanagare, D.N. Peasant Movements in India: 1920 – 50. Chapter 5 “Agrarian Agitation and Congress Politics in Oudh, 1920-2 and 1930-1”.

the introduction of a new system of illegal taxation called *nazrana*. According to this new system of unofficial taxation, the landlords could enhance rents at the time of renewal of land lease either to the same or to a different tenant, thereby encouraging illegal eviction of tenants to an even greater extent.

In other words, there was no relief whatsoever for the oppressed classes in rural areas, particularly in eastern U.P. and Awadh, from the inhuman exploitation carried out by the *talluqdars* and *zamindars*. Such was the plight of the oppressed cultivators that it was observed in the 1950's, among untouchable labourers in Basti district that 'the practice of eating *gobraha* (grains collected from animal excreta and cleaned) is common. Eating of carrion is also common. Almost a fifth of the population of the district is compelled to resort to these abnormal practices".⁴⁰

Some leaders within the Congress like Jawaharlal Nehru had begun to realize the political importance of addressing questions of agrarian conflicts between the oppressive landlords and the oppressed peasantry of U.P. and had even started speaking in favour of abolition of *zamindari* system. Despite it all, during Congress' campaign for Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932, he wrote to a big landlord of U.P.: "those views have no application to present day politics and in any event, the Congress is not committed to those views!"⁴¹ Infact, none of the agrarian programmes advocated by the Congress upto the independence period had raised the question of radically altering the structure of land ownership.⁴² The first concrete attempt made by the Congress party in this direction came with the setting up of a Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee in Dec.1947 with J.C. Kumarappa as its chairman. For the first time, a detailed survey of agrarian relations prevailing in the country was made by this committee. All the major issues relating to land reforms were recommended by it that exercised a considerable influence in the evolution of land reforms policy in subsequent years. This will be taken up in the following chapter.

⁴⁰ Pandey, Gyan. Ascendancy of the Congress in U.P.:1920-50. p 19.

⁴¹ Ibid. p 197.

⁴² Report of the National Commission on Agriculture. 1975. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. Pp. 17-21.

Annexure

Table 1

Average Holdings of Land in U.P. Regions, 1882 (acres)

Type of Tenancy	Upper Doab	Middle Doab	Lower Doab	Trans-Ganga	Rohilkhand	Bundelkhand
Occupancy Tenants	8.6	6.7	3.7	3.9	5.2	6.2
Tenants-at-will	7.2	5.7	2.6	3.1	3.6	4.9

Source : Amin, Shahid. Sugarcane and Sugar in Gorakhpur. p 43.

Note : Upper Doab – Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Bulandshahr, Aligarh.

Middle Doab – Mathura, Agra, Etah, Maainpur.

Lower Doab – Farrukhabad, Kanpur, Fatehpur

Trans-Ghagra – Gorakhpur and Basti

Rohilkhand – Bijnor, Moradabad, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Bodaun.

Bundelkhand – Hamirpur, Jalaun, Banda, Jhansi.

Table 2

**Prices, Rental and Revenue Demands, And Wages In The United Provinces, 1930-34
(Index Numbers, 1901=100)**

Year	Wholesale Prices	Rental Demands		Land revenue Demands	Wages (Agricultural)
		Secured Tenants	Ordinary Tenants		
1906	129	104	106	101	100
1911	120	106	115	103	100
1916	160	111	121	104	120
1921	258	114	134	108	---
1926	230	120	146	109	---
1929	218	120	165	110	180
1930	162	121	166	111	---
1931	112	121	165	112	---
1934	103	121	161	113	120

Source: Dhanagare, D.N. "Peasant Movements In India: 1920-50." Chapter 5. Agrarian Agitation And Congress Politics In Oudh. p. 116.

CHAPTER III

An Evaluation of Land Reforms: Equity and Productivity Aspect in U.P. in the Post-Independence Era

Introduction

This chapter looks at the agrarian structure of U.P in the post-independence period as it evolved from the colonial times. It shows how despite various claims made in the name of land reforms, the landholding pattern in the country remains as highly skewed in favour of the big landlords as it was on the eve of independence. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section gives an introduction to the colonial context in which the post independent Indian state formulated its agrarian policies aimed at increasing agricultural productivity. The second section outlines the politico economic orientation of land reforms in U.P. The final section begins by looking into the formation of kulak class in this state. It further explores the production and productivity aspect of land reforms that were carried out in the state.

Indian economy, at the time of independence, was in a state of crisis. We saw in the earlier two chapters how the institutional set up (viz., feudal landownership and increasing hold of traders and moneylenders over peasant production process) within which agricultural production was carried out was such that it led to the growth of a parasitic class of intermediaries who continued to live lavishly on high rates of feudal rents extracted from the poor peasantry. Further, with the land-man ratio steadily declining between 1881-1931¹ and the consequent pressure on land increasing, these rents usually amounted to as much as 50 percent of gross output value and in fact, went up to even 60 percent in the relatively more fertile areas.² These rents were feudal as they were a return to monopoly ownership of land per se and not a return to capital invested by the landlord in the production process.³ The existence of such high levels of feudal rents inhibited free

1 Patnaik,U. The Long Transition, p 283.

2 Ibid.

³ Rent arising due to monopoly ownership of land per se was called Absolute Rent by Adam Smith. This concept of rent was later on developed by Marx into the theory of Absolute Ground Rent. This concept of

flow of capital investments into agriculture. For, it meant that the capitalist producer, in the presence of such rents, would have to produce a surplus large enough to cover not only the Absolute Ground Rent but also the income obtained by way of profit or interest from investment elsewhere in the economy. [Patnaik, U.1999]

In the absence of such productivity raising capital investments into agricultural lands, it is then no wonder that the whole of British India was marked by a near-zero average rate of change of productivity per unit area of all crops on the one hand while **declining** rates of growth of yield per unit area of foodgrains on the other [Blyn.1966]. With population growing at 0.67 percent per annum, every region of British India, including even the most prosperous Punjab, witnessed a decline in per capita foodgrains production and availability in the post World War-I period as has already been noted earlier. Such was the extent of decline in per capita foodgrains production and availability that a typical Indian, on the eve of independence, faced a 20 percent lower availability of basic foodgrains relative to the situation at the turn of the century.⁴ We have already seen how such long-term trends of decline in the rate of growth of per capita foodgrains production together with inflationary war financing culminated in the Great Bengal Famine which claimed a minimum of 3 million lives.

Therefore, at the time of independence, one of the most crucial tasks that lay in front of the Indian planners was to step up the rate of growth of foodgrains production. However, in the face of the existing barrier of Absolute Ground Rent to productivity increases through capital investments into agricultural lands, it was impossible to achieve this target of self-sufficiency in foodgrains production. The abolition of 'rent' as a social category altogether through radical land reforms is indeed a definite way of overcoming this barrier [Patnaik,U. 1986]. However, radical land reforms have never really been intended by our policymakers. This is mainly in order to preserve their own vested interests, for in a mixed economy like ours, those with decision-making powers are precisely the ones who are also the rural as well as urban elite. In fact, far from reducing

Absolute Ground Rent is different from Ricardo's notion of "Differential Rent" which arises in the process of production. See a.) Marx, Karl. Capital. Volume III. Part VI. "Transformation of Surplus Profit into Ground Rent." b.) Smith, Adam. Wealth of Nations. Ed. Cannon. Chapter XI. c.) Ricardo, David. Principles of Political Economy and Taxation. Ed. Piero Sraffa.

⁴ Patnaik and Hasan. 'Aspects of Farmers Movements in Uttar Pradesh in the context of Uneven Capitalist Development in Indian Agriculture', in T.V. Sathyamurthy's (ed) Industry and Agriculture in India since Independence. Vol II. 1995.

inequalities in land ownership among different sections of the cultivating peasantry, the various legislative measures of land reforms that have been implemented throughout the country have only led to a further concentration in the ownership as well as operational holdings pattern overtime [Chapter 4].

Thus, the main objective of land reforms in our country, from the very beginning, was not an egalitarian distribution of land ownership but the promotion of a capitalist tendency in Indian agriculture. In this regard, it has been argued that in the absence of land reforms, productive investment by landlords in the capitalist direction will not take place without a very large rise in profitability in undertaking direct cultivation. Alternatively, if there is no land reform, the landlords will not undertake direct cultivation along capitalist lines unless there is a discrete rise in surplus produced per unit area [Patnaik,U. 1983]. Moreover, the increase in surplus per unit area should be such that Absolute Ground Rent constitutes only a tiny fraction of the entire surplus, the remaining portion (i.e., surplus produce net of rent) accruing to the capitalist farmer as profit on capital invested in undertaking direct cultivation.

This tremendous increase in the productivity of agricultural produce (mainly rice and wheat under foodgrains) leading to a rapid increase in the rate of growth of foodgrains production is indeed what the economy experienced particularly since the mid 1960s when the foodgrains grew at a compound annual rate of 2.02 percent per annum during 1967-68 to 1979-80 initially which subsequently rose to 2.85 percent during 1980-81 to 1989-90 [Table1]. A number of steps were taken by the government in this direction, the most notable being the creation of domestic market for foodgrains through initiating a planned investment drive in infrastructural activities etc. in the immediate post-independence period and the adoption of New Agricultural Strategy (NAS) in the mid sixties. The introduction of NAS marked a decisive shift in the government's perception of what constituted the crucial constraint to further increases in the rate of growth of foodgrains production in the agrarian sector of the economy.⁵ The importance given to land reforms in the earlier plans, atleast on paper if not in practice, was now denied even in principle. Instead, emphasis was now laid on increasing the productivity of foodgrains through technological modernization.

⁵Chakravarty, Sukhamoy.Development Planning:The Indian Experience. Pp. 24-27.

Thus, while the creation of domestic markets greatly increased the relative profitability of foodgrains by increasing the ratio of foodgrains prices relative to that of manufactured goods by nearly 50 percent between late nineteen fifties and mid nineteen seventies [Patnaik and Hasan.1995], the introduction of "Green Revolution" technology greatly contributed to a sustained increase in the growth rate of foodgrains production through the provision of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. and credit at subsidized rates. Though this strategy had an impressive impact on wheat and later on rice during the nineteen eighties when this technology spread to the eastern regions of the country, there seems to have been no discernable impact on the rate of growth of coarse cereals which constitute the staple diet of the majority in the countryside [Table 1]. Even in the case of wheat and rice, only those states benefited from this new modern technology package which were not only agriculturally well developed, especially in terms of irrigation, roads, railways, credit facilities etc. but also had a substantial section of the well-to-do cultivating peasantry who could afford to switch over to a technology which demanded a much higher initial as well as working capital outlay per unit output. These were undoubtedly the states of Punjab, Haryana and Western U.P. in the northern parts of the country [Table 2]. We will focus on U.P.- a state where this imbalance induced by the 'Green Revolution' technology package can be most clearly seen.

POLITICO-ECONOMIC ORIENTATION OF LAND REFORMS IN UTTAR- PRADESH : EQUITY ASPECT OF LAND REFORMS

The agrarian structure of U.P. that emerged after nearly two centuries of subjugation to colonial exploitation had several growth inhibiting features like the existence of a rent receiving class of parasitic intermediaries between the actual tiller and the state, widespread prevalence of insecure tenancies on extortionist terms inhibiting the optimum utilization of tenants land, a predominance of tiny uneconomic holdings and the extreme fragmentation and subdivision of holdings. Such was the extent of concentration in land ownership that barely 1.49 percent of the bigger landlords owned nearly 57.7

percent of the land while the majority, i.e., 98.51 percent of small landowners accounted for only about 42.43 percent of the total land on the eve of independence.

In Eastern U.P., where the *talluqdari* system of land revenue settlement had prevailed, as much as three-fourths of the entire *zamindari* area was under the ownership of a mere top 5 percent of the *talluqdars* in 1951-52. This was in sharp contrast to the 54 percent owned by the top 5 percent of western U.P. *zamindars* at that time.⁶ The principle slogan of giving 'land to the tiller' around which the peasantry of U.P. had been mobilized by the then Congress government in its struggle against imperialism has however never been intended by our policymakers and has therefore remained confined to theory only. In other words, apart from Telangana and West-Bengal where land reforms carried out were to an extent redistributive in nature, U.P. as in most other states in India has however experienced "land reforms from above". As a result, all the measures of land reforms that have been implemented in the state mainly during the first two decades of Indian independence starting from the fifties upto the early seventies viz., the U.P. *Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act*, *Consolidation of Holdings Act* as well as the *Ceilings on landholdings Act* have only tended to preserve the interests of the dominant class of big landowners at the cost of the marginal and the landless agricultural labourers. The overall result has been that the agrarian structure of U.P. in the post colonial period continues to be as heavily skewed in favour of the dominant sections as it was on the eve of independence.

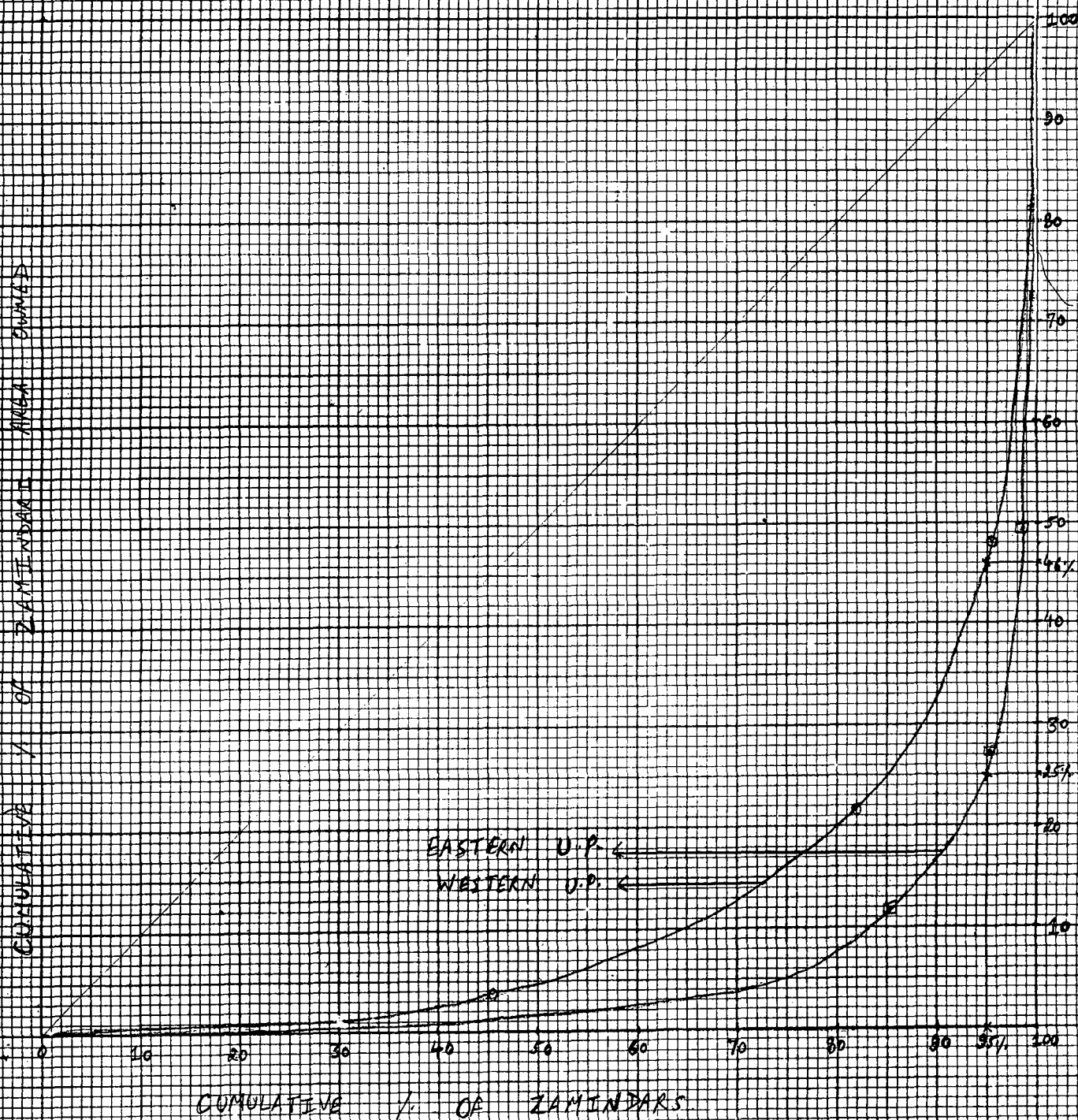
This section briefly takes up each of the above mentioned land reform measures together with the loopholes inherent in each legislation and shows how all these together have resulted in a greater concentration of land ownership with a tiny minority on the one hand while forcing bulk of the lower strata of the peasantry to join the ranks of landless and semi-landless agricultural labourers on the other.

The first attempt towards reforming India's agrarian structure was made with the passing of the U.P. Z.A.L.R. Act in July 1952. All the intermediary tenures that had existed between the tiller and the state under which land was held were abolished and transferred into two major tenurial categories : *Bhumidari* and *Sirdari*.⁷ While the *bhumidars*, who mainly constituted the former *zamindars*, were given heritable, permanent

⁶ Singh, Baljit and Sridhar Misra. A Study of Land Reforms in U.P. . Calculated from table 5 on Pp. 215 and 216.[See P. 44a]

⁷ Resource Use, Productivity and Land Reforms in Uttar-Pradesh. NCAER. February. 1977.

PRE-ZAMINDARI ABOLITION (1951-52)



REGION-WISE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF ZAMINDARS AND THE ZAMINDARI AREA OWNED ACCORDING TO THE AREA OWNED IN SAMPLE VILLAGES IN U.P. IN 1951-52

and transferable rights in land, *sirdars* who primarily comprised the former occupancy *ryots*, were to hold land on heritable but not transferable basis. Besides creating these above two tenurial categories under which land was held, the former non occupancy *ryots* as well as tenants at will (mainly sharecropping) cultivating 'sir' lands continued to hold land as tenants under the newly created *bhumidars* and *sirdars*. They were now termed as *Asamis* and *Adivasis* respectively and were subject to ejectments on various grounds. While the *zamindars* were allowed to retain large areas of their 'sir', *khudkasht* and grove lands without any payment to the state under the pretext of personal cultivation, a heavy compensation in terms of cash and bonds was paid to the *zamindars* in cases where their rights were terminated and their lands vested with the state. Such lands over which 'ex-*zamindars*' could automatically claim *bhumidari* rights accounted for more than one-fourth of the total agricultural land of the province.⁸ Further, a highly regressive feature was introduced by making the tenants pay ten times (which was subsequently raised to twenty times) the rent at hereditary rates in order to convert their *sirdari* into *bhumidari*.⁹ Thus, while the former *zamindars* were made *bhumidars* of their sir and grove lands without paying any multiple of land revenue, former tenants, mainly occupancy tenants were made to pay a heavy price for acquiring such rights over the very lands they tilled. Moreover, conversion of *sirdari* into *bhumidari* was substantial in terms of area but not in terms of numbers. In an evaluation based on sample studies before and after enforcement of the ZALR act, it was found that 52.8 percent of all cultivators had no *bhumidari* rights over any part of their lands and over 70 percent cited lack of cash as the main reason. Of the farms above 50 acres in size, all had *bhumidari* rights, while only one-third of the tenants on farms below 3 acres could claim *bhumidari* over some part.¹⁰

Worse still, bulk of the cultivating tenantry comprising the former non-occupancy *ryots* and tenants at will on sir lands, who were indeed the most vulnerable sections among the tillers, were precisely the ones subjected to forced evictions by *zamindars* in order to claim *bhumidari* right over large parts of their lands. This process of tenant evictions was greatly facilitated by the time lag of at least four years between the placing and subsequent

⁸ Shankar, Kripa. Land Transfers: A Case Study. 1990. P 20.

⁹ Report of the National Commission on Agriculture 1975. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. p 132.

¹⁰ Patnaik and Hasan. 1995.

passing of the U.P. ZALR bill in the state Assembly and a further two years before it could ultimately be brought into practice. Consequently, these evicted tenants were either forced to join the ranks of landless agricultural labourers or were made to continue to cultivate their 'lords' farms on a share crop basis under the garb of *sajhedari* or agricultural partnership. The fact that sharecropping or *bataidari* was not even recognized as letting out till as late as 1975 only reinforced the predominance of sharecropping as the principal form of tenancy arrangement.¹¹ Further, the U.P. Land Laws Amendment Act 1975 laid down certain extremely stringent conditions for the recognition of a sharecropper as tenant in U.P. According to the laws laid down, a sharecropper was required to show a documentary evidence of his possession over the land, which, needless to say, is almost impossible to prove in all such cases. As a result, absentee landlordism and sharecropping is still rampant in U.P. In one of the studies conducted by the Land Reforms Unit (LRU, Mussoorie) in the early nineties, it was revealed that 89 percent of the total tenants had leased in on sharecropping terms while 8.7 percent had leased in on cash rents. Despite the repeated claims made by the policy makers to bring about an egalitarian distribution of land among different sections of the cultivating peasantry, the surplus land (over and above the ceiling limit imposed on landholdings in 1960) acquired by the state did not even account for 1 percent of the entire cultivated land upto 1980 and consisted mostly of inferior land, a part of which was unfit for cultivation.¹² If this was the magnitude of land acquired in the first place, then the land actually distributed among the landless and the poor can well be imagined!

We can therefore conclude that the Congress programme of *zamindari* abolition with compensation as it has emerged in the form of various state legislative measures did not lead to any significant change in the agrarian structure of U.P. even after nearly four decades of its implementation in the state [Trends in concentration of ownership and operational holdings have been discussed in detail in Chapter 4]. It merely ended up preserving the interests of the already existing dominant class of rural landed elite allowing

¹¹ Land Reforms in India: An Empirical Study. 1989. Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. Report of the First Year. Volume 1. Land Reforms Unit, Mussoorie.

¹² K. Shankar. Pp 20 & 23.

the erstwhile *zamindars* now turned *bhumidars* to retain large areas of lands under the pretext of 'personal' cultivation. Further, 'personal' cultivation was so defined as to cover cultivation through hired labour paid in cash or kind but not in a crop share¹³. Far from undertaking cultivation personally, not even personal supervision by such a landlord or his family is treated as an essential requisite of 'personal' cultivation. An obvious implication of such a pro- 'landlord' legislation has been a rapid increase in the rate of tenant evictions, thereby forcing them to join the ranks of landless agricultural labourers on the one hand while facilitating concealed tenancy, mainly sharecropping, under which the actual tenant is termed as a *sajhedar* on the other.

Against this background of an unreformed agrarian structure, the state's attempts to promote capitalist tendency in Indian agriculture through the introduction of 'Green Revolution' technology package has only resulted in a lopsided growth pattern in U.P. Western U.P., where conditions for the formation of an upwardly mobile class of rich farmers undertaking direct cultivation along capitalist lines were far more favourable than those in eastern U.P., could and did take advantage of this increased profitability of foodgrains production and has therefore fared much better than the eastern region not only in terms of a higher level of resource use per acre but also much higher levels of production and productivity compared to any other region in the state. This is discussed below.

PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY ASPECT OF LAND REFORMS IN U.P.

The failure of the state in bringing about institutional changes through radical land reforms, especially against the background of a rapid industrialization drive initiated during the first phase of Indian planning experience (1950-51- 1964-65) was sooner or later, bound to manifest itself in a wage goods supply crisis, as indeed it did during the mid nineteen sixties when the economy faced a severe food crisis leading to a rapid rate of food

¹³ National Commission on Agriculture. 1975. Section XV on Agrarian Reforms. Pp. 132.

price inflation.¹⁴ Despite a tremendous increase in the rate of growth of foodgrains, which grew at a compound rate of 3.3 percent per annum during the first decade after independence,¹⁵ there was a severe foodgrain crisis in the country. Besides highlighting the extreme importance of the question of giving 'land to the tiller', this emerging crisis once again brought to the fore the crucial role played by the state in stepping up foodgrains production through public investments in rural development, irrigation and other infrastructural activities. This was a period when limits to further increases in foodgrains production through area expansion had already been reached at. Therefore, emphasis now had to be placed on land augmenting technological progress in agriculture. Consequently, public investment in the agrarian sector did step up following the mid sixties crisis, though with a significant shift in the composition of such investment, a greater reliance now being placed on price incentives.

With the relative profitability of foodgrains already on the rise since the early sixties owing to a shift in intersectoral terms of trade within which foodgrains prices increased much faster than raw materials prices by about 50 percent in favour of foodgrains,¹⁶ new agricultural strategy (NAS) was pushed through which entailed the introduction of a modern technology package of high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. at subsidized rates to the farmers. Its aim was to promote capitalist development in Indian agriculture by encouraging the *zamindars* turned *bhumidars* to become capitalist farmers. While this above strategy proved to be a success to some extent in western U.P. where technical conditions of production ever since the colonial times were far more favourable for the growth of an upwardly mobile class of rich capitalist farmers, it largely proved to be a failure in eastern U.P. where a highly polarised class structure in the countryside inhibited such productivity raising capital investments into

¹⁴ Kalecki, M. 'Problems of Financing Economic Development in a Mixed Economy' in Selected Essays on the Economic Growth of the Socialist and the Mixed Economy. Also, see Chakravarty, Sukhamoy, Development Planning : The Indian Experience, 1987.

¹⁵ Patnaik, Utsa. Political Economy of State Intervention in Food Economy. EPW. Vol. XXXII. No. 20 and 21. May 17-24. 1997.

¹⁶ Patnaik and Hasan. Aspects of Farmers Movements in Uttar Pradesh in the context of uneven Capitalist Development in Indian Agriculture. In T.V. Sathyamurthy's (ed) Industry and Agriculture in India since Independence. Vol. 2. 1995.

agriculture, thereby making rent rather than profit much more attractive as a mode of surplus appropriation.

Such was the extent of concentration in land ownership in eastern U.P. that a mere top 5 percent of the *zamindars* owned as much as 75 percent of the entire *zamindari* area as against 54 percent in western U.P. in 1951-52. Not only was the extent of polarization in class structure in the countryside much sharper in the former region, capital formation in agriculture too since the colonial times, has been largely concentrated in western U.P. This has meant a relatively much greater fertility and therefore productivity of the lands of the Upper Doab comprising the districts of western U.P. compared to the eastern region. We have seen before how this resulted in a much greater extent of commercial farming in western compared to any other region in the state. In fact, it has been estimated that as much as 37 percent of the total cropped area in the western region in 1951-52 was under commercial crops like wheat, sugarcane, oilseeds etc. This figure stood at a much lower level for eastern U.P. at 16 percent.¹⁷ Moreover, western U.P. has historically had the advantage of having a much higher farm size relative to any other region in the state.

In other words, the agrarian structure of western U.P. as it evolved from the colonial period, was far more favourable for the development of a class of capitalist farmers who could invest in productivity raising capital investments into agricultural lands. The growth of this class was further stimulated by the market-oriented nature of land reforms initiated by the Congress government in the immediate post-independence period. Moreover, the introduction of “Green Revolution” technology package has only led to a further increase in concentration of both input usage as well as land ownership in the hands of this tiny class of capitalist farmers in regions where it existed, notably the western region of the state. This process of kulak class formation however remained by and large absent in eastern U.P. where the highly polarized class-structure in the countryside inhibited unhindered capital flows into agriculture. Further, with tenancy going underground, feudal rent continued to act as a barrier to productive investments in the post-colonial period as well.

¹⁷ Singh and Misra. Pp. 62.

In this regard, a study by Kripa Shankar (1990) shows how the process of land transfers in U.P. initiated by the Congress programme of market oriented land reforms was further facilitated by the introduction of “Green Revolution” technology package since the mid nineteen sixties. While in western U.P., it was the newly emerging class of commercial farmers whose position was consolidated through such a transfer of lands, it was mainly the lower categories, notably those cultivating an average land size of 2.5-5.0 acres who emerged as the dominant buyers of land in the post “Green Revolution” period in eastern U.P. The statistics on land transfers in the two regions given below lend support to the point made above.

In western U.P., the share of the dominant buyers’ (i.e., those cultivating land upto 5-10 acres) in total land purchased increased from 19 percent during 1950-1968 to 28 percent during 1968-83. At the same time, the share in total land sold by the top category owning above 10 acres declined drastically from a little above half to less than two fifths in the second period. Thus, it is the top two categories of owners with land above five acres that have emerged as the net buyers of land in the post-“Green Revolution” period in this region. The net sellers are those owning an average land size of less than 2.5 acres. Their share in total land disposed off has increased from 28 percent to about 35 percent in the latter period. In other words, there is an increasing tendency to dispose off agricultural land by the small and marginal groups, which is rapidly being purchased by the upper strata of the cultivating peasantry in the western region. Clearly then, the “Green Revolution” technology package has resulted in a further concentration of land ownership at the top on the one hand while leading to increasing landlessness and semi-landlessness on the other.

In sharp contrast to the western region, it was the class of self-sufficient farmers owning an average land size of (2.5-5.0) acres who emerged as the significant buyers of land in eastern U.P. in the post-“Green Revolution” period. While the share of this category in the total land purchased increased from one-tenth in the first period to one-third in the second, there was a significant decline in the share in total land sold by the two highest categories from one-fourth to nearly two-fifths in the latter period. One possible explanation for these changing class relations in eastern U.P. countryside could be that the

productivity of even small sized holdings increased in the post “Green Revolution” period which have induced the marginal and small groups to retain even their tiny plots of land. This was the period of rising foodgrain prices and hence, increased profitability of agricultural produce. In the absence of kulak class formation or of landlords turning into capitalist farmers in eastern U.P., it is increasingly the lower size groups which have benefited the most from government’s various price incentive schemes such as the setting up of minimum support price, subsidies etc.

Thus, while the Congress programme of land reforms further stimulated the growth of this class in regions like western U.P. where it already existed through facilitating a process of land transfers from the marginal and small cultivators to the upper strata of the peasantry, it by and large maintained the status quo in areas like eastern U.P. where the formation of a rich class of capitalist farmers failed to take place. Even after two decades of land reforms in U.P., as many as 92.36 percent of the households in the eastern region were found to be cultivating an average holding size of upto 5 acres compared to three-fourths in the western region [NCAER, Feb.1977]. Further, nearly seven-tenth (68 percent) of the net area in eastern U.P. was accounted for by small and marginal holdings of under 5 acres size. This was in sharp contrast to the western region where as much as three-fifths of the area was accounted for by holdings of an average size of 5 acres and above. Moreover, with the percentage of agricultural labourers continuously increasing and tenancy going underground, sharecropping still continues to be rampant in eastern U.P. countryside.

Consequently, it was the western region that accounted not only for a higher resource use per unit area but also enjoyed a much higher level of productivity, especially of wheat and rice compared to the eastern region. [Table 3]. Such was the extent of concentration of agricultural produce (foodgrain as well as non-foodgrain) that with just over a third of the net sown area, the share of the western region alone accounted for nearly

two-fifths of the state's total foodgrains production as well as 46.1 percent of all crops production by the mid nineteen seventies.¹⁸

In other words, technical conditions of production were initially far more favourable in the western region and were not conducive enough for such productive investments into agricultural lands in the eastern region. However, we find that despite this, if one were to look at the growth profile of foodgrains in eastern U.P. during the nineteen eighties, there has undoubtedly been a tremendous increase in the growth rates registered, particularly of paddy whose productivity increased at a compound annual growth rate of 6.8 percent during the eighties. [Table 4]. This rate not only exceeded that of western U.P. by more than one percent but was also higher than that recorded for the state as a whole. One crucial factor that explains this marked improvement in the performance of eastern UP's agricultural economy during the nineteen eighties is the stepping up of public investment in the rural sector. The discrete rise in rice production in the region is primarily attributable to the positive impact of assured irrigation supply during this period of spread of the "Green Revolution" technology package mainly to the eastern parts of the country. This decade therefore witnessed a narrowing down of the inter-regional inequalities in the growth rates of production as well as productivity of foodgrains brought about primarily by the narrowing down of the gap in public investment between the two regions.¹⁹

Besides a tremendous increase in agricultural productivity, this was also the period when all the major economic indicators like employment and real wage rates in agriculture moved in the positive direction. While agricultural employment by usual status in U.P. increased at a compound annual growth of 2.08 percent per annum between 1977-78 to 1987-88 which subsequently fell to 0.77 percent during 1987-88 to 1999-2000,²⁰ there was a marked improvement in real wage rates in agriculture in all the regions within U.P. between 1970-71 to 1986-87. During this period, real wage rates in U.P. agriculture grew

¹⁸ Lieten, G.K. and Ravi Srivastava. *Unequal Partners: Power Relations, Devolution and Development in Uttar Pradesh*. Sage Publications. 1999. Pp. 47 and 48.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* Pp. 50-51.

²⁰ Sen, Abhijit. 'Agriculture, Employment and Poverty : Recent Trends in Rural India' in V.K. Ramachandran and M. Swaminathan's (ed) 'Agrarian Studies : Essays on Agrarian Relations in Less Developed Countries. 2002.

at a faster rate at 2.48 percent per annum compared to the All-India rate of 2.25 percent.²¹ Further, while this trend increase in wages was recorded for all the regions within U.P., the rate of increase was the highest in eastern U.P., which saw a more than doubling of real wage rates of unskilled workers as opposed to a 51.5 percent rise recorded in the western region. [Table 5].

Thus, “Green Revolution” has on the one hand, led to increased concentration of land in the hands of the well-to-do sections of the peasantry, thereby encouraging reverse tenancy, especially in the western districts- a region where capitalist tendency could and did develop even though to an extent, in the post independence period, it has, on the other, also led to increased productivity and production growth rates, real wages and employment in the U.P. countryside. Hence, the impact was not felt so much on poverty, which actually registered a decline during 1973-74 to 1993-94 not only in U.P. but at the all-India level as well. [Table 6].

However, the post-reforms period marked by a decisive restructuring of public investment and other financial flows into agriculture, substitution of subsidies by price incentives to the farmers etc., is bound to have an extremely adverse impact on poverty levels, especially of the growing numbers of the landless and semi-landless agricultural labourers in the countryside. [Chapter 4].

The next chapter brings out the long term trends in the pattern of land ownership and operational holdings in U.P. in relation to All-India and shows how even after fifty years of Indian independence, the agrarian structure not only of U.P. but of the country as a whole remains almost as highly skewed as it was on the eve of independence.

²¹ Lieten and Srivastava. p 53.

Annexure

Table 1

All-India Annual Growth Rates of Production of Foodgrains (Index Based)
(Base Triennium Ending 1981-82 = 100)

(Percentage Per Annum)

Crop	1967-68 to 1979-80	1980-81 to 1989-90	1990-91 to 2000-01
1. Rice	1.99	3.62	1.79
2. Wheat	5.68	3.57	3.04
3. Coarse Cereals	0.67	0.40	0.06
5. Pulses	-0.44	1.52	-0.58
6. Foodgrains	2.02	2.85	1.66

Source : Economic Survey, 2001-02, p 189 and Economic Survey 1999-2000, p 134 for the period 1967-68 to 1979-80.

Table 2

State and Region Foodgrains Output Per Capita*, 1960-98

Region/State	1960-62 (1)	1972-74 (2)	1984-86 (3)	1996-98 (4)	Percent Change (4-3/3)	Percent Change (3-1/1)	Percent Change (4-1/1)
I North and North West							
- Haryana and Punjab	313.5	454.0	734.9	745.43	1.43	134.4	137.78
- Uttar Pradesh	184.5	176.9	242.8	253.54	4.42	31.6	37.42
- Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal	113.9	222.1	212.4	185.51	-12.66	86.5	62.87
Average	204.6	234.7	337.2	394.83	17.09	64.81	92.98
II East							
- Assam	145.4	137.9	121.1	139.55	15.24	-16.71	-4.02
- Bihar	158.6	140.0	136.9	145.05	5.94	-13.68	-8.54
- Orissa	225.1	200.1	217.1	174.35	-19.69	-3.55	-22.55
- West Bengal	147.5	151.0	154.6	179.42	16.05	4.81	21.64
Average	162.2	152.9	152.9	159.59	4.38	-5.73	-1.61
III South							
- Andhra Pradesh	180.8	175.3	161.5	164.37	1.78	-10.67	-9.09
- Karnataka	161.6	185.0	154.3	171.8	11.34	-4.52	6.31
- Kerala	61.9	58.9	43.6	27.83	-36.17	-29.56	-55.04
- Tamilnadu	160.9	146.6	134.1	118.47	-11.66	-16.66	-26.37
Average	152.3	150.4	133.9	120.62	-9.92	-12.08	-20.80
IV West Central							
- Gujarat	103.5	95.2	95.5	107.70	12.77	-7.73	4.60
- Madhya Pradesh	273.9	231.4	237.2	240.95	1.58	-13.40	-12.30
- Maharashtra	165.0	110.0	124.7	135.62	8.76	-24.42	-17.81
- Rajasthan	242.1	199.8	180.4	237.49	31.65	-25.49	-1.90
Average	198.6	158.3	160.3	180.44	12.56	-19.28	-9.14
All Regions	178.9	172.0	192.1	201.80	5.05	7.38	12.80

Source : Patnaik, Utsa. Political Economy of State Intervention in Food Economy. EPW. Vol. XXXII, Nos. 20 and 21, May 17-24, 1997. Figures for 1996-98 have been updated from data on production of foodgrains given in the Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy, RBI. 1999-2000. Population figures are from Statistical Abstract, India. 2000. p 9.

*Note : *(Annual average for selected triennial periods in kg. Per head of regional population).*

Table 3**East and West Regional Disparities in Agrarian Performance in U.P., India**

Sl.No.	Description	Eastern U.P.	Western U.P.
1	Population per sq. km. 1991	614	602
2	Gross Irrigated Area as a percentage of GCA	46.9	76.7
3	Ground Water Potential as percentage of Gross Recharge (1990)	75	67
4	Percentage of Total Irrigated Area Served by Canals (1989-90)	29.3	23.4
5	Percentage of Irrigated Area Served by Tubewells (1989-90)	63.2	68.8
6	Percentage of All-Farm holdings in <1 ha (marginal)	81.3	65
7	Average size of marginal holdings (ha)	0.32	0.4
8	Fertiliser Use 1980-81 (kg/ha)	78.87	57.6
9	Fertiliser Use 1989-90 (kg/ha)	80.92	100.53
10	Wheat Yield 1980-81 (kg/ha)	14.62	19.4
11	Wheat Yield 1989-90 (kg/ha)	18.1	24.5
12	Paddy Yield 1980-81 (kg/ha)	9.11	14.08
13	Paddy Yield 1989-90 (kg/ha)	16.13	21.73
14	Area Under Cash Crops as percentage of GCA (1980-81)	10.06	26.85
15	Area Under Cash Crops as percentage of GCA (1989-90)	10.37	31.61
16	Gross Income per hectare of Net Sown Area (1988-89)	88.72	116.12
17	Area Under Summer Crops as percentage of GCA	2.01	4.42

Source : Government of U.P. (1996)

Table 4

Region-wise Compound Growth Rate of Foodgrains, Wheat and Rice in Uttar Pradesh

Year	Production				Productivity			
	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-96	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-96
1. Foodgrains								
- Eastern	2.47	2.09	5.81	2.68	2.07	1.61	4.96	2.92
- Western	3.90	2.26	4.57	2.89	3.37	2.27	4.57	2.53
- U.P.	2.86	1.95	4.92	2.65	2.40	1.70	4.54	2.59
2. Wheat								
- Eastern	8.25	8.34	7.01	3.48	4.44	1.92	3.80	2.85
- Western	8.05	4.91	4.87	2.84	4.78	2.34	3.95	2.81
- U.P.	7.23	5.46	5.64	3.20	4.09	1.99	3.80	2.43
3. Rice								
- Eastern	1.82	3.19	7.73	2.94	1.45	1.99	6.80	2.96
- Western	3.32	5.40	5.03	4.97	0.87	3.46	5.67	1.38
- U.P.	1.68	4.00	6.29	3.45	1.10	2.41	5.98	2.38

Source : Quoted from Lieten, G.K. and Ravi Srivastava . Unequal Partners. p. 49. (Department of Agricultural Statistics, Uttar Pradesh.

Note: i) Computations are based on three-year average ending in the year stated.

*ii) *The average growth rate for U.P. includes three other regions besides the Western and Eastern regions. These are the Hills, Bundelkhand and the Central Region.*

Table 5

Real Wages of Unskilled Rural Labourers in U.P., 1985-95

Year	U.P.	Western Region	Eastern Region
1985-86	140.70	117.14	162.62
1986-87	138.82	121.63	168.43
1987-88	138.10	121.10	165.23
1988-89	138.06	121.35	166.72
1989-90	154.61	138.75	180.85
1990-91	164.46	151.21	193.65
1991-92	156.78	145.64	181.01
1992-93	163.57	151.54	191.20
1993-94	165.23	151.95	192.03
1994-95	168.68	151.46	204.60

Source : Quoted from Lieten, G.K and Ravi Srivastava (1999), "Unequal Partners", p.54. Rural and Urban Wage Index, and Rural Consumer Price Index, U.P. various issues

Note : Base Year is the financial year 1980-81

Table 6

Estimates of Rural Head Count Poverty Ratios by the Expert Group Method

Year	Uttar Pradesh	All-India
1973-74	56.5	56.4
1977-78	47.6	53.1
1983	46.5	45.6
1986-87	36.6	38.3
1987-88	41.1	39.1
1989-90	30.5	34.4
1990-91	34.8	35.0
1992	47.9	44.0
1993-94	42.6	37.5

Source : Sen, Abhijit "Economic Reforms, Employment and Poverty : Trends and Options", Economic and Political Weekly, Special Number, Sep. 1996.

CHAPTER IV

Agrarian Structure Of Uttar Pradesh Vis-A-Vis All-India In The Post Independence Period

Changes in the agrarian structure of any country or a particular region within that country are best reflected in the distribution of landholdings across size classes within the cultivating peasantry. For this purpose, it becomes extremely important to look at the pattern of landholdings in the rural areas of the specific region under study, i.e., U.P. in relation to All-India. In this regard, the first comprehensive All-India survey on landholdings in the post-independence period was carried out by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in its eighth round in 1953-54. It provides estimates of two basic distributions of landholdings-viz., distribution of land owned by households and that of land operated. According to this data source, a highly skewed structure of both ownership and operational holdings, not only in U.P. but in India as well, continues to exist even today. Tables 1 and 2 show the actual distribution of land ownership as well as operational holdings in rural U.P. in relation to All-India as is shown by the NSS both in its eighth as well as forty-eighth rounds (i.e., the first and the last respectively in the series of landholding surveys carried out by the NSS so far).

Looking at the data for All-India for 1991-92 [Table 1b], we find that while more than seven-tenths (71.8 percent) of the households belonging to the size-class of upto 2.5 acres own only about a sixth (16.93 percent) of the total owned area, barely 5.42 percent of all the households belonging to the medium and large size groups owning land above 10 acres had ownership rights over as much as two-fifths of the entire owned area. In U.P. however, the level of concentration in land ownership is slightly less relative to the All-India level [Table 1a]. The marginal category of ownership holdings in U.P., constituting approximately three-fourths (74.4 percent) of all the households own a relatively greater proportion of the total area, i.e., 27.42 percent compared to All-India's 17 percent. The percentage of total land owned by those belonging to the medium and large size classes is also somewhat less at 22.5 percent in U.P. compared to All-India's 39.9 percent. In other

words, a sizeable proportion i.e., 52.3 percent of the entire area in U.P. as against 35.52 percent in All-India is under the ownership of those owning upto 5 acres.

Table 1a
Percentage Distribution of Household Ownership holdings and Owned Area in
1953-54 and 1991-92 in U.P

Size class of Household Ownership Holdings (in acres).	Percentage distribution of households.		Percentage distribution of area owned.		Average Area per Household.	
	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54
Upto 1.0	47.69	49.05	6.53	2.37	0.31	0.26
1.0-2.5	26.71	10.98	20.89	10.11	1.61	1.69
2.5-5.0	14.73	18.4	24.88	19.35	3.5	3.6
5.0-10.0	7.92	14.25	25.82	29.08	6.73	6.95
10.0-20.0	2.59	5.53	16.37	22.2	13.06	13.66
20.0-30.0	0.25	1.03	2.79	7.23	23.42	23.81
30.0-50.0	0.12	0.63	2.23	6.76	38.96	36.51
50.0 and above	0.01	0.13	0.48	2.9	89.4	75.2
All Sizes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	2.07	3.4

Source : NSS Report Nos. 399. Pp. A-13, A-30. Report No. 66. Pp. 44.

Note :1. The size classes for the 48th round have been converted from hectares into acres (using 1 ha.=2.5 acres) to make it comparable with the 8th round.

2. Figures for the 8th round exclude those who own less than 0.01 acres while for the 48th round excludes those with less than 0.005 acres.

Table 1b

**Percentage distribution of Household Ownership holdings and Owned Area
in 1953-54 and 1991-92 in All-India**

Size Class of House- hold Ownership Holdings. (in acres).	Percentage distribution of households.		Percentage distribution of area owned.		Average Area per Households.	
	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54
Upto 1.0	51.36	46.9	3.8	1.4	0.24	0.27
1.0-2.5	20.52	13.9	13.13	4.9	1.61	1.67
2.5-5.0	13.42	13.6	18.59	10.5	3.5	3.6
5.0-10.0	9.28	12.9	24.58	19.2	6.67	7.08
10.0-20.0	3.92	7.8	20.64	22.9	13.25	13.95
20.0-30.0	0.9	2.5	8.44	13.1	23.53	24.35
30.0-50.0	0.45	1.5	6.51	12.4	36.35	37.53
50.0 and above	0.15	0.9	4.31	15.6	73.83	88.71
All Sizes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	2.52	4.81

Source : NSS Report No. 399. Pp. A-35, A-18. Report No. 66. p. 12. Patnaik, U. 1972.

Note : Figures for the 8th round exclude those owning less than 0.01 acres whereas for the 48th round excludes those who own less than 0.005 acres of land.

Table 2a
Percentage Distribution of Household Operational Holdings
and Operated Area in U.P.

Size Class of Household Operational Holdings. (in acres).	Percentage distribution of Operational Holdings.		Percentage distribution of Operated Area.		Average Area per holding.	
	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54
Upto 1.0	38.0	35.56	5.39	2.17	0.37	0.25
1.0-2.5	30.02	21.04	19.57	9.93	1.64	1.69
2.5-5.0	18.52	20.4	26.30	20.45	3.57	3.60
5.0-10.0	9.85	15.4	26.3	29.46	6.71	6.93
10.0-20.0	3.08	5.74	16.03	21.94	13.06	13.79
20.0-30.0	0.34	1.2	3.12	7.93	23.08	24.2
30.0-50.0	0.18	0.53	2.67	5.43	37.89	36.12
50.0 and above	0.02	0.13	0.61	2.69	79.47	76.88
All Sizes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	2.53	3.72

Source: NSS Report No. 407. Pp. A-28, A-11. Report No. 66. Pp. 13, 45.

Note : Figures for the 8th round excludes those operating less than 0.01 acres while for the 48th round excludes those who operate less than 0.005 acres.

Table 2b
Percentage Distribution of Household Operational Holdings
and Operated Area in All-India.

Size Class of Household Operational holdings. (in acres).	Percentage distribution of Operational holdings.		Percentage distribution of Operated Area.		Average Area per holding.	
	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54	1991-92	1953-54
Upto 1.0	34.7	34.9	3.32	0.12	0.32	0.21
1.0-2.5	25.09	15.8	12.28	4.4	1.64	1.7
2.5-5.0	17.79	16.9	18.70	10.0	3.52	3.6
5.0-10.0	11.9	15.9	24.13	18.6	6.73	7.1
10.20.0	5.27	9.8	20.93	22.4	13.3	14.0
20.0-30.0	1.26	3.2	8.9	12.6	23.8	24.3
30.0-50.0	0.70	2.2	7.57	13.8	36.38	38.0
50.0 and above	0.20	1.2	4.17	17.1	70.27	83.5
All Sizes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	3.35	5.4

Source: NSS Report No. 407. Pp. A-34, A-17. Report No. 66. p.15. Report No. 74. p 90. U.Patnaik [1972] for the 8th round.

Note : Figures for the 8th round includes those who operate less than 0.005 acres while for the 48th round excludes those operating less than 0.005 acres also.

Looking at NSS data on operated area [Tables 2a and 2b], we find that the level of concentration is as high as in the case of ownership holdings. Once again, the extent of inequality is higher at the All-India level compared to U.P. Given the widespread prevalence of petty tenancy, especially in a region like Eastern U.P., one would normally expect the distribution of operated area over various size classes to be less unequal compared to that of owned area. This is however not supported by the NSS data considered

above. The explanation for this lies in the complex pattern of tenancy relations which have emerged in Indian agriculture, especially in the post-"Green Revolution" period. This will be taken up in detail later on in the chapter.

However, if one were to look at the various landholding surveys carried out by the NSS starting from the 8th round in 1953-54 to the latest i.e., the 48th, one would find that not only has the definition of ownership been extended from round 8th to the 16th to include owner-like possession but also that the average size of land owned and operated per household been changing over time. Moreover, the size-classes itself have changed over successive rounds of the NSS. All this makes it difficult to compare data on landholdings based on actual distributions as is shown by the NSS over time. In other words, in order to analyse long-term trends in the pattern of landholdings, Lorenz curves have been constructed by plotting the cumulative percentage of holdings ranked by farm size against the cumulative percentage of area owned or operated by them.¹ The values of the shares in the total area owned or operated by the top 15, middle 20 and bottom 65 percent of the households have been read from the curves so derived based on actual estimates from the NSS. The entire data on landowning and operating population has been summarized into these above mentioned three groups which approximate broadly to Daniel Thorner's three-fold classification of the Indian rural population drawing a living from land into mazdoor, kisan and malik.² 'Maliks' have been defined by Thorner as those landed proprietors who derive their income by employing tenants or labourers, the 'kisans' as those cultivators who 'live primarily by their own toil on their own lands, and the 'mazdoor' as 'those villagers who gain their livelihood primarily from working on other people's land.

The particular division of the population we have adopted here, namely the top 15 percent, middle 20 percent and bottom 65 percent has been derived by identifying the middle group from the Lorenz curve. This is defined as that group which would have little or no change in its ownership position over time if there was a completely egalitarian distribution.³ (Thus, we take the chord on the Lorenz curve which is parallel to the line of equal distribution, i.e., the 45 degree line.) Once this group is defined, the group above it

¹ Patnaik, Utsa. "Class Differentiation within the peasantry: An approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture. EPW. Review of Agriculture. Sep. 1976.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

(top 15 percent) as well as the group below it (bottom 65 percent) are automatically defined.[See Annexure to Chapter 4]. After summarizing the data into these three groups mentioned above, we can now analyse the changes that have taken place in the rural class structure and its impact on the agrarian structure of U.P. in relation to All-India. In order to do so, it becomes important to look at certain long-term trends in the pattern of landholdings in these areas. We, therefore, begin by looking at the trends in concentration of owned area over time in rural U.P. with respect to rural India. This is shown in table (3) given below:

Table 3
Trends in the concentration of Owned Area in U.P. in relation to All-India over
successive landholding rounds of the NSS
(In Percentage)

Year	NSS Round.	Bottom 65		Middle 20		Top 15	
		U.P	All-India	U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India
1991-92	48 th	16.5	9.8	24.5	24.2	59.0	66.0
1981-82	37 th	17.5	11.0	26.3	25.0	56.2	64.0
1971-72	26 th	18.0	11.5	26.5	24.6	55.5	63.9
1953-54	8 th	17.3	8.2	25.2	23.0	56.5	68.8

*Source: Calculated from data given in NSS Report No. 399. Pp. 17, Report No. 66.
p 12 for All-India and Report Nos. 66, 215, 330, 399 for U.P.*

As is indicated by the table above, while 66 percent of the owned area in India was concentrated in the hands of the top 15 percent of the households in 1991-92, bottom 65 percent owned a mere 9.8 percent. The level of concentration is somewhat less in U.P. in relation to All-India. While 59 percent of the owned area lies with the top 15 percent of the households, bottom 65 percent accounts for 16.5 percent of the entire area owned in U.P. in 1991-92. Two things are evident from the table given above. Firstly, if we look at the period between 1953-54 to 1971-72, i.e., the period when most of the land reforms legislative measures were carried out in U.P., there is a slight improvement in the structure of land ownership. This is shown by a rise in the share of bottom 65 percent of the

households from 17.3 percent in 1953-54 to 18 percent in 1971-72. This increase in turn has been brought about by a decline in the share of the top segment by a mere one percent from 56.5 to 55.5 percent respectively during the same period. This improvement in the distribution of owned area could be attributed, even though to an extremely limited extent, to the land ceilings imposition and the redistribution of surplus land thus acquired by the state amongst landless agricultural labourers during this period. Even though the official data on landlessness shows a drastic decline in the percentage of rural landless households in U.P. from 9.36 percent in 1953-54 to 2.78 percent in 1961-62, this decline could well be owing to definitional changes rather than a positive impact of land redistributive measures that were undertaken by the state. In other words, the definition of 'ownership' from the NSS 17th round onwards was changed to include 'owner-like' possession of land covering long term leases of about thirty to fifty years. Moreover, there has been a rising trend in the percentage of landless and semi-landless households not only in rural U.P. but in Indian countryside as well, especially since the 1970s. This is brought out by table 4 given below:

Table 4
Percentage Of Landless And Semi-Landless Households In The Successive
Landholding Rounds Carried Out By The NSS.

NSS Round	Year	Percentage of landless households.		Percentage of landless and semi-landless households.	
		U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India
48 th	1991-92	4.9	11.3	34.6	42.4
37 th	1981-82	4.9	11.3	30.9	39.9
26 th	1971-72	4.6	9.6	32.7	37.4
17 th	1961-62	2.78	11.68	28.55	37.9/39.0
8 th	1953-54	9.36	23.09	n.a.	41.1

Source: NSS Report No. 399. p. 23. Report no. 144. Pp. 8,126. Report No. 66. p 4.

*Note : i) *Landless households are defined as those owning either no land or land less than 0.005 acres while semi-landless are defined as those who own land between (0.002-0.2) ha. or (0.005-0.5) acres of land.*

ii) n.a. : not available

In other words, the extremely limited scope of the top-to-bottom nature of land reforms, as have indeed been carried out in U.P., is evident from the table above. Before we look at the data on ownership holdings for All-India, let us look at the position with respect to the concentration of ownership and operational holdings in Western and Eastern U.P. by 1970-71, i.e., after a period of two decades of the implementation of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act in U.P.

Table 5a
Concentration of Owned Area in Western and Eastern U.P. in 1971-72
(In Percentage)

NSS Round (Year)	Bottom 65			Middle 20			Top 15		
	W.U.P.	E.U.P.	U.P.	W.U.P.	E.U.P.	U.P.	W.U.P.	E.U.P.	U.P.
26 th (1971-72)	17.5	19.8	18.0	29.5	26.2	26.5	53.0	54.0	55.5
8 th (1953-54)	n.a.	n.a.	17.3	n.a.	n.a.	26.2	n.a.	n.a.	56.5

Source: NSS Report No. 215 (Vol.2), on U.P. p. 118

Note: i) The 26th round which gives the region-wise break-up also provides data on the Himalayan, Southern and the Central regions within U.P. These have, however, not been included here.

ii) n.a. : not available. W.U.P. = Western U.P, E.U.P. = Eastern U.P.

Table 5b
Concentration of Operated Area in Western and Eastern U.P. in 1971-72

NSS Round (Year)	Bottom 65			Middle 20			Top 15		
	W.U.P.	E.U.P.	U.P.	W.U.P.	E.U.P.	U.P.	W.U.P.	E.U.P.	U.P.
26 th Round(1971-72)	31.8	27.5	18.5	21.7	27.5	30.3	46.5	45.0	51.2
8 th Round(1953-53)	n.a.	n.a.	19.0	n.a.	n.a.	26.0	n.a.	n.a.	55.0

Source: NSS Report No. 215 (Vol. 2) on U.P. p. 170.

Note : n.a. - not available

It will be seen from table 5a that the U.P. *Zamindari* Abolition did succeed in breaking the monopoly, especially of the big *talluqdars* of eastern U.P. who owned huge landed estates in the pre-zamindari abolition period. The extreme concentration of land ownership, particularly in eastern U.P. has already been noted earlier in chapter 3. However, the proportion of total land owned by the top 15 percent of the households still continued to be sizeable at 54 percent in eastern and 53 percent in Western U.P. as is indicated by the table.

Looking at the data on land ownership for All-India (Table 3), there is an improvement in the share of bottom 65 percent of the households in total area owned while a decline in the share of the top 15 percent between the 8th and the 26th rounds. Whereas the share of the former increased from 8.2 percent in 1953-54 to 11.5 percent in 1971-72, that of the latter declined from 68.8 percent to 63.9 percent and then, increased only marginally to 64 percent in 1981-82. The share of the middle segment on the whole registered an increase by 2 percent from 23 percent in 1953-54 to 25 percent in 1981-82. This decline in the concentration of land ownership with the tiny minority, even though to a very limited extent, was an outcome of the institutional changes that were brought about mainly in Telangana during the late nineteen forties and early fifties, Kerala and in West-Bengal during the nineteen seventies and the eighties. However, owing both to the limited impact of such institutional changes as have been brought about in these states as well as a near-total failure of land reforms in other parts of the country, not only does the structure of land ownership for All-India remain highly concentrated in favour of the top 15 percent but also there has been a continuous increase in the percentage of landless and semi-landless households in rural India since the 1970s. (Table 4).

Secondly, the period between 1971-72 and 1991-92 has been the period when the growth in inequality in rural land ownership is clear (Table 3). This was the period of introduction of the "Green Revolution " technology in Indian agriculture. In other words, the introduction of high-yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. since the mid 1960s has only led to a further increase in the concentration of land ownership with the top 15 percent of the households, both in U.P. as well as in India. The increase in the share of the top 15 percent over the same period is however higher in U.P. compared to All-India. While their share in total owned area in U.P. increased from 55.5 percent in 1971-72 to 59

percent in 1991-92, i.e., an increase by 3.5 percent, there was a 2.1 percent increase, i.e., from 63.9 percent in 1971-72 to 66 percent in 1991-92 in the case of All-India. At the other extreme, the share of the bottom 65 percent of the households declined by 1.5 percent in U.P. from 18 percent to 16.5 percent over the same period. This decline was of the order of 1.7 percent in the case of All-India. In other words, the post "Green Revolution" period has only been marked by increasing levels of inequality amongst different sections of the rural peasantry, not only in U.P. but all over the country as well.

However, if we look at the Gini-Co-efficient which is conventionally used to measure the extent of inequality in the distribution of land ownership, we would find that while our findings above show a continuous increase in inequality since the 1970s, the concentration ratio remains constant at 0.71 between 1970-71 and 1991-92 for All-India while it infact declines in U.P. from 0.63 in 1971-72 to 0.60 in 1981-82. This is due to the fact that Gini co-efficient is calculated on the basis of landowning households only and does not take into account those who, over time, become landless tenants or labourers.⁴ Therefore, it is not a fair indicator of measuring the extent of inequality in land distribution. V.M. Rao has, however suggested a formula for adjusting this co-efficient for the landless households which has then been used by U.Patnaik for calculating the adjusted ratio for household ownership holdings for the eighth round of the NSS. The formula used is $C_a = (1-r) \cdot C_u + r$ where C_u is the unadjusted concentration ratio, C_a is the adjusted concentration ratio and $r = N_2/N$ (where N_1 is the number of landowners, N_2 is the number of landless persons and $N = N_1 + N_2$ is the total population.) i.e., the proportion of landless households to total population.⁵ Following the same procedure for successive landholding rounds of the NSS for U.P. and All-India, we get the following :

⁴ V.M. Rao. Adjustment of Measure of Inequality in Rural Land Ownership for Landless Categories. Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics. Vol. XXV. No.2. April-June 1970. Pp. 59-64.
and U.Patnaik. "Capitalist development in Indian agriculture". 1972.

⁵ Ibid.

Table 6
Concentration Ratios (Adjusted and Unadjusted)
for Household Ownership Holdings

NSS Round (Year)	No. Of Sample Households.		Unadjusted Concentration Ratio(Cu)		Percentage of landless households.		Adjusted Concentration Ratio(Ca)	
	U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India
48 th (1991-92)	4166	33289	0.63	0.71	4.9	11.3	0.65	0.74
37 th (1981-82)	3444	29089	0.60	0.71	4.9	11.3	0.62	0.74
26 th (1971-72)	3807	35947	0.63	0.71	4.6	9.64	0.645	0.74
17 th (1961-62)	4962	53138	0.72	0.73	2.78	11.68	0.73	0.76
8 th (1953-54)	-	75720	0.64	0.76	9.36	23.09	-	0.82

Source : Obtained from various NSS Reports : i) Report 399. Pp. 16, A-30. ii) Report No. 330. p. 59. and iii) Report No. 215(vol. 1) on U.P. p.86.

In other words, though the trend remains unaffected, the levels of concentration in each decade as is shown by Ca (i.e., the adjusted ratio) are higher than what the original unadjusted ratio i.e., Cu shows.

Even where ownership of land may be highly concentrated, the operation of land is generally expected to show a lower degree of concentration. This is because it is presumed that there will be a net transfer of land through the lease market from the land rich to the land poor. In short, it is generally presumed that most of the owned area leased out is done so by the big owners and most of the operated area leased in, is leased in by small owners. However, this presumption is not borne out by the actual situation as depicted in Tables 7, 8a and 8b. Looking at the data on operational holdings, we find that the level of concentration is as high as in the case of ownership holdings.

Table 7
Trends In The Concentration Of Operated Area In U.P. In Relation To All-India
Over Successive Landholding Rounds Of The NSS

Year	NSS Round	Bottom 65		Middle 20		Top 15	
		U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India
1991-92	48 th	15.8	17.0	27.4	22.5	56.8	60.5
1981-82	37 th	17.0	18.5	28.0	25.5	55.0	56.0
1971-72	26 th	18.5	19.0	30.3	26.0	51.2	55.0
1961-62	17 th	-	20.0	-	26.5	-	53.5
1953-54	8th	19.0	11.0	26.0	23.0	55.0	66.0

Source : Calculated from data in NSS Report No. 407. p. 21 and Report No. 66. p. 15 for all India . For U.P., Report No. 66. p. 13. Report No. 215. p. 70. Report No. 407. p. A-11. Report No. 338. p. 73.

Clearly, a trend similar to the one observed in the case of distribution of owned area can be seen in the case of operational holdings as well. Taking the first phase covering the period of land reforms i.e., 1953-54 to 1971-72, we find that in U.P., the decline in the share of the top 15 percent in total operated area is much sharper when compared to that in owned area. It decreases from 55 percent in 1953-54 to 51.2 percent in 1971-72. The main beneficiaries of this reduced share of the top segment is the middle 20 percent whose share increases from 26 percent in 1953-54 to 30.3 percent in 1971-72. The position of the bottom 65 percent has however registered a steady decline since 1953-54 as is brought out by table 7. However, if we look at table 5b, we find that 31.8 and 27.5 percent of the entire operated area is cultivated by the bottom 65 percent of the households in western and eastern U.P. respectively in 1971-72. In eastern U.P., the proportion of total area operated by the middle segment is also equally substantial at 27.5 percent. In other words, it can be seen that by the 1970s, the proportion of total area operated by the top 15 percent, both in western as well as in eastern U.P., is much less than what is owned by them while the reverse is true for the bottom 65 percent of the households. This difference is accounted

for by net leasing-in of land from the top 15 percent to the bottom 65 percent of the households in both the regions during this period . However, unlike in eastern UP where the share of the middle peasantry in total area owned and operated is roughly the same around 26 to 27.5 percent, in western UP even the middle peasantry was leasing out a substantial proportion of its total land owned to the bottom most segment upto 1971-72 [Tables 5a and 5b]. This clearly indicates the failure of one of the stated objectives of the U.P. *zamindari* abolition and land reforms (ZALR) Act to abolish petty tenancy in the state. Clearly, "land reforms from above" as have taken place in U.P. have meant that tenancy, far from being wiped out, has only gone underground.

In the other words, our findings above show the failure of the U.P. ZALR in mitigating the extent of concentration of land ownership in U.P. during this period. Further, with tenancy going underground, it only means that the conditions of production were not conducive enough for kulak class formation in the state till as late as 1971-72.

The second phase covering the period of "Green revolution" in Indian agriculture has once again been marked by a continuous increase in the concentration of operational holdings with the top 15 percent of the holdings. This is true of both U.P. and All India. While the share of the bottom as well as the middle segments have both declined in U.P. by around 2.7 and 2.9 percent respectively, that of the top 15 percent has registered an increase by 5.6 percent during this period. A similar trend can be observed at the all India level as well.

However, looking at the data on operational holdings for U.P. for 1995-96 given by Agricultural Census [Table 7a], we find that there is a break from the earlier pattern of increasing concentration of land with the top 15 percent of the households. It is the share of the bottom 65 percent of the households that registers an increase in total area operated from 23 percent to 25.2 percent during 1990-91 and 1995-96. The share of the top 15 percent however declines by two percent while that of the middle 20 percent remains more or less constant at 22 percent. Despite this reversal in the earlier observed trend of increasing concentration, the share of the top 15 percent of the households in total operated area however continues to remain sizeable at 53 percent.

Table 7a

Concentration of Operated Area in U.P. in 1995-96 and 1990-91

Year	Bottom 65	Middle 20	Top 15
1995-96	25.2	21.8	53.0
1990-91	23.0	22.0	55.0

Source : Agricultural Census for the Years 1990-91 and 1995-96

In other words, the extent of inequality in the distribution of operated area is as sharp as in the case of owned area during the period of "Green Revolution" in Indian agriculture. This is contrary to what one would normally expect. That is, even though the concentration of operated area is usually expected to be less than that of owned area primarily owing to a greater control of land by small landholders due to net leasing-in from the big landlords, this is however not supported by the data on distribution of operated area given above. The reason for this perhaps lies in the complex pattern of tenancy relations whereby it is the marginal and the small landowners that are leasing-out to big landlords. This becomes clear once we look at the long-term trends in the distribution of total area leased-in in U.P. in relation to All-India. Tables 8a and 8b below show this:

Table 8a

Trends in the distribution of total area leased-in in U.P. and All-India

Year	NSS Round	Bottom 65		Middle 20		Top 15	
		U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India	U.P.	All-India
1991-92	48 th	21.2	17.0	32.3	24.6	46.5	58.4
1971-72	26 th	36.2	32.0	27.8	29.0	36.0	39.0
1953-54	8 th	31.0	-	30.0	-	39.0	-

Source : Calculated from data provided in NSS Report No. 66. p 46. Report No. 215 (vol. 1) p 88. Report No. 407. p A-52.

Table 8b
Trends in the distribution of total area leased-in

(All-India)

Year	NSS Round	Bottom 60	Middle 25	Top 15
1991-92	48 th	13.0	28.6	58.4
1971-72	26 th	27.0	34.0	39.0
1953-54	8 th	10.0	27.5	62.5

Source : Calculated from data given in NSS Report No. 407. p A-56. Report No. 215. p 49 and Patnaik, U. Class Differentiation within the Peasantry : An Approach to Analyses of Indian Agriculture. EPW. Sep. 1976.

The pattern of leasing-in of land in U.P., as is indicated by table 8a, shows that while the share of the bottom 65 percent of the households in total leased-in area increases from 31 percent to 36.2 percent between the 8th and the 26th Rounds of the NSS, that of the top 15 and middle 20 percent of the households declines by three percent and 2.2 percent respectively over the same period. This trend is however reversed if we look at the period between 1971-72 to 1991-92. The data reveals that the decline in the share of the bottom 65 percent from 36.2 percent to 21.2 percent is mainly offset by an increase in the share of the top 15 percent, which rises from 36 percent in 1971-72 to 46.5 percent in 1991-92. The middle segment too registers a relatively minor rise in its share in total leased-in area by 4.5 percent over the same period.

A similar pattern of land leasing-in can be observed in the case of All-India from table 8b. However, unlike in U.P. the data on distribution of total leased-in area for All-India shows a relatively greater share of the top 15 percent in total leased-in area in 1991-92 over 1971-72. This increase in the share of the top 15 percent has been brought about due to a decline in the respective shares of both the bottom 60 percent as well as middle 25 percent of the households by 14 percent and 5.4 percent respectively over the same period.

In other words, the data on tenancy examined above shows a tendency towards greater control of land, away from the small and marginal groups of cultivators

operating land of an average size of upto five acres, by the rich and upwardly mobile sections of the middle peasantry cultivating an average land size of five acres and above. This shift in the rural class structure could be attributable to the increased profitability of undertaking direct cultivation along commercial lines, in turn made possible by the productivity raising techniques of production introduced mainly in the north-western parts of the country during the late sixties and early seventies. However, this tendency towards a shift in rural class structure may be said to be true of an agriculturally advanced region like western U.P., the same cannot be generalized for all the regions within the state. This is especially the case when we take into consideration a feudal and backward region like eastern U.P. where sharecropping still continues to be the dominant form of tenancy relations. In other words, even though the state level data on landholdings examined above reflects a tendency towards a change in the rural class structure of U.P., with the newly emerging class of kulaks gradually displacing the feudal big landed proprietors as had existed during the colonial period, the tremendous heterogeneity in the agrarian structures across the state makes the analysis based on state level data woefully inadequate.

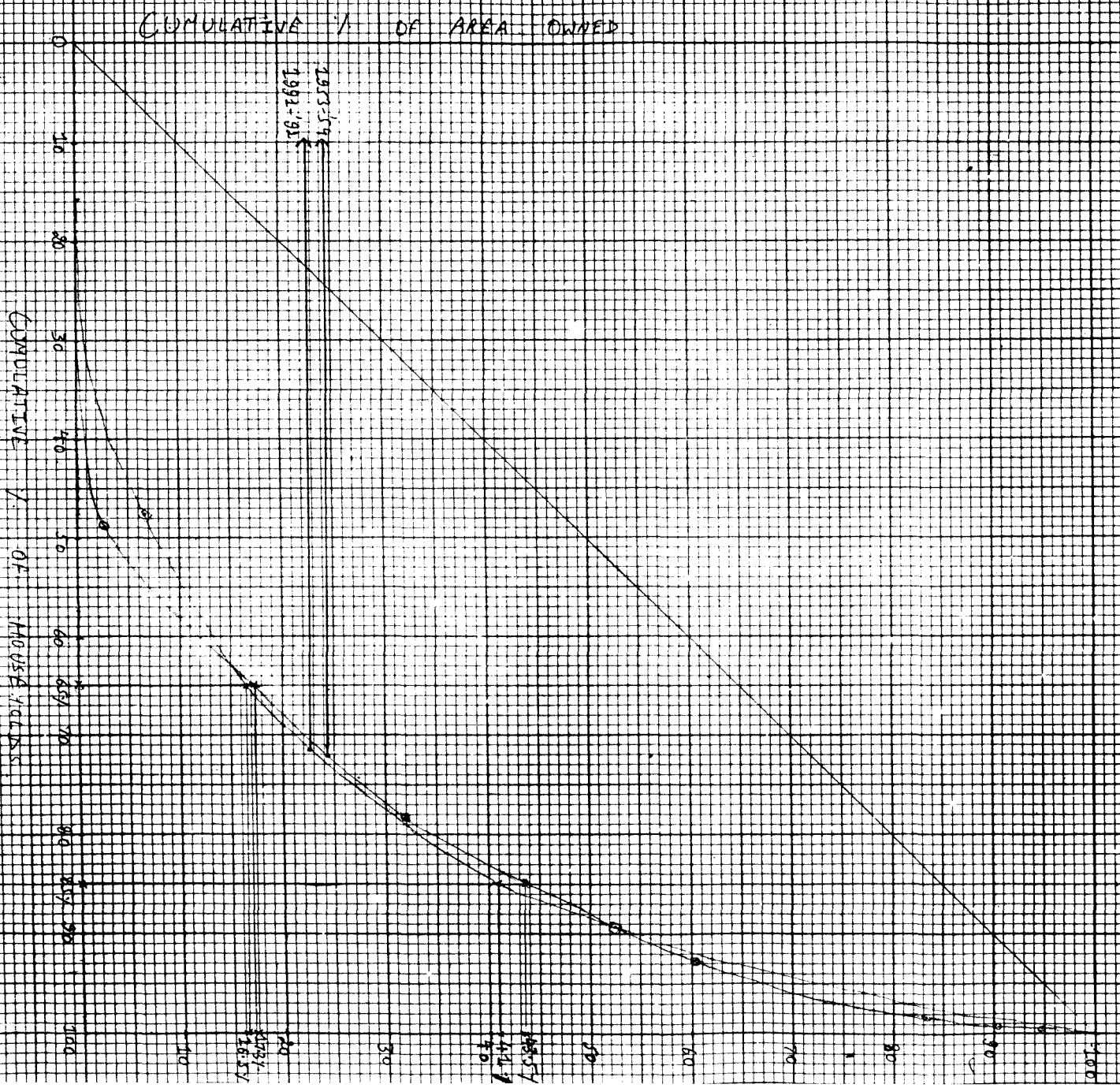
Further, if we compare U.P. with other agriculturally advanced states like Punjab and Haryana which show an increasing tendency towards Reverse tenancy, we find that the average size of leased-in area per leasing-in household is much lower in U.P. at 0.59 ha. compared to 3.17 ha. in Haryana and 1.31 ha. in Punjab (Sarvekshana, Oct.-Dec. 1995). Moreover, the percentage of agricultural labour households (defined by the Rural Labour Enquiry (RLE) as those deriving 50 percent or more of their total income from wage paid manual labour in agricultural activity) not cultivating land (whether owned or on lease) is barely 37.86 percent in U.P. as against 94.59 percent in Punjab or 85.03 percent in Haryana [RLE.1993]. The implication of this is that in U.P., unlike in the latter states, a huge section of the agricultural labour households in the absence of adequate alternative employment opportunities and extremely inadequate income from wage paid work in agriculture continues to hold on to their tiny plots of land for want of a certain minimum requirement of food security that their tiny holdings can atleast ensure. Further, the average size of land cultivated by such agricultural labour households, while being almost insignificant in states like Punjab and Haryana at 0.09ha. and 0.04 ha., is relatively much higher in U.P. at 0.20ha. This only means that land cultivated by agricultural labour

households in U.P. is statistically significant. Not only this, with most of the tenancy contracts being unrecorded, sharecropping continues to be rampant in U.P. countryside even today. NSS data shows a predominance of unrecorded lease contracts in rural India. According to this data source itself, while 9.5 percent of the rural households reported leasing-in of land (other than homestead), only 1.3 percent reported recorded leasing. The area under recorded lease formed only about 16percent of the total leased-in area (Sarvekshana.Oct.-Dec.1995). In other words, given the fact that most of the rural labour contracts are unrecorded, no definite statement can be made based on the available official data on tenancy examined above.

Therefore, in short, while the shift in rural class structure of U.P. analysed above may be real to an extent, the unreliability and lack of data on the same makes it difficult and imprecise to draw any definite conclusion based on our findings above. The landholding structure in the state, even today, continues to be heavily skewed in favour of the top 15 percent of the households. Both the so-called land reforms and the introduction of "Green Revolution" technology, though may have led to the development of capitalist tendency in one part of the state, have resulted in a lopsided pattern of agricultural growth within U.P. However, we saw the importance of the state's role in promoting agricultural production and productivity, wage rates, employment etc. and the positive impact it had on alleviating poverty even in a backward region like eastern U.P. during the nineteen eighties. The post reforms phase which marks a decisive withdrawal of the public sector from the economy at large is bound to exert an adverse impact upon the growing numbers of the landless and the semi-landless who are already living at or below subsistence margins. This has been dealt with in the concluding chapter.

ANNEXURE

TABLE 3
UTTER, PRADESH



CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED OVER SIX CLASSES OF HOUSEHOLDS DIVIDED INTO 1000S IN THE 8th AND 48th ROUNDS OF NSG (UTTER PRADESH)

1993-94
1993-94

20
20.52

40.5
40

50

60

70

80

90

100

CUMULATIVE % OF HOUSE HOLDS

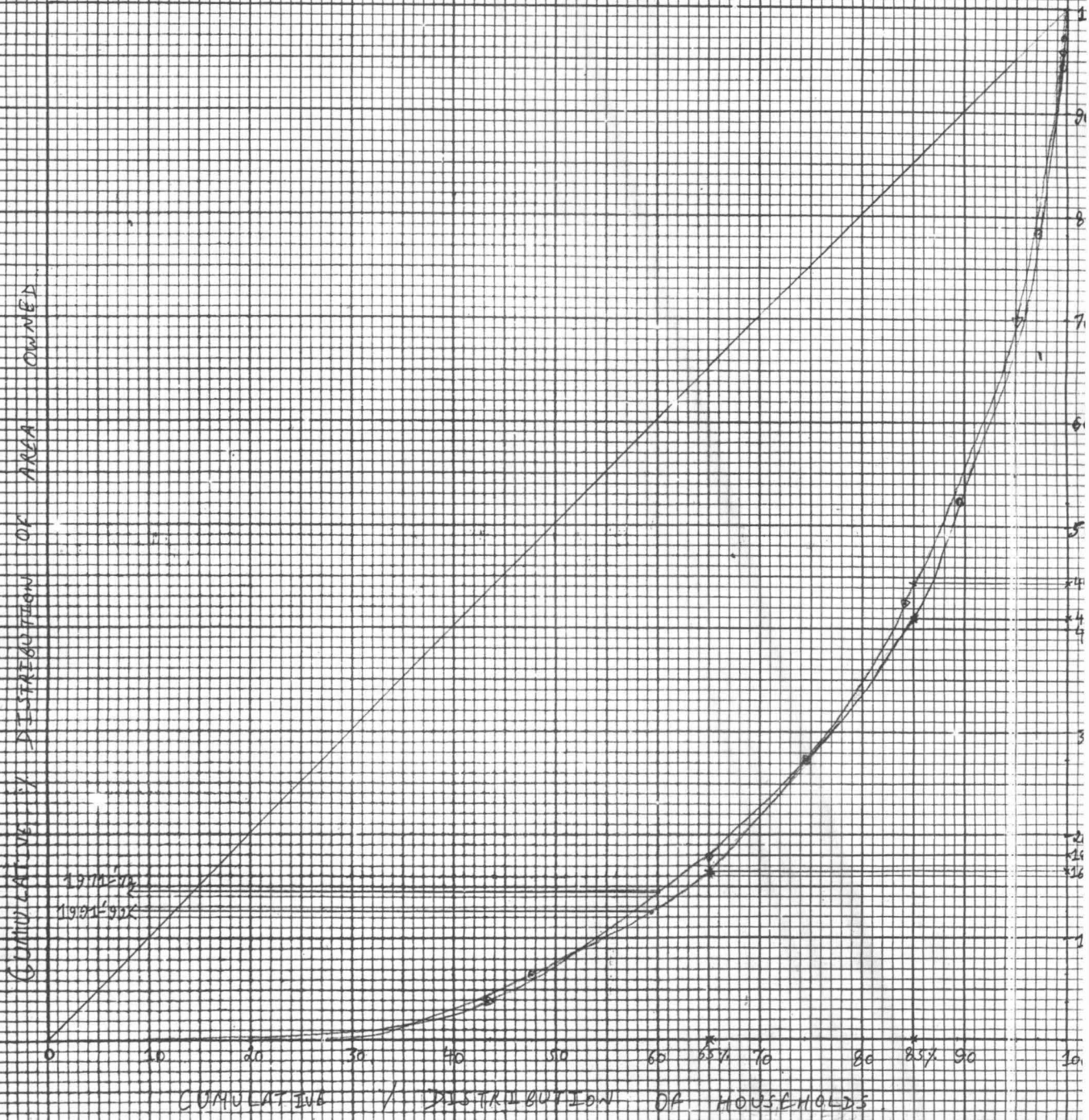
CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED

CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED

CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED

TABLE 3

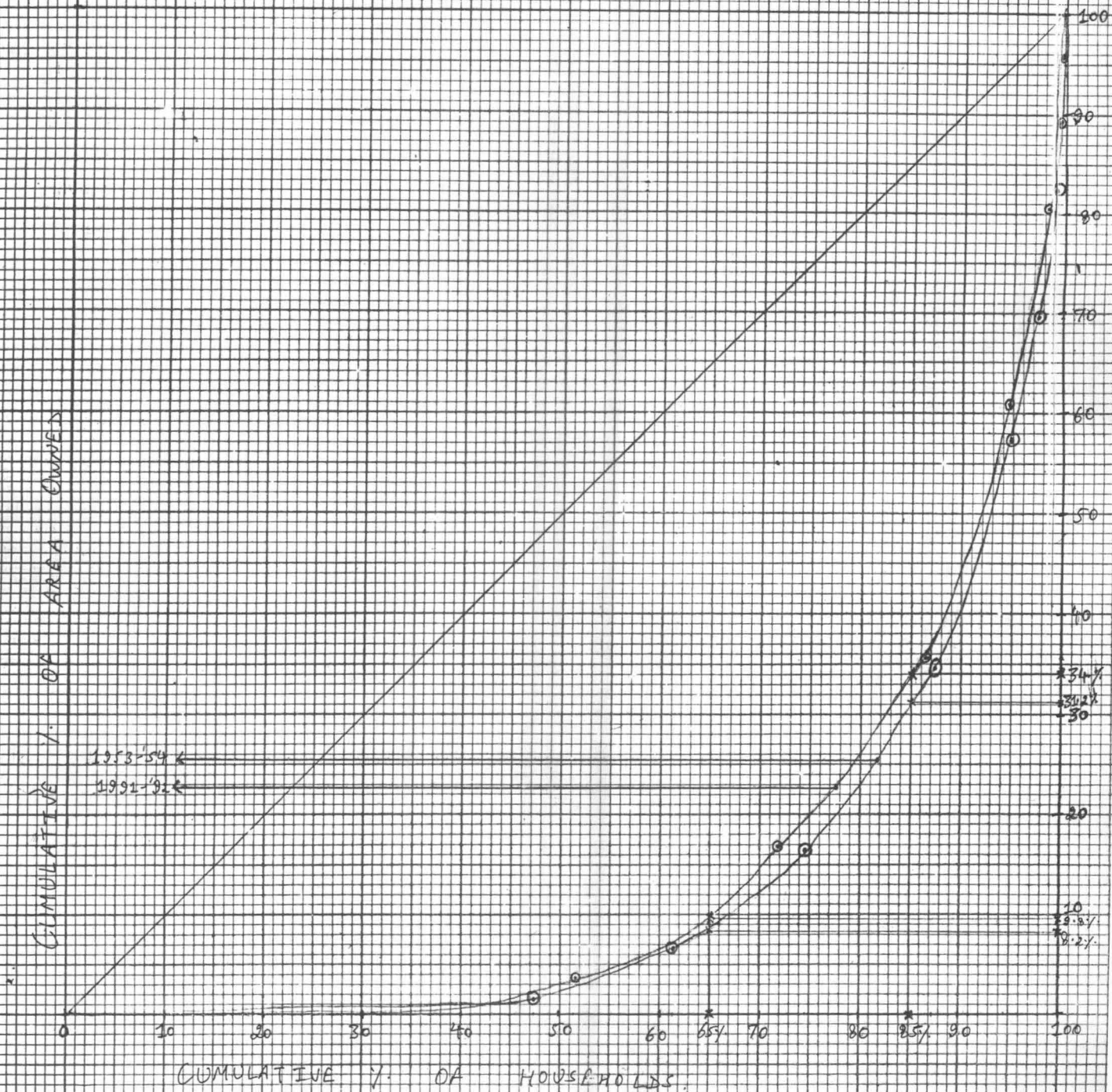
UTTAR - PRADESH



CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED
OVER SIZE CLASSES OF HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS IN THE 26th AND
48th ROUNDS OF NSS (UTTAR PRADESH)

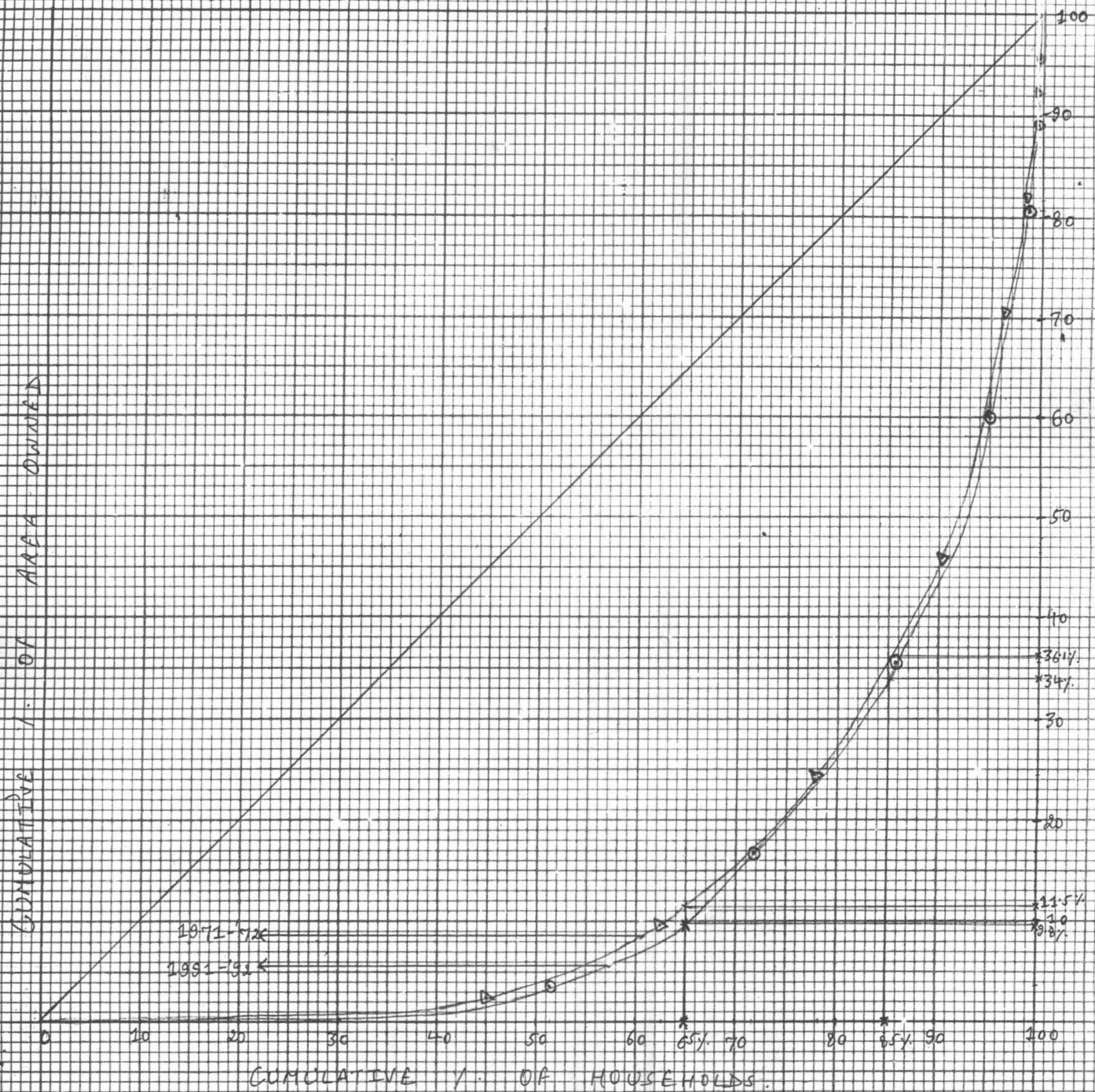
TABLE 3

ALL-INDIA



CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED OVER SIZE CLASSES OF HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS IN THE 8th AND 48th ROUNDS OF NSS (ALL-INDIA)

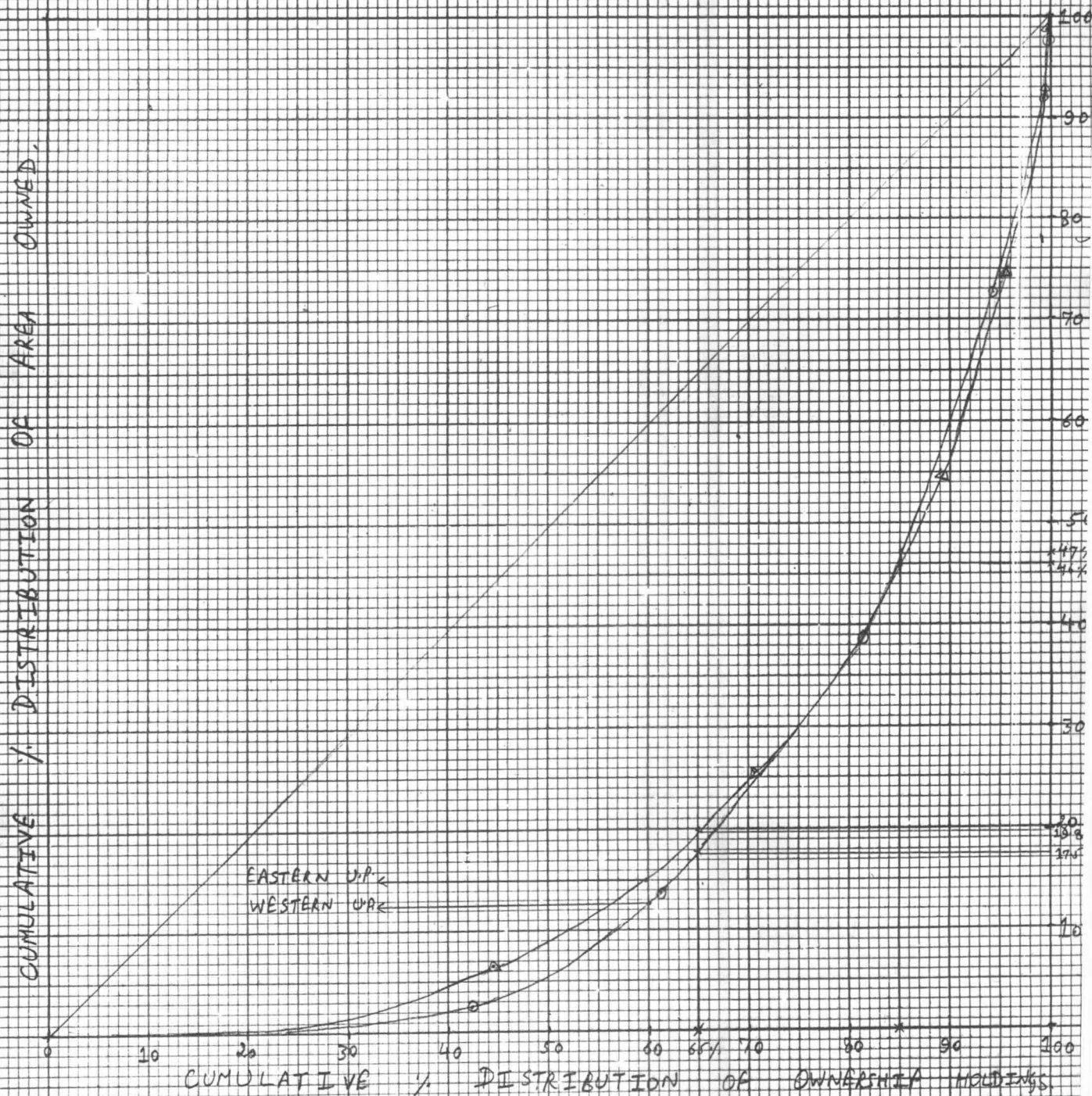
TABLE 3
ALL-INDIA



CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED
OVER SIZE CLASSES OF HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS IN THE 26TH
AND 48TH ROUNDS OF NSS (ALL-INDIA).

TABLE 5a.

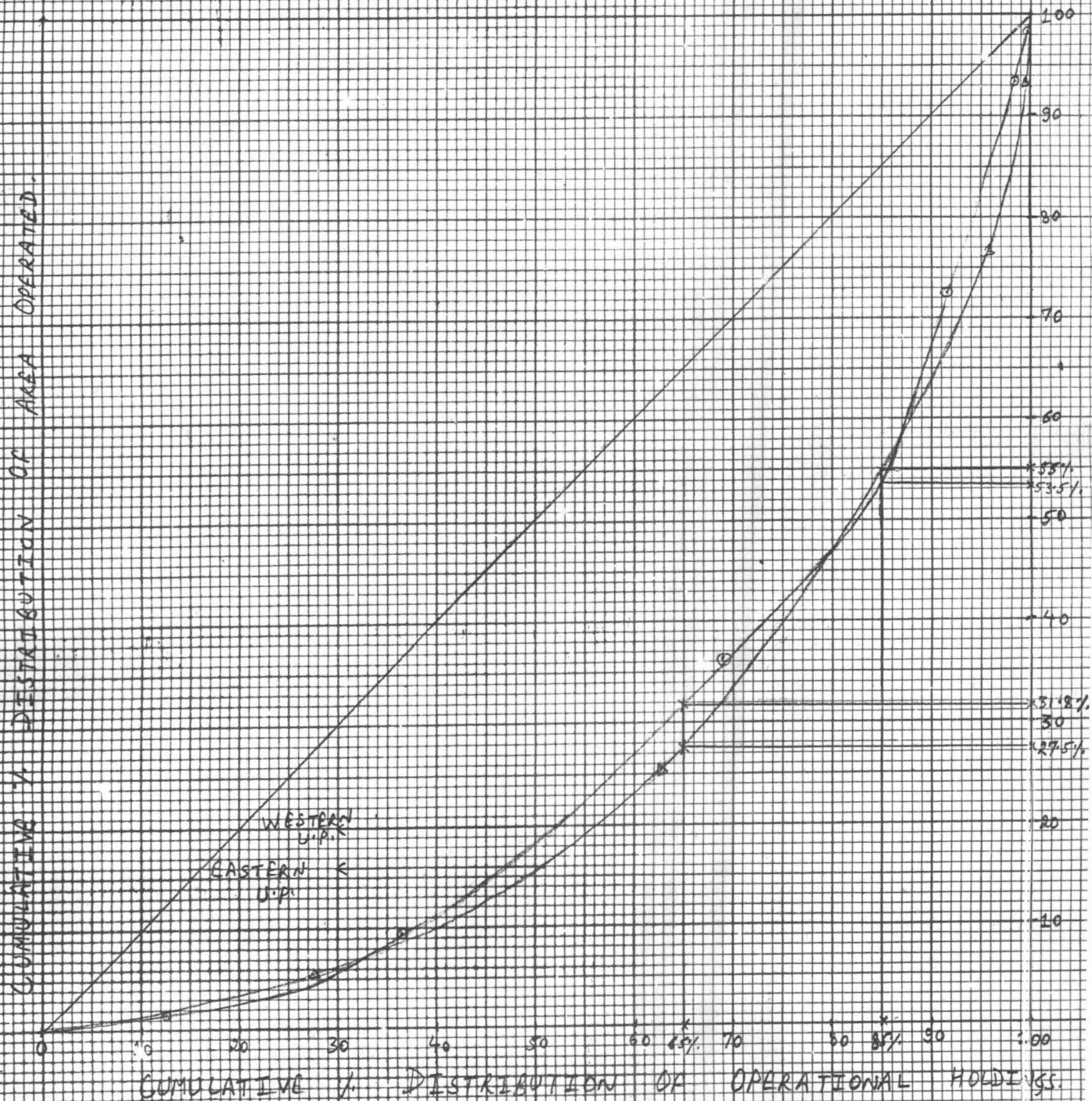
WESTERN V/S. EASTERN UTTAR - PRADESH.



CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND OF AREA OWNED BY SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLD OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS IN THE 26th ROUND OF NSS (WESTERN V/S. EASTERN U.P.)

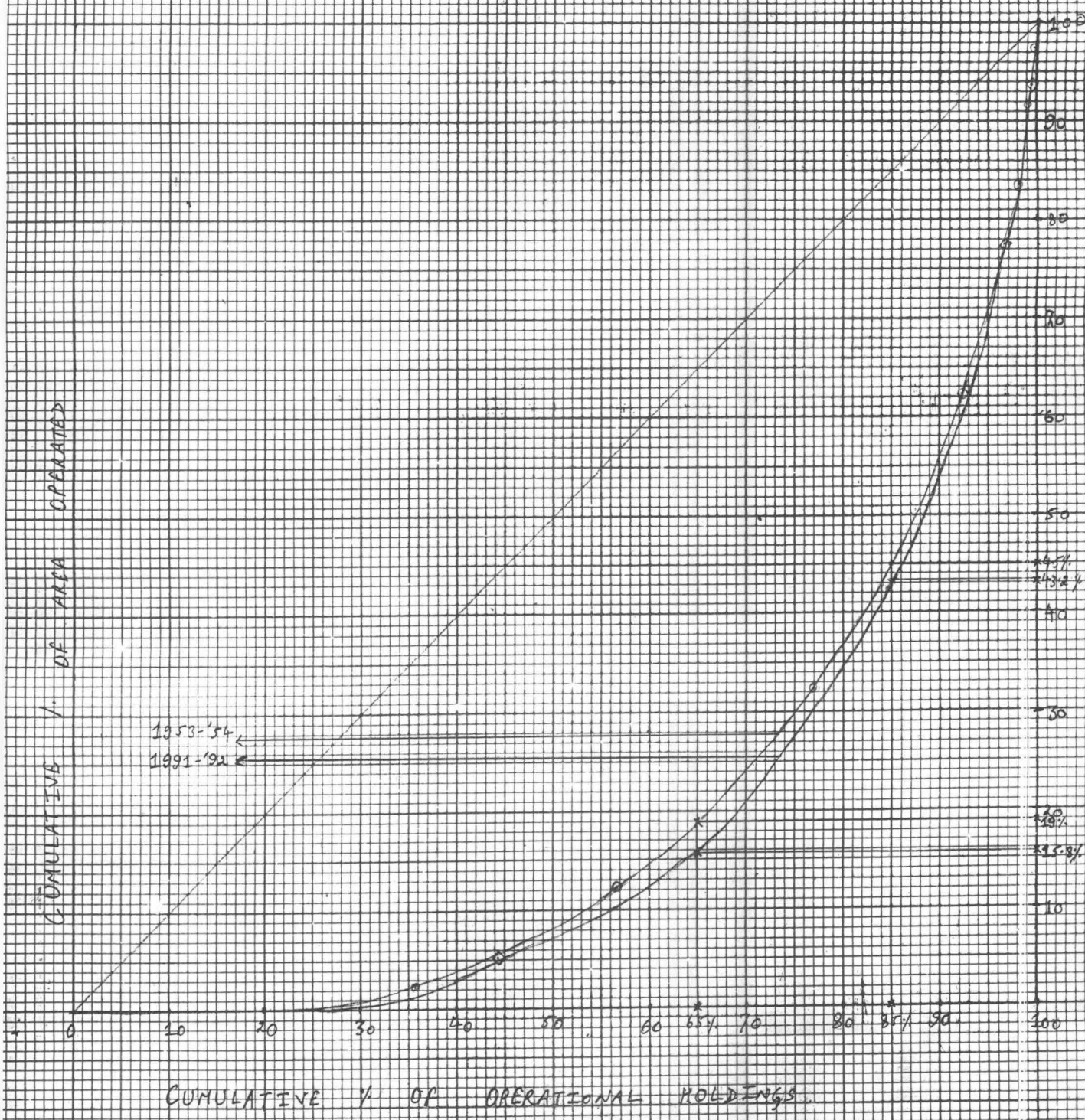
TABLE 56

WESTERN M/S EASTERN UTTAR - PRADESH



CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AND AREA OPERATED BY SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLD OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN THE 26TH ROUND OF NSS (WESTERN M/S EASTERN U.P.)

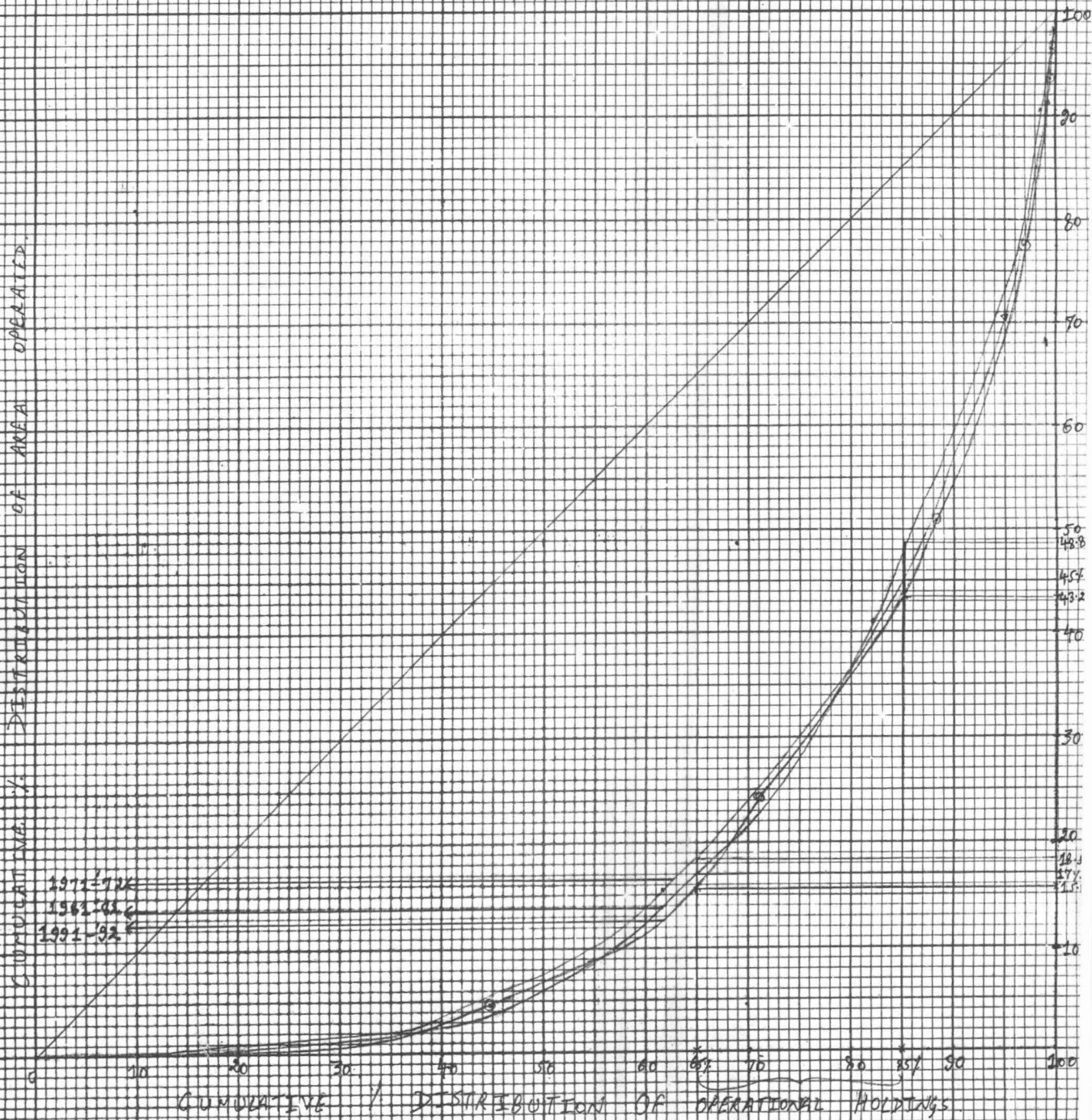
TABLE 7
UTTAR - PRADESH



CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AND
AREA OPERATED BY SIZE CLASS OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN
THE 8th AND 48th ROUNDS OF NSS. (UTTAR PRADESH)

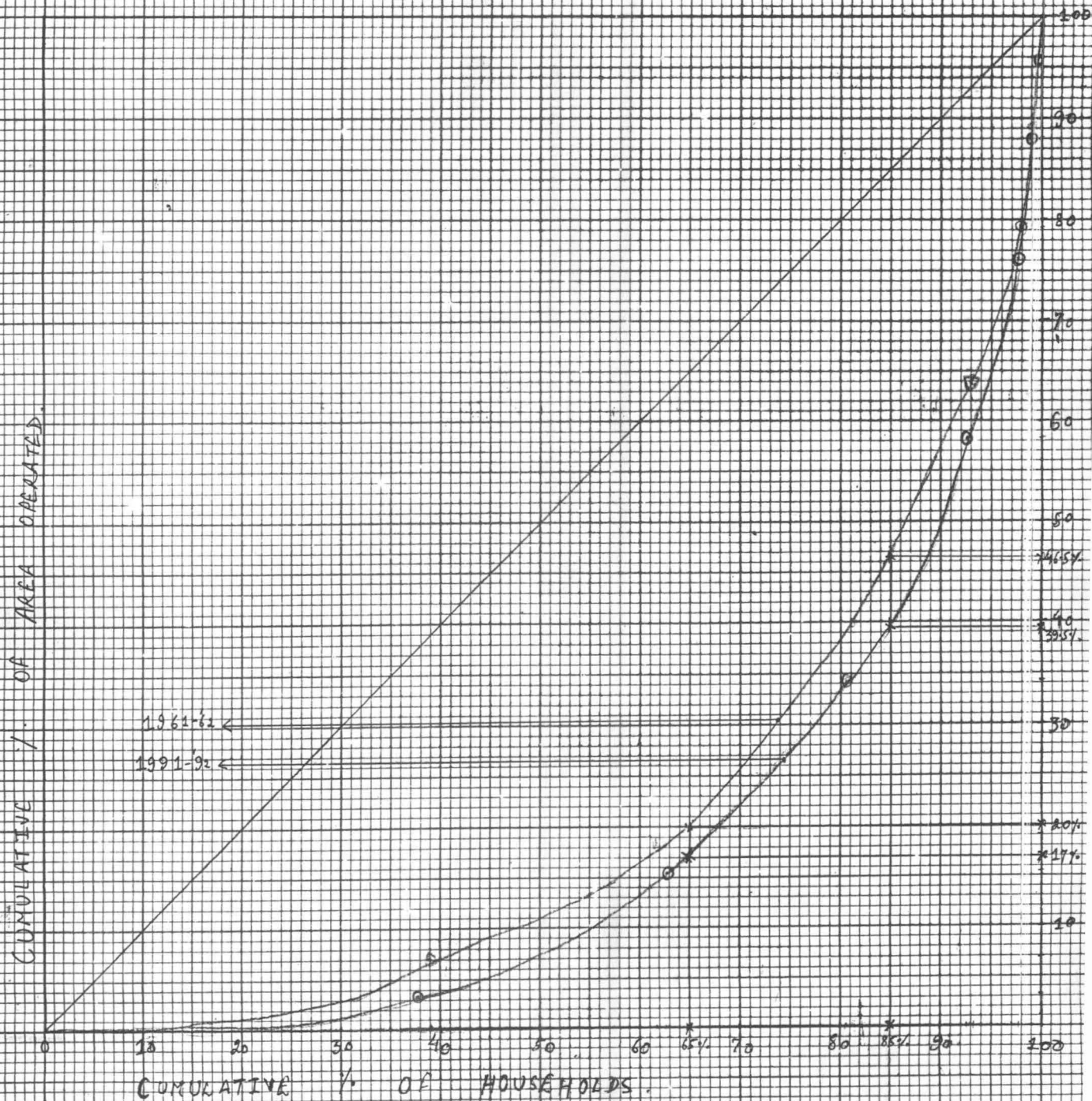
UTTAR - PRADESH

TABLE 7



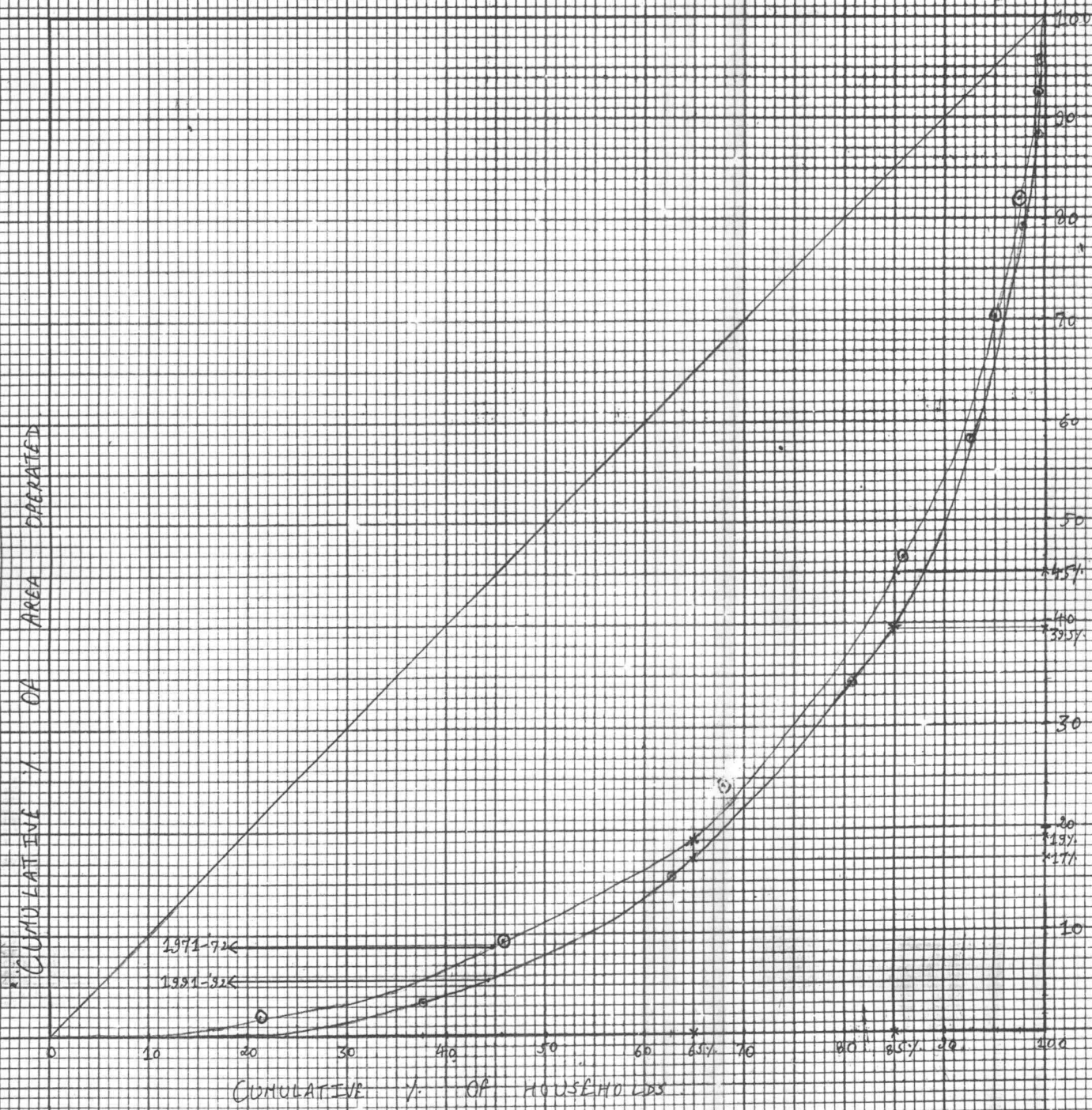
LORENZ CURVE SHOWING CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AND AREA OPERATED BY SIZE CLASS OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN THE 68th, 70th AND 85th ROUNDS OF NSS (UTTAR - PRADESH)

TABLE 7
ALL INDIA



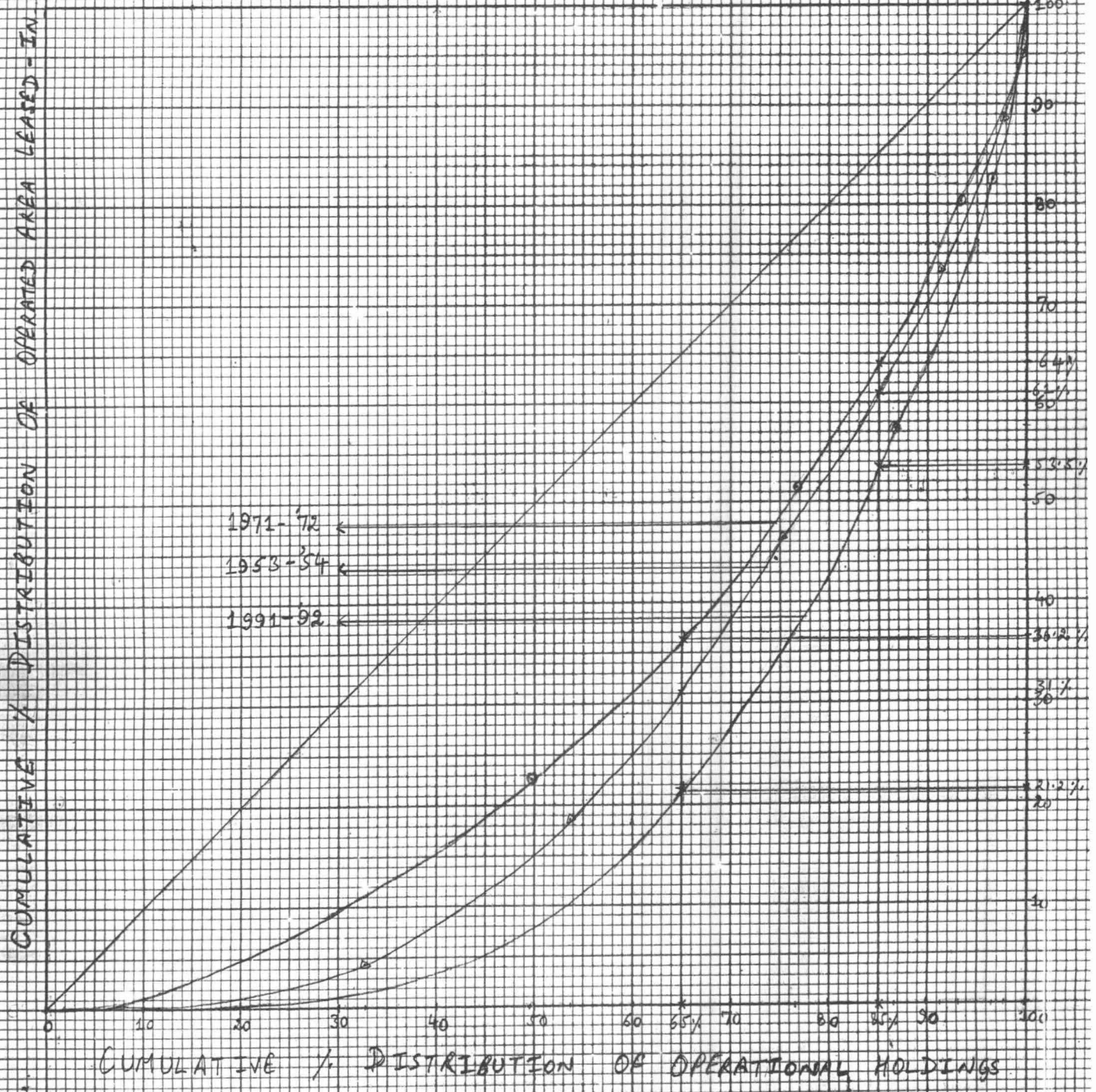
CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS
AND AREA OPERATED BY SIZE CLASS OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS
IN THE 27th AND 43rd ROUNDS OF NSS (ALL-INDIA)

TABLE 7
AREA - INDIA



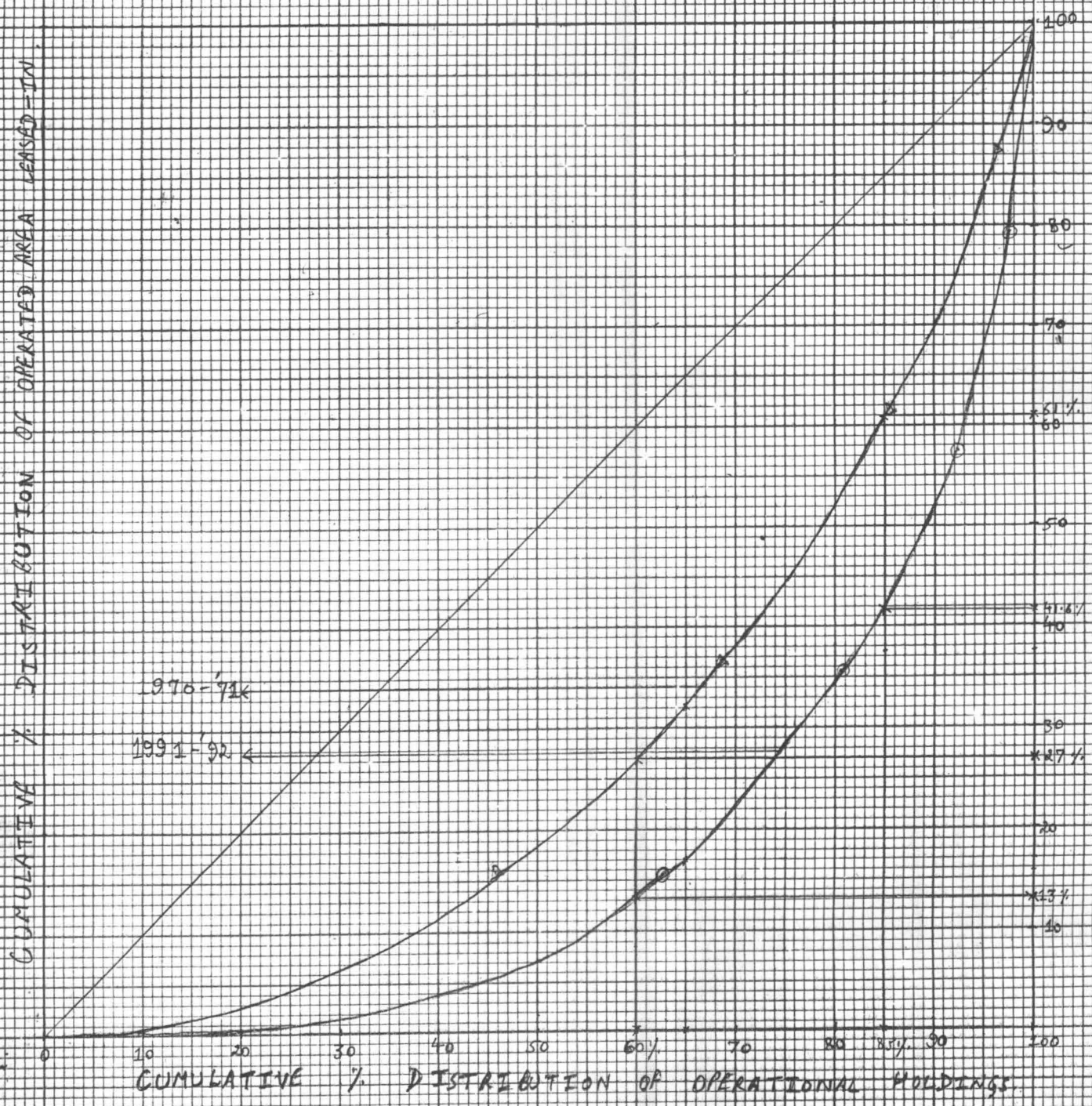
CUMULATIVE % DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS
AND AREA OPERATED BY SIZE CLASS OF OPERATIONAL
HOLDINGS IN THE 26th AND 48th ROUNDS OF NSS (ALL INDIA)

TABLE 8A
UTTAR - PRADESH



CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AND OPERATED AREA LEASED-IN BY SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLD OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN 40th, 26th AND 8th ROUNDS OF NSS (UTTAR PRADESH)

TABLE 86
ALL-INDIA



CUMULATIVE PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS
AND OPERATED AREA LEASED-IN BY SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLD
OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN THE 48th AND 26th ROUNDS OF NSS (ALL-INDIA)

CHAPTER V

Agrarian Crisis in the Post-Reforms Period

The most significant change that the Indian economy has undergone as a result of structural adjustment programme initiated in the 1990s is its transformation from a supply constrained to a demand constrained economy [Patnaik, P. Nov. 1999]. This feature of the economy is in sharp contrast to what had prevailed earlier in the pre-reforms period. Then, the government, whenever entrusted with the task of promoting development, ensured that the economy was not constrained on the demand side through maintaining fiscal deficits, if need be. This however does not imply that the economy then was never demand constrained. Instead, “the functioning of the economy was such that the tendency was always to eliminate the state of being demand constrained. What the nineteen nineties saw was an abandonment of this trait, a systematic change where the state of being demand constrained could and did become perennial.”¹

This transformation of the economy into a demand constrained system is an inevitable fallout of the neo-liberal reforms policy package implemented by the Indian state since the early nineties, particularly after General Agreement on Trade and Tariff (GATT)'94. This strategy, based on a combination of trade liberalisation, substitution of subsidies by price incentives to the farmers and restructuring public investment and other financial flows into agriculture has proved to be a failure within a decade. As a result, the Indian agrarian sector is currently in a state of crisis.² Today, we are faced with an ironic situation whereby there is a decline in per capita calorie intake in rural India and this decline has speeded up in the nineties owing to rapidly rising stocks of foodgrains, especially of wheat and rice with the Food Corporation of India [FCI]. The tables below bring out the decline in calorie intake levels in rural and urban India in the nineties on the one hand while a steady build-up of public stocks of foodgrains with the FCI, particularly during the latter half of the nineties, on the other.

¹ Patnaik, Prabhat. The Performance of the Indian Economy in the 1990s. *Social Scientist*. Vol. 27. Nos. 5-6. May. 1999.

² Patnaik, Utsa. Agrarian Crisis and Global Deflationism. *Social Scientist*. Vol.30. Nos.1-2. Jan.-Feb. 2002.

Table 1**Average Calorie Intake in Rural and Urban India, 1970-71 To 1998**

YEAR	RURAL	URBAN
1970-71	2339	2047
1972-73	2346	2033
1973-74	2421	2029
1977-78	2317	1994
1983	2309	2010
1986-87	2289	2082
1987-88	2285	2084
1988-89	2290	2118
1989-90	2311	2126
1990-91	2259	2088
1991	2204	2010
1992	2174	2048
1993	2157	1993
1993-94	2147	2028
1994-95	2085	2052
1995-96	1978	1969
1997	2078	2010
1998	2011	1980
Percent Change		
1993 over 1987-88	-5.6	-4.37
1998 over 1993	-6.77	-0.65
Total Change		
1998 over 1987-88	-11.99	-4.99

Source: NSS Surveys on Consumer Expenditure.

Table 2
Procurement, Offtake and Stocks of Foodgrains, India 1995-96 To 2000-2001

FISCAL YEAR	PROCUREMENT			OFF-TAKE			STOCK		
	Rice	Wheat	Total	Wheat	Rice	Total	Rice	Wheat	Total [^]
1995-96	9.9	12.3	22.2	14.0	12.8	26.8	13.1	7.70	20.8
1996-97	11.8	8.20	20.0	12.4	13.3	25.7	13.2	3.20	16.4
1997-98	14.5	9.30	23.8	11.4	7.70	19.1	13.0	5.10	18.1
1998-99	11.6	12.6	24.2	11.8	8.90	20.7	11.7	9.90	21.7
1999-00	14.1	17.3	31.4	5.00	10.9	15.9	10.7	21.7	33.1
2000-01	16.4	11.4*	27.8*	2.72	5.75	8.50#	14.5	27.8	42.2

Source: Patnaik, Utsa "Agrarian Crisis and Global Deflationism". Social Scientist. Vol.30. Nos.1-2. Jan-Feb.2002. Pp21.

*Note : i) * as on 11-1-2001 (incomplete) # April-Dec. 2000.*

*ii) ^ includes coarse grains. * Procurement and Offtake up to june 30 and stocks as on july 1. Thus, last column refers to stocks as on july 1995, july 1996 and so on .by july 2001 (not shown), stocks were in excess of 55 m.t.*

Looking at tables 1 and 2 above, we find that the decline in average calorie intake in rural India is much sharper at 6.8 percent in the latter half of the nineties covering 1993-98 compared to a 5.6 percent decline in the six years preceding 1993. This decline is only going to get worse in the coming years owing to the massive build-up of food stocks (especially of rice and wheat) with the FCI, particularly after 1998-99, as is evident from table 2 above.

It is however important to note that this present situation of high stocks of foodgrains with the FCI is not a result of over production. Agricultural growth, on the contrary, has slowed down since 1990-91 and foodgrains production has barely kept pace with population growth. This declining trend in foodgrains production together with the rapidly rising food stocks with the FCI has meant a steady decline in per-capita availability of foodgrains in the economy. This is brought out by the table given below:

TABLE 3
Per Capita Foodgrains Availability in India.
(Three Year Annual Average)

Three year period ending in the year.	Average Population (million).	Availability per Head per Annum of		
		Cereals Kg.	Pulses Kg.	Foodgrains Kg.
1992	850.70	162.83	14.22	177.05
1995	901.02	160.06	13.54	173.60
1998	953.07	162.06	12.59	174.65
2001	1008.14	151.80	11.50	163.30
Individual year 2001.	1027.0	142.55	9.60	152.15

Source : Patnaik, Utsa. Agrarian Crisis and Global Deflationism.

Social Scientist.2002.

Note: Availability is Gross output less 12.5 percent on account of seed, feed and wastage, and less net exports and net addition to public stocks. Output is for agricultural year from July-June: For example, 1992 refers to 1991-92 and so on. Population figures for inter-censal years have been derived by applying the growth rate of 1.89 percent per annum yielded by the 1991 and 2001 census population totals. Population figures relates to the end of first quarter of the year against which shown.

Table 3 above shows how the per capita foodgrains availability, after registering a relatively small decline of 2.4 kg between 1991-92 and 1997-98, drastically falls by 11.35 kg during 1997-98 and 2000-01, thereby implying an overall decline of the order of 13.75 kg between 1991-92 and the triennium ending 2001. This huge decline in foodgrains absorption in the economy, particularly in the last three years of the post reforms decade, can be attributed to the steady rise in public stocks of cereals (primarily rice and wheat) with the FCI, especially since 1998-99, in turn brought about by the macroeconomic deflationary policies pursued by the Indian state since 1991. In an attempt to contain fiscal deficit through reducing food subsidy, there has been a consistent rise in the central issue prices of foodgrains, more so after the introduction of Targeted Public Distribution System

(TPDS) in 1997.³ This is supported by the fact that the issue price was raised for the Above Poverty Line (APL) population by 85 percent for wheat and 61 percent for rice between 1998-99 to 2000-01. Not only this, the Below Poverty Line (BPL) prices of wheat and rice were also raised by 66 and 62 percent respectively.⁴ The impact of such mounting stocks of foodgrains with the FCI on average calorie intake levels is bound to be much more severe than is already the case, in the coming years.

Further, against the background of rapidly declining levels of public investment in Indian agriculture,⁵ productivity levels of both foodgrains as well as non-foodgrains have registered a sharp decline during the nineties as has already been noted earlier.⁶ This decline in productivity, especially of rice and wheat, is particularly true of the states comprising the Indo-Gangetic region covering West-Bengal, U.P., Haryana and Punjab.⁷ This region (including Bihar) accounted for more than three-fifths (60.9 percent) of the country's total output of rice and wheat during the triennium ending 1998-99.⁸ Further, U.P.'s contribution within the region, stood at the highest level at 23.3 percent or nearly one-fourth of the country's total production of rice and wheat was accounted for by U.P. alone during the same period. Clearly then, though the impact of the present crisis has been felt throughout the country, it has been particularly severe in states like U.P. where agriculture is indeed the mainstay of the economy. The present crisis is therefore bound to leave the state historically underdeveloped and relatively very backward. Below, we show how the adoption of such deflationary neo-imperialist economic policies have led to a significant change in the overall economic environment for U.P. agriculture. We show how it has, on the one hand, resulted in a fall in rural incomes through severe cutbacks in rural non-farm employment opportunities while on the other, led to increased threat to food security, thereby creating potential conditions for the occurrence of famines as under Colonial rule on the other.

³ Swaminathan, M. *Weakening Welfare : The Public Distribution of Food in India*. 2000. Pp. 94-99.

⁴ Patnaik, U. *Agrarian Crisis and Global Deflationism*. 2002.

⁵ Patnaik, U. February 2001.

⁶ *Economic Survey*. 2001-02. p 189.

⁷ RBI Report on Currency and Finance. 1998-99. p III-13.

⁸ *Ibid*.

Impact Of New Economic Policies on U.P. Agriculture

Before we look at certain long term trends in the growth rates of area and production under the principal crops in U.P., it is necessary to understand that all such changes that have taken place in the post-reforms era are not specific to U.P. alone. These must be viewed in the broader context of the income deflationary macroeconomic policies that are being forced upon the developing countries by the developed world. If we look at the decade eighties, we find that seventy-eight developing countries, mainly in the Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America had undergone structural adjustment. A striking similarity can be seen between the package implemented in India from mid-1991 and the one implemented in those countries with very adverse results. This global uniformity in policies is due to a certain asymmetry in global supply and demand of agricultural output [Patnaik,U.1996]. This is because the global North accounts for about 85 percent of the total world income. This implies that the demand for agricultural products directly or indirectly entering into their consumption basket cannot be met, except to a minor extent, by their own domestic supply of many of those products, thereby making them highly import dependent on developing countries of non-temperate lands. This in turn, is due to the fact that temperate lands have historically had a very rigid and limited output vector and cannot change it. Though this rigidity arising from climatic conditions can be changed by artificial means, bulk production by that is not profitable. On the other hand, large non-temperate countries like India have a highly diversified output vector. However, due to the **inelastic supply of tropical land**,⁹ it becomes necessary on the part of the advanced countries to implement policies which will lead to adaptation of cropping pattern of non-temperate lands to suit the requirements of the developed countries so as to maintain their high living standards [Ibid.].

In other words, such policies which reduce domestic demand are continuously being stressed upon by the international lending agencies namely the IMF and the World Bank etc. because the incomes of developing countries populations have to be suppressed in order to check their effective demand for domestically consumed goods and thus, divert

⁹ Patnaik, U. 5-6 Feb. 2001. It has been reported that while the net addition to Total Sown Area (TSA) during the nineteen eighties in India was over 7 million hectares, in the nineties, TSA has become stagnant. Further, the index of TSA declined from 100 in 1990-91 to 97.7 by 1995-96 and increased to 100.3 only by end-decade in 1999-2000.

a larger part of the available limited resources, especially irrigated land, towards the production of tropical primary exports (like tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa, vegetable oils, fruits, spices etc.) needed by the developed countries, which they are incapable of producing. Additionally, many temperate-land summer fruits and vegetables are sought to be obtained in winter from developing countries. Hence, a clear shift in cropping pattern (i.e., a shift away from foodgrains production towards non-foodgrains production), geared essentially towards primary exports takes place in developing countries through the market mechanism itself. Such cropping pattern shifts can be also seen to some extent in Uttar-Pradesh where the post-reforms period is marked by a general slowing down of growth compared to the twenty years before 1989-90. There is a deceleration in the rate of growth of area under foodgrains in particular on the one hand, while an increase is observed on the other hand, in the rate of growth of area under non-foodgrains. However, the decade of the eighties in particular saw a collapse of area growth, while the nineties, though showing some improvement over the eighties, has not recaptured the area growth of the period 1968-69 to 1979-80 [Table 4].

TABLE 4

Long term trends in the growth rates of Area under different crops (Foodgrains and Non-Foodgrains) in U.P.

Year	Rice	Wheat	Coarse Cereals	Foodgrains	Non-foodgrains
Pre-reform					
1968-69 to 1979-80.	1.03	2.97	-2.57	1.59	3.4
1980-81 to 1989-90	0.03	0.86	-1.98	0.02	-3.84
Post-Reform					
1990-91 to 1999-00	0.81	0.91	-1.62	0.25	0.32
Longer-Term Growth Rates					
1968-69 to 1989-90	1.07	2.55	-2.54	0.36	-0.34
1980-81 to 1999-2000	0.48	0.77	-2.11	0.05	-0.46
Overall					
1968-69 to 1999-00	0.87	1.79	-2.4	0.25	-0.28

Source: Calculated from data in Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) Nov. 2001.

Note : Coarse Cereals include jowar, bajra, maize, ragi, small millets and barley.

Non-foodgrains include rapeseed, linseed, potatoes and sugarcane.

The table above shows that coarse cereals, which constitute the staple diet of the majority in the countryside, have however registered a decline in area throughout the period considered. While rice and wheat are the only two cereals apart from the high-valued cash crops like sugarcane, linseed, potatoes etc. which have benefited from the “Green Revolution” technology, coarse cereals have not only remained largely untouched by this productivity raising technology package but have increasingly been displaced by the above mentioned primary exportable crops.

In a situation where high-valued commercial crops like oilseeds, potatoes and sugarcane are increasingly displacing area under coarse cereals, the sustainability of agricultural growth requires a substantial increase in productivity levels of cereals in order to compensate for both a decline in area under cultivation of foodgrains as well as rate of growth of population which increased from 2.08 percent between 1981-91 in rural U.P to 2.14 percent during 1991-2001.¹⁰

However, the post-reform period has witnessed a decisive restructuring of public investment in agriculture. Instead of direct productive investments in infrastructure like irrigation, rural development, subsidies etc., a greater reliance is now being placed on price incentives. According to the neo-classical economists, this decline in government spending in the agricultural sector is considered to be desirable, for under the neo-classical theory, public investment must displace or ‘Crowd-Out’ private investment. The underlying assumption behind this kind of a theoretical understanding is that of full employment. However, in a world where 55.5 million tonnes of food stocks remain with the FCI (as in July 2001) , an increase in public outlays in agriculture infact ‘Crowds-In’ private investment via the multiplier effect. Since the marginal propensity to consume out of an additional rupee spent by the poor is greater than that by the rich, an increase in public expenditures on broad-based activities like irrigation and power does mean giving some purchasing power in the hands of the rural poor.[Patnaik, P. 1999]. This is in sharp contrast to the extremely narrow and specific form that private investment takes. Private investment is usually restricted to very specific areas like agro-based industries where

¹⁰ Sen, Abhijit. “Agriculture, Employment and Poverty: Recent Trends in Rural India”, in V.K. Ramachandran and M. Swaminathan (Ed.). p 394.

multiplier effects are by and large absent. The benefits of such a growth therefore do not trickle down to the rural poor.

Such declining levels of public investments in agriculture [Table 4] are only a necessary component of contractionary macroeconomic policies as restraint on central government expenditure and reduction of budget deficit to GDP ratios pursued by the Indian state under increasing pressure from the international funding institutions namely the IMF and the World Bank. Consequently, the overall growth rate in agriculture has declined from 2.45 percent during the 1980s to 1.46 percent during 1990-91 to 1997-98 in U.P.,¹¹ while the rate of growth of foodgrains production in particular has reduced to 2.52 percent in the 1990s compared to 4.56 percent in the 1980s. The decline has been particularly marked in the case of coarse cereals whose growth rate has fallen from a positive 1.58 percent in the pre-reforms decade of the eighties to a negative of 0.62 percent in the post reforms period [Table 6]. Table 5 brings out the decline of public outlays in agriculture.

Table 5
Plan Outlays For Public Sector By Major Heads Of Rural Development As
Percentage To Total Plan Outlays In U.P.

Major heads of rural development.	At 1984-85 prices 7 th plan (1985-1990)	At 1991-92 prices 8 th plan (1992-1997)	At 1996-97 prices 9 th Plan (1997-2002)
I. Agriculture and allied activities	786.96	---	3070.38
II. Irrigation and flood control	2200	---	3290.12
Combined(I+II)	2986.96	4670.45	6360.50
III Rural development	604.25	1569.15	4742.80
I+II+III	3591.21	6239.60	11103.20
IV Energy	3403	7006.26	7544.15
V Grand total	10447	21000	46340
I+II+III as % of SDP	15.60	11.13	11.02
IV as % of SDP	14.78	12.50	07.40
I+II+III+IV as % of SDP	30.37	23.62	18.42
V as % SDP	45.50	37.45	45.98

Source: i) Ninth five year plan. Vol.1.p 181.

ii) Eighth five year plan.vol1.Pp. 65-66.

iii) Seventh five year plan.vol.1.p 30

Note: i) The above percentages are obtained after deflating the series with WPI (Base : 1980-81)

ii) SDP is at constant price based on 1980-81 prices

¹¹ CSO. Gross State Domestic Product. 2001. Statement 42: Gross State Domestic Product at Factor Cost by Industry of Origin. At constant (1980-81) prices.

Table 6
Long Term Trends In Growth Rates Of Foodgrains Production In U.P

Period	Rice	Wheat	Coarse Cereals	Foodgrains
Pre-Reform				
1967-68 to 1979-80.	2.46	4.94	-3.16	1.39
1980-81 to 1989-90	5.03	3.75	1.58	4.56
Post-Reform				
1990-91 to 1999-00	3.05	3.17	-0.62	2.52
Longer-Term Growth Rates				
1967-68 to 1989-90	4.95	5.96	-0.78	3.88
Overall				
1967-68 to 1999-00.	4.84	4.96	-0.25	3.52

Source: Calculated from data in Agriculture, Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) Nov 2001.

Note : Coarse Cereals include jowar, bajra, maize, ragi, small millets, tur and barley.

There are some interesting conclusions, which emerge from the output growth rates given in table 5 with the area growth rates of table 3. We find that despite the absence of area expansion in physical terms during the eighties compared to the earlier period covering 1968-69 to 1979-80, the rise of yields was high enough to maintain the foodgrains growth rate at 4.6 percent, well above the All-India level of 2.85 percent. A combination of factors was responsible for bringing about such a rise of yields during this period. To begin with, we know that nineteen eighties was the decade when the “Green Revolution” technology package spread to the eastern parts of the country. Further, the adoption of such high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. was simultaneously accompanied by a substantial increase in the share of public outlays devoted to agriculture. This was the period when public investment in agriculture and allied activities, irrigation, power etc. was stepped up significantly, particularly after the drought of 1987. The increase in public outlays, especially on irrigation led to an increase

in total area sown in economic terms by raising land productivity, thereby compensating for the absence of area expansion in physical terms during this period. Moreover, an increase in public investment in agriculture and allied activities (which includes expenditure on employment generation) meant that a domestic market for foodgrains was created during this period. Alternatively, the latter half of the eighties saw a significant increase in rural demand for foodgrains, in turn brought about by an increase in the rate of growth of rural employment registered, especially during 1987-88 to 1993-94. [Table 7]

Table 7
Rates Of Growth Of Rural Employment In U.P. By Usual Status
(Principal +Subsidiary)

Period	Non agricultural employment	Agricultural employment	Total employment
1977-78 to 1983	4.00	3.18	3.33
1983 to 1987-88	0.22	0.75	0.65
1987-88 to 1993-94	4.23	1.71	2.18
1993-94 to 1999-00.	3.74	-0.15	0.69
1977-78 to 1987-88	2.28	2.08	2.12
1987-88 to 1999-00	3.98	0.77	1.43
1977-78 to 1990-91	4.75	0.75	1.60
1990-91 to 1999-00	1.02	2.26	1.95

Source: Sen, Abhijit: "Agriculture, Employment and Poverty;Recent trends in Rural India". In V.K.Ramachandran and M. Swaminathan (eds)" Agrarian studies: Essays on agrarian relations in less developed countries" 2002, pp 411,412.

As can be seen from the table above, there was a huge increase in both agricultural and non-agricultural employment during the period 1987-88 to 1993-94, thereby raising the figure for total employment to 2.18 percent. This was particularly true of rural non-farm employment, which grew at a rate of 4.23 percent during this period. This increase in

non-farm employment in rural U.P. led to a significant shift in the overall structure of rural workforce, away from agricultural employment towards non-farm employment, thereby resulting in labour market tightness in the wage goods sector. This shift in rural workforce could be a plausible explanation behind the rise in real wage rates recorded for unskilled rural labourers in U.P., particularly since the second half of the eighties, as has already been observed earlier in chapter 3.

In the nineties however, we find a huge drop in the proportion of plan outlays devoted to agriculture. The combined outlay on agriculture and allied activities, irrigation and rural development as percentage of SDP has fallen from 15.6 percent during the 7th Plan period to 11.02 percent during the 9th Plan. If energy is also included in the above noted expenditures on rural development, then this figure declines from 30.37 percent during the 7th Plan to 18.42 percent during the 9th Plan. As a result, not only has the non-agricultural employment fallen to 1.02 percent during the post-reforms decade of the nineties, we also find that the productivity levels have dropped to such an extent that despite a growth in physical area under foodgrains, the growth rate of output has reduced to only 2.52 percent. However, U.P. continues to register higher growth rate of foodgrains than India as a whole where, unlike in U.P, it has dropped to below the population growth rate.

The fact that per capita calorie intake has been falling slowly not only in U.P. but in all the major states (except Kerala and West-Bengal) reflects the unequal distribution of growth benefits [Table 8], and the fact that the fall in average calorie intake has been larger in the nineties only reflects the adverse impact of income deflationary macroeconomic policies on bulk of the rural poor. In this regard, NSS data on consumption expenditure reports that the per capita direct cereal consumption in U.P. fell from 16.83 kg. per month in 1972-73 to 13.91 kg. per month in 1993-94. Alternatively, there has been a 17.4 percent in per capita direct cereal intake in U.P. during this period. This is clearly brought out from the table given below:

Table 8
Per Capita Direct Cereal Consumption by States in India
(in kg. per month), 1972-73 and 1993-94

	Andhra Pradesh	Assam	Bihar	Gujarat	Harayana
RURAL					
1972-73	15.27	14.81	15.58	13.32	17.57
1993-94	13.27	13.17	14.31	10.65	12.92
Percent change	-13.0	-11.1	-8.2	-10.0	-26.5
URBAN					
1972-73	12.68	12.55	13.49	10.77	11.86
1993-94	11.30	12.05	12.82	8.96	10.46
Percent change	-10.9	-4.0	-5.0	-16.8	-11.8
	Karnataka	Kerala	Madhya Pradesh	Maharashrta	Orissa
RURAL					
1972-73	15.63	7.97	17.28	12.60	15.22
1993-94	13.15	10.11	14.20	11.39	15.93
Percent change	-15.9	26.9	-17.8	-9.6	4.7
URBAN					
1972-73	11.32	8.17	12.88	8.95	13.77
1993-94	10.87	9.46	11.32	9.37	13.36
Percent change	-4.0	15.8	-12.1	4.7	-3.0
	Punjab	Rajasthan	Tamil Nadu	Uttar Pradesh	West Bengal
RURAL					
1972-73	15.38	18.17	14.53	16.83	13.64
1993-94	10.79	14.85	11.72	13.91	14.96
Percent change	-29.9	-18.3	-19.3	-17.4	9.7
URBAN					
1972-73	10.71	13.21	11.12	12.24	10.53
1993-94	9.01	11.52	10.05	11.08	11.64
Percent change	-15.9	-12.8	-9.6	-9.5	10.5
ALL-INDIA					
	Rural	Urban			
1972-73	15.26	11.24			
1993-94	13.40	10.63			
Percent change	-12.2	-5.4			

Source : NSS Surveys on Consumption Expenditure.

In other words, we have seen that the post- reforms decade of the nineties has only led to a worsening of all the welfare improving macroeconomic indicators for bulk of the rural poor, not only in U.P. but in the country as a whole too.

Concluding Remarks : A striking similarity can be seen between the overall economic environment for Indian agriculture existing today with that prevailing in the half century before the Colonial rule ended. The present situation of a stagnant agrarian sector reminds us of the colonial period, which was marked by a frequent recurrence of famines throughout the Indian countryside. By pressurizing the third world countries like ours into pursuing the same set of macroeconomic deflationary policies as were implemented by the Colonial State, a similar kind of politico-economic domination of the lands of temperate countries is taking place today as did under Imperial rule. Only the form of this exploitation has assumed a slightly more subtle form in the present situation. Unlike in the earlier period when this exploitation took the form of a direct territorial expansion by the colonizer into the colonized nation, it now takes place indirectly through the U.S. dominated IMF and World Bank dictating economic policies to the socio-economically backward Asian and African nations through the process of increasing trade liberalisation in agriculture. Once again, we are faced with a situation whereby the domestic food security is under severe threat. A famine-like situation as under British rule is increasingly being created. Once again, an increasing emphasis on primary crop production for export as against for domestic consumption is taking place. With per capita availability of foodgrains touching an all time low of 159.1 kg during the triennium ending 2000-01, we find that it is slightly less than even the level of 159.3 kg. Per head for the period 1933-1938, i.e., the period marked by worldwide economic Depression.¹ Further, the

¹ Patnaik, U. Feb. 2002.

falling global prices of primary exports (including both food as well as non-foodgrains)² have led to an increasing number of farmers committing suicide across the country.

All these problems emanating from increasing trade liberalisation of Indian agriculture and WTO regime have only aggravated the problems already existing due to the highly concentrated structure of landholdings that continues to persist from the colonial times upto the present, not only in U.P but in Indian countryside as well. Even though remnants of the old *zamindari* as well as *talluqdari* system still remain, especially in an extremely feudal and backward region like eastern U.P., there has however been a definite break from the earlier techniques of production which existed under British India, so far as the relatively more prosperous and developed districts of the western region within U.P. are concerned. Alternatively, we saw how throughout the colonial period, barring a few extremely fertile tracts of the Upper Doab covering mainly the western region, a virtual absence of capital formation in agricultural lands, especially in regions like eastern U.P., completely ruled out the possibility of technological improvements in Indian agriculture. Infact, even in areas where the British further extended the already existing system of canal irrigation under the Mughals, agricultural lands had suffered severely owing to problems arising from excessive canal irrigation. Not only were the tools and implements used in carrying out agricultural production highly primitive, there was also a heavy concentration of land- the most important means of production, in the hands of a tiny minority of feudal *zamindars* and *talluqdars*. This situation was however altered in the post- colonial “independent” India with the introduction of the “Green Revolution” technology during the mid 1960s. With pump sets, harvesters, tractors, power tillers etc. being introduced, the post 1960s phase in Indian agriculture has no doubt witnessed a decisive break from the past. We’ve seen how the spread of this modern high-yielding technology package to the eastern parts of the country during the 1980s did lead to the revival of an extremely feudal and backward economy like eastern U.P. as well. We saw the importance of the state’s role in keeping up growth rates through generating rural demand.

However, this spurt in eastern UP’s economy has only been short lived. The post-reform period has been marked by a slump in the overall growth rates not only in U.P. but

² Patnaik, U. “Introduction” in Alice Thorner’s (Ed.) Land, Labour and Rights. Daniel Thorner Memorial Lectures. Tulika. 2001.

in Indian agriculture as a whole. An increasing emphasis on macroeconomic deflationary policies leading to sharp cuts in public investment to GDP ratios has meant that the supply of land (both in physical as well as economic terms) has once again become virtually inelastic. This fixity of land as a means of production has become a key issue in any discussion on Indian agriculture today. This takes us back to the central theme of this dissertation i.e., the issue of how to address the land question, particularly in the present context of an overall stagnation in Indian agriculture?

We saw how throughout the colonial period, a denial to the tillers of their right over the very lands they tilled had disastrous consequences for bulk of the rural population. This manifested itself, on the one hand, in the growing numbers of the small and marginal cultivators joining the ranks of landless agricultural labourers over time while a frequent recurrence of famines rendering still many more landless and absolutely impoverished on the other. The present situation, whereby a number of farmers suicides are being reported from various parts of the country, is a grim reminder of our colonial past.

In other words, the factors responsible for the present agrarian crisis must be located in the backdrop of the policies that the “independent” Indian state has been pursuing vis-à-vis agriculture. From independence upto the present, a piecemeal approach to the agrarian question, in the form of inconsistent land reforms, investment with a regional imbalance, short-term populist declarations have only served to make our agrarian economy more vulnerable and incapable of defending itself in the global market.

Thus, only by following the democratic agenda of giving “land to the tiller” can a long term solution to the present problems faced by Indian agriculture be achieved. However, “land to the tiller” is not meant in the sense implied by those belonging to the Neo-Chayanovian school of thought like Charan Singh etc. Nationalisation of land could perhaps be a possible step towards solving the present agrarian crisis.

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