

# Share Tenancy in West Bengal in the Post Independence Period

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**Pradip Kumar Biswas**



CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC STUDIES AND PLANNING  
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
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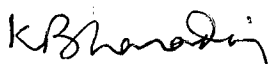



July 1989

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "SHARE TENANCY IN WEST BENGAL IN THE POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD" submitted by Mr Pradip Kumar Biswas, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M.Phil) of this University, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his own work.

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

  
KRISHNA BHARADWAJ  
Supervisor

  
DEEPAK NAYYAR  
Chairperson

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P. K. BISWAS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The main object of this dissertation is to bring out the pattern of changes in the agrarian economy in terms of tenancy situation in West Bengal. Theoretical issues involved in tenancy and sharecropping have been raised as an attempt to comprehend the implications of our empirical findings. We have also worked into the question whether sharetenancy inhibits the growth of agriculture in terms of its productive efficiency (to be defined there).

It is shown in Chapter II that the theoretical observations made by the classical political economists on the sharetenancy system could be useful in understanding the situation with regard to tenant farming in an underdeveloped agriculture like that of India. The emergence and the growth of sharetenancy system had been analysed by them in the context of the historical developments of their contemporaneous society. The dissolution of serfdom, as they observed, released a huge work force and created conditions for the emergence of a production organisation which came to be known as metevage or sharetenancy. The landlords had enough land to lease out and there had been no dearth of agricultural work force to lease it in.

At that particular historical juncture feudalism was disintegrating and the capitalist relations tended to proliferate in agriculture. New types of production organisations were taking their shapes heralding the advent of capitalism.

Smith, Turgot, Mill, Jones and Marx highlighted the specific historical context while making their observations on the growth of sharetenancy. The historical context of the development of sharetenancy in colonial Bengal is, however, altogether different and it is not suggested that the concrete observations made by the classical political economists are entirely replicable to the context of the conditions that led to the emergence of sharetenancy as a dominant mode of production during late colonialism. But their mode of analysis is suggestive and relevant - and hence fruitful - for our purpose. The most useful suggestion which one can draw from their analytical treatment of sharetenancy is that the development of production organisation should be studied in the context of a given historical situation. It is to be noted in this connection that the neo-classical economists made a major mistake in treating sharetenancy as a purely economic organizational form having no link to the historical development of the society and its production

organisations. This is reflected in their theoretical formulations of sharetenancy in which they have treated peasantry either as a single homogeneous class or consisting of landlord - tenant pairs each representing the whole class. The different sections of the peasantry with their different levels of accumulation are involved in production in a qualitatively different manner. The homogeneity postulate does not hold good even for the sharetenants who may be stratified into a number of classes according to their nature of involvement in different markets. The contractual arrangements for sharetenancy vary from one category of tenants to the other category. Furthermore, in their attempt to arrive at competitively determined rental shares the neo-classical economists did not consider the fact that these shares are often historically given or statutorily fixed.

In chapter III a succinct summary of the development of patterns of agrarian relations evolving out of the colonialist land management policy, commercialization of agriculture and tenancy legislations is presented as a backdrop to comprehend as to how sharetenancy emerged as a dominant mode of cultivation during the later phase of colonialism. The growth of commercial agriculture in colonial Bengal set a new pattern of



rural dependence. The 'large or dominant' cultivators opened up new avenues of exploitations by linking up two or more markets through suitable terms of contracts. The dynamic outcome of this new type of interactions between the different sections of the peasantry was reflected in the polarisation of the peasant economy. A large section of the dispossessed peasantry ended up as bargadars.

Chapter IV makes an attempt to trace the growth of sharetenancy in West Bengal in the post-independence period. The tenants have been classified into a number of categories according to their size of holdings. The changing pattern of the size-class distribution of tenancy has been looked into in the context of the changes in the landholding structure. We have also analysed the changes in the pattern of lease contracts for share rent, fixed kind rent and fixed money rent.

It is often claimed that share-tenancy stands as an obstacle to the adoption of modern technology in agriculture. Bhaduri, Pradhan Prasad, et al observed that the adoption of modern technology is largely hindered by the wide prevalence of share-tenancy in agriculture. An attempt has been made in Chapter V to examine this question on the basis of a case study

of the district of Murshidabad. Investigations refer to a comparative study in terms of the distribution of areas under HYV and other crops, cropping intensities, pattern of input use, irrigation intensities and productivities of the different crops of the share-cropped and non-sharecropped holdings in the sample region of the district. The study is based on the survey findings of the Agricultural Census Commission (1986-87) as well as the Socio-economic Survey and Evaluation Branch, Government of West Bengal (1987-88).

The state has been playing a vital role in bringing about a change in the pattern of rural dependence. In Chapter VI an attempt has been made to evaluate the state interventions, specially in terms of their effectiveness. The state of West Bengal has already adopted several land reform measures as well as certain economic programmes for ameliorating the conditions of the poorer sections of the peasantry. But we have observed that all these measures have not brought about a substantial change in the nature of power relations between the 'large or dominant' cultivators and the 'small' and 'very small' peasants. The statutorily fixed limits of ceilings on the size of ownership holding have been implemented in a number of districts with considerable success. But the land-

lords have found new avenues of exploiting the poorer sections of the cultivators. They continue to dominate over the poorer sections of the peasantry through their involvements in grain trade as well as in the business of modern inputs.

However, a change in the nature of inter-linkages between the different markets has been noted. Cases of land-credit inter-linkage, for example, have not been found in West Bengal agriculture. But the petty producers' operations in the product market have been found to be constrained by the interlocking terms of contract. The petty producers in some cases are still required to part with their produce at a low harvest season price to meet their credit obligations to the grain traders who often belong to the big land-owning class. The poor peasants often fail to avail themselves of the institutional credit facilities because of their dearth of mortgageable assets. It is to be noted in this connection that the 'dominant' cultivators have been able to crowd out the poor peasants from the organised credit markets. We have noted this sort of situation in West Bengal after the promotion of institutional credit in the rural areas. On the other hand, the programmes designed to creat

alternative employment opportunities for the landless labourers, bargaders and small and marginal farmers, generated very few mandays per those households.

It follows from all these observations that the power structure still continues to favour the big land-owning class and no substantial change has been brought about in the pattern of rural dependence. There has been a notable progress in the establishment of the occupancy rights of the sharetenants in West Bengal after the adoption of the 'Operation Barga' programme. Cases of eviction have been rare. Insecurity of tenure has been substantially reduced. But capitalist relations are not tending to proliferate in West Bengal agriculture. The input as well as the rural capital market are still dominated by the traders and big landowners. Benefits of the programme for uplifting the rural poor have not been drawn by the people for whom they are meant. Above all, the programmes did not create a dynamic process of self-sustaining development.

State interventions have no doubt brought about a change in the 'dependency Web'. The mode of surplus extraction and accumulation has been largely affected

by a number of measures taken by the state to break the pattern of rural dependency. But these reformist measures seem to be inadequate in protecting the weaker sections of the peasantry from the exploitations of the landlords.

## 2. SHARETENANCY IN ECONOMIC THEORETICAL ASPECT

There emerges a wide spectrum of theoretical literature on tenancy starting with Smith's publication of *Wealth of Nation* (1776) and the literature is enriched by several authors. The approaches and issues with respect to tenancy have shifted from time to time, bringing new dimension to this literature, in order to explain the contemporary problems. Some amount of abstract reasoning was applied to the problem in the works of late 20th century (see 2.2. below). For our analysis, we have focussed upon certain aspects and issues which may be relevant to understanding the tenancy situation in West Bengal. A part of this literature, though belonging to the thought of 'Classical' schools is still relevant to our times and sometimes appears even more important than the more recent attempts to explain the working of the underdeveloped agriculture. We have, therefore, analysed the literature on tenancy separately in terms of the two broad schools of thought, namely, Political Economy Schools and Neo-Clasical Schools, briefly outlining their different approaches and treatment of issues with respect to tenancy.

### 2.1. Sharetenancy in Political Economy-Some Salient Features

#### 2.1.1. The Literature

This school of thought developed over more than two centuries, with its rough beginnings in the Physiocrats

in France and William Petty in England and culminating in Marx as a full-fledged theoretical system. Among the early political economists Smith (1776), J.S. Mill (1804), Turgot (1766), Jones (1831), and Marx dealt with the tenancy institution in details. In particular sharetenancy finds prominence from the very inception of Political Economy in the late 18th Century.

As an important relation of production in agriculture in the backward region of contemporary Europe and in Britain, in its pre-industrial revolution stage, sharetenancy attracted attention of these economists. Economists in the early 20-th century who contributed to this literature from a Marxian perspective are notably, Lenin and Kautsky (1899). This approach has been widely adopted to analyse the working of underdeveloped agriculture and intensively so, in the post-sixties in India (Bagchi, 1973, 1975, 1976a; Bardhan, 1979, 1980, 1982; Bhaduri, 1973, 1981, 1983; Bharadwaj, 1974, 1975, 1985, 1988; Chandra, 1974, 1985; Patnaik, 1976, 1983; Prasad, 1974; Rudra, 1975, 1978; et al).

#### 2.1.2. Issues Discussed:

The major issues, we find in political economy, with regard to tenancy are as follows:

- ( i) Historical evolution of tenancy;
- ( ii) Sharetenancy as a transitional system;
- (iii) Interaction between the process of accumulation and tenurial conditions (discussed in Indian experience in the process of commercialization by the recent authors);
- ( iv) Notion of comparative efficiency and technical viability or progressivity (nature of productive forces and of production relations) of different modes.

2.1.3. The Broad Approach of the Classical and Marxian Schools

Economists belonging to this schools of thought analyse the behaviour of the economy as constituted of different 'classes' and of 'individuals' in terms of the historical evolutionary process of development of society. Changes and choice of the different forms of land relations are analysed in terms of the extent situation of rural classes and their accumulation of capital and the level of technology adoptable in cultivation.



For example, in the feudal system (after the abolition of serfdom in Europe) the development of productive forces was too low to allow cultivation of big estates by large-scale capital-intensive technique or by using large number of labourers (where monitoring cost is too high) and therefore, sharetenancy emerged as a suitable organisation of production to resolve these problems.

The process of development of capitalism was seen thus: with increasing commercialization of agriculture means of production get concentrated in the hands of a small section of the agriculturists leading to differentiation of the peasantry. These different classes with assymetric factor endowments choose particular type (s) of production organisation(s) in that historical context. The political economists discussed the alternative forms of organisation from the point of view of their relative superiority in terms of the yields and their roles in furthering or depressing accumulation.

The behaviour of a tenant is analysed by looking into his subsistence need, accumulation of capital, factor endowments and the nature and extent of his involvement in the rural markets.

Bearing this basic approach in mind we shall note the findings of these political economists on the different aspects (mentioned above) and how these are relevant to our context. In fact, as we shall see in the following chapters, this approach appears best suited to analyse tenancy in West Bengal (see 2.4. below).

#### 2.1.4. The Classical/Marxian Discussion on Tenancy

##### ( i) Historical Evolution of Tenancy:

The political economists hold the view that the emergence of various land tenure system is a historical evolutionary process which is conditioned by the development of market capitalism in agriculture. While dealing with the evolution of tenancy they identified four different types of rental contracts and ranked them according to the development of organisational set up as (1) rent in the form of labour, (2) share rent, (3) fixed kind rent and (4) fixed money rent which, according to some of them, correspond to the successive stages of development of the economy (Smith, 1776; Jones; 1831; Marx, Capital, vol.III).

Labour rent, a form of social relations, was primarily associated with feudal/slave system - (Capital, Vol.III, pp.790-94). However, it may exist in the developed stages of society as pointed out by Lenin and Kautsky (1899) in the cases of Russian and German agricultures and as also noted for recent times by Bardhan and Rudra (1983) in India's agriculture. Lenin reasoned that, because of labour uncertainty (both from the point of view of labourers and the landlords), in a certain stage of capitalist development, the landlord would lease a small parcel of land to the labourers on the condition of his supplying labour to the landlord for a stipulated period of time. In such a situation labourers were either underpaid or unpaid.

(a) Evolution of Sharetenancy:

After the dissolution of the serfdom labourers became relatively free. But they had neither land nor other means of production, except labour. The landlords possessed all the land and other means of production excepting the labour. The level of technology in agricultural production was very low inhibiting the use of capital intensive technique. The landlords also found that the monitoring cost was very high in case of using large scale hired labour in their big estates. Therefore,

sharetenancy (or metayage in Europe) emerged as a suitable organization of production to meet the problems.<sup>1</sup>

(Marx, Capital, Vol.III, Ch.XLVII) The landlords had to provide capital for cultivation and some-times consumption loans to the sharetenants. Since the metayers obtained only a half of the produce, they would try to produce as much as possible from the leased land by using the capital which the landlords advanced to them. In this way, metayers could accumulate certain amount of 'stock' (capital)<sup>2</sup> and then go for fixed rent lease contract (Marx, Capital, Vol.III, p.803). In fact the classical economists identified several conditional factors, arising in the process of historical evolution of a society, which led to the emergence of various land-tenure systems. Smith, for example, pointed out that in case of share-tenancy, it was not only the shortage of land but lack of capital of the tenants. Credit market was either absent or the tenant has no access to that market. Therefore, in such a situation landlord was the

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1. In a different situation in West Bengal in the closing decades of colonial rule, we shall see in chapter-3, polarization of land in a technologically backward agriculture led to a high growth of sharetenancy.
  2. Share rent may not include entire surplus. At least some of the sharetenants could retain and accumulate some surplus.

only source of finance to the tenants. Sharetenancy, therefore, emerged as an adjustment to the absence of market for capital and credit. As Smith stated, "a villain enfranchised ... have no stock of his own, could cultivate it only by means of what the landlords have advanced to him, and must, therefore, have been what French call a metayer". (p.367)

(b) Emergence of Money Rent:

For the emergence of fixed-rent tenancy Jones (1831) specified the permissibility conditions. "The rent of land may be paid in money, in produce or in service. Payments in money are rare, they suppose an advance in the organisation of society, which is found in few spots of the globe. There must be both market to supply species and a tenancy capable of risking the variations of such markets and able to contract on their own responsibility for money rent with a reasonable probability of their being able to perform such contracts". (p. 167) Smith, in his Lectures, holds that the transformation of share-rent into money rent requires an overall development of the society: "after the custom (sharetenancy) had continued for a long time the tenants picked up so much as enable to make a bargain

with the landlord to give him a certain sum for a lease of so many years....." ( p.101)

The statements above indicate that the emergence of cash-rent requires the existence of a class of better-off tenants. They should have enterprising capacity and the ability to take the risk of crop failure. The transformation of sharerent to money rent is mediated through the development of markets and particularly commercialization of agriculture. These wealthy tenants, as they observed, also accumulate their capital and emerge as a class through the process of commercialisation of agriculture.

In Marx, the dynamics of social change and the associated change in lease contract in agriculture is analysed more intensively. He observes, "the transition of rent in kind into money rent presupposes a considerable development of commerce.....industry.....commodity production and thereby money circulation." (Capital, Vol.III, p.803)

In fact Marx drew analogy between the transformations in industry and agriculture. The development of industrial capital is characterised by the gradual increase in organic composition of capital, abolition

of small-scale petty producers and the growth of monopoly. Similarly, agricultural capital abolishes the petty peasants who were cultivating on the basis of traditional technology. It establishes large-scale capitalist farming. These big farmers invest capital, use capital intensive modern technology, employ hired labour, enjoy economies of scale and sometimes lease-in land from the poor on cash rent contract. In the earlier stage of development the petty producers usually leased-in land from the big landlords on share rent. The petty producers, now become dispossessed of land. They either work as wage-labourer in the land of the capitalist farmers or migrate to join the urban labour force.<sup>3</sup>

( ii) Sharetenancy as a Transitional System:

From the discussion of the historical evolution of the different forms of tenancy it is clear that sharetenancy emerges as a transitional system. It lies between the evolutions of labour rent and money rent. Sharetenancy emerges when the markets for labour, credit and land are not developed and the level of technology in cultivation is low. In that circumstances a labourer

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3. We shall see in the subsequent chapters that this transformation in West Bengal not only fails to be accomplished in its final form of capitalism but, deviates from its 'Classic' path of transition.

has to depend primarily on the landlords for credit and employment as well as for leasing-in land. Share contract enable the tenants (at least a section of them) to accumulate wealth/surplus. After a certain degree of accumulation these tenants could opt for fixed rent contract.

But this transformation requires monetisation and overall capitalist development of the economy. Share-tenancy ultimately vanishes when the agricultural sector is fully commercialized and profit motive becomes the basis of cultivation.

In later writings, Lenin and Kautsky (1899) have pointed out that sharetenancy is not necessarily a system associated exclusively with feudalism. They have modified the above Marxian view and stated that instead of declining, sharetenancy might be increasingly prevalent at a certain stage of capitalist development in agriculture.

Predominance of usurious and merchant capital in agriculture may retard differentiation of the peasantry and sustain poor peasants who are amenable for direct and indirect exploitation. With a certain degree of land concentration (and capitalist development) the big-landowners lease-out a parcel of land to the labourer to



build up a tie so as to get a secured labour service.

( Lenin, 1899).

(iii) Interaction Between the Process of Accumulation and Tenurial Conditions - Indian Experience:

It is observed that a high degree of commercialization of agriculture during the colonial regime failed to bring about capitalist transformation in the colonies. Even after several decades of independence and desperate attempts, these countries remain underdeveloped. Some sort of capitalist relations, though they develop, become intertwined with the precapitalist relations of production. So, in agriculture, we find, capitalist farming co-exists with sharetenancy in the ex-colonial countries like India.

Recent historical researches indicate that the intervention of the colonial state firmly laid the basis of agrarian commercialization in India in the nineteenth century (Chowdhury (1964), (1967); Whitcombe (1971); Siddiqu (1973); Amin (1981); Sen (1982)).

Trade in agricultural commodities grew considerably. There had also been a remarkable rise in the degree of monetisation. Despite these developments feudal relations showed no sign of their eventual dissolutions. Capitalist relations did not proliferate either. The process, on the contrary, raised the degree of dependence of small cultivators, moneylenders, traders and landlords. The

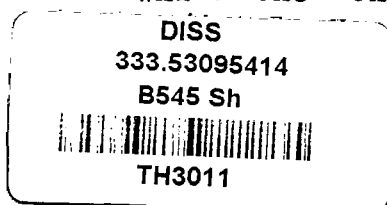
petty producers often had to accept debt servitude.

The ~~study~~ development of capitalism in the post-colonial period, as Bharadwaj (1985) points out, can be explained in terms of exchange relations that evolved out of the agrarian commercialization in its colonial context. Exchange relations have been analysed in terms of the hierarchical structure of the agrarian society. The terms and conditions of exchange are set by the 'large or dominant cultivators' having substantial surplus while the 'medium cultivators' generate 'sizeable enough surplus' and adjust their cropping patterns according to the variations in relative prices. The 'medium cultivators' are basically 'price-takers' and 'quantity-adjusters'. The 'chronically deficit households' and 'subsistence households' are incapable of generating any net surplus on any sustained or continuous basis and are most of the time deficit and their involvement in exchange relations has been compulsive. (pp.11-13).



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The 'very small cultivators' with their 'chronically deficit households' have to enter the labour or credit market to secure consumption loans or advances for circulating capital. Their cash needs are so impending that they have to sell their output immediately after harvests at a very low price. They have to buy back the same produce in the lean season when the price reaches its peak. While the 'chronically deficit households' are often



trapped in an on-going process of borrowing, the subsistence households may find ways and means to an extent, to protect themselves from the vagaries of market fluctuations (p.11-12).

The dynamics of these relations of exchange often work through the inter-linked market deals in which the different sections of the peasantry are involved. A 'dominant party' exploits its weaker counterparts in the 'market game' by inter-locking the terms and conditions of contracts. Numerous examples of surplus extraction by a 'dominant party' can be drawn from the widely prevailing landlabour as well as land-credit interlinkages in Indian agriculture. Then the type of exchange system in which a party is involved is affected by its initial resource position and the nature of production relations. The terms of exchange for a party are also affected by the same.<sup>4</sup>(p.13)

One of the basic features of inter-linked markets is, as Bharadwaj (1985) observes, 'the weaker party in exchange loses the option to exercise choice in other markets due to its commitment in one' (p.13). For example, a tenant cannot sell his labour in the free market at

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4. Bharadwaj (1985) points out that the dynamic outcome of commercialization and the process of accumulation in general is not reflected in the growing literature on inter-linked markets. The available analysis of the optimality of contracts is based on static exchanges. (p.13).

a higher wage as he has committed himself into a land-labour tie. The case of a petty producer contracting loans on the commitment of selling his produce to the creditor immediately after harvests may also be mentioned as an outcome of inter-linking terms of contract.

An 'obverse aspect' of the inter-linking terms of contract is that 'the power of the dominant party to exploit in inter-linked markets are much more than in markets taken separately' (p.13). The dominant party obviously plays a decisive role in determining the terms of contracts which forms the basis of inter-linked market deals. And that is why the terms of contracts that inter-lock the different markets always lead to a situation where the dominant party can appropriate a major part of surplus. The different parties' claims over surplus at a point of time are determined by their existing resources position and levels of accumulation. In the successive periods exchange relations working through the inter-linked market deals cast their differential impacts on the levels of accumulation of the different parties. Exchange relations change with the changes in the levels of accumulation and differentiate further the already differentiated peasantry. The uneven development of the different markets may also be construed as a dynamic outcome of the exchange relations working through the inter-linking market deals.

(iv) Notion of Efficiency, Technological Innovation  
and Growth:

(a) Incentives and Resource use Efficiency

From the above analysis it is clear that the land-poor peasants are forced to lease-in land primarily for survival. It is, therefore, obvious that such poor peasants being driven by survival needs would try to produce as much as possible from the small plots of land by maximum possible use of family labour. Profit incentives have a limited role in such production activities. Incentives would work in a situation where a tenant can generate and accumulate surplus.

Analysing different modes of lease contracts political economists have come to the conclusion that a share-tenant has a greater incentive to exert his own labour compared to a slave or a wage labour. In case of fixed rent tenants or owner cultivators the incentive has been found at a still greater rate. Incentive to use own capital also works in accordance with the variations in the nature of tenancy. Smith observed that metayers would try to use landlord's capital as much as possible in maximizing their production. They would not be willing to invest their own capital because half of the produce would go to the landlords. In case of the fixed-rent tenants the situation is different. Their efforts to maximise

profit within the tenure of the lease induce the fixed - rent tenants to invest their own capital.

Turgot (1766) pointed out that growing population pressure on land leads to fragmentation of holdings and each tenant shares a smaller parcel of land. For maintaining a minimum level of production in a stagnant agriculture a poor tenant uses more and more labour in the diminishing parcel of land.

The comparison across different land-tenure systems may lead to the general conclusion that sharetenancy has a greater disincentive effect compared to the fixed-rent tenancy or owner cultivation. Sharetenancy, therefore, leads to misallocation of resources. But the political economists observe that sharetenancy has been a suitable and efficient tenurial arrangement for particular classes in a particular historical situation. They consider the development of the different markets in which lessors and Lessees are involved. The level of production technology as well as the level of accumulations of the parties involved in this tenurial arrangements are also considered in this respect. Considering all these factors the political economists argue that the 'choice'<sup>5</sup> of particular

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5. The 'choice' is not necessarily sym<sup>m</sup>metrical to lessor and lessee. It is obvious that a poor tenant's choice is too restrictive and the terms of exchange are consequently adverse compared to the other party.

land-lease contract results in the best possible use of resources compared to the alternatives open to the dominant party as also to the weaker party. For example, a labourer who has no capital or assets may not be offered fixed rent lease. Sharetenancy is suitable to him. The labourer can borrow capital from the landlord and use the capital and his labour on the leased land. Labourers who have enough capital can opt for fixed-rent lease. They use their own capital and maximise profit. So changes and choice of different lease contracts by different classes at different stages of development lead to most remunerative use of resources under the circumstances.

This approach of the political economists was wrongly criticised by Cheung (1969). He commented, "Smith's idea of analysing the development of land tenure system on the ground of more gainful resource use is certainly an improvement one, however, the approach he used is not enough to yield fruitful results. Once property laws define a specific set of constraints on competition, there may exist several forms of contractual arrangements implying same resource use ..... When these property laws are altered, the contractual arrangements may change. It follows that the appropriate approach in analysing land-tenure development is to trace the alteration in property laws, and not, as Smith did to interpret (or advocate) changes in laws by tracing what might appear to be defective leasing

arrangement." (p33). This criticism of Cheung appears to be groundless because, firstly, neither his competitive model is applicable to the situation which Smith analysed nor does this perfectly competitive model leads to the same resource use efficiency (see 2.2.3(b)). Secondly, Smith did not mean to say that co-existence of different lease contracts imply the same resource use efficiency. He, in fact, observed that efficiency is less in case of sharetenancy. But the contracts are optimal in the sense that both the lessor and lessee use their available resources most remuneratively given the alternative choices, accumulation of capital and the level of production technology.

Smith did not state that leasing arrangements were defective and he did not, therefore, advocate any change in the laws. Cheung's criticism in this respect does not hold good. Smith and other political economists hold that the changes in the property laws and land-tenure contracts depend more importantly upon changes in the requirements of the society, although the converse is not denied. The latter set of changes is related to the development of production forces. Numerous examples may be drawn from the literature of the classical political economy to illustrate the case of social awareness in framing economic theories. One can cite the fact that J.S. Mill in pointing out the effect of land reforms, he took the social effects into consideration. To quote him : "The metayer tenure is not one which we should be eager to introduce when the exigencies of the society had not naturally given birth to it; but neither ought we be eager to abolish it on a much a priori view of its disadvantages.... a state of well-being so much beyond what is realized in most European countries should be put to



hazard by an attempt to introduce under the guise of agricultural improvement a system of money rent and capitalist farmers. The enlargement of farms usually diminishes the number of labourers employed on the land unless the growth of capital, trade and commerce in manufacture affords an opening for displaced population competition might reduce wage rates and their living standards like the daylabouers."(1904,p,192).

In the context of the present day underdeveloped agriculture of India these incentive effects and efficiency of resource use have to be looked into in terms of the peculiarities and specificities of the exchange system. The choice of the petty tenants in such exchange system with respect to cropping, input use, source of land and credit, is restricted, at a point of time as well as dynamically.<sup>6</sup> (Bharadwaj, 1985, p13).

(b) Sharetenancy, Technological Innovation and Growth:

It is commonly alleged that sharetenancy alone or in combination with interlinked credit transaction hinders employment of capital and technological innovation in land. (Bhaduri, 1973, 1982, Utsa Patnaik, 1985) Utsa Patnaik holds the view that the prevalence of a high rate of ground rent with a given rate of surplus in an underdeveloped country like that of India reduces the rate of profit to a very low level. The rate of profit has been found to be lower than that of the other sectors of the economy. This has a very discouraging effect on capital investment in land. Capital will be invested only when the peasant will find that such investment leads to sufficient increase in productivity to equalise the profit rate with that

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6 . In chapter 5. we have discussed the situation in West Bengal.

of other sectors. In a different way Bhaduri reaches at a similar conclusion. He points out that the landlord withholds innovations in agriculture for the reason that he can exploit the tenant in 'interlinked' market with tied contracts for land-lease and credit. Given the minimum consumption requirement of the tenant, as innovation raises productivity of land, tenant's consumption loan declines. This decline in consumption loan reduces the interest earnings of the landlord. Though the innovation raises rental earnings of the landlords, the rate of increase in rent is lower than the rate of decline in interest earnings. So, in effect, the landlord's total income as well as his control over the tenant decline. Thus Bhaduri argued that sharetenancy to be a barrier to investment of capital and thus growth of agriculture and its modernisation.<sup>7</sup>

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7. In support of or against Bhaduri's model several articles were published. To mention a few: Newbery (1975 b) pointed out that if some of the contracts are under the control of the landlord, he could extract the entire surplus generated by innovation. The landlord would be better off to do so rather than to withhold innovation. "The basic point is that if the landlord has sufficient monopoly power to exploit the peasant

Foot Note 7 Contd..

and to withhold innovation then he ought to have sufficient power to extract the extra profit generated by the innovation." This argument mentioned above is reinforced by Braverman and Srinivasan (1981). They hold that in a complex world where landlords have extensive power over share contract and credit terms, they need only one instrument of control, namely, plot size, to extract the entire surplus from the tenant. Braverman and Stiglitz (1981) analysed the utility based model and observed the following three features which partly support Bhaduri's observation. These observations are; (i) Though innovation increases the utility possibilities for the landlords and tenants, the competitive market equilibrium may lead to a situation when the landlord becomes worse-off. (ii) Changes in technology may alter productivity of labour in such a manner that it may be beneficial to the landlord to withhold innovation. For example, their optimal contract under the new technology may lead to a reduction in tenant's effort and decrease in landlords share. (iii) Technological innovations may lead to either an increase or a decrease in the tenants demand for credit depending on the risk-return characteristics.

The basic problem with these specific neo-Marxian interpretation is that they did not account for the dynamic out-come of the commercialization and the process of accumulation on the different sections of the peasantry. These different classes of the peasantry involve in the exchange system in a qualitatively different manner (see 2.2.4.(iii)). Instead of maximising static gain, a landlord can increase his gain more and more by introducing modern technology. This is possible by adjusting the terms and conditions of lease. For, example, with the introduction of H.Y. Boro paddy duration of lease and size of leased holdings were reduced. Also rate of share rent has increased (Chandra, 1975). Lease contract also may change from share-rent to money rent. This change is accompanied by shortening of lease and a quick turn over of tenant or tenant-switching. By this way landlord could capitalise the increase in productivity. (Bhardwaj, 1985) The introduction of modern technology may open another avenue for exploitation. The landlord becomes trader of these modern inputs in that village area. And he could link this input market with other markets.

The landlords, therefore, find higher profitability in speculation, trade in grain and modern inputs and usury than investment in land. On the other hand, the petty

tenants having a little surplus may partly adopt high yielding crops for more production from tiny holdings. The landlords by adjusting terms of contract further the appropriation of surplus. This restricts the growth of investible surplus of the tenants. Thus, the low rate of productive investment (both, by the tenants and by the landlords) in land leads to a slow growth of the agriculture and the adoption of modern technology.

## 2.2. Sharetenancy in Neo-classical Literature

This literature originates from a foot note of Marshall's Principles of Economics (1952, p-536).

Marshall 'formally'<sup>8</sup> proved the general inefficiency of the sharetenancy system by using marginalistic framework in a competitive economy. Thereafter a group of neo-classical economists has taken up this marginalistic approach and continued the controversy regarding efficiency of sharetenancy.

### 2.2.1. Issues Discussed

Neo-Classical economists in their analysis on tenancy focussed broadly on the two aspects:

- (i) Comparative static efficiency of different tenurial contracts;
- (ii) Choice of different contractual arrangements.

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8. Marshall analysed the behaviour of the different landtenure system on the basis of political Economic approach in the body (pp-535-36). But in the foot note he use marginalistic approach. (See Jyness, 1984).

### 2.2.2. Broad Approach

These economists do not consider the historical evolutionary process in which different classes of peasantry come up with different levels of accumulation. The impact of this differential accumulation on the choice of tenurial contract and the behaviour of tenant is also not considered. They consider the peasantry to be homogeneous or divided into pairs-'tenants' and 'landlords', each representing a whole class. Markets are treated as perfectly competitive or as deviations from perfect competition. Sometimes these deviations are treated as restrictions in their model. Each landlord-tenant pair operates atomistically to maximize their net gains and choose a particular type(s) of contract(s) through substitution principle. The economists then analyse whether these contracts lead to efficient allocation of resource. Efficiency is defined in a technocratic way. It requires marginal product of a factor to be equal to its price. Some assume tenants have minimum consumption requirements (what is called reservation utility). At that level of income, labour supply curve is perfectly elastic (i.e. marginal utility of leisure is zero).

### 2.2.3. Observations

#### Static Efficiency in different Tenurial Contracts :

Debates in the Neo-Classical theory followed upon

Marshall's derivation of inefficiency in the share-cropping contracts. A group of those economist supported this inefficiency and a few of them suggested measures to remove it. Others tried to prove the system to be efficient. We shall see that the controversy was primarily based on the specification of the neo-classical resource allocation model and its underlying assumption. (See below).

(a) Inefficiency Aspects of Share-Tenancy

In the sharetenancy system inefficiency arises due to the lack of incentives to supply inputs. Since neither the sharecropper nor the landowner receives the entire marginal product of the factors, none of them will be willing to carry the production beyond the level at which price equals the share of the marginal product of the factor accruing to them. (Marshall 1952, Johnson (1950), Schikele(1941) et al). Simple derivation of this inefficiency is as follows:

Let output  $Y$ , be a function of labour,  $t$ , and land,  $H$ . The landlord gets a share, 'a', of the gross product and 'w' is the wage rate. Then

$$Y=f(t,H) \dots\dots(1)$$

Worker's share,  $Y_w$ , is

$$Y_w = (1-a) f(t,H) \dots\dots(2)$$

The worker wants to maximize  $(1 - a) f(t, H) - w.t$  with respect to  $t$ .

Where  $w.t$  is the alternative earnings as wage labour. A necessary condition for such a maximization is

$$(1 - a) \frac{df}{dt} = w \dots\dots(3)$$

Since,  $0 < a < 1$ ,  $w < \frac{df}{dt}$  in equilibrium. This implies that the sharecropper will employ less labour than an owner-cultivator or a fixed-rent tenant (where  $w = \frac{df}{dt}$ ). This inefficiency is applicable to all the non-land inputs.<sup>9</sup>

The basic assumption behind this outcome is the perfect competition in the labour market. The tenant can sell his labour as much as he wishes at a constant wage rate. If there is uncertainty in the labour market, labourers' expected wage will be lower. Then he will use more labour per unit of the leased land. This would reduce the inefficiency. (Bagchi, 1973) Efficiency of input use depends on several other factors, like duration of lease or threat of eviction, size of holdings of the tenants etc.<sup>10</sup>

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9. This derivation of model is based on Marshall's Principles of Economics (1952), P-536.

10. Bhardwaj and Das (1975) observed that small tenants use more inputs on leased in land than their own land under threat of eviction.



(b) Efficiency under Sharetenancy:

Several economists admitted the possibility of inefficiency but suggest some measures by which this inefficiency could be partly or fully eliminated. Such mechanisms are insecurity in duration of lease (Schikele) input specification, cost sharing and short-term leasing (Johnson, 1950), reduction in plot size and raising rental share (Adam and Rask (1968) full cost sharing (Heady 1947 ; Rakshit 1982 ) etc.<sup>11</sup>

11. Schikele (1941) argues that any intension on the part of the tenant to supply sub-optimal input will be partly offset to the extent the tenant faces insecure terms. Heady (1947 and Rakshit (1982) suggest that full cost sharing will lead to a solution. In equilibrium factor price will be equal to its marginal products.

$$(1 - a) \frac{df}{dq_j} = (1 - a) p_j$$

or  $\frac{df}{dq_j} = p_j$

Where  $p_j$  and  $q_j$  are respectively price and quantity of the j-th input.

Johnson(1950) summarizes the principal mechanisms through which a landlord can ensure desired behaviour of the tenant. However, he emphasises short-term contract. If the performance of any tenant is unsatisfactory, his contract will not be renewed. Adam and Rask (1968) argue that a tenant tries to maintain a minimum level of income. If there is no alternative sources of earnings, the tenant has to accept a low level of remuneration. The landlord, then, may be in a position, to bid up rental share together with division of land into smaller parcels. Because of the reservation utility the tenant may be forced to increase the input uses upto the optimal level.

In respect of efficiency, an extreme strand was taken by Cheung (1968, 1969). He was very critical about the disincentive implication of sharetenancy which was advocated by Marshall and earlier classical economists. Cheung (1968) explicitly stated the purpose of his work: "It will be shown here that.... the implied resource allocation under private property rights is same whether the landlord cultivates the land himself, hires farm hands, ..... leases..... on a fixed rent basis or shares the active yield with his tenant." (P.1107). The basic assumptions he needed to establish the resource allocation efficiency are the private property rights in land and perfect competition in all the markets. Landlord's objective function is to maximize wealth through adjusting the rental share, size of tenancy and the number of tenants. Cheung, then, established that all forms of tenancy leads to the same allocation of resources implying Pareto-Efficient competitive equilibrium.

In Cheung's model it is implicit that land market is not perfectly competitive. Because if a landlord can reduce plot size and increase the number of sharecroppers, a sharecropper can also lease-in land from a number of landlords. Thus, a tenant can increase the size of his holding. In such a situation relevant

constraints on his (Cheung's) optimizing model will<sup>12</sup> change. Then different forms of tenancy will not be equivalent in terms of Pareto-efficient equilibrium.<sup>13</sup>

12. The model is as follows:

Landlord's objective function is to maximize his total wealth. Two homogeneous factors of production - land pertenant farm,  $h$ , and the amount of tenant labour,  $t$ . Production functions are identical. The landlord's total rent,  $R = m.a.f(h,t)$ . Where 'm' and  $f$  are number of tenant and production function respectively. Under perfect competetion,  $w.t = (1-a)f(t,H)$ . Differentiating the relevant lagrange function with respect to the argument,  $m, a$  and  $t$ , the following results can be obtained:

(i)  $a.f/h = df/dh$ . This indicates that the rent per unit of land is equal to the marginal product of land in equilibrium. It is a condition which is identical to that of fixed rent contract. (ii)  $df/dt = w$ , This implies marginal product of tenant labour equals that under wage Contract.

$$(iii) \quad a = \frac{df/dh}{f/h} = \frac{f - w t}{f}$$

The implication of the equation is that the percentage received as profit in owner cultivation is equal to the percentage of out put received as rent by leasing out.

13. Hence, Cheung's criticism of Smith (see 2.1.4.(iv) (a) above) does not hold good.

Moreover his private property right doctrine fails to bring out the changing pattern of the lease contracts resulting from the interaction between the different classes of peasantry.

(ii) Choice of Different Land-Tenure Contracts

The following factors influence significantly the choice of land-tenure contracts: Variations in risks and uncertainty in production and employment; returns to scale; nature of technological change; level of monitoring and supervision costs; existence of non marketable family and bullock labour; different levels of entrepreneurial ability among different labourers and random differences in productivity of labourers etc.

The question arose from Cheung's (1968) derivation of Paretian efficiency that if different forms of contracts lead to the same resource use efficiency, why different forms of contracts exist at a particular time. Cheung attempted to solve this question in terms of the different transaction costs for alternative tenurial system together with the agent's risk aversion in the presence of production uncertainty. He assumes that transaction cost (negotiation plus enforcement costs) is much higher under sharetenancy than that under fixed rent contract or wage contract. But sharetenancy is preferred by the risk-avertter because it reduces their risks by spreading and sharing. The choice of different contracts, therefore, depends upon the balancing of different transaction costs

and risk-sharing benefits. Newbery (1975) and Reid (1976) proved that if transaction costs are equal in different contracts and if there is constant returns to scale, sharetenancy offers no risk sharing advantage over a linear combination of wage and rental contract. Moreover, Cheung himself assumes that sharetenancy involves higher transaction costs.

So, given his assumption, nobody will prefer sharecontract. Newbery and Stiglitz (1979) argue that with the presence of second independent source of risk, share contract is superior to a mixture of wage and fixed-rent contracts. Sharetenancy also offers risksharing advantage in the presence of increasing returns to scale or indivisibilities of some inputs.

There are some other situations where sharetenancy becomes suitable;

(i) Marginal productivity of labour fluctuates randomly. For efficiency, wage rates must be equal to that random marginal product. Collection of information of that random marginal product on a moment to moment basis is much costly to the landlord. A wage system, therefore, entails either close monitoring to the value of that random marginal product or a constant wage with the resulting inefficiency. Sharecropping represents a compromise between the two. (Newbery and Stiglitz, 1979) (ii) Sometimes markets for some factors of production are not developed; families endowed with

these factors lease in land on share contract. For example, women can not work for other as wage labourer due to social taboo. The women can work in the leased land and the male member can work out side as wage labourer. (iii) Land-augmenting technological progress facilitates the choice of sharetenancy. (Bardhan and Srinivasan (1971) ).

### 2.3. Comments on the two Approaches

The political economists, by their scientific way of looking at social transformation (in terms of changing production relations, production forces and their interaction) and its manifestation in the form of changes in social and economic organisations could rightly establish that the system of share-tenancy emerges as an intermediary stage of historical evolution from feudalism to capitalism. Sharetenancy has been found to be gradually replaced by superior system of fixed - rent tenancy and ownership cultivation with the development of capitalism in agriculture.

On the basis of the observations made by the political economists one can argue that sharetenancy has been a suitable and efficient tenurial arrangement for particular classes in particular historical situations. Issues involving the developments of the

markets for commodity, labour, land and credit should be taken into consideration in forming any view on suitability and efficiency of the institution. The level of production technology as well as the levels of accumulation of the parties involved in this tenurial arrangement should also be considered in this respect.

The neo-classical economists deal primarily with 'static efficiency' and 'choice' between alternative forms of tenancy. Absence of historical perspective is a major limitation of their analysis. They accept the system as if it has always been there. Issues involved in the identification of the determinants of the alternative choice between different forms of tenancy as well as the efficiency (measured in relation to marginal productivities and factor prices) of the different forms of tenancy find prominence in the neo-classical exercise.

The sharetenancy system has been found to be inefficient by a number of neo-classical economists. The 'Choice' of this inefficient system violates the basic assumption of 'rationality'. The neo-classical economists make some stringent assumptions in their models to justify the choice to be rational. Market



relations and social relations are assumed as constraints in their models. But these are just not the restrictions in the neo-classical sense. These restrictions can not be removed by altering certain assumptions. Because these are necessary ingredient of the existing society and unless the society changes these constraints will remain.

The term 'efficiency' has a much wider meaning and connotation for the classical economists than for the neo-classical counterparts. The latter use the term too restrictively to mean whether the marginal products of inputs are equaled to the prices of inputs. While analysing the 'efficiency' with respect to the use of inputs for the different tenancies, Classical economists consider the inadequacy of market development, production forces and distribution of resources among different classes of peasants. They also deal with the problems of combining the factors for their best possible uses. The viability of a system, they observe, depends on the ability of the dominant party to appropriate maximum possible surplus under that system compared to the alternative choices. With the changes in production technology and the levels of accumulations if the dominant class finds alternative contracts that helps appropriate surplus

at a higher rate, it will choose the new type of contract. The weaker party having little alternative choice has to accept such contract.

They noted that the role of different institutions in furthering social accumulation is different. They ranked fixed rent tenancy at the top and thereafter sharetenancy in this respect.

The basic approach to understand tenancy relations is, therefore, entirely different between the political economists and neo-classical economists. The former bring entire social and economic system vis-a-vis individual behaviour into their analysis whereas the neo-classical economists are concerned only with the behaviour of individual.<sup>14</sup>

#### 2.4. Applicabilities of the Two Approaches

The approach adopted by the political economists is suitable to understand the state of tenancy in West Bengal, particularly, the growth and evolution of sharetenancy, impact of land concentration on tenancy and the behaviour of tenants in exchange systems. By the mainstream econometric tools we may analyse factor productivities and input use under tenant cultivation

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14. For a critical analysis of the neo-classical approach to sharetenancy see, Bagchi (1973), Chandra (1974), Bharadwaj & Das (1975), Bharadwaj (1988).

and owner cultivation at a point of time. They also help us to obtain quantitative results on the technical relationship between tenancy and other variables like wage rate, irrigation, cropping intensity, use of modern inputs, technical progress etc.<sup>15</sup> We may forewarn here that the interpretation of the empirical results on such relations and the inferences drawn therefrom may be vastly different depending on the alternative theoretical view points of the researcher. (See Bharadwaj 'Technical Relations in Indian Agriculture' in (ed) Shah and Vakil, .1979).

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15 . We have also analysed some of these technical and quantitative relations in Chapter V.

### 3. SOME ASPECTS OF CHANGING SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN COLONIAL BENGAL.

3.1. The main object of this short chapter is to provide a backdrop for discussion on tenurial conditions in West Bengal by tracing the growth of share-tenancy in its colonial context. Issues relating to the growth of land market, commercialisation of agriculture, the dispossession of a section of the peasantry and the rise of the jotedars have been raised in this connection. Although we deal with historical materials, our concern here is not to detail the historical records and the concerned debates but to draw certain analytical observations for our purpose in this thesis.

Though the exact period regarding the emergence of sharetenancy is not known, evidence of the prevalence of this institution in India could be traced back to as early as the 4th Century B.C. from the Arthashastra of Kautilya (Byres, 1983). Our reference in this chapter, however, is to the later colonial period of the 19-th and early 20-th centuries when the cumulative and differential impact of commercialization of agriculture (accompanied by specific land revenue policies) on different sections of the peasantry made a large section of the petty producers dispossessed of their

land. On the other hand the ~~tardy~~, often retarded, growth of industry (Bagchi, 1976 b) as well as off-farm employment opportunities compelled these dispossessed peasants to resettle as sharetenants. As a result, sharetenancy grew on a large scale in the last few decades of the colonial regime, (See below).

### 3.2. EMERGENCE OF LAND MARKET AND SUBINFEUDATION IN THE LATE 18-TH CENTURY

The most striking feature of the agrarian history of colonial Bengal of the late 18-th century was the emergence of a land market. The East India Company's (EIC) desperate attempt to farm revenues made land marketable. The company's experiment of farming revenues dispossessed the old Zamindars and impoverished the established farmers. The company's men took hold of the most profitable farms. The main aim of the Hasting's revenue farming policy "was to raise from the land the enormous sum required for financing the Company's 'Investment' (purchased goods for export ) and commercial charges". (Ray, 1979, p.41)

EIC granted the zamindars rent collecting rights for five years with the condition of paying a fixed sum of revenue (which was much higher than that in the previous situation) per year. If the zamindars failed to provide that fixed amount of revenue at the stipulated period, their contracts were terminated immediately. The estates were auctioned thereafter. Apart from the traditional zamindars, Calcutta Banians (merchants) and the amils (government officials) started buying landed estates. The high competition in buying the estates, accompanied by certain rise in the price of cash crops, raised the revenue demand. The zamindars started subletting parts of their estates to the locally powerful farmers for securing the rent collection. The latter again subletted to the nominal farmers or kutkinadars under their control. Several other intermediaries emerged in that process of rent collection and revenue payments. N.K.Sinha (1968) observes, this five year farming experiment "brought with it an endless train of principal farmers, nominal farmers, securities, counter-securities, agents, kutkinadars, etc." (P.86). Thus the EIC's land management policy brought about the process of large-scale sub-infeudation which was further aggravated by the Permanent Settlement in 1793.

Bhaduri (1976) observes that the Zamindars started subletting parts of estates, to hedge risk -of holding the assets and whatever surplus the ryots could generate they had to part with it to the intermediaries. They, in consequence, were sinking in debt. Moreover, the defaulting zamindars sold their assets and the government, anxious to ensure that security of revenue, encouraged such sales. There was no dearth of demand for estates. The purchase of tenure steadily rose. Roychaudhuri (1977) observes in this connection, "It is significant that many a co-sharer in the tenures derived no income whatsoever from his 'landed interest', yet retained it as a symbol of social prestige. On the supply side, the prestige value of becoming a rent receiver rather than a mere 'owner' of lands cultivated by hire or cropsharing labourers was probably an important influence. The better-off peasant was surely willing to pay some price to become a hawladar. And this entire process of proliferation was rendered economically viable by the relatively low and unchanging rate of revenue demand (that followed an initial substantial hike) which left a large surplus to be distributed among numerous and parasitical class of rather poor intermediaries." (P.168)

### 3.3. COMMERCIALIZATION OF AGRICULTURE, DISPOSSESSION OF PETTY PRODUCERS AND THE GROWTH OF JOTEDARS:

Commercialization of land gave birth to a class

of dispossessed peasantry. The growth of a market for agricultural produce brought no fortune for the petty producers. Cultivation of commercial crop at the expense of food crops increased the liquidity needs of the petty producers and made them increasingly dependent on the creditors.

The agriculturist creditor-cum-traders, through their extensive control over both the credit and product markets, started grabbing the indebted peasant's assets. Usury was widely practised to bring about asset transfer in the lender's favour. The indebted peasants were trapped in debt and lost their land to the agriculturist creditors. Thus the process of commercialization in which the peasants, according to Bhaduri (1984), participated involuntarily, stratified the peasantry broadly into an emerging class of propertied cultivators who also acted as creditors and traders and a class of dispossessed peasantry. The peasants belonging to the latter class were either resettled as sharecroppers or agricultural labourers. The former class of peasants came to be known as Jotedars, 'a new category of large landowners'. As Sugata Bose has recently observed, "by virtue of his crucial position in the rent-collecting hierarchy and importantly, by his place at the head of the village landholding and credit structure, the



Jotedars is widely seen to have held the key to the social and political destiny of rural Bengal. (1986,P.7)

The Jotedars or propertied peasants found prominence in the contemporary literature. The District SSR (Survey and Settlement Reports) indicate how the 'Jotedars' were gaining prominence in the rural hierarchy specially in the 1930's. The Dinajpur SSR observed, "the most significant feature of Dinajpur rural life is the inequality in social status and standards of living of different rustic families. Almost every village will reveal some large family of substantial cultivators... As elsewhere in North Bengal this Jotedar class is socially supreme in country side. The Jotedar families may hold several hundreds or even thousands of acres of land in their own possession. All these men are of a class which may be described as practising large-scale farming, though it is farming not with any capital sunk in machinery, but through the traditional methods, employing either labourers or adhiars (sharecroppers)" (1941,PP.16-17).

The SSR of Western Bengal districts also provide ample evidence to show how a class of propertied peasantry grabbed land through their usurious activities.

The Burdwan SSR, (1940, P.17) for example pointed out that credit was too easily got, since even an occupancy right is an adequate security (Ibid, P.17). The inevitable consequence was that 'after many years of struggling.... the cultivator's right in his land is sold up and he is resettled upon it as Karfa or Bhagdar. The Budwan SSR also observed that the bulk of the money-lending business is in the hands of the richer cultivators who employ their surplus funds in this manner. (Ibid,P.17) In Bankura, as the District SSR (1926, P.8) points out 'almost every considerable temure-holder is also a mahazan.' The SSR described the position of an ordinary cultivator as 'little more than the serf of the money-lenders to whom he pays the bulk of his crop, partly as rent and partly as interest on his loan, and even in a good year retains barely enough for his subsistence and that of his family.' (Ibid, P.20). The major problems of the district according to SSR, were firstly, the gradual acquisition by mahajans and middlemen of the most fertile lands, in district and secondly, the gradual replacing of comparatively low rents by excessively high produce rent. (Ibid, P.20).

The Birbhum SSR (1937, P.61) observed, 'a more prosperous tenant or a tenant who has added to his income by a subsidiary occupation, it is only occasionally that land is found to pass away to non-agricultural interest

holder.' In Midnapore, as the District SSR (1939) indicated, that 'the landlord-Mahajans used to lend money and grain and had their eyes up on the landed property of the loanee. (Evidence from Jalaxdhar Ghosh, Midnapore, in the Bengal Provincial Enquiry Committee; Vol-2. P-140.)

Therefore, being involved in the process of commercialization of agriculture a large section of the petty producers gradually lost their occupancy holdings. On the other hand the rich peasants appropriating a huge surplus and grabbing the land of the petty ryots gradually emerged in social hierarchy as jotedars. (see also 2.1.4.(iii)).

#### 3.4. THE GROWTH OF SHARE-CROPPING AND LEGAL ENACTMENTS.

Transfer of land from the occupancy ryots to the jotedar - mahajans rose to a new height specially when the Bengal Tenancy Act (Amendment) came into force. The Act, for the first time, legalized the sale and transfer of ryotee occupancy holdings. Its impacts were not of course, felt in the early 1930's, because of the depression. The stipulation of a 20 percent landlords' fee and the landlords' right to pre-emption incorporated in the Act also retarded the transfer. The 1938 Amendment to the Tenancy Act

removed the restrictions on the transfer of occupancy holdings. Land transfer, in consequence, increased substantially. Land was bought mostly by the jotedar mahajans who were also traders in jute or rice. The Kishan Sabha in its memorandum to the Land Revenue Commission brought out how the emerging pattern of landlordism in Bengal encouraged the growth of share-cropping."... To a landlord of this type the receipt of produce rents has every advantage; not only is the higher rate well worth the extra trouble of assessing and collecting his half-share, but, and this is most important, this new type of landlord is already a trader in grain or Jute.... In other words he is rationalizing his business vertically. Consequently we find that amongst these new landlords it is the usual practice to have their lands cultivated by bargadars." (In the Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal (1941), Vol.6, P.46).

The Floud Commission (1940) found that of the local raiyati land transferred between 1928-40, 31.70 percent was cultivated by the bargadars. (Vol.I-II, Table V, 11(f)). The commission conducted an enquiry into the land revenue system of Bengal covering 85,470 acres in various district of Bengal. It was estimated that 20

percent of the cultivated land in Bengal was under the Barga system. The commission came to the conclusion: "the rapid increase in the numbers of bargadars is one of the most disquieting features of the present times; and it is an indication of the extent to which hereditary rayats are losing their status and being depressed to a lower standard of living. It is true that the successive provisions of the tenancy Acts have endowed the raiyats with the practical ownership, of their land. But a large and increasing proportion of the actual cultivators have no part of the element of ownership, no protection against excessive rents, and no security of tenure." (Ibid, Vol.1, PP.38-39). The actual extent of area under barga cultivation is shown in table 3.1.

The above evidence indicates a causal relationship between the dispossession of land of the petty producers and the growth of bargadars in the last three decades of colonial rule in Bengal. Obvious question arises as to why such land concentration and the peasant differentiation was not accompanied by a corresponding development of capitalist relations in agriculture as happened in the 'classic case' instead a large mass of dispossessed peasants resettled as sharecroppers. We have already hinted the specific conditions emerged under colonial exploitation over the centuries that led to a rapid growth of sharetenancy.

The deindustrializing impact of the colonial  
policy in India led to displacement of a large number  
of the workers in cottage and manufacturing industry  
to Agriculture (Bagchi, 1976b). So industry, instead of  
pulling labour from agriculture, pushed its own workers  
into agriculture. Continuous drainage of surplus from  
agriculture by the British government as well as by  
the rich peasants without any reinvestment<sup>16</sup> forced  
agriculture to stagnate. Thus they restricted further  
expansion of employment in agriculture. This steady  
growth of economy accompanied by a high growth of  
population, made the conditions of the labourers miserable.<sup>17</sup>  
The distressed labourers, therefore, having no other  
choice directed their survival strategy towards leasing  
in land which could provide a security of employment  
and livelihood. Their desperate attempt to cling to land  
provided ample scope for exploitation.

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<sup>16</sup> Rich peasants had little interest to reinvest in land because alternative investment opportunities in trade and usury, particularly in the interlinked markets, are more profitable to them. Whatever surplus remained, they spend it in the unproductive tertiary sector (Bhardwaj, 1985).

<sup>17</sup> As Biplab Dasgupta observed, "Whereas until 1911 the birth and death rates were more or less in balance and the demographic growth was imperceptible, now births left the deaths far behind, what may be described as a 'demographic explosion'. In the rural labour market now too many people were chasing an unchanging amount of rented land for cultivation as tenants, while non-agricultural work opportunities were becoming increasingly rare" (1987, monitoring and evaluation of the Agrarian Reform Programme of West Bengal. P.20).

### 3.5. PEASANT MOVEMENT AND TENANCY REFORMS: THE COLONIAL HERITAGE.

The simmering discontent of the sharecroppers culminated into the adhiar movement of 1939-40 in North Bengal. The sharecroppers of North Bengal were known as adhidars who used to share 50 percent of the crop produced. The movement was not directed to raise the share of crop for adhiars, nor it was related to security of tenure. It was the traditional practice in the North Bengal district to keep the crop at the Jotedar's places after the harvest. The jotedar after retaining his own share, used to deduct the quantity of paddy matching the adhiars' debt obligations from the adhiars' share. The system gave ample opportunity to the jotedars for illegal exactions from the adhiars. The movement was directed to put an end to the practice. The adhiars also demanded that the interest on paddy loan must not exceed 25 percent and no interest should be charged for seed paddy.

The devastating famine of 1943 exposed the fragility of Bengal's peasant economy. There had been an unprecedented rise in land transfer in the jotedar's favour swelling the rank of the dispossessed peasantry. Agrarian discontent exploded in the Tebhaga movement launched by the sharecroppers in 1946-47.

(17) The bargadars demanded two-thirds share of the crops for them as recommended by the Flood Commission (1940). Initially the call for the movement came from the Bengal Provincial Kishan Sabha in September, 1946. The bargadars and the peasants responded spontaneously and soon it gathered momentum. The movement started first in Dinajpur and then in the adjoining districts of Jalpaiguri and Rangpur. It subsequently spread from the North Bengal districts to Mymansingh and Midnapur districts in the south. The movement was suppressed within the middle of January, 1947 by strong police action. (See Chandhuri "Agrarian movement in Bengal and Behar", the Peasant struggle in India, (ed), A.R.Desai (1972), pp.358-59. Also see Susil Sen (1972), pp. 36-43). As a



result of this movement and the change in the political scene after 1947, the Bargadars Act was passed in 1950. It was stated in the Act that any written agreement between the bargadar and the landlord about the mode of division of the produce would be considered legally valid. Otherwise the produce would be divided into three parts, one part for the bargadar and one part for the landlord, the rest would have to be shared between the two parties. The sharing principle should be fixed in accordance with the contributions of the respective parties towards the costs of cultivation. Furthermore, sharetenancy contracts could be terminated if the bargadar was found to have misused the land or neglected cultivation. The Government proposed to set up the Bhagchas Boards for the settlement of disputes between the bargadars and the landowners. The act simply aimed at maintaining status quo as regards the rights of the sharecroppers. This Act along with Bargadars Act of 1950 were incorporated in the West Bengal Land Reforms Act of 1955. The legislative enactment referred to above, failed to provide security to the bargadars. Throughout the fifties there had been mass eviction of sharecroppers and denial of their legal share of the produce. The number of cases of the disputes referred to the Bhagchas Board in West Bengal increased

from 20,511 in 1953 to 66,499 in 1954. The number of eviction cases rose from 7,218 in 1953 to 28,214 in 1954 and the number of judgements favouring eviction increased from 1823 in 1953 to 7639 in 1954. (Statement of Minister for Land and Land Revenue in West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 31.7.1956, Assembly Proceedings, Vol-15, No.2, P-672).

### 3.6. SHARETENANCY AT THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE.

The system of sharetenancy was a dominant phenomenon in the closing decades of the colonial rule in Bengal. The tenants were known as Barga in West Bengal, adhi in North Bengal, Kishani in Berbhun and tanka in the Southern districts of Bengal. The most common feature of these tenancy contracts was that the tenant supplied the plough and cattle, the seed, and the measure, and the crop was divided on fifty-fifty basis between the bargaders and the landowners. The usual practice was that the tenants stacked the crops on the landowners' threshing floor. The landlord after retaining his own share used to deduct various kinds of charges such as interests on seeds or consumption loans, tax on using the landlord's threshing-floor etc., from the tenants' share (Sen (1972), PP.1-16).

The Census Report of 1951 provide data for barga cultivation, but they are of questionable accuracy. A comparison between the 1951 Census data and the figures furnished in the Land Reform Commission suggests a slight decline in the proportion of barga cultivation between 1940 and 1951. But the survey made in 1951 by the census commission was confined to interrogating the owner-cultivators. Given the background of the Tebhaga movement and the Bargadars Act of 1950, the owner cultivators have had reasons to understate the area of the holdings under barga cultivations as well as the number of bargadars they employed. Table 3.1 summarises the different point estimates made by the LRC in 1940, Census Commission in 1951 and Basu and Bhattacharya in 1961. The latter estimates were made under the aegis of the Research Programme Committee

of the planning commission. It follows from the table that there had been a marked rise in the area under Barga Cultivation in 1961.

TABLE 3.1

Area of Land under Barga Cultivation as percentage of total cultivated area, West Bengal.

District	LRC 1940	Census 1951	Basu and Battacharya under the aegis of the Research Programme Committee of the Planning Commission, 1961
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Burdwan	25.2	29.2	25.0
Birbhum	24.8	22.1	-
Bankura	29.2	27.4	-
Midnapur	17.1	19.0	36.0
Hoogly	30.5	20.4	-
24-Pargunan	22.3	13.3	26.0
Nadia	24.1	15.6	-
Murshidabad	25.8	20.2	30.0
Malda	9.6	18.2	27.0
Dinajpur	14.5	21.4*	28.0*
Jalpaiguri	25.9	32.0	46.0
Darjeeling	-	7.9	-
Coch Bihar	-	19.8	-
Furulia	-	-	-
West Bengal	25.5	20.3	-
Bengal	21.1	-	-

\* West Dinajpur

Source: Implementation of Land Reform: A Review by the Land Reforms Implementations Committee of the National Development Council, Planning Commission, New Delhi August 1966, P.156.

#### 4. CHANGES IN LAND-HOLDING STRUCTURES AND GROWTH OF SHARETENANCY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

This chapter attempts to trace the nature of growth of sharetenancy in West Bengal in the post-independence period. The tenants have been classified into a number of classes according to their size of holdings.<sup>1</sup> The changes in the size class distribution of the tenants have been looked into in the context of the changes in the landholding structure. We have also analysed the changes in the pattern of lease contracts for share rent, fixed kind rent, and fixed cash rent. A district level disaggregated analysis has also been made in this respect.

##### 4.1. Population Growth and Land Availability.

West Bengal is one of the most densely populated states in India. It has a total population of 55 million constituting 8% of the total population of the country in 1981. Its geographical area covers 3% of the total area of the country. In terms of population density it ranks second among the states of India. The population density of the state stands at 621 people per square kilometer. The most densely populated state is Kerala with 654 people per square kilometer. The corresponding figures for India is 221 (Census, 1981). High demographic pressure,<sup>2</sup>

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1. A holding is defined as marginal, small, medium or large if its size is 0-1 ha, 1-2 ha, 2-4 ha, or 4 ha and above respectively.

2. The population growth rate in West Bengal is 2.46% per year over the period, 1951-1981.

tardy development of industry and commerce, and slow pace of urbanisation characterise the economy of West Bengal. The economy, still remains predominantly rural in character. The Census estimates of 1981 show that around 74% of the state's population belongs to rural areas. The number of rural people per hectare is 8. The availability of land per rural household stands at 0.81 hectare. The number of agricultural workers per hectare is 1.6 in West Bengal, 1.3 in Kerala and in Southern Regions and 1.1 in the Northern Region as also in all India level. In estimating population pressures on land we should consider not only the number of workers employed per unit of land but also the level of technology used in cultivation. Population pressure on West Bengal agriculture in both respects seems to be fairly high.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.2 Distribution of Land Holding.

In the previous chapter we gave some qualitative information regarding the emerging pattern of inequality in land distribution among rural households, at the time of independence. Our attempt in this section is to trace

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3. In Appendix A, we have given some general characteristics of the West Bengal Economy, viz., demographic character, productivity of land and labour, yield of different crops, annual growth rates of different crop production, fertilizer consumption, irrigation etc.

the changes in the distribution pattern thereafter. Several surveys were made after independence and plenty of quantitative information on land distribution is available (see Appendix B). These estimates suggest that a bulk of the rural masses are either landless or possess only tiny uneconomic holdings. On the other hand a small segment of the rural masses owns most of the cultivable land (see table 4.1). Therefore, a high degree of inequality in the distribution of landownership is accompanied by a very low and declining land availability per head in West Bengal agriculture. The concentration of land, though declined slightly in terms of Gini-Coefficient seems to increase in the lower size-classes over the last three decades (Table 4.12 ). But in the upper size-classes the concentration, both in terms of the number of households and area owned, declined over the same period. Apart from landlessness, tiny holdings have been increasing steadily. These landless class and the small operators, therefore, are continuing to depend on the landlord for employment or leasing in land because of the lack of alternative sources of income. The decline in the weight of the big landlords leads to a decline in labour demand<sup>4</sup> and supply

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4. The reduction in area of these classes are not accompanied by a corresponding increase in cropping intensity or labour absorbing technology (see Appendix A).

of land for leasing.<sup>5</sup> But the requirement of the landless or small peasants to lease in land or for getting employment elsewhere increases over time.

The structure of land holding encompasses the size - class distributions of ownership holdings as well as operational holdings. The structure is intimately related to the forces of production - it determines the nature and extent of resource use, adoption of modern technology among various classes of cultivators. The structure itself changes with the development of the forces of production. In West Bengal, the cultivation in agriculture continues by elaborating the existing production structure without any drastic change in the basic structure of landholdings after independence. (see below).

#### 4.2.1. Land Ownership.

This section deals with the distribution of ownership of land among size-classes of households, average size of ownership holdings, ~~average size of ownership holdings~~ and the changing features of this land distri-

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5. Due to decline in total land of these classes, with unchanged technology, leased out area will decline.



bution in the post independence period. We have used 8th, 16th, 26th and 37th rounds of N.S.S. data for which the respective reference periods are 1953-54, 1960-61, 1971-77 and 1981-82. Bondopadhyaya's survey data for the year 1981-82 have been used for comparison or cross-check. These estimates are presented in table 4.1. The table shows that the area owned by the rural household was 4.14 million hectares in 1953-54 and 4.26 million hectares in 1960-61. Then, in 1971-72 it declined to 3.87 million hectares, but in 1981-82 it increased to 1960-61 estimates. In view of the revised definition<sup>6</sup> of ownership holding, total owned land was expected to rise in 1971-72 over 1960-61, but actually it failed. This decline indicates an under estimation which was possibly due to underreporting of owned land. Because of the unstable political atmosphere and ceiling law the big landlords are likely to under-report their owned area.<sup>7</sup> But in 1981-82 with certain stability on the political front and the redistribution of a sizeable portion of vested ceiling surplus land to the poor, the estimate of owned land was expected to be more accurate. However, in practice, total owned land increased a little

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6. See Appendix B.

7. In the period of strong peasant movement during United Front regime (1967-70) attempts had been made to confiscate the ceiling surplus land of the big land-lords. Because of fear of losing land, the big landlords seem to under-report their own land to the survey that followed immediately.

in 1980-81 over the earlier estimates. On the other hand, the number of rural household increased at a high rate. In 1953-54 it was 4.3 million and it steadily rose to 7.7 million in 1981-82. Consequently average land availability per household declined from 0.97 hectare to 0.55 hectare from 1953-54 to 1981-82. If we consider only the households owning land, the trend in the growth of ownership holding is also high. The number of holdings increased from 3.4 million to 6.4 million over the period, 1953-54 to 1981-82. Consequently, the average size of ownership holdings declined from 1.22 hectare to 0.66 hectare over the same period. In 1953-54 the percentages of households owning no land to total rural households was 20.5. The remaining 79.5% of the rural households owned 4.1 hectares of land with the average holding size of 1.22 hectares. Fifty three percent of the total households belongs to the lowest rank of the size-class of ownership holding i.e., 0.002-1.00 hectare. The households belonging to this class own 19% of the total area owned by the rural household, Top 5% of the households having more than 4 hectares each, covers 40% of the total owned area of the rural household. The distribution of landownership seems to be extremely uneven in the early 50s in West Bengal.

The concentration in terms of the number of household and the area of land in upper size classes (more than 4 hectares) declined steadily over the years. Only 1.7% of the rural households belong to the upper size-classes in 1981-82. But those households cover 13.7% of the owned land area in that year.

Percentages of the household belonging to the marginal class of landowners (defined in terms of the size of holdings being 1 he or less, see foot note 1) to total rural households increased from 5.3% in 1953-54 to 68% in 1971-72 and it marginally declined to 64% in 1981-82. Correspondingly percentage of area owned by the households belonging to the marginal class to total owned area of the rural households increased from 15.9% in 1953-54 to 27.3% in 1971-72 and further to 30.3 in 1981-82.<sup>8</sup> The proportion of households belonging to the small size class (1-2 hectares) to total rural households remains more or less unchanged at the level of 12% over 1953-54 - 1981-82. But the percentage area owned by the households increased from 18.6% to 28.8% over the same period. The Gini-Coefficient shows a slow but steady decline in concentration (see table 4.12).<sup>9</sup>

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8. Sirohi, Ram and Singh (1976) observed a similar trend in land concentration at the all India level where population is shifting from higher size classes to the lower strata.

9. Gini-Coefficient refers to the area between the Lorenz-curve and the diagonal line. Therefore, it cannot

NSS estimates of land ownership comprises all types of land including homestead land (see Appendix B). So, the percentage figures of landless households, seems to be under-estimated in NSS. Bondopadhyaya's survey in the year 1981-82 gives a clear picture of landownership which includes only cultivated land. This survey estimate is in congruity with the NSS findings of secularly declining trend in the concentration above 4 hectare category. If we combine the landless and marginal classes together then Bondopadhyaya's estimate would support the NSS estimates of high concentration in this combined class. Bondopadhyaya's estimates of landownership which is purged of non-cultivable land shows that percentage of landlessness among the rural households are as high as 35.5% in 1981-82. Bondopadhyaya observes that top 19% of the households, owns 70% of the total owned land. Though we cannot say the exact trend in landless households due to non-comparability of data, its magnitude is quite high throughout the post independence period as could be guessed from these different rounds of NSS (See Table 4.1).

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capture in which classes the concentration is high and in which class it is low. Thus inter-class comparison becomes difficult by using Gini-Coefficient. Particularly in West Bengal the concentration declined in the upper classes but increased rapidly in the lower class. Gini-Coefficient cannot focus on this kind of change.

4.2.2. The above analysis reveals the following main features of the ownership of land:

(a) The number of ownership holdings increased at a high rate (3% p.a.) over the last three decades but the figure for owned area remains more or less unchanged causing average size of holding to decline.

(b) Land concentration (measured in terms of Gini Coefficient) declines at a very slow rate over the decades (Table 9).

(c) Concentration in the upper size-classes declined both in number of households and area owned by them, over successive surveys.

(d) Concentration of households and area owned increased in the lower size-classes over the post-independence period.

#### 4.2.3. Some Suggestive Explanations

##### (i) Demographic Factors:

High growth of population (see 4.1 of this chapter and Appendix A) and subdivision of family holdings cause the number of ownership holding to increase so rapidly (as stated in (a)). This fragmentation of holdings also partly explains the decline in the number of households and the area in the upper size-classes (c) and the fragmentation caused the households to shift to the

marginal and small classes ( d)). Its consequence is the general decline in the land concentration (b).

(ii) Juridical Factors:

Estate Acquisition Act (1954) and Ceiling legislations (with successively reduced limits on the maximum size of owned land, See Chapter 6) caused the big landlords either to benami transfer the land or to sell the land immediately. Also some land was confiscated by the state. This land reform measures had the effect of some reduction in concentration in the upper size-classes (b). Redistribution of this vested ceiling surplus land to landless added the weight in the bottom size-class of ownership holdings (as stated in (d)).

(iii) Political Factors:

Peasant uprisings in the United Front regime and Naxalite movement in the late '60s made the landlords feel some sort of insecurity in maintaining larger estates through legal or illegal ways. Thus, the threat of confiscation of land led these big landlords to transfer their land which helped reduce concentration of land in the largest size class (b).

(iv). Technological Reasons:

Introduction of modern technology on a limited scale made the cultivation profitable. Separated members of the big landowner's family may partly adopt the modern technology. Lack of alternative employment opportunities forces the petty farmers to maintain tiny land for a secured minimum earnings who could have sold this small plot. The attempt of the big landlords to maintain large estates restricts decline in land concentration. The cultivation of HY crops stabilises the petty producers, by raising their earnings.

(v) Other factors:

Special government's policy like, SFDA, MFAL, etc. raise the earnings of the petty peasants and perpetuate their existence. It also helped them to maintain retain certain amount of owned land which other-wise could have been sold in the process of production, exchange and subsistence. (see 6.2.).

4.2.4. Operational Holdings:

An operational holding comprises all the land cultivated by a peasant household independent of the title, legal form, size or location of the farm. So it can be considered as the basic unit of the agricultural operation. The practice of leasing and the cultivation

of non-household land lead to the divergence between the distribution of ownership and operational holdings. In a labour surplus and backward agriculture, proportionately more land is leased in by the petty producers than the area leased in by the rich peasants. This usually makes the distribution of operational holding to be less skewed than ownership holdings. Table 4.12 shows that not only in West Bengal but in almost all the states the concentration in operational holding is much less than that of ownership holdings. Exception is Punjab where concentration is same in both the cases of ownership and operational holdings in 1971-72. In West Bengal concentration in operational holdings though declined in 1960-61 over 1953-54, but it rose in 1971-72 and reached almost to the estimate of 1953-54.

However, this measure of concentration in terms of Gini-Coefficient is not helpful for inter-class comparisons in a situation where operational holdings grew at disparate rate in different classes (see Foot Note 9). For our purpose, we have made use of Agricultural censuses and various rounds of N.S.S. estimates. Though in absolute magnitude some amount of variations between the estimates of these two sources could be found, while dealing with the trends and inter



class variations (for each source) biases due to these errors would likely be less (See Appendix B).

N.S.S. estimate for the year 1953-54 shows that 4.2 million cultivating households operated 4.9 million hectares of land (see table 4.2). The average size of holdings was 1.11 hectares. TOP 17% of the rural households operated about 62% of the cultivated land and almost half of the operated land was cultivated by the top 5% of the rural households. On the other hand, bottom 65% of the households, belonging to the less than one hectare class of operators, cultivated only 14% of the total cultivated area. Out of this 65% only 1% is non-cultivator. This indicates a high degree of under-estimation of noncultivating households. This underestimation is possibly due to inclusion of homestead land and other noncultivable land in operational holdings. The estimates for 1960-61 indicates 40% of the households are non-cultivators. But total percentage of household below 1 hectare category is almost same in both the surveys of 1960-61 and 1953-54. In 1961-62 the distribution was highly skewed but to a lesser extent than in 1953-54. Gini-Coefficient shows that an increase in the concentration of operational holdings in 1970-71 over 1960-61. However, the size-class distribution indicates that both

the households and area declined in the upper classes but increased in the lower classes. The percentage of the rural households belonging to the size class of 4 hectares and above and their cultivated area as a percentage to total operated area declined sharply over the period 1953-54 - 1980-81. In 1953-54, top 5.4% of the households, belonged to the size class of 4 hectares and above, operated 31.4% of the area in that class. The respective percentage estimates declined continuously to 1.5% of households and 14.4% of the area in 1980-81 (See Table 4.2). Contrarily households and area operated in the lower size classes increase over the period, 1953-54 - 1980-81. There are some under-estimations of the actual number of operational holdings, total area operated and the average size of operational holdings in N.S.S. 1971-72 as compared to Agricultural Census, 1970-71.<sup>10</sup>

4.2.5. A separate table (Table 4.3) for Agricultural Census has been annexed to see in detail the recent changes in operational holdings. During the decade, 1970-71 - 1980-81, total number of operational holdings increased

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10. Under-estimation arises possibly due to exclusion of suburban areas in N.S.S. Comparison of the two methodologies is given in Appendix B.

from 4.2 million to 5.9 million with an average annual growth rate of 3.9% (The corresponding rate of growth for all India was 1.4%). Total operated land increased from 5.1 million to 5.4 million hectares over the decade. This high rate of growth in the number of operational holding relative to the growth of operated area had the effect of reduction in the average size of holdings. The average size of holding declined from 1.2 hectares to 0.95 hectare over the period. It is interesting to note that though the average size of holdings declined in the last decade, it increased significantly in all the individual classes except the marginal one. In the marginal size-class the average size of operational holding declined from 0.43 hectare in 1970-71 to 0.40 in 1976-77 but thereafter it remained unchanged upto 1980-81. The Agricultural Census authority interpreted it in terms of the "large influx of the operational holdings in the lowest size group." (1986, P.17) It may be seen that the percentage distribution of the number of holdings in total number of holdings declined in all the size-classes except the marginal class. In the marginal class it increased from 60% to 69% over 1970-71 - 1980-81. Percentage of the total area operated by the households belonging to top three classes declined from 52.5% to 39.7% during '70s and that of the operated area cultivated by the

marginal class of peasants increased from 48.5% to 60.3% over the same period. The decline in the areas under the cultivation of the higher size-classes was more than off set by the corresponding decline in number of holdings. For the marginal size class the increase in the area under cultivation was more than off-set by the corresponding increases in the number of holdings. This explains the overall decline in the average size of operational holdings inspite of increase in the average sizes of operational holdings under each size-class excepting the marginal class.

4.2.6. District-wise estimates indicate the growth of operational holdings to be fairly high in all the districts in the '70s but the rates of such growth vary across the districts (See Table 4.4). Six districts, namely, 24 Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri, West Dinajpur and Cooch Behar have experienced the maximum growth (more than 43%) over the decade of '70s. These districts are located<sup>in</sup> the border area of the state with East Bengal (now Bangla Desh). Apart from growth of population and fragmentation of operational holdings, large-scale influx of imigrants from East Bengal after 1971 ~~the~~ might be a contributing factor to this excessive growth. On the other hand six districts, namely, Howrah, Malda, Purulia, Midnapore, Birbhum and Burdwan have experienced relatively lower growth rates (less than 30%) over the decade as compared to the West Bengal average of 39%.

In the size group of 0-1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> the percentage of households to total cultivating households have markedly increased in all the districts but that of area operated has increased in some districts and decreased in others. (See Table 4.5) In Howrah the percentage of households in the marginal class to total number of cultivating households is as high as 89%, covering 58% of the total operated area in 1980-81. Here population density is very high (with the average size of holdings being 0.5 hectare) and therefore, most of the population belongs to the lower size-classes. On the other hand, percentage distribution of household in the size-classes above 2 hectares have declined significantly in all the districts except Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. These latter two districts have low population density and thus average size of holdings was quite high. Area operated by the households in the size class of 10 hectares and above in these two districts exceeds 35% of the total operated land. These districts are hilly and most of the holdings above 10 hectares are Tea gardens. So, these estates do not come under ceiling legislation.

4.2.7. Changes in the concentration across size class of operational holdings are similar to that in the concentration across size classes of ownership holding (See 4.2.2.) Also the causes are almost the same (See 4.2.3.). But the reduction in concentration in operational holdings is not as sharp as in ownership holdings (see table 9) in terms of Gini-Coefficient.

This feature of land concentration is found in almost all the states of India except Punjab." <sup>11</sup>

#### 4.2.8. Comparison of Ownership and Operational Holdings.

The number of ownership holding is always seen to be larger than that of operational holdings except for the year 1953-54. In that year the number of operational holding was 4.2 million and of ownership holding was 3.4 million. Excepting the year 1953-54, the area under operational holding was seen to be always higher than that of ownership holding.<sup>12</sup> During the period 1953-54 - 1960-61 ownership holdings increased at a rate of 2.5% per annum but operational holdings declined to a higher rate of 3.7% per annum. For the next two decades growth rates of operational holdings were 1.7% and 3.7% respectively and that of ownership holdings were 2.3% and 2.8% respectively.

This phenomenon mentioned above, has several implications. For example, the number of non-cultivating

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11. Sirohi, Ram and Singh (1976).

12. This phenomenon of differences in the number and area between ownership and operational holding is observed in all the states of India and aggregative all India level (Harpal Singh, 1976).

households to total households became larger than the number of landless households. In 1971-72, 14% of the households are landless but 31% of that is non-cultivators. A bulk of the very small landowners, have no bullock or other fixed capital and failing to hire in from others, sometimes leases out their owned land.<sup>13</sup>

The divergence between the area under ownership and operational holdings might arise due to cultivation of governments', other institutional and village common land and some village land owned by the urban households.<sup>14</sup> Fluctuation in the area under operational holdings over times may also arise due to changes in the sampling designs of the surveys.

The divergence between owned and operational holdings and growing concentration of operational holding

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13. There are also some other reasons for which the number of non-cultivating households exceeds the number of landless households. The leasing out of land may take place when the house-hold belongs to higher caste, or when there is absence of able-bodied family members or when migration to urban areas takes place. (See 4.3)

14. It may be mentioned here that the leasing out of land was confined to area leased out by households only. The information on leased in area are collected from households, government's institutions and non-household institutions. Among all the states of India, the difference between the percentages of area leased in and leased out is highest in West Bengal (10 percentage point) At the all India level 4.3% of the owned land was leased out but 7.47% of the area leased in 1981-82.

and ownership holding in the lower classes from the upper classes have an impact on leasing practices. Decline in big holdings reduces supply of land in the lease market. The increasing concentration of land and household in the lower classes increased the number of uneconomic holdings and their demand for supplementary earning sources which raises the demand for leasing in land. Some owners of tiny holdings lease out land in view of its smallness, short of what is required for viable cultivation. So, prevalence of a large mass of small and very small owners of land influence both the supply and demand in the lease market (see below).

#### 4.3. Changes in the Extent of Tenancy After Independence.

The tendency to lease out land to the tenants and to appropriate a large share of the produce by the landlords is still prevalent in West Bengal as in other states of the country. The agrarian economy has under-gone some changes. Some deliberate measures were taken to eliminate the evils of such exploitation. Series of land reform measures (particularly, tenancy reforms), introduction of green revolution technology, some improvement in overall agriculture and also changes in landholding structure (which we have described above) over the last three decades have had some impacts and might be counter-acting influences, to some extent, on the nature and extent of tenancy.



Available sources of data for this purpose are various rounds of the NSS and Agricultural Census. N.S.S. through its various rounds covers the period from 1953-54 to 1981-82. But the Agricultural Census portrays only the recent situations, i.e., in between 1970-71 and 1980-81. Some variations in methodology over successive surveys in each source and across sources need to be noticed. (See Appendix B).

4.3.1. Dharam Narain and P.C. Joshi (1969), Bardhan (1971) and S.K.Sanyal (1972), after critically analysing the N.S.S. and Agricultural Census data came to the conclusion that there was a declining trend in the weight of tenancy but not upto the level as these data suggested at the all India level.<sup>15</sup> High decline in the extent of tenancy was partly due to concealment. However, they emphasised this concealment to be quite widespread in West Bengal and Kerala.

In case of West Bengal the N.S.S. data show that the number of tenants increased but the area under tenancy declined over the last three decades. (Table 4.6) However, a general declining trend in the percentages of households leasing out to total rural households and the area leased

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15. See Lakshminarayan & Tyagi (1977).

out as a percentage of total area were noticed over these three decades. The percentage of landowning households leasing out part or whole of their land was 13.1% in 1953-54 and 9.75% in 1960-61 and then it remained unchanged upto 1970-71. Thereafter it substantially declined to 4.4% in 1982. The number of lessor household increased from 1953-54 to 1971-72 but thereafter it declined. (Table 9.5).

On the other side in the lease market, the percentages of households reported leasing in part or whole of their cultivated land to all households as well as of the area leased in to total area experienced declining trends over the last three decades. In 1953-54, 41.5% of the rural households were leasing in which declined to 30.6% in 1971-72 and further to 26.6% in 1982. The area leased in as a percentage to operated area declined over the same period. It was 34.1% in 1953-54, 21.57% in 1971-72, and 12.31% in 1982 (Table 4.7). Though the percentage of leasing in household in total households declined over the years, the absolute number of tenants increased substantially in 1982 N.S.S. estimate over earlier estimates.

However, the absolute figure for the number of bargadars (tenants) and the area under tenancy in West Bengal became a controversial issue for the scholars.<sup>16</sup>

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16. Ratan Ghosh provided a brief description of the different views in this controversy. E.P.W. Rev. of Agriculture, June 20-27, 1981. See also, T.K.Ghosh (1986) , Operation Barga and Land Reforms, Delhi, pp.93-99

Government officials view the number of bargadars to be not less than 2 millions. Other groups particularly the 'leaders' of peasant movement, estimate it to be around 1.5 millions.<sup>17</sup> In both the cases the basis of calculation was dividing the area under barga cultivation by the average size of barga holdings. Board of Revenue estimated the total area under barga cultivation to be little more than one million hectares by taking into account the Floud Commission (1940) estimate of their percentage of area under Barga.<sup>16</sup> The estimated average size of barga holdings from the record lies between 0.39 hectare and 0.51 hectares. On this basis total number of bargadars was estimated to be in between 2 millions and 2.5 millions. Directorate of Land Revenue estimated the number of bargadars to be 3.5 million in 1980. Actually this estimate was done by the Land Reform Commissioner. The problem with his estimation was that the use of old records of rights led to over-estimation of tenancy. Since in the intervening period quite a large number of bargadars have been evicted and the lands have been resumed for self-

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17. P.K.Datta, 'Statistics of Bargadars and Extent of Barga cultivation in West Bengal', Directorate of Land records and Survey, Govt. of West Bengal, May 1981.

cultivation etc. A similar error exists in other estimates which were not based on household survey. Mondopadhyaya's Survey estimate of 1981-82 shows 1.37 millions of bargadars to leasing in 11.5% of the total operated area in West Bengal. His estimates gives a highly deflated figure since already more than 1.4 million bargadars have been recorded. (See Dasgupta, 1987, P.47).

The variation in the different estimates arises due to heterogeneity of their sources and the method of collection of information at different reference periods. The most reliable source is the N.S.S. which indicates that during 1971-72 - 1982 the number of bargadars increased from 1.7 million to 2.06 million and leased in area declined from 0.83 million hectares to 0.52 million hectare with the corresponding percentages in the operated area declines from 18.7 to 9.4. Ratan Ghosh (1981), combining the estimates of N.S.S. Agricultural Census the states Statistical Bureaus, etc. calculated the number of bargadars to be around two million in 1980. This prediction is supported by the later N.S.S. estimate (1982).

The common impression that sharetenancy has reached a moribund stage (or declining) was supported by N.S.S. upto 1971-72. But thereafter the N.S.S. estimates

partly refute this notion - number of bargadar was increasing and area under barga cultivation was decreasing. This trend in the N.S.S. was supported by Agricultural Census, (See Table 4.8). However, wide difference exists between these two sources. According to Agricultural Census, the number of tenant holdings increased from 0.6 million (14.24% of the total number of operational holdings) to 0.65 millions (11.07% of the total number operational holdings) and the area leased in declined from 0.41 million hectares (8.9% of the owned area) to 0.38 million hectares (7.95% of the owned area) over the '70s.

4.3.2. In the N.S.S. , there exists a wide discrepancy between the estimates of the leased in area and leased out area.(Table 4.6 and 4.7) As one possible explanation, we learn from the N.S.S., that the 'leasing out of land was restricted to area leased out by households only; ~~(the information on area leased in by households only);~~ the information on area leased in by households covered leasing of land from households as well as from government and non-household institutions.'<sup>18</sup>

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18. It is also mentioned that this divergence is maximum in West Bengal, among the states of India. Sarvekshana, Vol. XI, No.2, Oct. 1987, PP.8.

However, it can not explain the rather large difference between the leased in and leased out area in the case of West Bengal. In 1982, the percentages of leased in area to owned area and leased out area to owned area were respectively 12.13 and 2.48. Out of this 12.13% the contribution of rural households was 10%. The low estimate of leased out area was primarily due to under reporting. (See 4.3.1).

#### 4.4. Cross-Section Variation in the Extent of Tenancy.

4.4.1. The incidence of tenancy vary across the districts. Agricultural Census estimates indicate that in the districts of Howrah, Hoogly and Birbhum the percentage of area leased in to area operated is around 11% in 1981. Corresponding figure for the state is 6.8% (See Table 4.8). On the other hand, the districts with low percentages of operated area under tenancy (less than 5%) are Purulia, West Dinajpur, Midnapur and Nadia. Percentage of area under tenancy is seen to be positively related to the availability of land per rural households and proportion of area under irrigation.<sup>19</sup> The districts of high growth,<sup>20</sup> namely, Nadia and Murshidabad have smaller percentages of the rural households under lease contract as well less percentage of area under tenancy. In Hoogly, growth of agricultural production was high;<sup>20</sup> But high population density appears to supersede the negative impact of agricultural progress on the growth of sharetenancy. The incidence of tenancy is seen to be higher in the districts with slow growth in foodgrain production. These districts are Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Bankura and West Dinajpur.

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19. Respective Correlation Coefficients are 0.68 and 0.47 and t-statistics are 3.37 and 1.91 with 13 degrees of freedoms in each case.

20. We have considered high growth as the growth of foodgrain exceeding 7% per annum (see Table 4.11).

#### 4.4.2. Size Class Distribution of Tenancy in Different Districts.

Table 4.8 shows the concentration of tenants in the smallest size-group is much higher in the districts of 24-Parganas, Midnapur, Hoogly and Howrah. In the districts of Murshidabad, Birbhum, and Darjeeling the concentration is higher in the size class of 1-2 hectares. The predominance of the lessees having no owned land is seen to be fairly high in the districts of Birbhum, Howrah, Jalpaiguri, and Cooch Behar. Though data on the size-class distribution of ownership holdings for each district are not available, we can compare the distribution of operational holdings (shown in Table 4.5) with that of leased in holdings. It may be seen that the percentage distributions of the number of leased-in holdings and leased-in area are similar to that of the number of operational holdings and operated area in the marginal and small size-classes across the districts. The higher the concentration of operational holdings in the lower classes, the higher is concentration of tenancy in those classes (compare table 4.5 to table 4.8). This indicates that the leasing-in of land is done more by the households belonging to the small and marginal size-classes than by the big landlords. But it is observed in the advanced regions of Punjab and Harjyana that the big landlords lease-in a sizeable proportion of their operated area primarily for profit maximization and economies of scale. (Singh, 1976).



#### 4.4.3. Types and Tenancy.

Tenures can be classified into a number of categories depending on the terms and conditions of lease such as, fixed money rent tenures, fixed kind rent tenure, share rent tenurers, usufructuary mortgage tenures etc. Also within each such category variations exist in terms of leasing contract. Of these different categories, share-tenancy is the most predominant form in West Bengal. In this particular category, variations in the contracts (e.g. of input and outputs sharing) are also numerous. Agricultural Census data shows that the area under share tenancy was as high as 72% of the total leased in area in 1970-71 which further rose to 90% in 1980-81. (See Table 4.9). The data also indicate an increasing trend in the fixed produce rent contract. In 1970-71, 2.27%, of the leased-in land was under fixed kind rent tenancy and which rose to 6.1% in 1980-81. On the other hand the percentage of leased in area under fixed money rent contract declined from 2.46% to 1.56% over the last decade. In this respect disaggregated districtwise estimates indicate wider variations in these lease contracts across the districts. In one district, namely Darjeeling, the prevalence of the fixed money rent is predominant and rising. In 1970-71 22% of the leased in area was under this system and in 1980-81 it rose to 28%. But in that district the extent of fixed

kind rent tenancy declined. However, the districtwise estimates indicate the sharp rise in the proportion of area under share-tenancy to total leased in area except Hoogly. This relative decline in the percentage of leased in area under 'fixed money rent' compared to that under other categories of tenancy (i.e. a stiff for tenants in the former) is possibly due to inflation which reduce the real share of the landlord under the fixed money rent system. It is difficult for the landlords to revise frequently the rent (fixed in money terms) upwards in the presence of several legal and other restrictions. (See Tables 4.9 and 4.10).

4.4.4. The weight of the lease contracts like 'fixed money' and 'fixed produce' increases with ascending size-classes, while the trend is reversed in the case of the system of rents as share of produce. (As shown in Table-10, the percentage coverage by 'share of produce' falls with the increase in size-classes.). In respect of 'other terms' (i.e. the contracts apart from share rent, fixed produce rents and fixed money rents) a general dislike was seen. Only the larger holdings, which often go beyond the conventional terms of leasing cover as much as 12.3% of leased land under 'other terms'. One possible reason for this rising trend of the proportion of leased-in area under fixed rent tenancy and declining

trend under share rent tenancy, over the size-classes is that the large farmers are capable of taking production risk. They can gain by producing more on the condition of paying a fixed sum to the landlords.<sup>21</sup> Bardhan and Rudra observed (in 1983) that in the broad category of share-tenancy a wide range of contract exists with regard to the share of crops and inputs, and period of lease. They found the share proportion of the gross production to cluster around 50:50 and which increases in favour of the tenants in the case of high yielding varieties. In almost 2/3rd of the cases it was found that landlords share some costs and this is found more prominently in the advanced villages. The share of gross produce was found to be higher for the parties bearing the higher proportion of cost of production.

#### 4.4.5. Variation in Crop and Cost-Sharing Under Share Tenancy.

Rudra and Bardhan (1983) observed that while the majority of villages have only one prevailing share pattern, in a significant number of villages more than

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21. As observed by Ashok Rudra and Pranab Bardhan, Agrarian Relations in West Bengal - Results of two surveys (1983).

one share pattern coexists in the same crop in the same village. As many as 14 share patterns were observed in their study. Rudra (1982) observed that the factors that change with the change in crop-share are soil quality, presence or absence of irrigation, the use of fertilizer, HYV, etc. Rudra also observed that in some cases landlords share costs on the condition of getting higher proportion of the output as share rent.

This cost-sharing arrangement in tenancy contract is a strikingly new phenomenon in Indian agriculture as noticed by others in different parts of India - Parthasarathy (1975) in West Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, Rao (1975) in Kota, Rajasthan, and Haryana, Bardhan and Rudra in West Bengal (1983).

Mitra and Banerjee (1980), in Bankura district of West Bengal, observed three types of sharing of gross product 70:30, 60:40 and 50:50 between landlord and tenants. It depends on the quality of the land. They observed 47% of the land leased out under 70:30, 13% under 60:40 and the rest under 50:50 share contract.

Nripen Bondyopadhyaya (1975) observed a strikingly new contract emerging in tenancy associated with the cultivation of summer paddy (Boro) in some of the

irrigated areas of West Bengal. The arrangement is known as 'Thika' - a contract system under which parcels of land are leased in for a particular crop for a stipulated season. In exchange the owner of the land is paid a rent in kind, specified at the time of contract.<sup>22</sup>

#### 4.5. Who Leases from Whom and What are the Motivations

It is a common impression that small farmers having tiny or no land of their own lease in land from those who have large holdings in a backward agriculture. This presumption was criticised by Laxinarayan and Tyagi (1977) who, analysing 26th round N.S.S. data for all India level showed that 38.37% of the tenants were large holders (belonging to the size-class) of 4 hectares and above). On the other hand tenants in the small and marginal size category accounted for only 36.28% of the leased in area which was lower than that of the tenants in the big size category. They also observed the practice of leasing out by small landowners was very common. Out of the total leased out area 31.2% was accounted for by the size-group of 2.02 hectares

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22. N.K.Chandra (1975) observed higher share rent in the irrigated areas where HYV crops were produced. The landlords could manage to appropriate the increased surplus by raising their share.

and below while the owners of 4.05 hectares and above contributed 55.61%. Sirahi, Ram and Singh (1976) on the basis of the same data observed that marginal and small farmers were net lessees (with a high degree), the semi-medium farmers were either net lessess or lessors at the margin and it varied across states. The large and medium farmers were net lessors in all the states.

4.5.1. Lessor Households: In West Bengal it is observed that the big landlords' contribution to total leased out area has been declining over the decades along with the population of big landlords (Table 4.6). The contribution of small and marginal land owners to total leased put area was 22.31% (12.4% of the small owners and 10.21% of the marginal landowners) and that of big and medium landowners were respectively 34.73% and 23.12% in 1953-54. The contribution of small and marginal owners has increased from 22.31% in 1953-54 to 58.19% in 1982. During this period medium and large owners' contribution declined from 57.85% to 17.86%. Percentage of households leasing out in the total leased out households were much high in the lower size-classes and their weight has been increasing over time. However, the

percentage of owned area leased out within a class was systematically higher in higher size-classes in 1953-54 which altered substantially in 1982. Only in the large size-classes in 1953-54 which altered substantially in 1982. Only in the large size-class it remained unchanged.

#### 4.5.2. The Lessees:

Regarding the size-class distribution of holdings reported to have leased in land, data are available for the years 1971-72 and 1982 in N.S.S. and for 1970-71 and 1980-81 in Agricultural Census. The N.S.S. data, shown in table 4.7, indicate that the percentage of leasing in households belonging to the landless class to total households showed a marked increase from 27.66 in 1971-72 to 46.6 in 1982. Correspondingly area leased in by landless households as a percentage to total leased in area increased from 11.6% to 20.81% over the same period. Concentration of tenancy, both in terms of the numbers of leasing-in households and leased-in area, is maximum in the marginal class of landowners in 1971-72 as well as in 1982. Area leased in by this size class as a percentage to total leased in area declined from 66.38% in 1971-72 to 59.15% in 1982. Correspondingly the percentage of the leasing in households in this class to

total leasing in household declined from 59.4% to 42.59%. Leasing-in households and leased-in area decline systematically over marginal, small, medium and large land-downing classes. In the marginal size-class the percentage of leased in area to the area of owned declined by a half and the net leased in area declined from 4.7 lakh hectares to 2.9 lakh hectares over 1971-72 - 1982. The percentage of leasing in households belonging to the small size-class to total leasing in households as well as the percentage of leased-in area in the marginal class to total leased-in area declined during '70s. But in the same class net leased-in area declined. In the top two classes, net leased in area was negative in 1971-72 and 1982 and the proportion of owned area to leased-in area was declining over the decade. Agricultural Census estimates on the distribution of tenant households according to the size-class of operational holdings (Table 4.8) corroborate the N.S.S. observation of the relative increases in concentration of tenancy in the lower size-classes.

#### 4.5.3. Motivation of Leasing.

The observations above establish the fact that though landpoor households are net lessees and the big landlords are net lessors, leasing in of land is not uncommon among the big landlords. Leasing-out is also



largely practiced by the small land-owners. For our case, information is not available about the particularities of landlord-tenant pairs. Bharadwaj and Das (1975) observed that "among the lessees, the small and medium tenants are the significant, both numerically as well as area-wise. The big landlords lease out particularly to the small lessees. In the irrigated region, however, there are lessees emerging in the above 13 acres group who have leased in substantial amount of land from landlords of all size groups but the major chunk of leased in area comes from the very big landlords owning above 30 acres." However, the preferences and choices of the different kinds of landlord-tenant combinations could be surmised in West Bengal, if we look into the motivations of leasing-choice of different rental contracts and duration of lease contract, cost-sharing contract etc.

Small peasants lease in land for their survival. They often seek credit, sometimes inputs, particularly seeds, from the landlord. Therefore, these petty tenants prefer big landlords. A rich landlord prefers poor peasants - because he has no dearth of capital, but he often needs secured labour for his own farm and thus chooses small peasants or landless labourers as tenants. Landlords also could capitalize the productivity increase due to introduction of modern inputs by revising the contracts or changing tenants frequently. This is possible only when the tenant is very small. Absentee

landlords, which is common in West Bengal, prefer the tenants who could finance their own needs. However, in recent times, after Operation Barga, landlords shifted to choosing very poor or landless labourers as tenants, with whom landlords could get secured share by threat of eviction and switching other tenants and also could ensure the supply of necessary inputs. However, the preference of the small landlords are different from others - rich peasants are preferred because they could cultivate the land by using their own capital and equipments. Big landlords lease in land either traditionally or for cultivating modern HYV crops. Because of their superior bargaining position, they are indifferent about the status of the lessors. (See Bharadwaj and Das 1975).

After the introduction of green revolution technology in agriculture, cost-sharing becomes a new phenomenon in West Bengal as well as in other States (see 4.4.4 and 4.4.5). This type contracts arises in order to make feasible the cultivation of HY crops involving high costs per unit area, by the poor tenants. It is also observed that the rich tenants have contracted a sizeable portion of their lease on the basis of fixed rent. These tenants cultivate HY crops, invest capital and raise profits within the tenure of the lease after paying a fixed sum to the landlords.

4.6 Some Comments on these changes.

In the post independence period we have observed a high population growth. The number of ownership and operational holdings of the small and marginal farmers as well as the number of tenants have multiplied over the last three decades after independence. Though the number of tenant households increased, area under tenancy declined substantially. In view of the difficulty to raise frequently their rental share, due to legislative or political reasons,<sup>23</sup> they reduce the plot size and distributed to large number of tenants. It may raise their total (expected) earning from leasing out. The petty tenants will try to produce the maximum possible for subsistence need, sometimes by introducing irrigation and other modern inputs.<sup>24</sup> The landlords then capitalize

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23. See. 6.1.1. and Appendix B

24. See 5.4.1

the increased productivity of land, slow growth of productivities, use of modern inputs, and investment of capital in agriculture (mainly by the state), and the increase in the number of small tenants indicate the limited development of capitalism and its little impact on traditional peasant economy. (See Appendix A). The nature of peasants' differentiation also points to the fact that peasantry is not polarised into big estate holders and landless labourers. On the contrary land is concentrated to the lower stratum of the peasantry and ~~consequently~~ the weight of the big land owners is declining. The decline in leasing out by the big landlords are not followed by the rise in leasing in by them<sup>25</sup> from the small peasants, a phenomenon known as 'reverse tenancy' associated with capitalist farming which is observed in developed agriculture of Haryana or Punjab.<sup>26</sup>

It can be well understood by the phenomenon which is termed as 'involution' by Geertz - in the sense of increasing elaboration of existing social and economic structure, instead of transformation of traditional structure. In this situation more and more labourers work

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25. Though in a very limited scale, it was observed by Bondopadhyaya in West Bengal, associated with particular crop.

26. See Bhalla, 1976, 1977.

on the same land with a little capital and by increasingly labour intensive techniques. Geertz described it as some 'sharing of poverty' - as in the sharing out of access to land or of opportunity to wage employment.

TABLE : 4.1

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OWNED BY SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLD OPERATIONAL HOLDING

SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLD OPERATIONAL HOLDING (HECTARES)	PERCENTAGE OF ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLD					PERCENTAGE OF THE ESTIMATED AREA OWNED				
	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72	1981-82	B-ESTIMATE <sup>1</sup> FOR 1981-82	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72	1981-82	B-ESTIMATE <sup>1</sup> FOR 1981-82
0.00-0.002	20.54	13.92	9.78	16.85	35.50					
0.002- 1.00	52.89	58.18	67.84	64.38	45.08	15.90	17.54	27.28	30.33	29.83
1.00 - 2.00	12.65	14.33	12.64	11.50	12.93	18.59	25.97	25.69	28.78	31.45
2.00 - 4.00	8.57	8.88	7.30	5.54	5.00	28.51	28.81	27.72	27.23	24.18
4.00 -10.00	4.61	3.91	2.39	1.29	1.48	28.74	25.29	18.61	12.12	14.53
10.00 & ABOVE	0.74	0.78	0.05	0.44		11.26	2.44	0.70	1.54	
ALL SIZE CLASS	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
ABSOLUTE TERM (Hectare)	4274000	4662000	5536600	7718000		4412000	4261000	3868800	4255700	
AVERAGE SIZE OF OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS (IN HECTARE)										
(a) ALL CLASSES	0.97	0.91	0.70	0.55						
(b) EXCLUDING LANDLESS	1.22	1.06	0.77	0.66						
NUMBER OF OWNERSHIP HOLDING	3396000	4013000	4995000	6417500						

<sup>1</sup> B-estimate = Bandyopadhyay estimate

SOURCE : (1) NSS 8th, 16th, 26th, 37th ROUND  
 (2) BANDYOPAHAY, N. & ASSOCIATE (1984) IN : EVALUATION OF LANDREFORM MEASURES IN WEST BENGAL. - A REPORT, CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA.

TABLE : 4.2

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AND AREA OPERATED BY SIZE CLASS OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS

SIZE CLASS OF HOUSEHOLDS OPERATIONAL HOLDING(HECTARES)	PERCENTAGE OF THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS					PERCENTAGE OF THE ESTIMATED AREA OPERATED				
	1953-54 (2)	1960-61 (3)	1971-72 (4)	1970-71 (5)	1980-81 (6)	1953-54 (7)	1960-61 (8)	1971-72 (9)	1970-71 (10)	1980-81 (11)
NEITHER OWNING NOR OPERATING		8.71	7.85							
0.00-0.002	0.89	31.4	30.94	28.89	23.84					
0.002-1.00	64.27	30.4	42.22	42.64	53.07	14.29	13.4	24.79	21.5	29.2
1.00-2.00	17.52	20.4	15.77	15.88	14.89	23.01	28.15	28.94	25.7	31.2
2.00 - 4.00	12.15	13.0	8.95	9.41	6.73	31.32	33.41	31.05	28.9	25.3
4.00 - 10.00	5.17	4.4	2.07	3.11	1.45	31.38	23.27	14.58	19.2	10.7
10.00 and above		0.4	0.05	0.66	0.02		1.77	0.64	4.6	3.7
ALL SIZE CLASS	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
IN ABSOLUTE TERMS(hectare)	4274000	4662000	5536600	5930000	7718000	4663000	5024000	4282600	5061631	5555000
AVERAGE SIZE OF OPERATIONAL HOLDING (HECTARE)										
(a) ALL CLASSES	1.09	1.08	0.77	0.85	0.72					
(b) EXCLUDING THE LANDLESS	1.11	1.57	1.2	1.20	0.94					
NUMBER OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS	4197000	3198000	3824000	4216000	5878000					

SOURCE: COLUMNS (2) & (7) - NSS 8th ROUND

COLUMNS (3) & (8) - NSS 16th ROUND  
COLUMNS (4) & (9) - NSS 26th ROUND

COLUMNS (5) - THE FIGURES FOR THE LANDLESS HOUSEHOLDS ARE SUPPLEMENTED FROM THE NSS 26th ROUND AND THE REST FROM AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 1970-71.

COLUMN (6) - THE FIGURE FOR THE LANDLESS CLASS HAS BEEN OBTAINED BY SUBTRACTING THE NUMBER OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS ACCORDING TO AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 1970-71 FROM THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AS PER THE NSS 37th ROUND AND REST FROM AGRICULTURE CENSUS

COLUMNS (10) & (11) - AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 1970-71 & 1980-81 RESPECTIVELY.

TABLE 4.3

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AND  
OPERATED AREA AND AVERAGE SIZE OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS  
BY SIZE CLASSES, 1970-71 and 1980-81.

SIZE-CLASS (ha)	NO. OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN (PERCENT- AGES)		OPERATED AREA IN (PERCENTAGES)		AVERAGE SIZE OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS IN (ha)	
	1970-71	1980-81	1970-71	1980-81	1970-71	1980-81
Below 1.0	60.0	69.7	21.5	29.2	0.43	0.40
1.0 - 2.0	22.3	19.5	25.7	31.2	1.38	1.51
2.0 - 4.0	13.2	8.8	28.9	25.3	2.63	2.70
4.0 -10.0	4.4	1.9	19.2	10.7	5.28	5.32
10.0 & above	(N)	(N)	4.6	3.7	64.20	144.52
All sizes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	1.20	0.95
TOTAL:	4216327	5877649	5061631	5554782 ha		

SOURCE : Agricultural Census, 1970-71 & 1980-81



TABLE 4.4

## DISTRICT-WISE ESTIMATE OF THE GROWTH OF OPERATIONAL HOLDING

FROM 1970-71 - 1980-81

Serial No.	District	NO. OF HOLDINGS		%age increase in no.of holding
		1970 - 71	1980 - 81	
1.	24-Parganas	698771	1002339	43.46
2.	Nadia	209896	349435	66.48
3.	Murshidabad	330539	499593	51.14
4.	Burdwan	293735	380929	29.68
5.	Birbhum	186628	239867	28.53
6.	Bankura	253264	337212	33.15
7.	Midnapur	810558	1040503	28.37
8.	Hoogly	228374	313586	37.31
9.	Howrah	183056	206836	12.99
10.	Jalpaiguri	135742	204752	50.84
11.	Darjeeling	52310	65091	24.43
12.	Malda	204833	234922	14.69
13.	West Dinajpur	248484	380483	53.12
14.	Cooch Bihar	166952	259293	55.31
15.	Puruliya	213185	262806	23.28
16.	Total(W.B.)	4216327	5877649	39.40

Source : Agricultural Census - 1970-71 &amp; 1980-81.

Table 4.5

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS AND OPERATED AREA BY SIZE CLASSES AND DISTRICTS, 1970-71 & 1980-81.

DISTRICT	SIZE CLASS : 0-1 (ha.)				SIZE CLASS : 1-2 (ha.)				SIZE CLASS : 2-4 (ha.)				SIZE CLASS : 4-10 (ha.)				SIZE CLASS : 10 & ABOVE (ha.)				Average Size of holdings (ha.)	
	Number of holdings		Area of holdings		NUMBER		AREA		NUMBER		AREA		NUMBER		AREA		NUMBER		AREA		1970/1	1980/1
	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1	1970/1	1980/1		
1. 24-PARGANAS	68.21	78.20	27.93	39.33	18.91	14.92	27.57	30.33	9.86	5.83	27.72	22.21	3.02	1.04	16.74	7.86					0.95	0.70
2. NADIA	53.81	67.71	15.28	30.62	24.01	21.20	25.47	34.29	16.51	9.02	23.40	23.65	5.67	2.07	22.69	11.44					1.31	0.97
3. MURSHIDABAD	63.78	70.61	24.33	32.29	20.25	20.24	26.38	35.55	12.19	7.76	30.41	24.03	3.78	1.38	18.57	7.98					1.05	0.90
4. BURDWAN	51.44	55.45	17.14	20.30	24.45	26.65	24.61	32.60	17.96	14.47	34.74	32.12	6.15	3.37	23.31	14.23					1.39	1.24
5. BIRBHUM	49.56	56.39	14.91	21.66	24.24	26.05	23.16	32.86	18.83	14.78	33.93	31.66	12.33	3.05	27.20	13.34					1.50	1.23
6. BANKURA	50.02	60.57	17.25	23.97	27.26	25.19	27.38	35.82	17.04	11.70	31.66	27.68	5.98	2.52	23.55	12.21					1.39	1.13
7. MIDNAPUR	65.37	75.76	28.57	35.93	21.92	16.18	30.04	31.16	9.89	6.65	25.88	23.00	2.82	1.39	18.15	9.56					1.00	0.79
8. HOOGLY	68.58	76.99	30.43	39.83	19.98	16.46	30.27	34.49	7.25	5.90	26.75	21.03	2.19	0.65	12.01	4.57					0.90	0.75
9. HOWRAH	86.94	89.08	55.31	57.85	9.92	8.65	26.35	27.58	2.65	2.20	13.45	12.57	0.49	0.17	6.89	2.00					0.50	0.47
10. JALPAIGURI	37.86	62.14	9.45	17.59	33.19	24.04	18.82	20.78	23.49	11.37	24.28	19.16	5.25	2.35	10.67	7.22	0.11	0.10	36.78	35.25	2.40	1.69
11. DARJEELING	38.12	54.10	6.67	11.42	27.89	27.01	12.95	17.17	23.34	13.92	20.34	16.88	10.37	4.62	19.19	11.09	0.28	0.34	40.85	43.44	3.06	2.35
12. MALDA	59.26	71.71	19.97	29.61	20.38	18.08	22.81	31.92	14.42	8.17	30.92	25.34	5.94	2.00	26.07	12.36					1.24	1.27
13. WEST DINAJPUR	43.33	61.97	12.85	22.64	25.91	21.18	21.80	27.15	20.75	13.30	31.81	32.94	10.01	3.54	33.43	17.11					1.67	1.07
14. COOCH BEHAR	56.48	60.87	23.52	26.38	26.60	25.28	31.69	34.78	13.64	11.83	30.56	30.06	3.28	2.02	14.24	9.58					1.15	1.01
15. PURULIA	55.07	61.62	21.61	24.23	25.58	24.39	26.49	33.17	13.95	10.70	27.62	26.24	5.40	3.27	23.96	15.77					1.28	1.18
TOTAL WEST BENGAL	59.96	69.69	21.53	29.20	22.34	19.50	25.72	31.20	13.23	8.80	28.93	25.30	4.46	1.90	19.94	10.70	0.02	0.02	3.87	3.66	1.20	0.95

Source: Agricultural Census, 1970-71 & 1980-81

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TABLE : 4.6

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEASING OUT HOUSEHOLD AND LEASED IN AREA AND LEASED IN AREA TO OWNED AREA BY SIZE CLASS OF OWNERSHIP HOLDINGS

SIZE OF HOLDING (HECTARE)	HOUSEHOLD (PERCENTAGE) LEASING-OUT				AREA (PERCENTAGE) LEASED-OUT				OWNED AREA (PERCENTAGE) LEASED-OUT			
	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72	1981-82	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72	1981-82	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72	1981-82
0.002 - 0.002	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
0.002 - 1.00	42.03	53.13	58.20	44.73	10.21	17.78	24.07	21.42	9.96	8.98	1.90	1.75
1.00 - 2.00	17.75	16.35	21.19	27.76	12.10	10.92	27.60	36.77	10.09	4.33	9.52	3.16
2.00 - 4.00	18.65	16.08	10.99	9.03	19.84	18.07	24.35	23.91	12.06	6.10	1.86	2.17
4.00 -10.00	16.41	13.62	9.62	8.19	34.73	45.53	24.08	14.72	18.74	7.91	3.36	2.95
10.00 & ABOVE	5.16	0.82	-	-	23.12	4.73	-	3.14	31.84	35.21	-	32.04
ALL SIZE CLASSES (HECTARE)	445000	367000	473500	279400	642100	385400	346300	105541				
(a) % OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS/ AREA OWNED	10.41	7.87	8.55	3.62	15.45	9.05	8.95	2.48	15.51	9.05	8.95	2.48
(b) % OF TOTAL HOLDINGS	13.10	9.15	9.48	4.37								

SOURCE : NSS 8th, 16th, 26th, 37th ROUND

TABLE 4.7

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEASING IN HOUSEHOLD, LEASED IN AREA, PERCENTAGE OF LEASED IN AREA TO OWNED AREA AND NET LEASED-IN AREA BY SIZE CLASS OF OWNERSHIP HOLDING

OWNERSHIP HOLDING	HOUSEHOLD(%) LEASING-IN			PERCENTAGE OF AREA LEASED IN			LEASED-IN AREA/OWNED AREA			NET LEASED-IN AREA(Ha.)	
	1953-54	1971-72	1981-82	1953-54	1971-72	1981-82	1953-54	1971-72	1981-82	1971-72	1981-82
0	N.A.	27.66	46.60	N.A.	11.60	20.81	N.A.	96800 Ha.	109600 Ha.	96800	109600
1	N.A.	59.40	42.59	N.A.	66.38	59.15	N.A.	52.49	24.01	470545	287293
2	N.A.	9.40	7.64	N.A.	13.77	14.14	N.A.	11.56	6.05	1967	35292
3	N.A.	3.12	2.73	N.A.	6.21	4.75	N.A.	4.83	2.15 (-)	32524 (-)	334
4	N.A.	0.42	0.44	N.A.	2.04	1.15	N.A.	4.20	1.09 (-)	66089 (-)	9536
ALL SIZE CLASSES (Ha.)	1773283	1695860	2069200	1185800	834435	523900	N.A.			488135	418359
% OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS/ AREA OWNED	41.49	30.63	26.64	34.10	21.57	12.31	34.10	21.57	12.31	12.66	9.83

SOURCE : NSS 8th, 26th, 37th ROUND

TABLE : 4.8

## PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBER OF HOLDINGS AND AREA UNDER TENANCY BY SIZE CLASS AND DISTRICTS, 1980-81

DISTRICTS (1)	SIZE CLASS : (0-1)ha.				(1-2)ha				ABOVE 2 Ha ENTIRELY LEASED				ABSOL <sup>1</sup> - UTE	ABSOL <sup>2</sup> - UTE AREA (ha)
	TOTAL		ENTIRELY LEASED IN		TOTAL		ENTIRELY LEASED IN		TOTAL		IN TOTAL FOR ALL CLA-			
	N (2)	A (3)	N (4)	A (5)	N (6)	A (7)	N (8)	A (9)	N (10)	A (11)	SSES (12)	N (13)	A (13)	
1. 24 PRAGANAS	65.01	40.93	8.59	7.34	25.69	38.68	1.51	3.73	9.30	20.39	10.18	11.19	113160	56281
2. NADIA	65.90	25.56	7.60	2.44	34.74	52.44	-	-	9.36	22.00	7.73	2.89	(11.55)	(8.04)
3. MURSHIDABAD	48.60	37.36	10.39	8.76	40.22	47.56	-	-	11.18	10.78	10.95	15.08	25635	15286
4. BURDAWAN	50.00	22.03	7.91	3.65	34.26	43.93	4.11	7.66	15.74	34.04	13.18	15.90	(7.34)	(4.50)
5. BIRBHUM	30.98	13.66	4.92	3.11	46.89	49.86	9.07	13.22	22.13	36.48	18.06	26.26	44643	31264
6. BANKURA	59.13	33.55	9.76	7.67	27.75	38.34	3.36	7.35	13.12	28.09	13.20	18.37	(8.95)	(6.96)
7. MIDNAPUR	76.75	54.77	5.79	6.20	16.83	28.42	-	-	6.42	17.36	6.32	9.13	49150	40019
8. HOOGLY	73.89	43.13	1.50	-	21.85	42.04	-	-	4.26	14.83	2.94	-	(12.90)	(8.49)
9. HOWRAH	82.96	61.02	15.08	11.61	14.34	28.55	-	-	2.70	10.43	15.82	14.90	31211	33243
10. JALPAIGURI	51.48	32.25	12.24	7.13	36.60	46.25	4.31	2.11	11.92	21.50	18.83	10.11	(13.01)	(11.27)
11. DARJEELING	33.64	12.40	15.33	6.45	43.14	42.58	11.44	14.82	23.22	45.01	34.32	49.33	40097	23915
12. MALDA	45.81	21.93	1.64	1.14	39.08	41.48	2.69	6.25	15.18	36.59	4.43	7.80	(11.89)	(6.26)
13. WEST DINAJPUR	47.87	28.11	10.48	1.29	34.22	56.87	3.41	2.35	17.90	15.02	11.57	3.65	116873	39438
14. COOCH-BEHAR	52.22	27.56	8.74	8.87	36.62	47.24	15.26	29.38	11.16	25.20	23.99	38.25	(11.23)	(4.82)
15. PURULIA	58.37	65.06	8.21	-	37.20	31.94	-	-	4.43	3.06	8.69	-	50212	38743
16. TOTAL WEST BENGL (AGL. CENSUS 1980/81)	60.88	34.16	7.95	5.69	29.09	42.19	3.52	5.60	10.03	23.65	11.47	16.91	(16.01)	(16.46)
17. TOTAL WEST BENGL (AGL. CENSUS 1970/71)	41.25	19.73	-	-	12.87	28.95	-	-	45.88	51.32	14.91	18.61	30714	12299

N : NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTED LEASED IN, A: AREA UNDER LEASING,

1: PARANTHESES INDICATES PERCENTAGE OF LEASING-HOLDINGS OVER TOTAL HOLDINGS, 2 : PARANTHESES INDICATES PERCENTAGE OF LEASED IN AREA TO TOTAL AREA.

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 1970-71, 1980-81

TABLE : 4.9

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LEASED IN AREA BY TERMS OF LEASING

DISTRICTS	FOR FIXED MONEY		FIXED PRODUCE		SHARE OF PRODUCE		OTHER TERMS	
	1970-71	1980-81	1970-71	1980-81	1970-71	1980-81	1970-71	1980-81
1. 24-PARAGANAS	4.00	0.99	1.74	4.90	76.31	92.27	17.95	1.84
2. NADIA	0.44	2.70	7.78	16.02	77.30	78.00	14.48	3.28
3. MURSHIDABAD	0.68	0.27	2.52	7.61	87.23	90.05	9.73	2.07
4. BURDWAN	0.20	0.61	3.61	8.08	88.27	89.80	7.42	1.59
5. BIREHUM	1.12	-	4.44	7.62	59.41	91.19	35.01	1.19
6. BANKURA	0.35	2.00	4.34	6.45	84.04	90.29	11.13	1.26
7. MIDNAPUR	3.17	2.28	1.41	6.56	69.87	87.60	25.55	3.56
8. HOOGLY	1.39	0.29	1.09	8.48	92.93	89.48	4.58	1.75
9. HOWRA	1.90	0.98	0.97	5.72	92.28	93.29	6.50	0.79
10. JALPAIGURI	0.98	0.32	1.57	2.03	70.68	91.19	26.76	7.46
11. DARJEELING	21.81	28.30	5.41	0.77	58.22	69.84	14.55	1.09
12. MALDA	1.32	0.94	0.45	6.56	66.61	90.92	31.61	1.58
13. WEST DINAJPUR	3.83	5.04	0.78	2.92	48.96	87.03	46.22	5.01
14. COOCH-BEHAR	0.33	-	2.60	1.32	55.20	93.36	30.86	0.29
15. PURULIA	6.79	-	5.86	-	65.11	100.00	22.24	-
ALL WEST BENGAL	2.46	1.56	2.27	6.10	71.74	90.25	25.53	2.09

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS 1970-71 AND 1980-81

TABLE 4.10

## TERMS OF LEASING-IN : SIZE CLASSES

SIZE CLASS (ha)	Leased in Area under Terms of Leasing				TOTAL
	FIXED MONEY	FIXED PRODUCE	SHARE OF PRODUCE	OTHER TERMS	
Below 1.0	2381 (1.8)	6197 (4.8)	119046 (91.5)	2459 (1.9)	130083 (100.0)
1.0 - 2.0	851 (0.5)	10380 (6.5)	146071 (91.9)	1654 (1.0)	158956 (100.0)
2.0 - 4.0	2246 (2.9)	5741 (7.5)	67782 (88.3)	971 (1.3)	76740 (100.0)
4.0 - 10.0	450 (3.9)	881 (7.7)	9940 (87.1)	139 (1.2)	11410 (100.0)
10.9 & above	10 (1.5)	-	559 (86.1)	80 (12.3)	649 (100.0)
All sizes	5938 (1.6)	23199 (6.1)	343398 (90.9)	5303 (1.4)	377838 (100.0)

SOURCE: Agricultural Census - 1980-81, West Bengal

TABLE 4.11  
COMPUTED ANNUAL GROWTH RATES (%)

West Bengal	Rice	Pulses	Food Crops	Cereals
	1950- 1984	1954- 1974	1960- 1976	1960- 1976
Burdwan	2.97	0.25	2.79	2.34
Birbhum	1.92	4.77	2.24	1.65
Bankura	2.29	1.33	1.16	-1.36
Midnapore	1.71	1.36	2.58	2.16
Howrah	2.92	5.85	2.67	1.53
Hoogly	3.46	1.63	7.52	6.29
24-Parganas	2.55	-2.10	2.50	1.97
Nadia	4.47	-1.53	7.24	7.94
Murshidabad	3.26	3.90	7.32	6.61
W. Dirajpur	1.54	-0.61	0.80	0.87
Malda	3.44	2.44	1.74	4.78
Jalpaiguri	-0.09	0.17	-0.72	-0.82
Darjeeling	0.08	-0.27	6.36	6.42
Cooch Bihar	1.51	0.06	1.69	1.79
Purulia	0.63	4.35	1.74	1.63

SOURCE: Agricultural Situation in India, Various Issues.



TABLE : 4.12

GINI RATIOS OF NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS TO THE AREA OF THE HOLDING

STATES	GINI RATIOS OF OWNERSHIP HOLDING AND OWNED AREA			GINI RATIOS OF OPERATIONAL HOLDING AND OPERATED AREA		
	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72	1953-54	1960-61	1971-72
ANDHRA PRADESH	0.760	0.732	0.686	0.755	0.591	0.744
ASSAM	0.726	0.592	0.542	0.552	0.367	0.522
BIHAR	0.6643	0.648	0.601	0.622	0.615	0.543
GUJRAT	-	0.664	0.659	-	0.484	0.646
HIMACHAL PRADESH	-	-	0.497	-	-	0.498
JAMMU & KASHMIR	0.533	0.498	0.376	0.457	0.385	0.375
KARNATAKA	0.652	0.670	0.604	0.604	0.675	0.586
KERALA	-	0.663	0.495	-	0.504	0.332
MADHYA PRADESH	-	0.623	0.606	-	0.539	0.606
MAHARASHTRA	-	0.695	0.663	-	0.553	0.656
ORISSA	0.636	0.615	0.567	0.629	0.502	0.468
PUNJAB	0.728	0.735	0.735	0.699	0.481	0.735
RAJASTHAN	0.669	0.632	0.579	0.607	0.525	0.579
TAMILNADU	0.725	0.568	0.643	0.674	0.495	0.554
UTTAR PRADESH	0.614	0.595	0.587	0.583	0.504	0.474
WEST BENGAL	0.679	0.608	0.555	0.597	0.436	0.536
ALL INDIA	0.689	0.680	0.664	0.674	0.579	0.660

SOURCE: QUOTED FROM SIROHI, RAM & SINGH : INTER-STATE DISPARITIES IN THE STRUCTURAL DISTRIBUTION OF LAND HOLDINGS IN RURAL INDIA : IJAE, JULY-SEPTEMBER, 1976, PAGE 19.

## 5. PRESENT STATE OF TENANT CULTIVATION.

This chapter deals with the present condition of tenant cultivation in West Bengal. It analyses the nature of involvement of the petty producers and tenants in different markets, particularly in the credit market. We have also attempted to relate the asset positions of the rural households with their nature of involvement in the credit market. Finally, we have analysed some technical aspects of cultivation relating to the level of productivity of land, intensities of cropping and input uses and the choice of crop-mix in the case of sharetenants vis-a-vis other cultivators. In this connection we have attempted to see whether sharetenancy acts as a barrier to modernisation of agriculture.

5.1. At present, agriculture in the Eastern Region, and particularly so in West Bengal is characterised by many economists as semi-feudal or non (or pre) - capitalist. This peculiar character emerged through complex and distorted<sup>1</sup> interactions of relations of production and forces of production. We have noted in Chapter III some aspects of the impact of commerciali-

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1. Distorted in the sense that it diverted our economy from the 'classic path' of transition to capitalism.

zation, Tenancy Reforms (1885) and usury and trade in grains on the rural class structure in the colonial period. Two distinct classes of Jotedars on the one hand and landless labourers and bargadars on the other emerged from the traditional ryots. Continuous and large-scale extraction of surplus left little for investment and constrained the advancement of technology in agriculture. The jotedars leased out a considerable portion of their land to the bargadars. Though the rental share was high, it was limited by conventions and customs. Thus, the exploitation of the jotedars became restricted upto a certain level in the lease market. The surplus belonging to the jotedars was not reinvested in land. The most favourable and profitable channels for these investments were usury and grain trade. By interlocking contracts in several markets they could maximize return from such investment and exploit the petty producers in an effective way. Interlinked land-lease and labour markets as well as credit and product markets were the most important areas of exploitative operations of the dominant classes of the agrarian society.

After independence, the mode of extraction and utilization of surplus has not altered significantly.

Bhaduri (1973), on the basis of village survey data of West Bengal, concluded that the 'dominant character of the existing production relations could best be described as sem-feudal'. Pradhan Prasad (1974) Nirmal Chandra (1974, 1975), Ranjit Sau (1973, 1975) and A.K. Bondopadhyaya (1984) supported Bhaduri's observation. Commenting on the observation (of Daniel Thorner, (1967) and others) of emerging capitalist relations in Indian agriculture Chandra and Sau said that in view of the weak pull of industry and large scale unemployment, small peasants attempt desperately to cling to land no matter how meagre is the return. The capitalist farmers would face insuperable barriers in ousting the small farmers. Nirmal Chandra, however, observed that sharetenancy is not necessarily a barrier to technological innovation. In fact, in the advanced villages of Burdwan District, he (1975) observed that the tenants have adopted HYV paddy in the irrigated areas on very onerous terms. Tenants take one-half of the products when they bear all the costs of production. But if the landlords share some costs, the share of the tenants declines to one-third, sometimes to one-fourth. The statororily fixed share of the bargadar is three-fourth of the gross produce when he bears all the costs, and one-half when he supplies only the labour input. Threat of eviction

was the principal instrument of control.

In the neighbouring state Orissa Bharadwaj and Das (1975) observed that the big tenants usually prefer small tenants having large family size. Apart from the own needs of the tenant the threat of eviction force the tenant to supply maximum labour on the leased-in land. These poor tenant families often render free and under paid labour services to the landlords. They also observed that the terms and conditions may vary depending on the relative status of the landlords and tenants.

The observations of the different economists mentioned above are based on household surveys. These indicate the nature, extent and scope of operations of the rich peasants to exploit the petty producers and tenants. The operations of the rich peasants also have some impact on the use of inputs and the adoption of modern technology and HY crops by the poor peasants particularly, the petty tenants. However, separate data pertaining to the nature and extent of involvement of the tenants in labour, credit and product markets are not available for West Bengal. We, constrained by the lack of data have to resort to other means for deriving inferences. We can look into the power structure of the rural society of West Bengal. We have tried to relate it

with the credit relations between different classes of cultivators.

Another source is a case study of the district of Murshidabad which investigate into the use of inputs, cropping intensity, adoption of HY crops and productivity on share-cropped farms as compared to the farms of owner operators.

5.1.1. The most important indicator of the rural power base is the asset position of the households determined by the ownership of land, building, agricultural machinery, non-farm business equipment, live-stocks, etc. The level of the ownership of these assets of a household determines the nature and extent of involvement of the household in different markets. For example, a household having enough assets like land or building can easily enter into the organised credit market where terms are favourable. Further, a landless household finds difficulty in getting institutional finance because of the lack of an acceptable collateral. It has to enter unorganised credit-market where the rich households are creditors. The terms and conditions for the poor households are often onerous in the unorganised credit market. The land-poor households generally lease in land and hire-in farm implements from the

rich households. They also sell their labour power to the rich. The asset positions of the different households, therefore, determines the nature of their dependency relations.

The findings of the Rural Credit Survey (N.S.S. 37th Round) indicate the asset and debt position of the rural households as on June 31, 1981. The figures relating to the value of assets of a household have been worked out by adding the values of land, building live-stocks and poultry, agricultural machinery, non-farm business equipments, durable household assets, share deposits, etc. The average value of asset per rural household in West Bengal stands at Rs.20,746.<sup>2</sup> The values of land and buildings seem to have constituted more than 84% of the total asset values (64% in case of land and 19.5% in case of building) of the cultivating households (Table 5.1). Since the share of land in the value of total asset is very high, the inequality in the distribution of assets reflects the inequality of land distribution to a considerable extent.



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2. The corresponding figure for all India is Rs.36,133.

TABLE - 5.1

Percentage share of different items of Assets in total Assets, Rural West Bengal

Sl.No.	Items	Culti- vators	Non-Culti- vators	Total (Rural)
1.	Land	64.1	32.2	62.1
2.	Building etc.	19.5	39.7	20.7
3.	Livestock etc.	5.0	6.4	5.0
4.	Machinery, equipments etc.	3.7	3.1	3.7
5.	Durable house- hold assets	6.6	11.5	7.1
6.	Financial assets	1.0	5.2	1.2
7.	Dues receivable	0.1	1.8	0.1
8.	Total	100	100	100

Source: N.S.S. 37th Round.

Table 5.2 indicates the inequality of asset distribution across the size-classes. It shows that 92.5% of the agricultural labourers and 23% of the cultivating households have assets of Rs.5,000 or less and 40.8% of the cultivators belong to the asset groups of Rs.10,000 or less. On the other hand 38.6% of the cultivators belong to the asset group of more than Rs.20,000. Asset position of the top 2.8% of the households exceeds Rs.1,00,000. This indicates the relative as well as absolute extent of inequality in asset distribution in rural West Bengal.



A detailed break up of asset is presented in table 5.3. It shows that only one-third of the households having assets of less than Rs.1,000 each possess no land. Even the households in the size-classes of household asset holdings upto Rs.10,000 possess land insufficient for their survival. Average asset values of livestock and poultry farms show that the lowest three classes (covering 40% of the cultivators) do not have even one bullock per household on the average. A large number of households have no live-stock at all. A large percentage of the lowest 40% of the households seems to have no farm machinery and transport equipment.

5.2.1. Extent of Indebtedness of the Different Sections Peasantry.

The Rural Credit Survey (N.S.S. 37th Round) refers only to the 'cash loans' that are defined as the loans 'which are taken in cash irrespective of whether repaid or contracted to repay in cash or kind'. This definition of 'Cash loans' may lead to underestimation of the actual extent of indebtedness of the rural households. Because several other categories of loans are also taken by the rural households such as kind

to kind, kind to cash etc.<sup>3</sup> Bondopadhyaya's (1984) survey of West Bengal villages reveals that about 61.8% of the total indebted rural households have taken this kind of 'cash loans'. But the underestimation mentioned above is more in case of the poor peasant, whose stock of food usually runs short in the pre-harvest season.<sup>4</sup> They have to borrow paddy or wheat from the landlords or traders against their standing crop, land or future labour. The Rural Credit Survey findings, however, suggest a high degree of dependence of the rural poor on the rich in West Bengal.

It follows from the NSS estimates that in West Bengal 21.6% of the cultivating households and 17.5% of the rural households are indebted and the corresponding debt per reporting household are Rs.1672 and Rs.1662 respectively. Around 98% of the indebted households belong to the poorer section (size classes of Rs.10,000

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3. Often loan transactions in the rural areas take place in non-monetary terms. Sometimes the rich people grant interest free loans to the poor.

These sources of loans come into the category of 'friends and relatives' according to N.S.S. It happens that explicit rate of interest is zero or nominal, but implicit rate is very high. The borrowers supply free or under-paid services of human labour and bullock labour or even household products to the creditors in exchange. Collection of information of these kinds of informal credit transactions are very difficult. The investigator may come to a misleading conclusion when the lender or debtor reports that the loans are interest free.

4. These loans are usually contracted during August and September (see Bondopadhyaya, 1984, PP.20-23).

or less). They account for 78% of the total debt. The rest 2% of the households accounts for 22% of the total debt. More than half of the indebted households belongs to the lowest asset group category. They have taken only 14.5% of the total loan (See Table 5.4).

It is interesting to note that the percentage of indebted household to total household in each class and the average amount of debt per reporting household are higher in higher size-classes. In lowest size class only 4.43% of the households are indebted with the average amount of debt being Rs.284. In the asset group of Rs.50,000 - 1,00,000 the corresponding figures are 26.23% and Rs.2756, respectively. The poor households do not have mortgageable asset and whatever they have are already encumbered.

#### 5.2.2. Sources of Credit.

The percentage distribution of households and debt across the size class of asset holdings are presented in Table 5.5. The table also shows the sources of such loans. Table 5.5 shows that the institutional sources provide credit to 10.6% of the rural households and these credits account for 65% of the total loan taken by the rural households from different sources. Co-operative banks cover 6.24% of the rural households and

23.4% of the total debt of the rural household. The commercial banks provide credit only to 2.6% of the rural households. And 32.4% of the total loan of the rural households in West Bengal is taken from the source mentioned above. This indicates that commercial banks have a bias towards providing loan to the rich peasants. The commercial banks usually grant large volume of loan to small number of people as compared to cooperative banks. On the other hand, the rural households have obtained 35% of their total loan from the non-institutional sources. Such loan is disbursed only to 9.5% of the rural households.

The contribution of institutional sources to total credit disbursement seems to be fairly high. However, the importance of non-institutional sources still remains dominant. Each of these institutional and non-institutional sources covers around 10% of the rural households. The non-institutional sources provide little more than a half of the total credit disbursed by the institutional sources. Table 5.5 also shows that the poorest class whose average debt per household being Rs.284 receives only 18% of their loan from the organised credit market. In the organised market loans disbursed by the co-operative banks amount to less than half of the loans advanced by the commercial banks to the rural households. Non-institutional sources provide loans to 78% of the indebted households belonging to the poorest class. Loans from these sources account for 87.8% of

the total borrowings of the households belonging to the lowest size class. In the size-group of households with asset holdings of Rs.1,000 - 5,000, the percentage of households receives loan ( 4%) and the average amount of loan per reported households (Rs.538) are higher than the corresponding figures for the poorest class. This class also received more from the organised sources, particularly, co-operative banks compared to the poorest class. Even then 85% of the indebted households take loan from the non-institutional sources which accounted for 80% of the total debt of this class. The landlords, moneylenders, and traders supply credit to 42.3% of the indebted households. In the size-class of Rs.5,000 - 10,000, only 39% of the indebted households receive 34.5% of their credit from institutional sources of which the share of co-operatives and commercial banks are respectively 31.5% and 22%. Another important source of credit to the poor is 'friends and relatives'. From this source 27% of the households receive 38% of their loan at free of interest. The poorer section of the households, therefore, is seen to be much more dependent on the non-institutional sources, particularly, on the landlords, local money-lenders and traders for their credit. Compared to other sections of the households their access to the organised credit market is quite low. Co-operative societies which are supposed to help the poor people in this respect have performed

poorly, . On the other hand richer sections of the peasantry receive more credit from the organised sources. Around 60% of the indebted households, belonging to the size-class of Rs.10,000-20,000, receive more than 57% of the credit from these sources. The respective figures increases with the increase in size-class. The higher the size-class the higher is the percentages of indebted households and the percentage of total loan received from co-operatives and commercial banks. Thus, a strong positive association is observed between asset position and loan-availability from the organised sources. This indicates that the rich have control over co-operative societies and good access to the commercial banks. It may happen that the rich relends the money (received from the organised source from which the poor are crowded out) to the poor at higher interest rates. These richer classes also obtain loan from the non-institutional sources but the extent is much less as compared to poor.

### 5.2.3. Rate of Interest.

One interesting feature of the interest rate is that the poorer sections of the households obtained a significant proportion of their total loan at free of cost. In the lowest three classes, 45% to 39% of the indebted households receive 32% to 64% of their total

credit at free of interest as shown in Table 5.6.

The sources are expected to be the 'friends and relatives'<sup>5</sup> and 'government'. The latter provides interest free loans to the assignees of vested land, sharecroppers, landless labourers, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes under different schemes.

At the lower interest rates (upto 10%) the poor households belonging to all the three classes receive very small amount of loan. Their indebtedness increases with the increase in interest rates. At the usurious rate of interest (i.e. more than 30%) 22-39% of the indebted households in the lowest three classes receive 19-24% of their total loan. The households in the bottom or poorest class take this loan at the minimum extent. Relatively less poor (measured in terms of the ownership of assets) households among the poor obtained slightly larger amounts of loan at the medium (10-15%) rate of interest and less credit at the high (15-30%) and usurious (30% and above) rates compared to the poorest class.

However, the amounts of debt of the poor households are seen to be extremely polarised over the rates of interests. On the one side, larger percentages of the

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5. In 4.2.1. and foot note 3, we have discussed the possible under-estimation of the extent of indebtedness and usury under the source 'friends and relatives'.

people receive loan from the 'relatives and friends' and governments at free of cost, and on the other hand, they take loan on a large scale from the landlords, moneylenders and traders at exorbitant rates of interest. They take small quantity of loan at the intermediary rates. This is quite obvious since, they have no access to the organised credit markets.

The richer sections of the rural households receive maximum credit at intermediary rates of interest, between 5% and 15%. Particularly at the interest rate of 10-15% they receive 50% of their loan. This indicates their access to the organised credit markets. Though they receive quite a high proportion (around 20%) of their loan at free of interest, it is still much lower compared to that taken by the poorer sections under the same terms.

#### 5.2.4. Types of Security.

It may be seen from table 5.7 that personal security and mortgage of immovable property are the most important types of security. Sixty nine percent of the indebted peasants have taken 70.4% of the total cash loans of the rural households with these two types of securities. And 20% of the indebted peasants has



taken loan without any security. The latter covers 12% of the total debt of the peasants. Loans against standing crop are significantly low.

#### 5.2.5. Purpose of Loan.

Table 5.9 shows that 79% of the indebted households belonging to the bottom size class borrows money for household expenditure. The average amount of loan per reported household is Rs.270. They do not take loan for current farm expenditure or long term investment in land. Borrowing money for capital expenditure on farm business increases systematically over the size classes. The percentage of households borrowing money for meeting household expenditure to total indebted households decreases with the increase in size-class (Table 5.9).

5.3. The survey, therefore, indicates that the extent of indebtedness (in terms of 'cash loan') is quite high among the poor peasantry. It is worth mentioning that in the richer sections of the people, proportionately more number of households have taken loans and the amount of cash loan per loanee is also higher. Generally, terms and conditions, sources and purposes of loans vary across the size-classes of asset holdings. The poorer sections usually take short term loans from local money-

lenders, traders and landlords at exorbitant rates of interest for the purpose of consumption and current farm expenditure. With little mortgageable assets and due to lack of information they cannot approach the organised sources of credit, even if they could do so, credit may not be available at the proper time and to the required extent. Thus at the event of impending need they approach the local sources even under such onerous condition. The primary agricultural co-operatives, which are a cheap source of credit to the poor, are largely monopolised by the rich and thus they help the poor, if at all, sparingly. The organised credit market for the poor is yet to form.

The richer sections of the peasantry having more favoured access to the banks, can borrow on a large-scale at lower interest rate for the purpose of investment in land and for current farm business. It may also happen that this rich peasants after taking cheap loan from the institutional sources relend to the poor people with a high interest rates.

So, the operation of all these factors - the rates of interest, nature of collateral, duration of loan and even the purpose of loan, discriminates in favour of the rich which further aggravates the

inequality of asset holdings and the dependency of the poor on the rich.

Another most important type of loan which was not taken into account in this survey is the loan in kind. This is an important instrument of the rich to exploit the poor. This type of loan contract is widely practised in West Bengal. The poor peasants usually borrow paddy or wheat from the landlords and traders during the middle of Kharif season, August-September, when their stock exhausts (Rudra, 1975; A.K.Bondyopadhyaya, 1984, PP.20-23). The lenders are able to charge high rates of interests sometimes implicitly by interlocking the contracts in other markets such as output markets, and labour markets, when the poor peasants desperately search for consumption loan (A.K.Bondyopadhyaya, 1984, PP.20-23).

The observations above cannot discriminate the conditions of the sharecroppers from that of the owner cultivators. However, from this analysis we may derive certain inferences regarding the conditions of the sharecroppers. The Agricultural Census (1980-81) and and the N.S.S. (1981-82) estimates reveal that more than three-fourths of the sharetenants possess less than one hectare of land each. (See 4.3<sub>a</sub>) These tenants are likely to belong to the lower segments of the asset

holders and obtain most of their loans from the non-institutional sources (which we have discussed above).

#### 5.4. Economic Aspects of Sharetenancy.

A question is often raised whether sharetenancy stands as an obstacle to the adoption of modern technology (see 2.1.4.IV.b) Bhaduri (1973, 1984), Pradhan Prasad (1974) et al observed that the adoption of modern technology is largely hindered by the wide prevalence of sharetenancy in Indian agriculture.

An attempt has been made in this section to examine this question on the basis of a case study of the district of Murshidabad. This study refers to the distribution of areas under HYV and other crops, cropping intensities, pattern of input use, irrigation intensities and the productivities of the different crops in the areas of the sharecroppers and non-sharecroppers for the sample region. This study is based on the survey findings of the Agricultural Census Commission (1986-87) as well as the Socio-Economic Survey and Evaluation Branch, Government of West Bengal (1987-88). From the latter survey we have obtained yield statistics of different crops. From the Agricultural Census we have collected information regarding the cultivation of H.Y.V. Crops,

cropping intensities, irrigation intensities and the pattern of input use. Frequency distribution of sample households across different categories and classes of cultivators is presented below. It may be mentioned in this connection that the conclusion drawn from this study is region specific.

Table - 5A

Frequency distribution of sample households

Size-classes of operational Holdings (he)	Share tenants	Owner operators	Total
Marginal (0 - 1)	7	47	54
Small (1 - 2)	19	36	55
Medium (2 - 4)	12	37	49
Large (4 & above)	8	25	33
Total	46	145	191

Source: Agricultural Census, 1986-87.

Table - 5B

Frequency distribution of Sample households for Wheat and Aus.

Crops	Sharetenants	Owner Cultivators	Total
Aus	10	25	35
Wheat	8	41	49

Source: Yield Survey (1987-88), Socio-Economic Survey and Evaluation Branch, Murshidabad, West Bengal.

#### 5.4.1. Adoption of HYV Crops.

Adoption of the productivity raising technology in agriculture (mainly the cultivation of HY crops) requires large amount of fixed and circulating capital. Neither the poor tenants have adequate fixed capital like machinery, farm implements and live-stocks (see 5.1.1), nor they are able to purchase these assets due to lack of access to the organised credit market. Their ability to invest for technological innovation seems to be very limited.

However, the tenants may cultivate HY crops in a small portion of their land by borrowing circulating capital and hiring-in the implements from the landlords. High interest charges and the charges on the use of machineries and implements together with land rent leave the tenants with little reinvestible surplus. Therefore, a process of contineual investment and technological innovation is not created in such a situation. Table 5.10 shows the extent of cultivation of HY crops in terms of its area held by different classes of sharetenants and owner-cultivators. It follows from the table that in case of owner-cultivation, the percentage of operated land under boro is much higher than that of in case of cultivation by sharetenants. The corresponding figures are 15.8% and 8.1% respectively. The proportion of HY

paddy area in the total area of cultivation by the sharetenants is much lower than the corresponding proportion for the owner cultivation. The owner cultivators seems to have brought 28.6% of their land under HY paddy, but the sharetenants cultivate this crop only on 16% of their land. The proportion of HYV area in the total area cultivated by the sharetenants is little lower than that of the area cultivated by the owner operators. The sharetenants put 40% of their gross-cropped area under the cultivation of HY crops. The corresponding figure for the owner cultivators is 46.9%. The difference between the sharetenants and the owner operators seems to be still less if we look into the figures relating to the proportion of HY crop area in the net cropped area. Seventy one percent of the cultivated land for the sharetenants seems to have been brought under the cultivation of HY crops. The owner cultivators, on the other hand put 75% of their net cropped area under the cultivation of HY crops.

#### Variations in the Adoption of HY crops across Size-Classes.

The degree of adoption of HY crops also varies across the size-classes in both the categories of cultivators. Among the sharetenants the marginal cultivators put a large percentage of net cropped area under the

cultivation of HY paddy compared to the cultivators of other size-classes. The percentage of the HY paddy<sup>6</sup> area in the gross cropped area declines from 16.6 in case of marginal class to 7.8 in case of the large size-class. There is no marked difference between the size-classes of sharetenancy in terms of the proportion of area under HY crops in the total cultivated area. Among the sharetenants the marginal cultivators account for the highest proportion of area under boro in their total cultivated area. The proportion of boro area in the total cultivated area of the marginal class of cultivators with the sharetenancy status is much higher than the corresponding proportion for each of the size-classes of the owners cultivators. The percentage of boro area as well as the percentage of HYV area in the total area cultivated by the large landowners of the owner-operator category seem to be much less than the corresponding percentages of area for the rest of the size-classes belonging to the same category.

Since paddy is the most important food crop in this region, tenants in the lower size-classes adopt

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6. HY Paddy includes HY aus, HY aman and HY boro crops. Paddy is the most important food crop in West Bengal. Of these three varieties of paddy, boro yields highest return and it is introduced recently in West Bengal.



more of HY varieties than of other varieties of this crop. This may partly explain the highest adoption of the HY boro by the marginal class of the tenant category. Irrigation facility is one of the most important factors that facilitates the adoption of these HY crops, because most of the HY crops require controlled and assured water supply. Table 5.11 shows the percentage area irrigated across different categories of cultivators. The table indicates that the sharetenants have a much lower percentage of irrigated area compared to the owner cultivators. These differences in the irrigated area may partly explain the difference in the adoption of HY crops between owner-cultivation and tenant-cultivation. However, sharetenants utilize more of their irrigated area for HY crops compared to the owner-cultivators. It is also observed that among the sharecroppers irrigation intensity systematically increases with the decline in size-class. Therefore, irrigation intensity and adoption of HY paddy are positively related to one another. This is also observed in case of owner-cultivation - the adoption of HY paddy is higher in the higher size-classes of the owner-operators where irrigation intensity is higher. However, intensity of irrigation alone can not explain the variations

in the adoption of total area under HY crops across size-classes.

#### 5.4.2. Cropping Intensity.

Cropping intensity, defined in terms of the number of crop rotations per unit of land, is found to be higher in the areas under sharecropping than that under owner-cultivation. The average of cropping intensities for all size-classes of the sharetenants stands at 177.3% as against 160% for all size-classes of owner operators. In case of sharetenancy cropping intensity increases with the increase in the size-class. But in case of owner-cultivation the cropping intensity is higher for the smaller and the medium size-classes than what it is for large and marginal size-classes. (Table 5.12).

The cropping intensity is found to be inversely proportional to the extent of irrigation for both the cases of sharetenancy and owner cultivation. A strong positive association between the extent of irrigation and the extent of cultivation of HY paddy is also observed. But the cropping intensity is seen to be inversely proportional to the area under HY paddy. This

partly explain the inverse relation between the extent of irrigation and the cropping intensity. It is to be noted in this connection that the cultivation of HY paddy, in spite of its lower duration, affects the crop calendar in such a manner that the cultivators have to reduce the multiplicity of cropping to a considerable extent. As for example, the sowing of HY boro paddy collides with the harvest of aman paddy. And the harvest of Boro collides with the sowings of Jute/Aus. In this case the farmer in question has to choose any pair of these three crops for cultivation on the same plot of land. If irrigation is assured, his choice usually goes in favour of the cultivation of those pairs of crops which include Boro. Return to investment are generally believed to be higher in Boro cultivation than that in the cultivations of Aus or Aman. Another possible reason for this inverse relation between cropping intensity, and area under irrigation is that the introduction of irrigation substitutes the traditional mixed-crop areas by monocrop HYV areas. In the unirrigated areas it is observed that two crops are cultivated on the same plot at the same time. For example, in the Kharif season Aus and Arahar are cultivated on the same plot and in the Rabi season some varieties of pulses and oil seeds are cultivated on the same plots taking one crop from each category.

#### 5.4.3. Intensity of Input use.

The survey estimates reveal farther that there is no major difference between the sharetenants and the owner cultivators in respect of the use of modern inputs per unit of land (see table 5.13.a). Fertilizers used per acre of operated land have been estimated to be 94 Kg. for both the categories of cultivators. The use of fertilizers and pesticides per acre of gross cropped land by the sharetenants is marginally lower than that of by the owner-operators. The use of manure per acre of land is 60% higher in case of owner-cultivation than what it is in case of sharetenancy.

Crop-wise disaggregated figures indicate that for some important crops like Wheat (HYV), Aman (HYV), Boro (HYV) and 'other crops' (mustard, sugarcane, vegetables etc.) the use of chemical fertilizers per acre of land is higher in case of sharetenants than that of the owner cultivators. The owner-cultivators use more fertilizers and pesticides per unit area in the cultivation of Aman (local variety) and Aus (Local and HY varieties) compared to the sharetenants. In case of potato and Jute the difference is negligible. The use of chemical fertilizer per unit area of HY paddy (Aus, Aman and Boro) is much higher in case of sharetenants

than what it is in case of owner-cultivators (Table 5.13 a).

The marginal and small categories of the share-tenants, in general, use inputs more intensively than that of the medium and large categories of tenants. This is particularly true for the cultivation of Boro and other HY paddy (Table 5.13b). The marginal class of the tenant cultivators use inputs more intensively than the corresponding class of the owner-operators. The extent of use of urea by the marginal class of the tenant category exceeds the extent of use of the same fertilizer by the other classes belonging to both the categories of sharetenants as well as the owner-operators.

#### 5.4.4. Productivity Differentials.

The estimate, made on the basis of the data generated by the 'yield survey' of the Socio-Economic Survey and Evaluation Branch, indicate that the productivity of wheat for the tenant farms is higher than that for the owner operators' farms. The tenant farms produce 20 Qt\* of wheat per hectare. The corresponding figure for the owner-operators' farm is 16.2 Qt. It follows from the observations made by the Agricultural Census (1985-86) that compared to the owner cultivators the sharetenants maintain a higher level of input use

\* Qt = Quintal

per unit area in case of wheat cultivation. This observation lends credence to our estimates, based on the yeild survey data, indicating the fact that the yield per hectare of wheat is much higher in case of the tenant farms than what it is in case of the owner-operator farms. In comparison to the owner-operators the tenant-cultivators use less amount of input per unit area of the aus cultivation. The owner-operators produce 18.8 Qt of aus paddy per hectare. The corresponding figure for the sharetenants is 18.5 Qt.

5.4.5. The foregoing observations suggest that the hypothesis relating to the disincentive effects of share-tenancy holds good if we consider the input use per unit of gross cropped area. But it seems to be questionable when we consider the use of input per unit of net cropped area.<sup>7</sup> Crop-wise disaggregated statistics of input use by the tenants show that for certain crops like wheat (nY), Jute, HY Paddy this principle of disincentive effect and inefficiency does not work.<sup>8</sup> It has

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7. This is due to more intensive use of land by the sharetenants. Because of the land shortage they try to raise more per unit land by multiple cropping and intensive use of labour.

8. In Chapter II we have discussed why the concept of inefficiency is not suitable to analyse the behaviour of the petty tenants whose restricted choice forces him to maximize gross production from the tiny holding. (See 2.1.4.iv)

also been observed that though the disincentive effect of sharetenancy on input use per unit of gross cropped area is valid, it varies between size-classes of tenancy. In fact, it is absent in the marginal size-class and it becomes significantly higher in the larger size-classes. The small tenants attempt to produce more from the small size of land by using more inputs per unit land. The threat of eviction reinforces the petty tenants to use more inputs per unit of leased in land. On the other hand the big tenants use inputs upto the profit maximizing level which is lower than the level for out put maximization (Bharadwaj and Das, 1975).

It is also evident that the sharetenants adopt HY crops and use modern inputs for cultivation. The adoption level of HY crops varies between the classes of cultivators among the tenant categories depending on the technical feasibilities and the economic conditions of the cultivators. Because of the smallness of their operational holdings, the marginal class of sharetenants brings higher percentage of the area under irrigation and cultivate more HY paddy compared to the rest of the classes of either category. Therefore, the hypothesis that sharetenancy stands as an obstacle to the adoption of modern technology in agriculture does not seem to hold good. However, this technical

efficiency of current operation and the use of circulating capital under tenants or the adoption of the HY crops and the use of other modern inputs to a certain extent by the tenants, does not necessarily indicate the progressivity or viability of the system leading to a self-sustaining growth of agriculture. It depends much on how the surplus is appropriated by the different classes and how the surplus is re-invested. In West Bengal agriculture, the mode of appropriation and utilization of surplus does not provide enough scope for a self-sustaining agricultural growth.<sup>9</sup>

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9. It may be mentioned that the landlords who appropriate a major portion of the surplus, find higher return on the investment of surplus in usury and trade in grain and modern inputs. They also invest in machinery and implements but to a limited scale. These implements are often hired out to the poor and high prices are charged. The operation of the landlords in different markets, particularly credit, inputs and lease markets, may allow some amount of technological innovation. But it does not lead to a continuous reinvestment of surplus and widespread development of technology in agriculture.



TABLE : 5.2

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS OVER  
ASSET HOLDING CULTIVATORS

HOUSEHOLDS ASSET HOLDING (Rs'000)	CULTIVATORS	AGRICULTURAL LABOUR	ALL RURAL HOUSEHOLDS
HOUSEHOL LESS THAN 1	3.62	35.85	11.19
1 - 5	19.14	56.70	24.04
5 - 10	17.00	6.85	15.50
10 - 20	21.60	0.54	17.87
20 - 50	25.12	0.00	20.36
50 - 100	10.02	-	8.25
100 - 500	3.46	0.06	2.76
500 & ABOVE	0.05	-	0.04
ALL GROUPS	100.00	100.00	100.00

SOURCE : 37th ROUND, NSS

TABLE 5.3

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS (0.00) REPORTING AND AVERAGE VALUE (Rs.) PER REPORTING HOUSEHOLD OF INDIVIDUAL ITEMS OF ASSETS AS ON 30.6.81 CLASSIFIED BY HOUSEHOLD ASSET HOLDING AND MAJOR HOUSEHOLD TYPE

ASSET GROUP (Rs 0.000)	TYPE OF ESTIMATE	ITEMS OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES							DURABLE HOUSEHOLD ASSETS	TOTAL ASSETS
		LAND	BUILD-ING ETC.	LIVE STOCK & POULTRY BIRDS	AGRICUL-TURAL MACHINERY ETC.	NON FARM BUSINESS EQPTS.	ALL TRANS-PORT EQPTS.	RURAL		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	
1. LESS THAN 1	P	32.95	52.82	22.02	30.80	5.12	0.94	97.78	98.45	
	A	252	343	98	17	73	230	156	485	
2. 1-5	P	84.83	93.72	54.35	63.84	10.30	6.99	99.30	100.00	
	A	1097	1306	408	33	202	371	279	2791	
3. 5-10	P	93.55	97.07	73.83	78.75	13.37	19.50	99.81	100.00	
	A	3690	2301	811	59	182	421	679	7435	
4. 10-20	P	96.74	97.20	85.42	89.06	12.91	29.50	99.60	100.00	
	A	8436	3623	1129	176	577	411	1028	14472	
5. 20-50	P	99.20	99.00	90.78	91.79	10.10	51.98	99.81	100.00	
	A	192.98	6650	1785	253	1351	547	2181	31379	
6. 50-100	P	99.84	99.42	93.09	92.51	14.92	73.92	100.00	100.00	
	A	42354	14784	2888	669	2311	721	4822	57502	
7. 100-500	P	100.00	100.00	97.42	95.68	16.64	89.74	100.00	100.00	
	A	88563	36295	4442	2604	2643	1888	8923	147078	
8. 500 & ABOVE	P	100.00	100.00	100.00	92.82	13.63	100.00	100.00	100.00	
	A	450869	133797	4421	4275	2506	12655	23813	637776	
9. ALL GROUPS	P	87.09	91.97	71.12	75.90	11.18	29.27	97.44	99.83	
	A	14035	5321	1397	276	814	663	1477	20746	

(1) P : PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS (0.00) REPORTING TO ALL HOUSEHOLDS IN AN ASSET GROUP UNDER A HOUSEHOLD TYPE.

A : AVERAGE VALUE (Rs) OF THE ITEM PER REPORTING HOUSEHOLD.

SOURCE : NSS 37th ROUND.

TABLE : 5.4

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS REPORTING CASH DUES OUTSTANDING TO ALL HOUSEHOLD AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AMOUNT OF CASH DUES OUTSTANDING AS ON 30.6.81 OVER SIZE GROUP OF OUTSTANDING CASH DEBT CLASSIFIED BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE

SIZE GROUP OF OUTSTANDING CASH DEBT (Rs.'000)	CULTIVATORS		ALL HOUSEHOLD TYPES			
	P	S	P	S	A	D
Upto 0.5	6.31	4.25	5.62	4.42	284	4.43
0.5 - 1.0	5.55	10.36	4.52	10.07	538	11.4
1.0 - 2.0	4.08	15.40	3.31	14.98	745	17.3
2.0 - 5.0	3.46	28.94	2.79	27.93	1470	19.3
5.0 - 10.0	1.15	21.29	0.94	20.72	1864	26.1
10.0 - 20.0	0.29	9.44	0.29	12.27	2756	26.2
20.0 - 50.0	0.05	4.22	0.04	3.97	7280	24.6
50.0 - 100.0	0.03	6.10	0.02	5.74		
100.0 & ABOVE	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL	20.92	100.00	17.53	100.00	1692	17.5

NOTE : P : PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD REPORTED CASH DUE TO ALL REPORTED HOUSEHOLD  
S : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LOAN  
A : AMOUNT OF LOAN PER REPORTED HOUSEHOLD IN THE CORRESPONDING ASSET GROUP  
D : PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD INDEBTED TO TOTAL HOUSEHOLD WITHIN EACH SIZE CLASS

SOURCE : NSS 37th ROUND

**TABLE 5.5**  
**SOURCES OF RURAL CREDIT AND ITS DISTRIBUTION OVER SIZE CLASSES**  
**CREDIT AGENCY**

HHS ASSET HOLDING (000)	INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES					NON-INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES			TOTAL
	TYPES OF ESTIMATE	GOVT	CO-OPERATIVE SOURCES ETC.	COMM BANK	TOTAL	LANDLORD MONEY LENDERS TRADER	FRIENDS AND RELATIVES	OTHER SOURCES	
1. UPTO 1	A		10	12.19	22.19	35.2	35.21	7.00	100.00
	P	0.47	0.47	0.54	1.48	1.56	1.56	0.31	4.43
	S	-	5.79	12.20	17.99	20.49	27.91	33.62	100.00
2. 1 - 5	A	8.95	13.33	9.82	32.1	42.29	29.91	12.72	
	P	1.02	1.52	1.12	3.66	4.82	3.41	1.45	11.40
	S	3.85	7.46	8.76	20.07	42	33.86	8.90	100.00
3. 5 - 10	A	8.89	28.72	2.02	39.63	30.97	29.47	6.17	
	P	1.54	4.98	0.35	6.87	5.37	5.11	1.07	17.34
	S	11.45	23.02	1.12	35.59	22.3	38.42	3.70	100.00
4. 10 - 20	A	6.45	43.27	10.44	60.16	26.18	21.97	0.42	
	P	1.25	8.33	2.01	11.59	4.41	4.23	0.08	19.25
	S	8.15	21.47	28.07	57.69	23.33	18.23	0.30	100.00
5. 20 - 50	A	4.79	42.57	22.76	17.12	19.35	11.37	9.39	
	P	1.25	11.11	5.94	18.3	5.05	3.75	2.45	26.10
	S	4.68	24.82	34.05	63.55	15.48	5.87	6.39	100.00
6. 50 - 100	A	10.37	42.52	21.46	77.35	17.57	21.39	1.52	
	P	2.72	11.94	5.63	20.29	4.61	5.61	0.40	26.23
	S	11.70	31.20	25.02	67.92	14.22	14.58	0.62	100.00
7. 100 - 500	A	13.78	46.39	27.53	87.7	13.26	17.98	3.39	
	P	3.42	11.51	6.83	21.76	3.29	4.46	0.84	24.81
	S	4.21	19.74	60.05	83.99	5.14	9.33	0.79	100.00
8. 500 and ABOVE	A	-	-	100.00	100.00	-	-	-	
	P	-	-	13.63	13.63	-	-	-	13.63
	S	-	-	100.00	100.00	-	-	-	100.00
9. ALL CLASSES	A	7.3	35.60	14.89	57.79	25.32	22.19	6.39	
	P	1.28	6.24	2.61	10.13	4.44	3.89	1.12	17.53
	S	6.98	23.59	32.36	62.93	16.3	14.96	3.27	100.00

A : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF INDEBTED HOUSEHOLDS  
P : PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD REPORTED TO ALL HOUSEHOLD  
S : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LOANS

SOURCE : NSS 37th ROUND

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TABLE 5.6

SIZE-CLASS OF ASSET HOLDING, PERCENTAGE OF CASH DUES AND RATE OF INTEREST AS ON 30.6.81

RATE OF INTEREST (IN PERCENTAGE)

HOUSEHOLD ASSET HOLDING (RS.'000)		NIL	UPTO 5	5-10	10-15	15-30	30 & ABOVE	TOTAL
UPTO 1	P	45.0	7.2	5.0	3.3	--	39.3	99.8
	S	63.9	5.9	3.3	2.9	--	24.0	100.0
1-5	P	38.9	4.2	7.5	24.4	9.2	25.9	110.1
	S	32.0	2.5	3.2	17.1	15.6	29.3	100.0
5-10	P	42.9	1.5	3.3	33.2	2.5	22.6	136.0
	S	45.2	0.8	21.1	11.9	1.2	19.2	100.0
10-20	P	28.8	1.6	0.6	46.1	8.9	21.0	107.0
	S	22.3	1.1	0.4	52.8	7.4	16.2	100.0
20-50	P	26.9	3.9	8.4	50.9	7.6	13.9	111.6
	S	17.8	5.4	5.2	47.9	11.3	11.3	100.0
50-100	P	29.2	6.7	9.2	56.3	5.7	14.9	112.0
	S	21.8	3.2	8.3	52.7	4.6	12.9	100.0
100-500	P	28.5	3.6	12.2	71.9	9.8	7.2	133.2
	S	14.7	1.7	4.5	73.9	2.5	2.8	100.0
500 & ABOVE	P	--	--	--	100.0	--	--	100.0
	S	--	--	--	100.0	--	--	100.0
ALL GROUPS	P	32.5	3.8	6.0	42.9	7.0	19.2	114.4
	A	1120	1650	1407	2109	2032	1104	1692
	S	21.5	3.1	4.9	50.3	7.3	12.4	100.0

P : PERCENTAGE OF INDEBTED HOUSEHOLD OF THAT CLASS RECEIVED LOAN AT THAT RATE.

A : AVERAGE AMOUNT OF LOAN AT THAT RATE.

S : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LOAN IN THAT CLASS.

NOTE : ROW TOTAL UNDER 'P' EXCEEDS 100 BECAUSE SOME PEOPLE TOOK LOAN AT MORE THAN ONE RATE OF INTEREST.

SOURCE : NSS 35th ROUND.

TABLE : 5.7

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LOAN AGAINST TYPES OF SECURITIES

	CULTIVATORS			ALL CLASSES		
	A	P	S	A	P	S
1. PERSONAL SECURITY	30.20	6.56	24.50	28.40	5.5	23.96
2. SECURITY BY THIRD PARTY	2.07	0.45	1.50	1.96	0.38	1.47
3. CROP	0.50	0.10	0.29	0.08	0.41	0.27
4. FIRST CHANGE ON IMMOVABLE PROPERTY	5.85	1.26	7.63	5.26	1.02	7.37
5. MORTGAGE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY	38.82	8.42	45.91	34.95	6.78	46.91
6. NO SECURITY	19.73	4.28	11.54	19.12	3.72	11.75
7. OTHERS	10.46	2.27	8.63	10.00	1.94	8.28
8. ALL	107.63	21.69	100.00	99.77	19.40	100.00

A : PERCENTAGE OF INDEBTED HOUSEHOLD RECEIVED LOAN ON THE BASIS OF THAT SECURITY

P : PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLD THAT HAVE TAKEN LOAN

S : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL LOAN

SOURCE : NSS 37th ROUND

TABLE 5.8  
NATURE OF INTEREST

	P	A(RS.)	S	P	A(RS.)	S
1. Interest Free	5.90	1073	17.78	5.11 (29%)	1050	18.09
2. Simple Interest	13.36	1834	68.89	11.04 (62.06%)	1859	69.16
3. Compound Interest	1.32	2188	8.08	1.06 (6.05%)	2136	7.62
4. Concessional Rates	0.52	1095	1.60	0.41 (2.34%)	1095	1.51
5. Unspecified	1.25	1033	3.63	1.03 (5.98%)	1042	3.62
6. All	20.92	1700	100.0	19.40	1692	100.00

P : PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS THAT HAVE TAKEN LOAN

A : AVERAGE SUM OF LOAN

S : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LOAN

SOURCE : NSS 37th ROUND

**TABLE 5.9**  
**PURPOSE OF LOAN OVER SIZE CLASS**

HOUSEHOLD ASSET (RS '000)		CAPITAL EXPEN- DITURE OVER FARM BUSINESS	CURRENT EXPEN DITURE ON FARM BUSINESS	CAPIT- TAL EXPEN IN NON- FARM BUSINESS	CURRENT EXPEN IN NON FARM BUSINESS	HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE	REPAYMENT OF DEBT	EXPENDITURE ON LITIGATION & OTHERS	UNSPECI- FIED	ALL
UPTO 1	P	-	-	0.85	-	3.32	-	0.25	-	4.42
	A	-	-	19.8	-	79.27	-	10.25	-	-
	S	-	-	194	-	270	-	150	-	284
	P	0.69	1.95	0.50	0.41	8.21	-	0.88	-	11.40
	A	6.58	18.11	4.39	3.60	72.02	-	7.72	-	-
	S	333	345	398	773	535	-	364	-	638
5 - 10	P	1.05	4.34	1.45	0.22	9.96	-	0.99	-	17
	A	6.06	25.03	8.36	8.36	54.44	-	5.71	-	7.45
	S	602.00	453	1038	1200	616	-	2439	-	7.45
10 -20	P	5.28	6.08	0.64	0.50	6.87	0.14	0.92	0.30	19.25
	A	27.43	31.58	3.32	3.32	35.69	0.73	4.78	1.56	-
	S	1208	1019	9113	2012	1162	672	677	629	1470
	P	7.16	7.76	0.41	0.73	10.76	0.01	1.26	0.12	26
	A	27.43	29.73	1.54	2.82	41-26	-	4.82	0.46	-
	S	19.28	986	1117	1337	2125	403	2292	122	1864
50-100	P	10.63	9.43	1.56	0.21	7.64	-	1.61	0.04	26.23
	A	40.53	35.95	5.95	0.80	29.13	-	6.14	0.15	-
	S	2728	1841	3310	905	2030	-	3138	200	2756
100-500	P	11.06	7.48	0.90	0.64	6.97	0.49	1.74	0.15	24.81
	A	44.58	30.15	3.63	2.58	28.90	1.98	7.01	0.60	-
	S	10412	2422	5370	4137	3874	1494	6789	1014	7280
500 and above	P	-	-	13.62	-	-	-	-	-	16.62
	A	-	-	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	100.00
	S	-	-	30672	-	-	-	-	-	30672
ALL GROUPS	P	3.91	4.79	0.80	0.41	8.13	0.04	1.00	0.09	17.53
	A	22.30	27.32	4.56	2.24	12.30	0.23	5.70	0.50	-
	S	2472	1059	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

P : PERCENTAGE HOUSEHOLD REPORTING TO ALL HOUSEHOLD OF THE CORRESPONDING ASSET HOLDING  
A : PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF INDEBTED HOUSEHOLD OVER TYPE OF LOAN  
S : AVERAGE AMOUNT (RS) PER REPORTING HOUSEHOLD

SOURCE: N.S.S. 37th ROUND

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TABLE - 5.10

PERCENTAGES OF GROSS-CROPPED AND NET-CROPPED AREA UNDER DIFFERENT CROPS

CLASSES	PERCENTAGE OF AREA UNDER BORO TO NET-CROPPED AREA		PERCENTAGE OF HY PADDY (AUS(H), AMAN(H) & BORO(H) AREA TO NET CROPPED AREA		PERCENTAGE OF HY PADDY AREA TO NET CROPPED AREA	
	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR
	MARGINAL	24	13.5	28.1	29.1	16.6
SMALL	4	14.2	21.2	45.3	12.2	28.4
MEDIUM	5.2	22.6	15.4	37.3	8.5	24.7
LARGE	11.2	8.9	14.6	21.2	7.8	13.1
ALL CLASSES	8.1	15.8	16.8	28.6	9.5	17.9

TABLE 5.10 (CONTINUED)

CLASSES	PERCENTAGE AREA UNDER HY PADDY WHEAT(H), JUTE(H) & POTATO(H) TO NET CROPPED AREA		PERCENTAGE AREA UNDER HY PADDY WHEAT (H), JUTE (H) & POTATO(H) TO GROSS CROPPED AREA	
	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR
MARGINAL	67.8	80.6	40.0	48.7
SMALL	71.5	75.4	41.1	47.2
MEDIUM	69.8	80.4	38.5	53.2
LARGE	75.6	68.9	40.5	42.3
ALL CLASSES	71.1	75.1	40.1	46.9

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS, 1986-87.

TABLE : 5.12

CROPPING INTENSITY

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>SHARE CROPPER</u>	<u>OWNER CULTIVATOR</u>
MARGINAL	169.4	165.5
SMALL	173.9	159.5
MEDIUM	187.2	151.1
LARGE	186.6	163.1
ALL CLASS	177.3	160.0

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS, 1986-87

TABLE : 5.11

PERCENTAGE AREA UNDER IRRIGATION

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>SHARE CROPPER</u>	<u>OWNER CULTIVATOR</u>
MARGINAL	58.0	51.1
SMALL	30.1	64.8
MEDIUM	22.2	59.5
LARGE	27.6	46.5
ALL	31.9	55.8

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS, 1986-87

TABLE - 5.13A  
INTENSITY OF INPUT USE

ITEM	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR	ITEM	SHARE CROPPER	OWNER CULTIVATOR
<b>WHEAT</b>			<b>AMAN(H)</b>		
UREA(KG./ACRE)	39.2	37.1	UREA (KG/ACRE)	43.9	34.0
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/ACRE)	89.2	82.6	TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/ACRE)	105.4	77.0
MANURE(QUINTAL/ACRE)	10.0	1.8	MANURE (Q/A)	18.2	8.7
			PESTICIDE(L/A)	0.2	0.3
<b>POTATO</b>			<b>AUS(H)</b>		
UREA(KG/A)	35.4	26.6	UREA(KG/A)	28.8	39.0
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER(KG/A)	86.2	97.9	TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	100.0	97.6
MANURE (Q/A)	2.3	24.0	MANURE (Q/A)	18.5	13.3
PESTICIDE(L/A)	0.3	0.1	PESTICIDE(L/A)	0.1	0.3
<b>OTHER CROPS</b>			<b>BORO(H)</b>		
UREA (KG/A)	12.4	9.9	UREA(KG/A)	37.0	50.0
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	28.0	26.5	TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	116.0	114.0
MANURE (Q/A)	1.9	2.2	PESTICIDE (L/A)	1.0	0.7
<b>JUTE</b>			<b>PADDY(H)</b>		
UREA (KG/A)	31.2	30.1	UREA (KG/A)	53.0	45.0
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	62.2	61.1	TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	133.0	194.0
MANURE (Q/A)	1.4	5.4	MANURE (Q/A)	15.0	23.0
PESTICIDE(L/A)	0.2	00.1	PESTICIDE (L/A)	0.7	0.6
<b>AMAN LOCAL</b>			<b>TOTAL OPERATED LAND</b>		
UREA (KG/A)	1.1	10.6	UREA (KG/A)	43.0	42.0
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	1.8	23.4	TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	94.0	94.0
MANURE (Q/A)	8.3	21.5	MANURE (Q/A)	9.0	15.0
			PESTICIDE (L/A)	0.3	0.3
<b>AUS LOCAL</b>			<b>NET CROPPED AREA</b>		
UREA (KG/A)	19.7	22.9	UREA(KG/A)	25.0	27.0
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	33.2	27.6	TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG/A)	54.0	61.0
MANURE (Q/A)	3.7	7.2	MANURE (Q/A)	5.0	10.0
			PESTICIDE (L/A)	0.20	0.2

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS, 1986-87

NOTE : KG/A : KILOGRAM PER ACRE

Q/A : QUINTAL PER ACRE

L/A : LITRE PER ACRE

H : HYV : HIGH YIELDING VARIETY

TABLE : 5.13 B

INPUT INTENSITY

ITEM	SHARE TENANT FARM					OWNER CULTIVATED FARM				
	MARGINAL	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE	TOTAL	MARGINAL	SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE	TOTAL
<u>BORO (H)</u>										
UREA (KG./A.)	55	75	40	50	57	62	43	55	39	50
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG./A.)	114	137.3	119	97	116	122	98	141	74	114
PESTICIDE (L./A.)	1.17	0.27	1.141	1.481	1.04	0.62	0.43	0.98	0.46	0.66
<u>PADDY (H)</u>										
UREA (KG./A.)	57	56	45	52	53	44	41	52	40	45
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG./A.)	142	152	126	105	133	93	104	100	74	94
MANURE (Q./A.)	32	17	8	4	15	11	60	11	10	23
PESTICIDE (L./A.)	0.96	0.31	0.52	1.18	0.69	0.78	0.39	0.82	0.40	0.62
<u>TOTAL CULTIVATED LAND</u>										
UREA (KG./A.)	51	44	39	41	43	41	43	47	33	42
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG./A.)	98	100	92	80	94	93	102	100	74	94
MANURE (Q./A.)	12	10	7	9	9	12	19	14	19	15
PESTICIDE (L./A.)	0.67	0.13	0.22	0.34	0.27	0.39	0.29	0.33	0.18	0.32
<u>INPUT USE PER GROSS CROPPED AREA</u>										
UREA (KG./A.)	31	25	22	22	25	24	28	33	21	27
TOTAL CHEMICAL FERTILIZER (KG./A.)	62	55	54	43	54	54	69	72	48	61
MANURE (Q./A.)	6	6	4	5	5	7	12	10	13	10
PESTICIDE (L./A.)	0.46	0.07	0.14	0.19	0.17	0.21	0.17	0.23	0.10	0.19

NOTE : KG./A. : KILOGRAM PER ACRE  
 Q./A. : QUINTAL PER ACRE  
 L./A. : LITER PER ACRE  
 H. : HIGH YIELDING VARIETY

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL CENSUS, 1986-87

## 6. STATE INTERVENTION

The degree of state intervention in the matters of land relations has considerably gone up in West Bengal after independence. Several land reform measures have been taken to fix the ceiling on the size of ownership holdings and the rate of rental share in case of tenant cultivation. Efforts have also been made by the state to record the occupancy rights of the tenants. Several economic programmes (FFW, RLEGP, CADP, IRDP etc.) have also been introduced to create alternative employment opportunities and credit facilities for the landless labourers, baragadars and the poor peasants. An effective implementation of the programme should have gone a long way in making the poor tenants relatively independent of the big landlords in their operations in production and marketing.

However, our concern in this chapter is to evaluate the tenancy reform measures, particularly, the 'Barga Operation' and the economic programmes referred to above. We have also observed whether these economic programmes have been helpful in creating conditions for the implementation of the programme of 'Operation Barga'.

### 6.1.1. Tenancy Reforms and Operation Barga

The first comprehensive land reform act in the post independence period is Bargadari Act (1950). The major

provisions of the Act (1950) which were designed to protect the interests of the bargadars are included in the West Bengal Land Reform Act (1955). Then the Bargadari Act (1950) was replaced. This Land Reform Act (1955) includes the existing act on tenancy. Though several amendments were made thereafter the major features of the Act (1955) with respect to tenancy remain unchanged. Major provisions of this act and its amendments (described in appendix B) are the determination of the share of produce payable to the landlords, jurisdiction of the Bhagchas Officers to decide disputes, provisions for penalty in relevant cases, restoration of land to bargadars and restrictions on civil courts in the matter of tenancy.

In the evolutionary process of tenancy reforms the pace set by the WBBA (1950) was of immense importance. For the first time in the history of West Bengal bargadars were officially recognised as comprising a class by themselves. These kinds of undertenants were subjected to justiciable rights and responsibilities.

Although the Act provided several legal benefits to the tenants, the tenants actually gained little from it. This was primarily because of its ineffective implementation. The most important factors which restricted the implementation of the act were (a) lack of protection to the sharecroppers against

unauthorised or illegal eviction, (b) the recording of bargadars' occupancy rights were not made compulsory and (c) inability of the poor bargadars to go against landlords both for political and economic reasons. What is important with the act is that along with the enactment of this legislation the state government's attention has gradually been directed towards the problems of the tenants. On the other side the act has created a social unrest. In fact, share-croppers were evicted on a large scale from their tenanted land.<sup>1</sup>

#### Measures to Abolish Zamindari System

West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act (1954) was designed to abolish intermediary interests in land which emerged in Bengal agriculture through Permanent Settlement. The major objectives were:

- (a) Elimination of the interests of Zamindars and other intermediaries by acquisition and payment of compensation;

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1. The number of eviction cases rose from 7,218 in 1953 to 28,214 in 1954 (Statement of Minister for Land and Land Revenue in West Bengal Legislative Assembly on 31.7.1956, Assembly Proceedings, Vol.15, No.2, P.672). For a detail of individual cases see "Impression of the Field Officers, Medinipur District, Revision settlement Operation, Medinipur, G.O.W.B., 1977.

- (b) Ceiling on ownership holdings and the recognition of the intermediary holders as direct tenants under the state in respect of their holdings below the limit imposed by the ceiling;
- (c) Acquisition of all intermediary interests in mines, minerals, markets, forests and fisheries.

The Revision Settlement of 1956, initiated for promoting a proper recording of rights, was a preparatory stage for implementation of West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act. Landlords and other intermediaries having vested interest in land tried to prevent the effective implementation of the act through legal and extra-legal means. Benami (false) transaction of land was their principal instrument in using the loop-holes of the law. To restrict this benami transaction further amendments were made in 1965.

The affected peasants and the potential beneficiaries (of the WBEAA), namely, sharecroppers, poor peasants and the landless labourers started organising themselves against the landlords at the beginning of '60s. They had the slogan of confiscation of surplus land from the landlords. This organisation acquired popularity among the lower stratum of the masses and launched several movements throughout the decade. These sharecroppers and landless labourers worked sometimes together with the government officials to capture benami ceiling surplus land. During three years of the United Front regime (1967-1970)



total land vested in the state was 5 lakh acres. As a consequence of this movement several important amendments had been made in the '70s. The amendment of 1972 was designed to raise the bargadars' share in total output produce from 60:40 to 75:25. The 1975 amendments were intended for acquisition of homestead land. The amendments of West Bengal Land Revenue Act (1979) and the Revenue Rules (1979), passed by the Left Front Government, seemed to be a radical departure from the earlier rules especially in adjudging the issue of Bargadari Settlement.

The pace of registration of the names of bargadars was very slow in the Pre-Left Front regime. The total number of registered bargadars out of about 2 million bargadars, was 495 thousands upto the end of September, 1977. This low figure indicates the tardy implementation of tenancy reforms measures.

We, therefore, observe that on the one hand, almost all the necessary acts and amendments in favour of the bargadars were enacted and the tenants were keen on establishing such rights, but in practice the tenants could gain little from such land reform measures. In brief, while the land reform measures existed on paper in the pre-1977 era, the success of the post - 1977 regime lies in putting them into practice. The ineffective

implementation in the pre-1977 was possibly due to two reasons:

- (a) Lack of the government's willingness to implement such reform measures (Lack of political will).
- (b) Strong influence of the landlord lobbies over the government machinery and rural masses (bureaucrat - landlord - ruling party nexus).

However, the series of tenancy legislation and their amendments in the pre-Left Front regime facilitated the Left Front government (who came into power in 1977) to prepare the legal ground for special reform measures, and particularly, the programme of Operation Barga. The Left Front government amended a few laws just to close the loopholes that existed in the previous laws. The main programme of the government could be summarised as follows:

- (i) A quick recording of the names of bargadars through Operation Barga and providing them legal rights to cultivate land.
- (ii) Drive to identify and acquire ceiling surplus land through government officials sent to villages who received active assistance from the poor peasants and the rural workers.

- (iii) Redistribution of surplus vested land to the landless and poor peasants, acquired through imposition of ceiling on land holding.
- (iv) Providing institutional credit and subsidies to the sharecroppers and the assignees of the vested land to remove the dependency of the bargadars and the assignees on the landlords and the local moneylenders.
- (v) Launching Food-for-Work and other programmes to provide off-farm employment to the rural poor.
- (vi) Restoration of land from which poor peasants were alienated through distress sales provided that the purchaser himself is not poor having landholding more than 1.0 acre.

#### 6.1.2. The Progress of Operation Barga

The programme simultaneously started in different areas of West Bengal in October, 1978. Operation Barga assumed the dimension of movement in the countryside of West Bengal within a few months of its launching.<sup>2</sup>

2. The entire programme was first designed to be accomplished within one year, i.e. by 13th June, 1979. Total number of bargadars recorded in the month of October was 11,024. The monthly estimate of the number of bargadars recorded rose to 18,720 in November and subsequently to the peak of 34,442 in March, 1979. It declined to 22,842 in May 1979. The time period for completion of the programme was first extended upto 31st December, 1979. The period was subsequently extended to June, 1985. April, 1979 onwards the monthly estimates of the number of bargadars recorded started declining and it reached a trough of 4,674 in November, 1979. However, after this temporary set back the movement gathered momentum and by March, 1980, the monthly estimate of the number of bargadars recorded reached the highest figure of 35,209. Thereafter it started declining and never regained its earlier pace.

The average monthly figure for registration was 18,000 in 1979 and 19,000 in 1980. It declined to 10,000 in 1981; 7,000 in 1982; 5,000 in 1983 and 3,500 in 1984. Total number of bargadars recorded through this programme from October 1978 to July 1985 was 8,34,011. Including the pre-Operation Barga figure of 4,95,076 the total number of recorded bargadars in July 1985 became 13,29,087. The monthly statistics of the registration of bargadars are displayed in Table 6.1. Table 6.2 sets out the district-wise estimates of the total number of recorded bargadars upto the end of 1984.

### 6.1.3. Constraints on the Implementation of Operation Barga

#### (a) Legal Constraints

The landlords having vested interest in land erected legal hurdles immediately after the launching of the programme through large number of civil rules.<sup>3</sup> Several injunctions have been served by the High Court and other civil courts. A large number of cases are still pending though the state government was aware of this fact from the very beginning of the programme and the law cells of the relevant departments had been strengthened to expedite the land-settlement disputes.

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3. For evidence see 'Ratan Ghosh (1981), Agrarian Programme of Left Front Government, E.P.W., Review of Agriculture, June, P.A-53, and T.K.Ghosh, (1986), Operation Barga and Land Reform, p.85.

(b) Local Constraints

In an agriculture where capitalist relations are yet to proliferate, it is very difficult to bring about the dissolution of the traditional landlord-tenant symbiosis merely by recording the names of the bargadars. A number of cases have been reported where the landlords adopted coercive measures to prevent the bargadars from recording their occupancy rights. In some cases landlords forced the registered bargadars to submit istafanama (withdrawal letter from registration). Dr. T.K. Ghosh who was actively associated with this programme at the Secretariat Level as well as at the field level observed, "these local resistances some times cut across the political ideologies. Supporters of even those political parties from whom political will was guaranteed in the implementation of the programme, some times offered resistance at the village level. In many cases, the Officers were told not to hold Operation Barga Camps or evening meetings in a particular area. In some extreme cases, some Panchayats passed resolutions stating that Operation Barga was not necessary in a particular area... The resistance pockets in some cases belonged to the local jurisdictions of the ruling political party as well as opposition parties... The capitalist and the feudal classes, on the one hand, seem to be sometimes united at

the village level, no matter whether they are persons of different political ideologies in that group. On the other hand, the poor seem to have only one class". (pp.89-92). Ghosh, therefore, concluded "the experience thus received, pinpoints the fact that land nexus is a very strange phenomenon which cuts across all ideologies". (p.90). A similar incident was observed by J.Guharoy (1986). He described how the landlords joining the ruling political parties distort and restrict the effective implementation of Operation Barga. Ghosh (1986) carried out a survey where questions regarding the problems of implementations were asked to the field workers: 479 people reported that they have received adequate support from the local Panchayats, 110 reported that they have received lukewarm cooperation and 108 reported to have received no cooperation from the local Panchayats. Out of 894 reporting officers, 114 stated that the bargadars were afraid, 693 reported that the bargadars were not afraid and 84 have reported that there was mixed feelings in the bargadars' mind.

A number of economists criticised the programme on the ground that it did not aim at abolishing the system of share tenancy. For example, Ratan Khaashnobish (1981) stated "the Left Front government is trying to create an atmosphere for the perpetuation of the tenancy

which assumes the intermediary interests on the soil....

A successful implementation of what the Left Front government calls 'Operation Barga' bears this implication. Operation Barga (OB) which tries to record the rights of the tenants approves the intermediary rights of the land-owners, too. Thus the rent earning authority of the non-cultivators, condemned by the bourgeoisie democratic revolution, gets a communist sanction." (P.A.44). He also added that, " This (OB) reduces the erstwhile revolutionary programme to an ordinary reformist one. Thus a compromise with the state structure reduces a programme of the abolition of tenancy to the perpetuation of tenancy." (P.A.44).

Khasnobis in his concluding observation expressed his doubt about the stability of the outcome of such a reformist movement like 'OB' in the event of the present government's replacement.

The government through Operation Barga programme tried to give as much relief to the rural poor as possible within the existing set-up through slight readjustment of existing property relations. It is to be noted in this connection that the share-tenancy emerged as a necessary concomitant to the historical development of the society. In this respect Mill's argument is quite relevant. He held the view that unless natural exigencies of the society (i.e., development of capitalism) lead to the dissolution

of the system any attempt to abolish it in the name of land reforms may cause their economic condition to worsen.

Boudhayan Chattopadhyay's (1984) survey of five districts reveals the fact that landowners are lying low for the time being and will make a move when favourable time will come. His observations support the doubt expressed by Khasnobis.

#### 6.1.4. Achievement of Operation Barga (1978-1985)

In the previous section (6.1.2) we noted that the estimated number of bargadars recorded was 13,29,087 in July, 1985. In other words more than half of the bargadars were registered. This performance is, therefore, quite impressive as compared to the pre-Left Front situation. The extent of registration of bargadars varied widely over the regions. A discussion of the performance of Operation Barga involves the number of recorded bargadars as well as the area recorded under barga cultivation.

Table 6.2A provides the district-wise estimates of the number of recorded bargadars and the percentage of recorded bargadars to rural population. Table 6.2B shows the total area under recorded barga cultivation and its proportion to total cultivated area. The districts in



the northern region are seen to have higher percentages of area recorded under barga cultivation to total area under cultivation in the respective districts. In the districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, West Dinajpur and Malda these percentage areas are 17.4, 16.2, 12.4, 16.2, and 14.2 respectively whereas it is 8.8% in West Bengal (Table 6.2B) as a whole. But the other indicator namely, the percentage of bargadars to rural population, shows that in that region only the districts of west Dinajpur, Cooch Behar and Malda have higher figures compared to 3.27% for West Bengal as a whole. However, in the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri these percentages are quite low, i.e., 1.62% and 2.90% respectively.

In Midnapur, a southern district, the percentage estimate of the number of recorded bargadars to total number of rural households was 4.7 and that of area under recorded barga cultivation to total cultivated area was 7.4. In the district of 24-Parganas the respective percentage figures are 2.5% and 9.0%. Among the western districts of Purulia, Burdwan, Bankura and Birbhum in the last two districts the percentage of the number of recorded bargadars to total rural population is higher than that of the state average and only in Birbhum the percentage of area under recorded barga cultivation to total

cultivated area is higher than the corresponding figure for the state. Performance of the Burdwan district is around the state figures for both the indices. The performance of Purulia is insignificant in this respect. In the districts of Murshidabad and Nadia, in the eastern region, the percentage of the number of recorded bargadars to total rural population as well as the area under barga cultivation to total cultivated area in percentage terms are around the corresponding percentage of the state figure.

Performance of Operation Barga in a particular area is dependent firstly, on how much the rural people are politically conscious and organised. Secondly, it depends on the economic conditions of the tenants. It is expected that a strong organisation of poor peasants and landless labourers can overcome the resistance imposed by the landlords in course of barga recording. Similarly, middle peasants who do not depend on the landowner for credit or other needs, are able to overcome the landlords' resistance in recording their names.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, the areas with

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4. Bargadars are not always of a single homogeneous category of poor peasants. Agricultural Census data of 1980-81 shows that 29% of the leased in holdings are in the size-class of operational holding of 1-2 hectares and 10% of the leased in holdings are in the size-classes of operational holdings of above 2 hectares. Therefore, it is expected that these different classes of tenants responded to this movement differently.

high concentration of bargadars are also expected to have more number of bargadars recorded.

In the Northern districts and Midnapur in the south the incidence of tenancy is very high<sup>5</sup> and the peasants are highly organised. A long tradition of peasant movement is found in these districts. Therefore, it is expected that Operation Barga would succeed in these districts. Ironically the rural poor in the districts of Nadia, Murshidabad and 24-Parganas who played an important role in participating in the peasant movement in the late '60s, did not show so much enthusiasm in establishing their occupancy rights as tenants.

The Directorate of Land Records and Survey provides estimates of the number of both recorded and total (recorded plus unrecorded) bargadars in each district of West Bengal. These data are presented in table 6.2C. It shows that in the districts of Burdwan, Hugli, Howrah, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Nadia, Murshidabad and 24-Parganas more than 40% of the bargadars are not recorded. Over all 43% of the bargadars in West Bengal have still not registered their names as bargadars.

The pace with which the programme of Operation Barga

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5. Boudhayan Chattapadhyay (1984) observed a high incidence of tenancy in the North Bengal Districts.

started and reached its peak made us believe that it would fulfil its target within a very short span of time. But it reached a moribund stage in the middle of 1981 although a large number of sharecroppers' rights remained unrecorded. This situation cannot be explained in terms of the lack of consciousness of the tenants or the legal imbroglio arising from the confrontations between the sharetenants and the landlords in course of barga recordings - the reason often adduced for the failure of Operation Barga to gather momentum.

To start with, Operation Barga was never designed to radically alter the rural power structure to be brought about by a radical redistribution of the means of production. Instead of initiating a structural change, its sole purpose was to bring about a change within the structure of existing property relations. To a certain extent, it provides a sanction to the existing property structure when Operation Barga attempts to establish the tenancy rights of the farmers as we have pointed out earlier. Even in that case, it was partially successful - 43% of the bargadars were not recorded.

In analysing the reasons behind the partial success of Operation Barga, we must have a look at the existing

rural power structure. It seems that the dominance-dependence relationship between the class of landlords and rural rich on the one hand and the sharecroppers and the landless labourers on the other, still persists. It is obvious that land is only one of the inputs necessary for production. The sharecroppers must have seeds, implements, fertilizers and above all, food to see them through to the harvesting season. In the absence, or near absence of state intervention in providing access to the circulating capital, the rural rich still remain as their 'lender of the last resort' to whom the poor peasants can turn to in distress. The landlord class can therefore effectively utilise this precarious condition of the tenants to their advantage.

After the introduction of Green Revolution technology in West Bengal, the cash requirements of peasants have increased because of the commercial and capital-intensive character of the inputs.<sup>6</sup> Now the landlords became the seller of these inputs in the local market. They also supply the services of pumpsets, shallow-tubewells, thresher, etc. which are required to shorten the period

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6. In chapter (V), we have discussed the extent of the adoption of H.Y. Crops and use of modern inputs by the sharetenants.

of harvesting and land preparation for the next crop. So, the introduction of new technology made the petty tenants more dependent on the landlords. The landlords control over the poor tenants' production decisions and production process have increased.<sup>7</sup> This made the choice of production strategy and thus survival strategy of the poor peasants further restricted. Therefore, while dealing with the landlord, a poor bargadar must be cautious such that his behaviour should not acquire displeasure of the landlord.

Thus, in the situation where the big landlords have sufficient control and influence over social, political and economic relations, mere recording the names of the bargadars can not remove the dependency of the poor bargadars on the landlords even if the permanent occupancy rights are ensured to the bargadars. They must have to come back in to the landlords' grip in other markets like credit and inputs. So, what is needed is to alter the entire power structure and to unleash the dependency of the poor peasant on the landlords.

The minimum requirement is, along with the raising political and social consciousness of the poor, to supply necessary credit and inputs through organised channels at

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7. See Biplab Dasgupta (1987), Monitoring and Evaluation of the Agrarian Reform Programme of West Bengal, (memio), pp.38-39.

the proper time and to the required amount. It is also required to create alternative employment opportunity for the poor. The bargadars, thus, can operate independently of the landlords.

## 6.2. Economic Programmes of the Government of West Bengal (1977 - 1984)

The left Front Government, well aware of the unequal dependency between the classes of landlords and tenants, took necessary measures to overcome its possible restraining impact on the implementation of the 'Operation Barga'. In the Operation Barga campaign, provision of institutional credit facilities to the recorded bargadars and assignees of vested land through commercial banks, Regional Rural Banks, was made. Programmes like Food for Work, NREP, RLEGP, IRDP, etc. were either initiated or intensified to generate additional employment (for the recorded bargadars, assignees and rural poor) and public utilities.

It is, therefore, necessary to assess how far these measures were able to break the traditional tie between the landlords and the petty producers and landless labourers.

### 6.2.1. Alternative Institutional Credit

A special programme of financing the sharecroppers and assignees of vested land by nationalised commercial

banks, the SBI, and regional rural banks was initiated from the Kharif season of 1979. In this programme the Panchayats have the responsibility to identify the bargadars and assignees of vested land who would be provided institutional credit. The revenue officials would certify and prepare the list of such candidates and then send to the relevant branches of the banks. During the Kharif season of 1979 about 50,000 such candidates were given loans. In the next Rabi and Kharif seasons 7,000 and 71,000 bargadars and beneficiaries of vested land respectively were provided bank loans. Table 6.3 shows the number of recorded bargadars and the assignees of vested land who obtained institutional credit. In 1979-80 around 59 thousand beneficiaries received institutional finance (Table 6.3). The estimated number of beneficiaries rose to 70,000 in 1980-81 and to the peak of 370,000 in 1982-83. Thereafter it steadily declined to 139,000 in 1985-86. In absolute sense this performance is quite impressive. However, compared to the 2.5 million recorded bargadars and the beneficiaries of vested land the performance was significantly low even in the peak period (14.8% of the bargadars and labourers). Loan disbursed by scheduled commercial banks is shown in Table-6.4. It shows that total loan disbursed - both short term and long term, within the period, 1977-78 - 1980-81, varied between Rs.21.5 - 31.1



crores per year. The size distribution of loans in 1980-81 was highly in favour of the poor peasants (as shown in Table 6.5). The small and the marginal farmers obtained 90% of the short term loans and 52% of the long term loans. The total amount of loan disbursed by the Land Development Bank steadily declined from Rs.12.1 crores in 1978-79 to 6.5 crores in 1983-84 (Table 6.6).

The above mentioned special programmes was linked with other two centrally sponsored credit-support programmes, namely, 'Special Component Plan' and 'Tribal Sub-Plan' in 1980. The former was designed for the scheduled caste bargadars and assignees to provide short term loans at the rate of Rs.500 per acre of which 38% would be subsidy. The 'Tribal sub-Plan' was designed to provide credit for the recorded sharecropper and assignees belonging to the scheduled tribes. In this case, 50% of the credit was the subsidy component.

The performance of the commercial banks in providing cheap credit to recorded bargadars and assignees is extremely poor as compared to the huge loan requirement of the vast number of assignees and bargadars. This inadequate performance is partly due to a lack of proper co-ordination between the Panchayats and the banks. To obtain loan each candidate is required to collect certificates from a number of agencies to prove that he is not

indebted to them. The Panchayat is also required to certify that the candidate is in actual possession of the land against which such a loan will be delivered. Banks usually prefer a small number of candidates each with a large volume of transaction than larger number of candidates with smaller amount of transactions. Therefore, for the reasons mentioned above, the poor bargadars usually do not get adequate amount of loan and at the proper time. Thus they have to seek loans elsewhere - probably local moneylenders, landlords and traders.

#### 6.2.2. Cooperative Credit Societies

Cooperative societies has a wide network in all over West Bengal. It covered 68% of the villages in 1960-61. Its coverage of villages rose to 79% in 1971-72 and further to 89% in 1981-82. But before 1978 such societies were monopolised by the rural rich. Poor peasants were generally not allowed to become its member. The Left Front Government attempted to universalise its membership. Entry fee of the small farmers are now reduced from Re.10 to Rs.1 and the rest, Rs.9, will be provided by the government. Under the new rules no farmers can be excluded from the cooperative societies.

The number of cooperative societies declined from 7918 in 1977-78 to 7544 in 1980-81 and it remained almost the same upto 1983-84 (Table 6.7). Number of membership slowly increased from 2 million to 2.3 million within one year from 1977-78, then it further rose to 2.6 million by 1983-84. The number of borrowers increased from 1.05 million in 1977-78 to 1.09 million in 1978-79, thereafter it started declining. Over this period the percentage of the borrowers belonging to the small and marginal classes of farmers varies between 70% to 80%. Compared to around 6 million small and marginal farmers (1981-82) this performance is very poor (16.5% of those farmers in 1977-78).

Total credit disbursement by these credit societies increased from Rs.516.1 million in 1977-78 to Rs.639.8 million in the next year. Thereafter it declined to Rs. 380.4 million in 1982-83. The amount of credit disbursed to the small farmers has increased from Rs 34.9 million in 1977-78 to Rs 162.2 million in 1983-84 and that to the marginal farmers has decreased from Rs 286.1 million to Rs. 160.4 million over the same period.

Table 6.7 shows the loan recovery figures to be around 63%. This impressive performance is more in the book-keeping sense. In many cases loans were not repaid but larger amount

of second loans were sanctioned and then after deducting the first loan net amounts were handed over to the loanees. Therefore the actual amount which the cultivators received in hand was much less than the figures shown in the table.

### 6.2.3. Employment Generation Programmes in West Bengal (1978 - 1980)

Parallel to the extension of credit facilities to the poor cultivators several employment generation programmes like Food for Work (FFW), Rural Work Programme (RWP), and Comprehensive Rural Restoration Programme (CRRP), were started in the middle of 1978. These programmes, worked through Gram Panchayats, involve construction of infrastructural facilities like roads, canals, flood control measures etc. The wage rate was 3 Kg of wheat in kind and Rs.2 in cash per 8 hours working day. The intention of wage payment in kind was to off-set the inflationary impact of wages. These programmes were designed to be carried on during the off-season so that normal works in the peak season was not affected due to the labour shortage. In the off-season most of the labourers remain unemployed. These programmes would provide them opportunity of getting some income. At the same time some infrastructural facilities would be generated in

the rural areas. Central Government has sponsored the programmes of NREP and RLEGP. These programmes were integrated with the state sponsored programme mentioned above. The main objectives of these programmes were generation of employment through creation of rural utilities like forestry, water structure, minor irrigation, soil conservation, drinking water facilities, roads, community buildings, etc.

During 1978-79 total employment generated by FFW, RWP and CRWP was 534.1 lakh mandays with an average daily wage rate (cash plus monetised equivalent of kind payment) of Rs.5.65. In the next year the employment figure increased to 540.9 lakh man-days with the average daily wage rate of Rs.6.75. If we assume that only the recorded bargadars and the 'beneficiaries' are employed, then the employment generated per such household would be 24.6 mandays in 1979-80. But if we add up the unrecorded bargadars and 3.3 million landless labourers, the average employment figure would decline to one manday per labourer, share-croppers or assignees. Though, in absolute number the man-days created by these programmes were significantly high but in terms of the vast requirements of the large number of under employed masses this performance is extremely inadequate.

#### 6.2.4. NREP in West Bengal (1980-1985)

Table 6.8 shows the amount of expenditure made and employment generated under NREP. Total mandays created was 12.7 million in 1980-81. It rose to 36 million in 1982-83, then it started declining and reached to 13.1 million in 1985-86. Total expenditure increased from Rs.97.9 million to Rs.342.3 million during 1980-81 to 1983-84 and then declined to Rs.283 million in 1985-86. In the peak year of employment in 1982-83, mandays created per agricultural labour and bargadar was around 6. In 1980-81 it was 2.4 and in 1985-86 it again declined to 2.5 with a temporary increase in 1982-83.

#### 6.2.5. Comprehensive Area Development Programme in West Bengal (1975 - 1978)

The programme was formulated by the State Planning Board in 1974. Under this programme an area of 15,440 ha was brought under irrigation between 1975-78, with the installment of 174 deep tube-wells, 2121 shallow tube-wells and 2 river lifts. About 80% of the instalment cost was met by way of loan from banks and the balance by state government as grants. CADP Service Centres distributed seeds, fertilizers and pesticides worth Rs.1.6 crores between 1975-76 - 1977-78. Around 71,000 farmers benefited.

#### 6.2.6. Progress of IRDP in West Bengal (1980 - 1983)

IRDP was launched in this state in 1978-79 covering 169 blocks with effect from October 2, 1980. Its coverage was extended to all the 335 blocks of West Bengal. Of the total number of beneficiaries covered in 1982-83, 25% was provided assistance for development of agriculture, 26% for animal husbandry, 4% for fisheries and 45% for small industries and business. The following table shows the amount of credit disbursement and the number of beneficiaries in different years under the scheme.

Table - 6.9

Year	Subsidy released (Rs. Crores)	Credit disbursed (Rs. Crores)	No. of beneficiaries assisted	Per Capita Investment (Rs.)
1980-81	0.8	1.4	28,481	769
1981-82	1.9	3.6	54,116	1016
1982-83	0.2	11.0	96,616	1755

Source: Report of the committee on Agricultural Productivity in the Eastern Region, RBI, (1984), Vol. II.

#### 6.2.7. Some Comments on these Programmes\*

Reviewing these we observe that the state intervention to ameliorate the conditions of the poor seems to have shifted abruptly from one policy to another during the post independence period. These policies were changed, not on the basis of an consistent evaluation of experience of the old policies or, in order to intensify their effectiveness.

#### Policies during the Pre-Left Front Regime

The policies undertaken in the '50s and '60s centred round the land redistribution and tenancy reforms. These policies have limited effectiveness: some land was redistributed and only a few tenants were provided security of tenure during that period. (see 6.1.1.) Long time lag between the declaration of a policy and the ultimate attempts to implement it, provided ample scope to the vested interests to manipulate and evade the laws.

At the beginning of the '70s emphasis was shifted to the cooperatives and the introduction of new technology in agriculture. But as discussed above (6.2.2.), the rich people largely monopolised the cooperatives and appropriated the facilities provided by the government (see also Kurien, 1986, p. 5).

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\* Though the following observations are based on West Bengal, these can be generalised to most of the states of India.



### Policies during the Left Front Regime

The Left Front government, in the late '70s and early '80s, revived and intensified the earlier measures with the addition of employment generation programme. These different programmes, conducted through different departments of the governments, though targeted to benefit the same poorer sections of the masses, lacked a proper co-ordination. So that while some particular sections of the poor were the beneficiaries of the diverse programmes (e.g. NREP and the programme of loan facilities from the banks), some others benefited from none. There has also been severe problems of monitoring and co-ordinating the activities of the relevant departments for each programme (e.g. the problem of co-ordinating Panchayats and Commercial Banks in case of credit supply, see, 6.2.1. and 6.2.2).<sup>8</sup>

Apart from administrative co-ordination, there is a more fundamental difficulty with these policies. While not understanding the intentions and attempts of the Left Front government to lift the rural poor and their success in this respect, even if partial, it can be said that these programmes - both of employment creation and credit disbursement - are not integrated with the conditions of rural life. Unfortunately these happen to be

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8. See also Note on Findings of Some Major Evaluation studies on Integrated Rural Development Programme, Ministry of Agriculture, G.O.I, January, 1988.

programmes 'from above' rather than 'from below'. The programmes have not initiated a self-generating process of development. Credit supply through cooperative banks which are supposed to be the most suitable institution for this purpose, could not perform upto the expectations, often suffering from overdraws and low recovery of loans. This state of affairs restricts further expansion of credit delivery. The same is true of the employment generation programme - just giving temporary employment opportunity can not help overcome the chronic underemployment problems of the poor. Though the assets created in the rural areas through these employment schemes benefited them, they failed to create enough employment in the subsequent years. So it may be said that the programmes such as employment generation, provision of credit facilities, subsidies, redistribution of surplus land etc. mentioned above have, no doubt, improved the economic conditions of the rural poor and reduced their dependency on the traditional patrons, at least temporarily, but that these could not drastically change the rural power structure.

The poor tenants still depend on the landlords, particularly for employment and credit. This continuing dependency of the bargadars on the landlords seems to explain why the programme of operation barga which assumed the

dimension of a movement at the beginning floundered badly, half-way to achieving its target. We find instances showing landlords' refusal to impart credit facilities to the recalcitrant tenants (Bondyopadhyaya, 1984). The fact of such denial itself is not as damaging as its round of impacts on the sharetenants who would now hesitate to get rid of their landlords. Since alternative sources of credit are yet to open up for them, they will have to depend on the landlords for credit and employment. The organised credit market still remains largely inaccessible to the tenants with inferior land rights. At the time of land reform legislation in 1978, the barga recordings were expected to facilitate their access to institutional loan services and alternative employment opportunities. Moreover, facilities of institutional credit that are made available to the bargadars with the recorded rights are not enough to make good the decline in availability of credit from non-institutional sources. A recent survey of 14 villages made by N. Bondyopadhyaya (1984) and his associates brings out the fact that loan availability per households was relatively high among the unrecorded bargadars as compared to the recorded one. (p. 88)

Professor Biplab Dasgupta conducted a survey in 5 villages which for long have been under the West Bengal Comprehensive Area Development Project (1987, Chapter II).

These villages are highly commercialised and the tenants are generally not poor. He observes that out of 50 sharecroppers, 42 have registered their names as bargadars during 1978-80 and the rest, except one, have registered in the subsequent years. Before the launching of Operation Barga in these villages the extent of usurious capital and the dependency of the sharecroppers on the landlords were not very high and whatever had been there, declined to insignificance in the later period. These sharecroppers also have reported that they have wide access to the organised credit market.

This observation lends credence to our hypothesis that effective implementation of a 'reformist measure' like 'Operation Barga' requires a dissolution of the 'traditional dependency web' so that the poor tenants could operate independently of the landlords.

We may conclude with the observation that the programme of 'Operation Barga' which once assumed the dimension of a movement has reached a moribund stage even when a large number of sharecroppers' rights still remain unrecorded. This is not simply because of the legal imbroglio arising from confrontation between the share-tenants and the landlords or of the landlords' use of extra-economic coercion against the sharecroppers in

course of barga recording. To a poor tenant, the question of survival is more important than establishing his rights of occupying the land. For, the poor tenants depend heavily on the landlords for their survival - the landlords supply credit to the tenants (even if at a high rate of interest) in their times of need, when alternative sources are not open to them. In such a situation the poor tenant is not likely to risk losing his main source of credit and other facilities by straining his relation with the landlords. We believe that the dependency of the bargadars on the landlords thwarted the success of 'Operation Barga' to a significant extent.

TABLE : 6.1

MONTHLY PROGRESS OF RECORDING THE NAMES OF BARGADARS IN WEST BENGAL

MONTH	NUMBER OF BARGADARS RECORDED UPTO THE MONTH								NUMBER OF BARGADARS RECORDED DURING THE MONTH							
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
JANUARY	572697	778486	1005499	1136512	1213203	1275927	1312769		24421	9080	4528	10686	6674	4659	1287	
FEBRUARY	600164	812599	1022860	1144266	1218861	1279940	1315371		24467	34113	17361	7754	5658	4013	2602	
MARCH	634606	824214	1042060	1150172	1225172	1285442	1317331		34442	14615	19200	5906	7111	5502	1960	
APRIL	666682	854740	1065336	1160450	1233514	1289635	1320425		32076	27526	23276	10278	7542	4193	3094	
MAY	689524	880279	1077522	1164848	1243301	1292516	1323289		22842	25539	12186	4398	9787	2881	2864	
JUNE	715890	915488	1089500	1170051	1247757	1296136	1325167		26366	35209	11978	5203	4456	3620	1878	
JULY	732955	945157	1102857	1177256	1252662	1300605	1329087		17065	20669	13357	7205	4905	4499	3920	
AUGUST	740808	963945	1107164	1182592	1258133	1303624			7853	18788	4307	5336	5471	3019		
SEPTEMBER	495076	746658	973758	1112212	1188390	1261365	1306529		5850	9813	5048	5798	3232	2905		
OCTOBER	506100	752582	980033	1116489	1191728	1264311	1307507		11024	5924	6275	4277	3338	2946	978	
NOVEMBER	524800	757265	992971	1120334	1197694	1266757	1309835		18320	4674	12679	3845	5966	2446	2328	
DECEMBER	548285	769406	999971	1125826	1205529	1271268	1311482		23465	12150	7259	5492	8835	4511	1647	

SOURCE : STATISTICAL HANDBOOK OF BARGADARS (MEMEO)  
DIRECTORATE OF LAND RECORDS AND SURVEY, WEST BENGAL

TABLE : 6.2A

	DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS UNDER RECORDED BARGA CULTIVATION AS ON 31.12.1984 : NAME OF DISTTS															
	BANKURA (1)	BURDWAN (2)	BIRBHUM (3)	DARJEELING (4)	HUGLI (5)	HOWRAH (6)	JALPAIGURI (7)	COOCH-BEHAR (8)	MALDA (9)	MIDNAPORE (10)	MURSHI-DABAD (11)	NADIA (12)	PURULIA (13)	24-PANA GANAS (14)	WEST DINAJPUR (15)	WEST BENGAL (16)
RURAL POLLUTION NUMBER OF RECORDED BARGADAR	2193568	3414219	1922296	742116	2506777	1628068	1903658	1643938	1934675	6170039	3351534	2324384	1687039	6569957	2136221	40186926
% OF RECORDED BARGADARS TO RURAL POPN	4.42	3.06	4.91	1.62	3.61	2.32	2.90	4.32	3.83	4.74	2.07	2.24	0.10	2.50	4.45	3.28

TABLE : 6.2 B<sup>1</sup>

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
TOTAL AGRICULTURAL LAND IN ACRES	87035	1053983	761445	103917	507889	227567	532009	599338	518937	1777546	921385	617151	1019001	130 to 86	602069	11413358
LAND UNDER RECORDED BARGA CULTIVATION IN ACRES	56091	90106	98275	18058	51002	23451	86248	74482	73960	131420	55424	31453	2047	117150	97494	1006665
% IF KARD YRDER % OF LAND UNDER RECORDED BARGA CULTIVATION	6.4	8.5	12.9	17.4	10.0	10.3	16.2	12.4	14.2	7.4	6.0	5.1	0.2	9.0	16.2	8.8

NOTE : <sup>1</sup>: COLUMNS IN TABLE 6.2B IS IDENTICAL TO TABLE 6.2A ( HEADINGS NO. 1-16)

SOURCE : FOR TABLES 6.2A and 6.2B : DIRECTORATE OF LAND RECORDS AND SURVEYS , WEST BENGAL

TABLE - 6.2C<sup>1</sup>

PERFORMANCE OF OPERATION BARGA AS ON 31.12.1982

	<u>DISTRICTS</u>															
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)
NUMBER OF RECORDED BARGADAR ('000)	98	104	94	12	91	38	55	72	74	292	69	52	2	164	95	1311
ESTIMATED NUMBER OF BARGADAR	113	224	102	32	162	69	194	139	99	476	129	104	-	340	127	2310
% of BARGADAR RECORDED	86.7	46.4	92.2	37.5	56.2	55.1	28.4	37.3	79.6	61.3	53.5	50.0	-	48.2	74.8	56.8
PERCENTAGE OF BARGADAR NOT RECORDED	13.3	53.6	7.8	62.5	43.8	44.9	71.6	62.7	20.4	38.7	46.5	50.0	-	51.8	25.2	43.2

NOTE : (1) COLUMN HEADINGS OF TABLE 6.2(c) FROM COLUMN NO (1) TO (16) IS IDENTICAL TO THAT OF TABLE 6.2(a)

SOURCE : DIRECTORATES OF LAND RECORD AND SURVEY, WEST BENGAL ,CITED IN R.GHOSE, EPW: 1981



TABLE 6.3

AGRICULTURAL CREDIT FOR SHARECROPPER AND  
ASSIGNEES OF RENTED LAND : 1979-80 1986-87

Year	Number of beneficiaries
1979-80	59114
1980-81	70154
1981-82	175520
1982-83	370071
1983-84	300892
1984-85	217192
1985-86	162095
1986-87	138556

SOURCE : GOWB DEPARTMENT OF RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT, CITED IN  
DASGUPTA (1987), p. 93

TABLE 6.4

LOAN DISBURSED BY SCHEDULED  
COMMERCIAL BANKS (RS. CRORES)

TOTAL LOAN DISBURSED  
BY THE LDB (RS. CRORES)

Years	Short term	Medium & long term	Total	Years	Amount (Rs. Crores)
1974-75	3.5	2.6	6.1	1970-71	1.2
1975-76	NA	NA	NA	1974-75	1.0
1976-77	5.0	6.3	11.3	1978-79	12.1
1977-78	15.2	11.7	26.9	1979-80	7.8
1978-79	17.3	13.8	31.1	1980-81	6.6
1979-80	12.2	9.3	21.5	1981-82	6.6
1980-81	17.6	13.5	31.1	1982-83	6.7

SOURCE : ECONOMIC REVIEWS G O W B,

TABLE 6.5

SCHEDULED COMMERCIAL BANKS DIRECT  
ADVANCE TO AGRICULTURE  
IN 1980-81

Size class	Short term (%)	Long term (%)
1 ha & less between	73.0	19.5
1-2 ha between	17.2	32.3
2-5 ha	6.3	15.0
5 ha & above	3.5	33.2
Total	100.00	100.00

SOURCE : REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURAL  
PRODUCTIVITY IN EASTERN INDIA RBI,  
1984, VOL - II

TABLE 6.6

TOTAL LOAN DISBURSED BY THE LDBS (RS CRORE)

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>AMOUNT (RS. CRORE)</u>
1970-71	1.2
1974-75	1.0
1978-79	12.1
1979-80	7.8
1980-81	6.6
1981-82	6.6
1982-83	6.7
1983-84	6.5

SOURCE: ECONOMIC REVIEWS, GOWB

TABLE 6.7

Credit Data of Primary Agricultural Societies : 1977-78 to 1983-84

YEAR	No. of Societies	Member-ship	No. of Borrower's ('000)			Loan issued (Rs)'0,000			Loan Recovered		
			Total	Marginal	Small	Total	Marginal	Small	Total	Marginal	Small
1977-78	7918	1983	1054	414	403	516115	134971	206072	357095	N.A.	N.A.
1978-79	7739	2221	1098	399	390	639792	144308	217807	412496	N.A.	N.A.
1980-81	7549	2313	698	285	204	410549	143444	191179	440470	N.A.	N.A.
1981-82	7574	2391	730	346	252	428759	149094	173967	406145	173472	134249
1982-83	7580	2428	513	219	136	380403	156606	112233	348302	132768	91053
1983-84	7617	7585	558	227	176	481083	162200	160406	452853	165400	129689

SOURCE: STATISTICAL STATEMENT RELATING TO CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN INDIA CITED IN DAS GUPTA 1987 P. 100

TABLE 6.8  
EXPENDITURE & EMPLOYMENT CREATED  
UNDER NREP

Year	Expenditure (Crores)	Man days (Crores)
1980-81	9.8	1.3
1981-82	19.3	2.0
1982-83	34.2	3.6
1983-84	24.2	2.9
1984-85	22.9	2.1
1985-86	28.4	1.3

SOURCE : ECONOMIC REVIEW,  
G O W B

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This dissertation seeks to analyse some aspects of sharetenancy in West Bengal in the post-independence period, on the basis of secondary data. The growth of tenancy and changes in the different forms of lease contracts viz., share rent, fixed kind rent, and fixed money rent, have been discussed. We have also attempted to look into such variations across size - classes of tenancy. We have noted some technical relations between sharetenancy on the one hand and the area under irrigation, cropping intensities, use of fertilizers and the adoption of HY Crops on the other. Finally we have analysed the effectiveness of some government policies. The policies were designed to provide security of tenure, alternative employment opportunities and institutional credit facilities to the bargadars so that they could operate independently of the landlords in production and marketing.

In Chapter 2 we have provided our analytical framework. For a theoretical understanding we have critically reviewed the relevant literature on sharetenancy in political economy and in the neo-classical theory. The political economists observe that the emergence, dominance and dissolution of the sharetenancy system are historical

phenomena, conditioned by the development of capitalism in the economy. The process of transition (from emergence, preponderance to dissolution) is mediated through the commercialisation of agriculture. In more recent works, economists, following the classical/Marxian tradition have analysed that the different classes of the peasantry operate in a qualitatively different manner in the production and exchange systems depending on their resource positions, and the development of the markets and the technology used for cultivation. A petty tenant having a little land and stock of capital uses more family labour in an attempt to maximise gross output required for survival. Whereas a rich cultivator tries to maximise his net profit by using capital and hired labour. Our investigation of the tenancy situation in West Bengal is made on the basis of this approach.

In Chapter 3 we have briefly dealt with historical background as a prelude to our analysis of sharetenancy in West Bengal in the post-independence period. We have observed that the sharetenancy emerged as a dominant relation of production in the last few decades of the colonial rule. The commercialisation of agriculture, establishment of the alienable property rights on land (by the colonial government), high land revenue and the

large-scale extraction of surplus by the landlords and other intermediaries dispossessed a large section of the petty producers of their land. Lack of off-farm employment opportunities forced the expanding population and the dispossessed peasantry to stay in agriculture. For a bare livelihood they tried to cling to land by leasing it in from the landlords. These tenants continued to be exploited by the jotedars and traders through high rent and usury.

In Chapter 4 it is noted that the number of bargadars have increased over the three decades after independence. The area under barga cultivation decreased at a high rate during the period mentioned above. Consequently, a larger number of bargadars were operating with a smaller size of the leased land. The growing population in view of the limited and uncertain opportunity to employment raised the demand for leasing in of land. The restrictive measures of the government and the decline in the number of big landlords reduced the supply of land in the lease market. Each tenant, therefore, had to put more labour and other inputs on the reduced plot of the leased land for raising subsistence. The increased productivity of the reduced plot raised the rate of rental earnings per unit of leased-out area of the landlords.

Relative distribution of the tenant households and the area under tenancy across size-classes indicate



that the weight is increasing in the marginal class.

The percentage of the tenant households belonging to the larger size-classes as well as the area leased in by them as a percentage to total leased-in area declined significantly over the decades. Similarly, area leased out by the larger size-classes as a percentage to total leased out area has substantially declined. But the share of leased-out land of the household belonging to the small and marginal classes has increased to a significant extent. It, therefore, seems that both the lessors and lessees are becoming concentrated in the lower stratum of the peasantry. This change is accompanied by an overall change in the concentration of holdings (both ownership and operational) from the larger size-classes to the small and marginal size-classes. Among the different types of the lease contracts relative importance of share-rent is increasing over the period. The area under sharetenancy as a percentage to total leased in area was 72% in 1970-71 and rose to 90% in 1980-81.

Cross-section data show that incidence of the fixed kind and fixed money rent contracts are higher among the tenants belonging to the larger size-classes.

The ownership distribution of assets (comprising land, buildings, farm implements, livestocks, etc.) is considered as an indicator of the structure of rural power which individuals exert in the market. In Chapter 5. we have observed that wealthy peasants operate in the credit market with favourable terms and conditions.

Their wide access to the organised sector of the credit market is primarily due to possession of high valued mortgageable assets. The poor households having little mortgageable collateral cannot approach institutional sources for finance. They have to take a major portion of their loans from the local moneylenders, traders and landlords at high interest rates.

In the same chapter, on the basis of a case study of the district of Murshidabad, we have analysed the extent of cultivation of HY Crops, cropping intensities, pattern of input use, irrigation intensities and the productivities of different crops in the farms of the sharecroppers and owner operators. The study reveals that the proportion of the HYV areas in the total area cultivated by the sharetenants is little lower than the corresponding ratio in case of the owner cultivators. The extent of the adoption of different HY Crops varies across size-classes in both the categories of cultivators. Among the sharetenants the lower size-classes of

cultivators bring larger proportion of their area under HY paddy (Boro (H), Aus (H) and Aman (H)). Though the sharetenants have lower percentage area irrigated, they utilise more of the irrigated area for HY Crops compared to the owner cultivators. The Cropping intensity is found to be 17.3 percentage point higher in tenant cultivation as compared to that for the owner cultivation. There is little difference in the use of fertilizers per unit of net cropped area between the tenant cultivation and owner cultivation. However, the small and marginal cultivators of the sharetenants use inputs more intensively compared to the corresponding classes of the owner operators. Our observations of input use, cultivation of HY Crops and cropping intensity, therefore, do not lend credence to the hypothesis that sharetenancy acts as a barrier to the adoption of HYV Crops in agriculture.

In Chapter 6 we have evaluated the land reform measures with special reference to Operation Barga and the economic programmes intended to provide employment, cheap credit and subsidy for the bargadars, 'assignees', landless labourers and the small and marginal cultivators. The growth of employment opportunities or credit disbursement through organised channel was significantly high during the first few years of the Left-Front regime. But

these are too insufficient compared to the large-scale underemployment and the huge requirements of credit of the bargadars and the small and marginal farmers. The bargadars, therefore, continue to depend on the landlords for credit and employment. The state interventions ensured the tenurial security to a large section of the bargadars through Operation Barga, but it failed to do so in case of credit and employment for the bargadars. The continual dependency of the bargadars on the landlords not only restrained the Operation Barga from fulfilling its target but failed to rescue the bargadars from the exploitative operations of the landlords. To abolish this unequal dependency relations it is, therefore, required to revamp the programmes of credit disbursement and employment generation. Further, a close monitoring is required to ensure that the benefits of the programmes must reach to the target beneficiaries.

It may appear from this study that there have been no substantial changes in the agrarian social structure since independence. The forces of production and the production relations, in fact, seem to have altered only to a limited extent. However, these aggregative observations may hide important changes that are occurring in the structure and mechanisms of tenancy. For example, new types of lease contracts (cost sharing) have emerged following the introduction of new technology (green revolution).

in agriculture. Our analysis based on secondary sources has failed to capture in details the changing strategies of the different parties involved in production and exchanges. Empirical analyses on the basis of secondary materials generally suffer from various limitations and ours is no exception. Detailed information regarding the behaviour of the tenants and landlords in different markets cannot be derived from the secondary sources. The level of surplus generation (and changes therein overtime) and the pattern of reinvestment of surplus by different classes of the peasantry are also not available. These changes require to be analysed to understand the dynamics of the symbiotic relations between the different sections of the peasantry and its macro consequences on the economy and could be better investigated through field surveys. We have, therefore, attempted to provide some qualitative information derived from various secondary sources, in support of our hypotheses.

Appendix A: Some General Characteristics of West Bengal Agriculture

Table 1

A. Basic data on Population	(in 1981)	
	West Bengal	All India
Total Population (in million)	54.6	685.2
(i) Rural (,,)	40.1	525.5
(ii) Urban (,,)	14.5	159.7
B. Agricultural Workers(,,)	9.5	148
(i) Cultivators(,,)	4.6	92.5
(ii) Agl. Labourers(,,)	3.9	55.5
C. Percentage of		
(i) Rural Population to Total Population	73.6	76.7
(ii) Agricultural Workers to Rural Population	20.9	19.7
D. (i) Popln. Density (per sq. km)	621	224
(ii) No. of Agl. Workers per 100 ha. of Net Sown Area	155	105

Sources : (i) Economic Review, 1986-87  
(ii) Agricultural Productivity in Eastern India, RBI, 1984

0

Table 2

Year	West Bengal		India	
	Population (m)	Density/ sq. km	Population (m)	Density/ sq. km
1951	26.3	296	361.1	117
1961	34.9	394	439.2	142
1971	44.3	499	548.2	177
1981	54.6	614	683.8	221
Average annual growth rate		2.46%		2.15%

Sources: (i) Economic Review, G.O.W.B., 1986-87  
(ii) Agricultural Productivity in Eastern India, RBI, 1984

0

Table 3

Cropping Intensity of Land in 1980-81  
(in per cent)

West Bengal	135
Kerala	131
Punjab	159
Haryana	147
All India	123

Source: Agricultural Productivity in  
Eastern India, RBI, 1984

0

Table 4

Trends in Foodgrain Yield (kg. per hectare)

State/Region	1950-51	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81
West Bengal	916	949	1170	1290
Orissa	540	758	839	779
Eastern Region	644	765	897	970
Southern Region	554	731	897	1149
Northern Region	608	788	1150	1493
All India	541	671	820	975

Source: Agricultural Productivity in Eastern India, RBI, 1984.

Table 5

Percentage of Area Irrigated  
in West Bengal

Year	Area Irrigated (%)
1970-71	18.73
1976-77	20.83
1980-81	24.12

Source: Agricultural Census, various issues

Table 6

Trends in Consumption of Fertilisers  
Per Unit of Gross Cropped Area  
(kg/ha)

Year	West Bengal	All India
1960-61	2.9	1.9
1970-71	13.6	13.6
1977-78	22.5	24.9
1988-81	37.1	31.5
1981-82	33.9	34.6
1982-83	34.2	36.6

Sources: Agricultural Productivity in Eastern  
India, RBI, 1984



TABLE : 8  
SELECTED ECONOMIC INDICATORS

STATE/REGION	POPULATION DENSITY (PER SQUARE KM.)	NUMBER OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS PER 100 HA OF NET SOWN AREA, 1981	PER CAPITA FOODGRAIN OUTPUT (KG.) 1980-81	CROPPING INTENSITY	VALUE OF OUTPUT (RS.)	
					PER HA OF NET SOWN AREA	PER AGRI- CULTURAL WORKER
WEST BENGAL	621	155	143	135	2354	1517
KERALA	654	126	51	131	4614	3645
SOUTHERN REGION	257	129	155	115	1794	1391
NORTHERN REGION	325	108	326	145	2624	2432
ALL INDIA	221	105	181	123	1468	1430

TABLE : 8 (CONTINUED)

STATE/REGION	N.K.P. PER HECTARE OF GROSS CROPPED AREA	PERCENTAGE OF CEREALS AREA UNDER HIGH YIEL- DING VARIETY	PERCENTAGES OF AREA ELECTRIFIED (VILLA- GES)	NUMBER OF PRIVATE ENEGIZED WELL PER THOUSAND HECTARE OF NET SHOWN AREA, 1980-81
WEST BENGAL	32.3	40.2	45.3	4.7
KERALA	32.9	39.2	100.0	46.0
SOUTHERN REGION	47.5	94.2	78.5	62.3
PUNJAB	123.2	87.7	100.0	73.6
NORTHERN REGION	68.4	59.6	61.6	44.0
ALL INDIA	34.6	39.7	55.6	32.6

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN EASTERN REGION (1984), RBI

TABLE : 9A

YIELD OF RICE (KILOGRAM PER HECTARE)

YEAR	AUTUMN	WINTER	SUMMER	TOTAL
1960-61	755	1083	1091	1040
1970-71	930	1220	2799	1213
1980-81	865	1310	2695	1349
1981-82	960	1040	2534	1120
1982-83	891	900	2591	1018
1983-84	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1475

SOURCE: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN EASTERN INDIA (1984) RBI

TABLE : 9 B

YIELD OF SELECTED CROPS (KILOGRAM PER HECTARE)

CROP	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1983-84
WHEAT	692	2323	1709	2590
COARSE GRAINS	602	779	945	1093
PULSE	487	561	493	655
SUGARCANE (IN TERMS OF GUR)	4600	5500	5600	5000
OIL SEED	315	409	451	519
JUTE	1253	1200	1314	1544
POTATO	10327	12277	16695	20988

SOURCE: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN EASTERN INDIA (1984) RBI

TABLE - 10

GROWTH RATE IN FOODGRAINS (PERCENT PER ANNUM)

FOODGRAIN	AREA			PRODUCTION PRODUCTION			PRODUCTIVITY PRODUCTIVITY		
	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81
RICE	1.1	NEGLIGIBLE	0.6	2.7	1.1	1.9	1.6	1.1	1.3
WHEAT	19.5	6.5	12.8	34.9	3.3	18.1	12.9	-3.0	4.6
OTHER CEREALS	0.6	-2.2	-0.8	3.2	-0.3	1.5	2.6	1.9	2.3
PULSES	-0.6	-2.5	-1.6	0.8	-3.8	-1.5	1.4	-1.3	0.1
SUGARCANE(GUR)	0.9	-3.6	-1.4	2.9	-3.7	-0.4	2.0	-0.1	1.0
POTATO	1.7	7.0	4.3	3.5	10.3	6.6	1.7	3.1	2.4
OILSEED	1.0	3.9	2.4	3.8	4.8	4.3	2.7	1.0	1.8
JUTE	1.3	4.0	2.7	0.9	5.2	3.0	-0.4	1.1	0.3

SOURCE : AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY IN EASTERN INDIA, R.B.I.(1984)

TABLE - 7

AREA UNDER HYV IN RICE AND WHAT<sup>E</sup> IN WEST BENGAL('000Ha)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rice</u>	<u>Wheat</u>
1970-71	528	336
1975-76	1052	526
1980-81	1564	470
1981-82	1628	423

SOURCE : SAME AS TABLE 10

APPENDIX B

SOURCES OF DATA ON LAND DISTRIBUTION

AND THEIR NATURE

All of the relevant data which have been incorporated in this regard are collected from secondary sources some of these are official data published by different government agencies like Agricultural Census, National Sample Survey etc. We have also used non-official data surveyed by Boudopadhyaya and his associates.

Sampling Design and Coverages of these Surveys:

1. Agricultural Census

Agricultural Census in West Bengal is not based on Complete Enumeration Survey. For this purpose special sample surveys are conducted jointly by the Board of Revenue and the Socio-Economic and Evaluation Branch of Directorate of Agriculture, West Bengal. Uptill recently Agricultural Census has been conducted thrice in West Bengal in the years of 1970-71, 1976-77 and 1980-81.

In all of these Census Operational holdings formed the basic units. The definition of an operational holding for Census purposes is all the land which is used wholly for agricultural production and is operated as technical unit<sup>1</sup> by one person alone or with others without regard

1. Agricultural Census, 1976-77, West Bengal, pp.29-30: Technical Unit is that unit which is under the same management and has the same means of production such as labour force, machinery and animals. This definition is maintained in all the census.

to title legal form, size or location.

In 1970-71 Agricultural Census in West Bengal sub-divisions formed the strata, and Revenue Circles and households were the first and second stage units. Out of 253 Revenue Circle 130 were selected at random.

All the villages in the selected circles were included. Operational holdings were categorized into three groups: (1) Less than 0.04 hectare (ha.), (2) from 0.04 ha. to 7.5 ha. and (3) more than 7.5 ha. Group (1) is excluded from this survey. In group (2) 10% of the holdings are selected systematically with a random start. In group (3) all the holdings were surveyed.

This sampling design has been subjected to change in the subsequent censuses - 1976-77 and 1980-81. For the purpose of sample survey in 1976-77 each Land Reform Circles Constituted as a stratum and the selected villages and operational holdings formed the first and second stage units respectively. Operational holdings were classified into 5 groups on the basis of the size of holdings as 0.02 - 1 ha., 1-2 ha., 2-4 ha., 4-10 ha. and above 10 ha. in each village . 20% of the households were selected from each of the first 4 groups and all the households in the last group were surveyed.

The sampling design of 1980-81 Agricultural Census was more or less same as that of 1976-77 Agricultural census, but it included the lowest size class (below 0.02 ha.) for survey.

#### The National Sample Survey

The reports of 8th, 16th, 17th, 26th and 37th rounds <sup>on</sup> land holdings in Rural Areas have been used for our purposes. This survey is based stratified two-stage random sampling. The state is divided into regions by grouping together contiguous districts having similar crop pattern and population densities. In each group strata were formed by grouping contiguous tehsils having fairly homogeneous population. Total population in all the state would also be more or less the same.

In each village stratum two sub-samples of nine villages were selected Circular Systematically with independent random start, after arranging the tehsils in order of geographical nearness. Households in each sample village were classified into three groups depending upon the land possessed by them. For this purpose households are divided into the following class according to the land possessed: 0-1 Acre (A), 1-2.5 A., 2.5-5 A., 5-7.5 A., 7.5-10 A., 10-15 A., 15-20 A., 20-30 A., 30-50 A., and above 50 A. First size class formed the first group with the possession of land 0-1 A. Next four classes belong to

1-10 A., constituted the second group. And the remaining size classes formed the third group. The total number of households allotted to each group was made proportional to the number of size classes in that group. A circular systematic sample of the allocated number of households was drawn from each group within a village.

#### Nripen Bondopadhyaya's Survey

In this survey the whole state is divided into five zones. In each zone rural Police Station (PS) were arranged. The Police Station's were selected randomly from each stratum. And the villages were also randomly chosen from each Police Station. All other 60 villages were selected in 30 selected Police Stations in West Bengal. In the first round household listing schedule was compiled wherein information related to landholding, sharecropping etc. were incorporated. In the second round a sub-sample of 14 villages from the previously selected villages were randomly chosen for intensive study. All the households having upto 3 A., of land were surveyed in this 14 villages.

Bondopadhyaya did not mention the basis of the selection of sampling house-holds in each village in the first round. The sample size is also very small. Therefore, sampling error might be high.

### Problem with these Data

In the official surveys chances of reporting error and thus biases in the estimates are fairly high. For example, a big landowner always tries to under state his total land area in view of the land-ceiling legislation, on the other hand a small landowner tries to under-report his total land with the expectations of getting benefits such as vested land through government redistribution programmes and financial aids and subsidy through different schemes. Land records are not properly used to check those reports on the size of holdings (both owner and operational). Most of these surveys, conducted at the base level, primarily, through the tehsildars or the persons not properly trained who are personally acquainted with and being influenced by the big landowner. This relation is to some extent, responsible for under reporting of the size and owned land and the area leased out by the big-landlords. Another source of error in these estimates is that these investigators often supply hypothetical data without going into the field. But since they have some knowledge about the households in their locality, this error is expected to be reduced to some extent.



Main Features of the 1955 Act

I. Share of the Produce Payable to the Landowner

1. The out put of any sharecropped land will be divided between the bargadar and the landlord:
  - (a) in the proportion ~~50:50~~ in the situation where all the non-labour inputs are supplied by the landlord, or
  - (b) in the proportion of 50:40 in the rest of the cases.

In 1972 amendment, West Bengal Act XII, this proportion (as in (b)) has been revised upwards to 75:25.

2. The bargadar should deliver the share of produce to the landlord within 7 days of threshing.
3. Landowner shall give a receipt to the bargadar for the quantity of the produce he receives as his share.
4. If the landowner declines to receive the share of the produce offered by the bargadar or to give a receipt for that share, the bargadar may submit it within one month to the prescribed authority. If the authority finds that the bargadar tenders lesser than what the produce is actually due to the landowner, the bargadar will be liable to pay the deficit. But, in the other case, the bargadar will be exempted from his liability to deliver the share of the produce to the landowner. The authority then gives the bargadar a receipt and the share of the produce to the landowner.

5. The place of storage and threshing of the produce will be decided
  - (a) at a place where the bargadar and the landowner have agreed, or
  - (b) by the bargadar, if there is any disagreement between them, after giving a notice to the landowner and provided that the landowners may come to instruct during the time of storage or threshing.
6. The second amendment of 1969 made the bargadar entitled to recover his share of produce or its money value if the landlord reaps the produce of the land cultivated by the bargadar, by force or by other illegal means.

## II. Termination of Cultivation by Bargadar

1. The Act (1955) mentioned that landlord cannot evict the bargadar from the leased land except in execution of order made by the relevant authority on one or more of the following circumstances:
  - (a) that the bargadar has without any valid reason failed to cultivate it properly or used it for any purpose other than cultivation;
  - (b) that the land is not cultivated by the bargadar personally;
  - (c) that the bargadar has failed to deliver the required amount of share to the landlord, or to the government authority at the prescribed time;
  - (d) that the landowner wants to resume the land for self-cultivation.

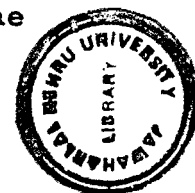
~~The resumption of land for self-cultivation is restricted by the law: The landowner's cultivated land must not exceed 3.00 hectares after such resumption. The amendment of 1972 added that the landowner cannot resume land for self-cultivation if the bargadar's total cultivated land falls below 1.00 hectare after termination. The President's Act of 1970 laid down that if the landowner fails to bring such resumed land from which bargadar has been terminated, under personal cultivation within two years of the date of termination or leases it to another bargadar, The Junior Land Reform Officer will be entitled to sell the land to the bargadar.~~

### III. Personal Cultivation

West Bengal Land Reform Act (1955) defined Personal Cultivation as cultivation done by a person of his own land on his own account by

- (a) his own labour;
- (b) labour of any member of his family, or
- (c) servants or labourers on wage payable in cash or in kind (not being as a share of produce), or both.

1978 amendment that the landowner, who will resume land for personal cultivation, must have a residence belonging either to himself or some member of his family in the locality where the land is situated and must reside at the place during most of the time of the year. Personal cultivation will mean that a person or a member of his family must remain present and arrange for cultivation. Also the landowner's principal source of income must be cultivation. Another important modification is that the landlord must cultivate the resumed land, after evicting the bargadar for self-cultivation, by his own or family labour and not by servant or labourer.



IV Restriction on Civil Courts in the Matter of Tenancy

The West Bengal Bargadari Act (1950) severely restricted the power of civil court in respect of tenancy. The act laid down that no order or other proceedings in this act shall be questioned in any civil court in the matter of tenancy. In this respect, if any question as to whether a person is or is not a bargadar arises in the course of any proceedings before any civil or criminal court, the court shall refer it to the relevant authority appointed by the state government.

V Jurisdiction of the Bhagchas Officer to Decide Disputes

The act laid down the responsibility of settling any dispute to a special officer or authority. The appointed officer/authority has to decide in the following matters:

- (a) disputes regarding division or delivery of the produce;
- (b) disputes regarding termination of bargadar from leased land;
- (c) recovery of the share of the produce which has been taken away by the landowner.

VI Provision of Penalty

- (a) The West Bengal Act of 1966 laid down that if any landowner terminates or causes to terminate or attempts to terminate a bargadar, after the commencement of this act, he shall be guilty of an offence punishable with imprisonment which may extend to six months or with a fine which may extend to one thousand rupees (before this act it was five hundred rupees) or with both.
- (b) The West Bengal Act of 1977 added that if any

landowner fails to provide a receipt against the share he obtained from the bargadar, he shall be guilty of an offence punishable with imprisonment which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees or with both.

(c) Landlords often pressurise the tenant to sign an istafanama to discard his tenancy right. 1978 Act laid down that all such attempts are criminal offences, punishable upto a fine of Rs.1000/- or imprisonment of six months or both.

#### VII Hereditary Right

The right of cultivation as a bargadar was made hereditary by the amendment of 1972. The cultivation of the land will be continued by any lawful heir of the bargadar after his death.

#### VIII Presumption Regarding a Bargadar

Landowner usually showed their family member or relatives as bargadars and the actual bargadars could not prove their bonafide rights and thus the landlords managed to bypass the laws of 1955. To overcome these loopholes, WBLRA, 1977 laid down that "A person lawfully cultivating any land belonging to another person shall be presumed to be a bargadar in respect of such land if such person is not a member of the family of the other person whose land cultivates and the burden of proving that such person is not a bargadar or that the land is in his (landowner's) personal cultivation shall....lie on the person who alleges that the person cultivating the land is not a bargadar in respect of such land," Therefore, under this law, if any person lawfully cultivates the land of another person he is presumed to be a bargadar.

He should, therefore, get all protection under the law. However, this process of reversing the burden of proof greatly helped the operation of 'Operation Barga'.

### Operation Barga

After coming into power in 1977 Left Front government tried seriously to implement the land reform measures already enacted. Operation Barga is the outcome of such an effort. Though Operation Barga is a recent phase of the development of land reforms in West Bengal, there is no radical departure from the earlier measures. But the novelty lies in the method of implementation.

The land reform officials realised that under the earlier method where the names of bargadars were recorded during the initial stages of settlement operation called Khanpuri - Bujharat (when the officials make plot-to-plot survey), bargadars were generally not identified and thus recording of bargadar was very tardy. Therefore, in search of an effective and efficient method, these officials organised two Re-Orientation Camps - one at Bilda in Midnapore district and the other at Halusai in the district of Hoogli, in May, 1978. The major points of discussion was why the sharecroppers were so reluctant to get their name recorded. The officers learned that the settlement works are usually done in the out-house of the landowners

which intimidated the bargadars into non-participation in these activities , moreover the settlement work is usually done at the day time when they are in the field.

Immediately after gathering experience from these Re-Orientation Camps, a workshop was held on 23 and 24 July, 1978, to formulate a simple but sufficient methodology for the working of Operation Barga.

The entire work recording of bargadars are divided into five steps:

- (i) Identification of the priority pockets with large concentration of bargadars;
- (ii) Formation of squads;
- (iii) Meeting with the bargadars;
- (iv) Reconnaissance and field verification;
- (v) Actual recording

#### Design of Operation Barga

For the working of Operation Barga the state (except the district of Purulia and Islampur sub-division which were ceded from Bihar) is divided into two areas:

- (i) Area 'A' covered the rest of the 18,000 mouzas which had already been covered by Khanapuri - Bujherata:

(ii) Area 'B' covered the rest of the 18,000 mouzas in the state for area 'B' a crash programme called Operation Barga was to be launched to complete the programme within one year. In these areas priority pockets would have to be selected in consultation with the peasant's Organisation. The composite squads of officers would have to cover these areas within a short-time. In area 'A' the approach was quite different - this Operation Barga would be done selectively on the basis of information obtained from the bargadars or other sources.

#### Working Design of the Squad

The main work of the squad is distributed among three consecutive days:

- (i) After giving a due notice the squad will organise an evening meeting on the first day at a place in the locality of the bargadars and agricultural labourers. This place of concentration of bargadars is detected during the discussion with the peasants organisation and in the meeting of Zila Parishads, Panchayat Samities and Gram Panchayats. While selecting the venue of evening meeting care must be taken to ensure that the place should be a public place or where the bargadars will not be afraid to come. At the beginning of the meeting, the



village level functionary who are known locally would start discussions regarding the benefits which a bargadar could get under the new law. The bargadars and others who were present in the meeting were provoked to speak out. In that discussion emphasis would be given to the following points:

- (a) legal and economic benefits that accrue to recorded bargadars;
- (b) security of rights under barga cultivation;
- (c) scope of employment in the schemes like FFW, IRDP, etc.
- (d) need for a supportive peasant organisation to achieve the benefits offered by land reforms.

Such meetings should be continued not more than one or two hours. At the end of such meetings a tentative list of unrecorded bargadars were prepared. This list would be put up in conspicuous places, as required by the law.

- (ii) In the second day this squad will go to the field for enquiry and verification. After verification a list of the genuine bargadars would be prepared. This list would be hanged in the public places such that objections, if any, could be raised.
- (iii) In the third day objections were raised, if any, and the final decision regarding a person being bargadar or not were taken after discussion in such

disputed cases. In this respect Revenue Officers are given special power under the new amendment (1978) to change the record-of-rights on his own motion. Thereafter a barga certificate was issued to each bargadar. The Revenue Officer than informed the settlement Department for the incorporation of their names in record-of-rights.

#### Re-Orientation Camps

Planning Commission formed the Task Force on Agrarian Relation which recommended that the rural poor should be organised and made to demand for achieving the benefits sponsored by the plan. It was mentioned that "In our view a certain degree of politicisation of the poor peasantry on militant links is a pre-requisite for any successful legislative - administrative action for conferring rights and privileges on them: Re-Orientation Camps, started in 1978, were primarily designed to serve the purpose of Operation Barga but has its consequences on Task Force's Prescription. However, this 'Re-Orientation Camps' were similar to the 'Conscintisation Camps' as prescribed I.L.O to re-orient the mental out-look of the rural masses and the the bureaucracy. In the 'Re-Orient-ation Camps' efforts had been made to create an atmosphere

in which poor villagers could talk about their problems, grievances against bureaucracy and government officials, from which bureaucracy could learn some practical lessons. Also in the camps efforts had been made to collect the names of prospective bargadars. The venue of Re-Orient-ation camps was selected by either the Settlement Wing or the Management Wing and was to be situated in a public place or a place for common use. The Re-Orient-ation camps were held widely all over the state from 1978 to 1982.

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