

**A STUDY IN THE AGRARIAN ECONOMY
Of
BHOJPURI SPEAKING AREA IN INDIA
SINCE BRITISH RULE**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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DECLARATION



Certified that the dissertation titled "A Study in the Agrarian Economy of Bhojpuri Speaking Area in India Since British Rule", submitted by Mr. Prakash Deo Singh is in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or anywhere else and is his own work.

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


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- Prakash Deo Singh

C O N T E N T S

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
Chapter I	
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter II	
AGRARIAN ECONOMY UNDER THE BRITISH RULE	9
Chapter III	
AGRARIAN ECONOMY IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD	47
Chapter IV	
CONCLUSION	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY	84

LIST OF TABLES

	Page:
1. Types of Cultivating Tenures in North-Western Provinces(1892)	16
2. Sellers of Land at Auction in Districts of Banaras, Ghazipur, Ballia, Jaunpur and Mirzapur (1795-1850)	24
3. Occupation of Buyers of Land at Auction in Districts of Banaras, Ghazipur, Ballia, Jaunpur, Mirzapur (1795-1850)	25
4. Social Origin of Revenue Payers Paying More Than 1,000 Rupees Land Revenue Yearly in Districts of Banaras, Ghazipur, Ballia, Jaunpur, Mirzapur (1885)	26
5. Alienation of Peasants' Holdings in Districts of Saran and Champaran (1885-95)	29
6. Area Under Poppy Cultivation in Bihar and Banaras (1860-90)	33
7. Export of Sugar From Calcutta to England (1833-47)	37
8. Magnitude of Compensation to be Paid to Ex-intermediaries in Some Selected Permanently Settled States	55
9. Percentage of Land Held and Land Revenue Paid by the New Tenure-Holders in Uttar Pradesh in 1953 and 1957	61
10. Percentage of Population Dependent on Agriculture in 1901 and 1951	64
11. Ten-Year All-Crop Growth Rates and Indices of Change for Output, Yield, and Value Added Per Acre (in Bhojpuri Districts)(1956-57to1965-66)	66

12. Purpose-wise Distribution of Debts According to Size Category in Sampled Villages of Jaunpur District 72
13. Size-wise Distribution of Marketed Surplus Per Farm and Per Acre of Cultivated Area in Sampled Villages of Jaunpur District 73

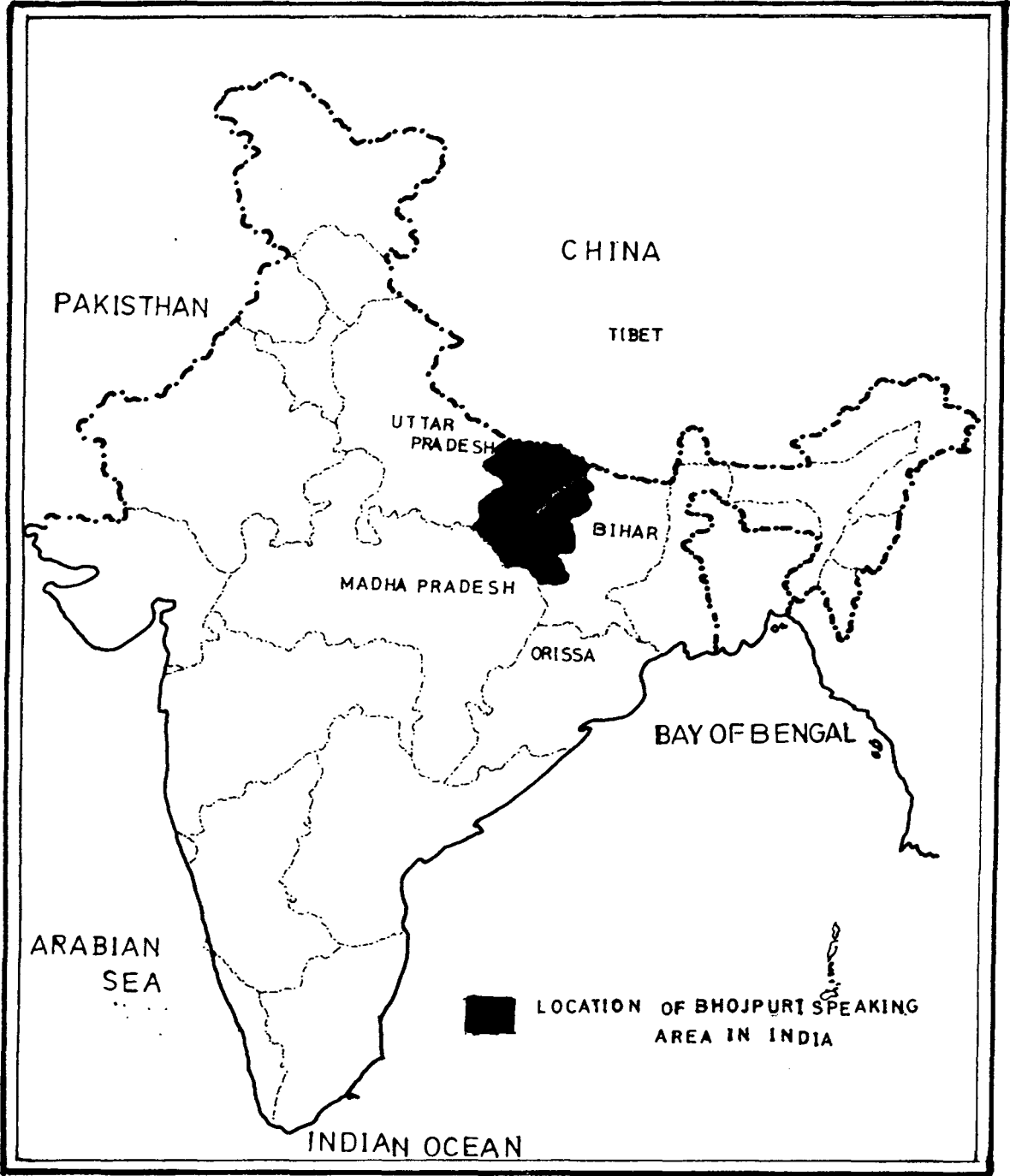


FIG.1.0



FIG2. BHOJPURI LANGUAGE SPEAKING DISTRICTS

"The Bhojpuri-speaking country is inhabited by a people curiously different from the others who speak Bihari dialects. They form the fighting nations of Hindostan. An alert and active nationality with few scruples and considerable abilities dearly loving a fight for fightings' sake, they have spread all over Aryan India, each man ready to carve his fortune out of any opportunity which may present itself to him...."

G. A. GRIERSON

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is an attempt to analyse the changes and the direction of changes the agrarian economy of Bhojpuri speaking areas in India has undergone since British rule. In an agrarian economy land market, commodity market and labour market constitute three important aspects of the economy. An attempt has been made here to analyse the character of the land, commodity and labour markets operating in the agrarian economy of the Bhojpuri area and the changes it has undergone since British rule.

The British rule was a rule of the aliens. This alien factor intervened in the normal functioning of our society and introduced many new things, particularly in the traditional agrarian social structure. Therefore, an analysis of the agrarian economy during the British rule becomes a necessary pre-condition for a proper understanding of the nature of the agrarian economy in the post-Independence period. This study is an attempt to analyse the nature of the agrarian economy during two different periods - the British period and the post-Independence period - and to bring about the continuities or discontinuities between these two periods.

The present Bhojpuri speaking areas in India cover seventeen districts spread over the two States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The districts of Bhojpur, Rohtas, Saran, Siwan, Gopalganj, East Champaran and West Champaran belong to the State of Bihar. The districts of Ballia, Azamgarh, Deoria, Basti, Mirzapur, Jaunpur, Gorakhpur, Banaras and Ghazipur belong to the State of Uttar Pradesh. The choice of Bhojpuri speaking area as the area unit of study has a methodological significance. Most of the studies in the agrarian economy have tended to take up administrative units as an area unit of study. Therefore, we find mostly either studies on Bihar or on Uttar Pradesh. But the Bhojpuri speaking area which is divided between two administrative States, constitutes a contiguous linguistic-cultural region.¹ Language and culture play an important role in the development of a particular social formation. Writing about the role of language in the development of an economy Lenin says: "...for the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, there must be politically united territories whose populations speak a

1. See, Gyan Pandey, 'Rallying round the Cow: Sectarian strife in the Bhojpuri Region, C.1888-1917' in Ranajit Guha(ed.), Subaltern Studies Vol II, (Delhi: OUP, 1983) footnote 1; G.A.Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.V, Part II, 1903, Delhi Reprint 1968, pp.4-5.

single language, with all obstacles to the development of that language and to its consolidation in literature eliminated....Unity and unimpeded development of language are the most important conditions for genuinely free and extensive commerce on a scale commensurate with modern capitalism, for a free and broad grouping of the population in all its various classes and, lastly, for the establishment of a close connection between the market and each and every proprietor, big or little, and between seller and buyer." 2

This study is based on the analysis of existing secondary materials. Both studies by academicians as well as government reports have been used. Since most of the studies done are either on Bihar or Uttar Pradesh, the choice of Bhojpuri area as a unit of study presents certain problems regarding availability of analytical literature and data. In this study it has been tried to concentrate on and use facts and data available for the Bhojpuri area as far as possible. In cases, particular data are not available, data for Bihar and UP have been used.

This study includes four chapters: (a) introduction, (b) the agrarian economy during British rule, (c) the agrarian economy in the post-Independence period, and (d) conclusion. The first chapter, besides presenting

2. V.I. Lenin, 'The Right of Nations to self-determination', in Lenin and Stalin, On National-Colonial Question, (Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1970), p.14.

the problem, includes a brief conceptual description regarding the general character of Indian economy during the British period and the post-Independence period.³

In the second and third chapters a detailed analysis of the agrarian economy during British rule and post-Independence period is presented. The fourth chapter tries to summarise the findings of the second and third chapter.

The first task executed by the British colonial system in India after capturing political power was to destroy the economic base which was naturally leading to the development of productive forces and changes in the relations of production here. This task was successfully performed using the coercive power exercised by their state machinery. In this manner the Indian economy which was a manufactured goods exporter was transformed into a large scale importer of factory produced goods from Britain.

By the beginning of the 19th century this 'de-industrialization' process had gained momentum. One-sided free trade was the main means by which this was done.

3. The analysis of the character of Indian economy during the colonial period and the post-Independence period presented here is taken from, T.G.Jacob, India: Development and Deprivation, New Delhi, Mass Line Press, 1985).

Apart from this, the colonialists went a step further in killing the Indian weaving industry. Lining up weavers and chopping off their thumbs was one among the many measures of the colonialists to annihilate Indian production.

The colonial policy of dumping inferior quality goods in the Indian markets and prohibiting Indian goods exports into Europe yielded results very soon. By the 1830s the once prosperous Indian manufacturing centres wore a desolate look. By this time the roles had been reversed completely. India became one of the biggest markets for British industrial capitalists, and production and exports of manufactured items from India registered a drastic decline. This situation continued to remain throughout the colonial period.

Just as the destruction of Indian handicrafts and manufacturing sector was dictated by the exigencies of British industrial capital, their agrarian policy in India was also, in the main, designed and implemented to suit the raw material needs of British industrial capital. After the destruction of the Indian industry, surplus from the pre-capitalist agricultural sector became the main source of capital transfers from the colony.

The British colonialists implemented two types of land-tenure systems in India - zamindari and ryotwari.

The impact of these land settlements instituted by the colonials can be summarized as follows: (a) a class of utterly parasitic landlords, moneylenders, land speculators and traders dealing with agricultural products came into existence and became the ruling elite in the countryside. This class, by its very basic nature, detested any productive investment and by its dominance discouraged any productive investment by the actual cultivators; (b) commercialisation and monetisation of agriculture developed in general to fulfil state's needs for cash revenue; (c) land as a private property which could be alienated from the cultivator came into existence. But due to the dominant hold of parasitic elements (including the state) over the surplus generated by the cultivators, capitalist mode of production could not develop.

After the transfer of power in 1947 direct colonial rule over India came to an end. But this does not mean that imperialist exploration of India also came to an end. The direct colonial plunder was replaced by a far more intricate and vicious method of plunder, called neocolonialism. While during the period of direct colonialism the strategy of the imperialists was to exploit the colonies by blocking the development of productive forces and maintaining backwardness in the economy, now during the period of neocolonialism

nialism the method came to be one of injecting a dynamism in the economy of the neocolonies and thereby integrating even the remote areas with the world capitalist economy.

Two factors led to the emergence of the neo-colonial method of exploitation. One was the political compulsion to avoid an anti-imperialist revolution resulting from the persistence of backward feudal production relations. The other was the question of how to increase and escalate exploitation.

In India, a systematic strategy of neocolonial plunder began to operate in the agricultural sector during sixties in the form of "Green Revolution", "White Revolution" etc. These schemes were introduced with the active patronage of US imperialists. One obvious and direct gain for the imperialists was the opening up of markets for their fertilizers, pesticides, HYV seeds, modern farm machinery and the capital and technology to produce them. Capital goods, raw materials and technology had to be imported even if these modern inputs were to be manufactured in India itself.

But to reduce the motive of the imperialists in developing agriculture on modern lines to just the immediate gains through selling their products and technology and exporting capital will be too simplistic. A more serious aspect of the programme is the progressively

deteriorating dependency quality of the neocolonial economies on the imperialist system. The case of fertilizers clearly reveals this aspect. In 1966-67 the domestic production of fertilizers came to only about half of the imports. This situation has changed and now imports come to only half of the domestic production. However, the major fertilizer manufacturing units in India were all started with foreign technology and capital aid. The capacity utilization is at a very low level, only about 68 percent. Even this level of capacity utilization is possible only with massive imports of chemicals and chemical components from the imperialist countries who initially promoted the establishment of the industry here. The main factors behind this very low level of capacity utilization in the domestic fertilizer industry are identified as the raw material and machinery bottlenecks. For both raw materials and machinery the dependency on imperialist economies continues and that is why India has to import huge quantity of manufactured fertilizers even when the domestic industry, if worked to full capacity, can cancel imports. Initially when fertilizer import started in a big way, the country was dependent only on that. Now the dependency has spread to a big new fertilizer industry while at the same time the dependence for manufactured fertilizers continues. Thus, from simple fertilizer imports in the beginning, India has now gone over to a much more vicious dependency.

CHAPTER II

AGRARIAN ECONOMY UNDER THE BRITISH RULE (1793-1947)

The Land-Tenure System

The present Bhojpuri speaking areas in India fell to the British piece by piece over a period of 38 years. The districts of Shahabad, Saran and Champaran in Bihar came under British rule in 1765 when the East India Company received the diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa; the districts of Banaras, Jaunpur, Azamgarh, Ghazipur, Ballia and parts of the district of Mirzapur fell to the British in 1775 when Banaras division came under the Company; the districts of Gorakhpur, Basti and Deoria formed the part of the "Ceded Districts" which came under British rule in 1801; parts of Mirzapur district which formed a part of the "Conquered Districts" came under British rule in 1803.¹

Bihar, then under Bengal Presidency, was "Permanently Settled" in 1793. Banaras Division also was declared "Permanently Settled" in 1795 along the lines laid down in the Bengal Regulation of 1793. After 1835, Banaras, Ceded Districts and Conquered Districts came to be collectively administered as North-Western Provinces and its further revenue history was that of the rest of the province except

1. See Walter C. Neale, Economic Change in Rural India: Land Tenure and Reform in Uttar Pradesh, 1800-1955, (London: Yale Uni. Press, 1962), pp.12-13.

that the revenue was fixed in perpetuity. In Ceded and Conquered districts in 1803, it was decided to have two successive three-year settlements, followed by a four year settlement, and then permanent, but soon the idea was abandoned and the area remained under various temporary settlements.

Thus we see that a vast tract of the Bhojpuri area was under the system of Permanent Settlement. The principal feature of the Permanent Settlement was that it sought to create a landed aristocracy in the country by conferring on the zamindars a right of private property in the soil. In it were combined the right to collect rent as well as the regulation of all other tenures existing on the land. This right was made transferable both by acts of the state and of the individuals possessing it. The state could transfer this right by open auction in the market for arrears of revenue while the zamindars could do so by sale, mortgage or gift. The state revenue on the land was declared as fixed in perpetuity.

The 'Permanent Settlement', however, did not mean a complete freezing of the land revenue, and the Company could secure an increase in it from time to time. The number of estates of defaulting zamindars, which for want of bidders in the early years of the depressed land market remained with the government, and the portion of the immense wasteland which at the time of the settlement were

not included in the zamindars' estates, became increasingly profitable with the growth of cultivation and rising prices. Other sources of increase came from the resumption of various kinds of 'rent free' lands. Thus, in Shahabad, revenue increased from £97,508 in 1790 to £176,273 in 1877-78.²

The reasons behind the introduction of this land-tenure system seem to be the following:³ to promote extension of cultivation and its improvement which will ensure prosperity of the Company's commerce; to ensure security of state revenue; to bring about through public auctions the transfer of land to a class most capable of land management; and, to induce a large investment of capital in agriculture through restoration of confidence in private property.

In Ceded and Conquered districts also, all the principles and premises of the Bengal Permanent Settlement except the fixation of revenue in perpetuity, were adopted till 1822.⁴ In 1822, 'the Regulation VII of 1822' was promulgated, and "from this Regulation follows the tenure system of the North-Western Provinces."⁵ The essence of Regulation VII was that it sought to make settlements with

2. W.W.Hunter, The Imperial Gazetteer of India, London, Vol.viii, p.244.

3. S.C.Gupta, Agrarian Relations and Early British Rule: A Case Study of Ceded and Conquered Provinces, (Bombay: 1963), p.86; B.B.Chaudhuri, 'Agrarian Relations: Eastern India', in Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol.II (Cambridge, 1982), p.88.

4. S.C.Gupta, *op.cit.*, p.70.

5. W.C.Neale, *op.cit.*, p.60.

the joint body of village co-sharers and to record the rights of everyone having any claim in a holding.⁶

Under this new system two kinds of corporate land holding system came to be recognised: pattidari and bhaiyachara.⁷ The pattidari estate was one in which descendants of a common ancestor had divided the lands of their ancestral patrimony following genealogical principles. However, the pattidars in a particular estate continued to recognise ties to the corporate body. The Govt recorded certain members of the corporate groups as "zamindars" and they were made responsible for the collection of revenue from their co-sharers in pattidari estates and for its payment to the Government.

In bhaiyachara estates, unlike pattidari estates, the land was jointly and commonly held undivided, and only the produce was divided. As in pattidari estates, some co-sharers were elevated to the roles of zamindar and made responsible for the collection and payment of revenue. By the end of the 19th century, both pattidari and bhaiyachara estates were rare in the Banaras region.

6. see, *ibid.*, pp.60-62.

7. See, B.S.Cohn, 'Structural Change in Indian Rural Society, 1596-1885', in R.E.Frykenberg, ed., Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969, pp.101-104.

In addition to pattidari and bhaiyachara estates, there were zamindari estates also in which one person or family had established the right to be recognised as sole proprietor of an estate. However, there seems to be little difference, in the essence, between the above three kinds of estates, because in fact, if not in law, the owners of each shares in a pattidari or bhaiyachara estate were sole zamindars on their share.

Thus we can say that the land tenure system of Bihar and North-Western provinces were essentially identical in that in both the sole proprietary rights in soil were conferred on zamindars. The existence of pattidari and bhaiyachara estates in North-Western provinces may point to the predominance of petty zamindari estates there. But joint ownership and petty zamindari estates were predominant in Bihar also.⁸

While the state revenue on land was fixed the demands of the zamindars on cultivators were left undefined and unspecified in the belief that they will be regulated

8. Manoshi Mitra, Agrarian Social Structure: Continuity and Change in Bihar, 1786-1880, (Delhi: Manohar, 1985), p.89; see also, Girish Mishra and Braj Kumar Pandey, 'Socio-economic Roots of Casteism in Bihar', in N.L.Gupta, (ed.), Transition from Capitalism to Socialism and Other Essays, (New Delhi: Kalamkar Prakashan, 1974), p.157.

by the mutual interests of the zamindars and the cultivators and by the ordinary laws of demand and supply operating in the case of land and labour respectively.

The zamindars holding proprietary rights in the soil were given the right of subletting and the right to evict the tenants from land and to attach and dispose off their property on failure of rent payment. This was a very important aspect in which the land-tenure system of the British India differed from that of the pre-British period. In pre-British times, the rights of revenue engagers over their peasants extended to seizure and confiscation of personal property, imprisonment, chastisement with stripes, tortures, etc. But the cultivators could never be physically alienated for ever from the land that they cultivated. But now the occupancy rights of the tenants were merged with the right of private property of revenue engagers.⁹

In Bihar, it was only through Act 19 of 1859 and more clearly the Tenancy Act of 1885 that the rights of the tenants got some recognition in law. Before that the various Regulations made by the government had one primary object, viz., the security of the public revenue and hence rent, and each successive Regulation served only to arm

9. S.C.Gupta, op.cit., p.89.

those who were under engagement for revenue with additional powers, so as to enable them to realise their demands in the first instance, whether right or wrong.¹⁰ But even the Tenancy Act of 1885 did not countenance default on payment of rent and revenue, as it was still based on the assumption of Permanent Settlement.

The Tenancy Act of 1885 classified tenants into three classes; occupancy raiyats, non-occupancy raiyats and under-raiyats.¹¹ Only the first class of occupancy raiyats were protected against eviction, and had the rights inheritable and transferrable. The last two classes of raiyats were liable to eviction for various reasons. These raiyats were also given the provision for acquiring occupancy rights if they could prove to have been cultivating the lands for 12 years. But the right of occupancy had little meaning when occupancy could not be proved due to near-universal failure on the part of zamindars to grant rent-receipts. Thus, the provisions of the Tenancy Act notwithstanding, the large bulk of the tenantry was composed of tenants-at-will, liable to evictions, subject to forced labour, illegally exacted cesses and exorbitant re-

10. Arvind N. Das, Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980, (Delhi, Manohar, 1983), p.43.

11. G. Ojha, Land Problems and Land Reforms, (New Delhi: Sultan Chand & Sons, Undated), p.65.

nts which were collected ruthlessly.

The North-Western Provinces had comparatively a longer history of tenancy legislation and over decades many tenants had acquired legal and even hereditary rights over their land(See Table 1).

Table 1

Types of Cultivating Tenures in the North-Western Provinces (1892)

Type of Cultivators	Percentage of Cultivated land
Proprietors	24.0
Permanent Tenure-holders and Fixed-rate Tenants	1.0
Occupancy Tenants	36.5
Tenantsat-will	38.5

Source: W.C.Neale, Economic Change in Rural India: Land Tenure and Reform in Uttar Pradesh, 1800-1955, London, 1962, p.100.

However, even in N-W Provinces, as competition for land rose, it was found that despite the recording of rights the position of tenants was not sufficiently protected, and rents rose and ejections were common.

Growth and Operation of a Land Market

The land-tenure system of British India led to the formation of a land market, resulting from three sets of circumstances:¹² (a) the insistence on the part of the Government on sales of defaulting zamindars' estates as a device towards ensuring the security of its revenue; (b) the inability of very many zamindars under the circumstances to cope with the increased revenue burden; and (c) the willingness, because of various reasons, on the part of moneyed persons to transfer part of their fortune to purchase of estates.

Till 1793, instead of putting the estates on auction for sale, the government preferred to use the old coercive means, such as imprisonment of the defaulters, to realise the arrears of revenue. There were mainly two reasons for this.¹³ Firstly, before 1793, the prices offered for estates were extremely low, even lower than the amount of land revenue on them, and hence their sales were not an effective device for realization of arrears. Secondly, the govt also refrained from such sales, partly out of political considerations, since indiscriminate

12. B.B. Chaudhuri, 'Land Market in Eastern India', 1793-1940, Part 1, Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.12, No.1, 1975, pp.1-2.

13. *ibid.*, p.2.

sales of estates of zamindars in disregard of their antiquity and their place in the rural society, were always attended with some degree of odium.

When the land revenue demand was fixed for ever in the Permanent Settlement areas, the government was more concerned with the stability and security of its income at all costs, and sales of defaulters' estates was judged to be the most effective device towards ensuring this.

The high pitch of land revenue was also responsible, to a large extent, for the auction sales of estates. In Bengal Presidency, between 1765 and 1793 the amount of the revenue nearly doubled itself and a further increase was imposed in 1793.¹⁴ In the Ceded and Conquered districts also, the demand for land revenue was so high after 1801 that the period between 1801 and 1922 was marked by forced sales of land in arrears of revenue.¹⁵ Some writers¹⁶ have even considered the sheer weight of revenue as the most important single factor responsible for transfer of lands.

14. *ibid.*, p.2.

15. W.C.Neale, *op,cit.*, p.56.

16. For example, Asiya Siddiqi, Agrarian Change in a North Indian State, U.P., 1819-33, (London: OUP, 1973), p.101.

Overassessment of revenue has also to be seen in the context of the depressed state of agriculture and its exposure to natural hazards, as well as a considerable part of the income of zamindars being often frozen because of faulty estate management, prevalence of rent-free holdings, etc.¹⁷

The agricultural economy was exposed to all kinds of fluctuations due to lack of security against floods and draughts. Other factors which contributed to this depressed condition were the rapacious exactions of various abwabs⁺ from the peasantry by the zamindars as well as their amlahs⁺⁺. The overall situation was so bad that in describing the condition of petty proprietors the collector of Saran said that they were "worse fed and worse clad than the hired cooly".¹⁸

Furthermore, zamindars, often granted away lands to members of the family and to favourites, or for religious purposes. All this led to a substantial amount of revenue paying land being turned into rent-free land,

17. Manoshi Mitra, op.cit., pp. 91-101.

+ cess or levy in cash or kind in addition to rent.

++ zamindar's retainer or servant.

18. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 92

thus depriving the zamindar of assets when the screw was turned on him by the government.

The largest number of auction sales for arrears of revenue seem to have occurred during the initial periods after the enforcement of sales laws.

In Bihar most such sales were between 1793-94 and 1806-7 and sharply diminished thereafter.¹⁹ In Banaras and the Ceded and Conquered districts also most such sales occurred till 1822.²⁰ However, as the sales for arrears of revenue decreased, the number of auctions to satisfy decrees of courts increased.²¹ In these sales, zamindars who had fallen into debt lost their estates to creditors.

The decline in the auction sales has been related to the increased value of landed property, resulting largely from increased rental assets. An upward trend in land prices was noticeable, in Bihar from 1806-7 onwards. In North-Western provinces also, by the middle of the nineteenth century, land prices had moved sharply upward. In 1837 the average selling price of land was estimated at one and a third times the amount of the revenue demand; in 1848 it rose to three and a half

19. B.B.Chaudhari, Land Market in Eastern India, op.cit., p.6.

20. See, B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.71; and W.C.Neale, op.cit., p.56

21. B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.71.

times the revenue; and in 1861 it rose to about five times the revenue.²² In Ghazipur, the price of land rose from 29 Rs and 8 annas per acre as the average for 1843-52 to 52 Rs and 12 annas per acre as the average for 1873-82.²³

Three sets of circumstances were responsible for the rising land prices since the middle of the nineteenth century.²⁴ Firstly, the large population growth increased the pressure of population on land in the context of extremely limited existence of other means of livelihood.

Secondly, increased income from estates, or at least a certain stability in it. This resulted from numerous circumstances like increase in agricultural prices and increase in cultivation, including cultivation of more valuable cash crops like sugarcane.²⁵ And, especially, where the system of produce rent prevailed (as it prevailed in many areas in Bihar),²⁶ the rising agricultural prices resulted in proportionately increasing the income of the landlords.

Thirdly, several changes in the sale laws and other laws which strengthened the security of creditors also contributed to the rising land prices.

22. Eric Stokes, 'Agrarian Relations: Northern and Central India', in Cambridge Economic History of India, c.1757-c.1970, Vol. II, (Cambridge Uni. Press, 1982), p.55.

23. B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.112.

24. B.B.Chaudhuri, 'Land Market in Eastern India, Part I', op.cit., p.29.

25. B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.113.

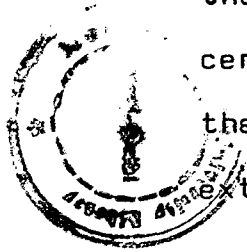
26. See Arvind N.Das, op.cit., p.39.

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Transfer of zamindari estates through auction sales, decrees of courts and private sales remained a characteristic of the rural society throughout the British period, and two factors tended to be increasingly decisive with time in the determination of the level of land prices: the size of rental income from the purchased estate, and the state of the credit market. Developments which resulted in reducing the rental income or the mortgageable value of an estate, and which disturbed the credit market, invariably reduced the land prices. For example, the crash in the land market in 1930s during the economic depression resulted from two factors: the contraction in the supply of money, and the instability in the credit market; and the sharp fall in the rental assets of estates due to various reasons such as low agricultural prices, and the increasing insecurity with time about realizing even this diminished income due to no-rent movements of the peasants.²⁷

Since sales of zamindari estates took place on a large scale, it will be interesting to know the social composition of the buyers and sellers. In Bihar, most of the big families survived and some, for example, the Hathwa family in Saran and Champaran, the Dumraon family and the family of Bhupnarain Singh in Shahabad, even

27. See B.B. Chaudhuri, *Land Market in Eastern India, Part 1*, op.cit., pp.35-36; and, W.C. Neale, op.cit., p.116.

prospered.²⁸ In Shahabad district the losers of land were mainly small estate owners and belonged to Bhumihar and Rajput castes.²⁹ In Saran and Champaran also exchanges of property took place mainly among owners of small and frequently jointly managed estates.³⁰

In Banaras also the main losers of land at auction seem to be from upper castes, such as Rajputs, Brahmins, Bhumihars, and Muslims. The heaviest sellers were Rajputs (See Table 2).

In Bihar, families making fortunes through connections with European traders and the new administration of the Company seem to make an impressive list among the buyers of estates.³¹ Even among these, families connected with the new British administration, connections not necessarily involving any participation in the new trade and business, were the heaviest purchasers.³² Furthermore, the existing zamindars were also significant purchasers. The role of mercantile capital in land purchases was not very

28. B.B. Chaudhuri, 'Land Market in Eastern India, 1793-1940, Part II: The Changing Composition of the Landed Society', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1975, p. 134.

29. Manoshi Mitra, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

30. *ibid.*, p. 114.

31. B.B. Chaudhuri, 'Land Market in Eastern India, Part II', *op.cit.*, p. 143.

32. *ibid.*, p. 143.

significant. The diversion of the mercantile capital, even where it occurred, was seldom done at the cost of the 'business' concerned.³³

Table 2

Sellers of Land at Auction, 1795-1850.
Districts: Banaras, Ghazipur, Ballia, Jaunpur, Mirzapur.

Caste	No.	Revenue	Percent
Rajput	134	191,890	54
Muslim	38	50,380	14
Brahmin	31	34,695	10
Bhumihar	17	21,625	6
Bania	20	24,970	7
Kayastha	2	1,076	-
Low Caste	10	5,287	1
Others	4	1,448	-
Unknown	27	25,199	7
Total	283	356,570	100

Source: B.S.Cohn, 'Structural Change in Indian Rural Society, 1596-1885,' in Robert Eric Frykenberg, ed., Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969. p.72.

33. *ibid.*, p.144

In Banaras region, as Tables 3 and 4 show, besides the Raja of Banaras, three groups seem to form the majority of buyers: the existing zamindars, money-lenders, and the 'new men' associated with the British administration. Moreover, in many cases it was difficult to draw a line between zamindars and money-lenders, because many traders and money-lenders were zamindars and many zamindars engaged in money-lending and trade.³⁴

Table 3

Occupation of Buyers of Land at Auction, 1795-1850.

Districts: Banaras, Ghazipur, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Ballia.

Occupation	No.	Revenue	Percent
Zamindar	61	73,342	21
Raja of Banaras	34	80,391	22
Commerce and Money-Lending	66	91,528	26
Service	46	30,740	9
Law	27	21,193	6
Unknown	49	59,376	16
Toatal	283	356,570	100

Source: B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.74.

Although such land changed hands during the British period, it seems that no effective changes took

34. B.S. Cohn, op.cit., p.75.

Table 4

Social Origin of Revenue Payers Paying More Than
1,000 Rupees Land Revenue Yearly, 1885.

Origin	No.	Revenue	Percent of Revenue
'New Men'	39	397,900	31
Commercial	36	168,400	13
18th-century Aristocrats	8	314,600	25
Traditional Aristocrats	23	243,400	21
Religious Institutions	4	8,200	1
Unknown	24	129,100	9
Total	134	1,261,600	100

Source: B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.78.

place in the structure of the landed society at the local level. "With the sale of their property, the legal position of the traditional zamindars changed; but in many cases their economic, social, and political position within their villages and taluks was little affected."³⁵ Various devices were open to the zamindars for retaining effective control over the better part of their estates.

In some instances what was found to operate was the zamindars' control over the village accounts and the

35. *ibid.*, p.112.

accountant(patwari) who worked to retain his control over the estate.³⁶ This resulted in submission of false information with regard to the quality of different lands and their values. When sales took place under such circumstances, the purchaser was unlikely to be able to meet the demands of the government and was likely to relinquish his purchase.

In many instances, the former zamindar continued to hold potentially the most productive fields. When an estate was sold, the previous zamindar was allowed to keep, at a low revenue rate, that land which he had cultivated for his own use as his home farm(sirland). In some estates, the sirland of the zamindars amounted to as much as 75 percent of all cultivated land.³⁷

Furthermore, in many cases, zamindars using their hereditary and caste and clan ties with the tenants were able to successfully ward off usurption of their land by an outsider.³⁸

Thus, the traditional landed society had its own innate capacity to ward off dispossession even when the British rule authorised it. Clan and caste ties, long-term domination over village functionaries and the peasantry,

36. Manoshi Mitra, op.cit., p.102.

37. B.S.Cohn, op.cit., p.91; see also, Erik Stokes, op.cit., pp.161-71.

38. Manoshi Mitra, op.cit., pp.103-104.

as well as legal loopholes all helped the old landed classes to maintain their effective control of their lands even when faced with threats of eviction.

The above discussion constitutes only one part of the land market. The other part constitutes the alienation of peasants' holding which took place on a large scale during the British Period.

Alienation of peasants' holding was mainly caused by the permanent background of their indebtedness.³⁹ There were several factors contributing to peasants' indebtedness during the British rule. Firstly, the rents and various illegal abwabs exacted by the zamindars were so high that it left very little to the peasants to subsist on. This necessitated grain loan, both for food and seeds. But given the small size of the peasants' holdings, even in normal years production could not increase to an extent to enable them to pay off their old debts and still to have enough to subsist on. Add to it the high rate of interest exacted by money-lenders, and their chances of getting rid of debts nearly disappeared. Thus, the money-lenders, through debt devices, could also have control over much of the local stock of grain. And it was this stock which went into the making of the export grain-fund.

39. See, B.B. Chaudhuri, 'The Process of Depeasantisation in Bengal and Bihar, 1885-1947', Indian Historical Review, Vol.2, No.1, 1975; Asiya Siddiqi, *op.cit.*, pp.132-133; Elizabeth Whitecombe, Agrarian Conditions in Northern India, Vol.1, (California, 1971), pp.132-33.

Secondly, the prevalence of money rents, encouraged by the British govt, induced the peasants to grow commercial crops on cash loans. The timing of this loans conveniently coincided with the timing of the rent payments. And, since profits from cash crops like sugarcane, indigo and opium, seldom reached to the pocket of the peasants, the growth of commercial crops resulted in further indebting them. Furthermore, since the usual time for the repayment of money loans was harvest time, the peasants required a relatively large amount of grain to convert it into cash, due to usually low agricultural prices at harvest time.

Table 5
Alienation of Peasants' Holdings(1885-95)

Distt.	Total No. of alienation	Percentage of alienation by mortgage	Percentage of alienation to ryots
Saran	95,233	98(approx.)	83.9
Champanan	18.890	77 ,,	55

Source: B.B.Chaudhuri, 'Rural Credit Relations in Bengal, 1859-1885,' Indian Economic and Social History Review, 6,3, 1969, p.223.

Transfer of peasants' land to creditors was mostly through mortgage rather than through outright sale(see Table 5). Alienation by mortgage was invariably to creditors. Table 5 also shows that majority of the creditors were affluent ryots. The creditors, primarily interested in the

total size of their appropriations from debtors over the years, often found that merely ousting a debtor and owning his lands did not necessarily serve their purpose. Continuing mortgage keeps the peasant in his power and enables him to make as much out of him as he can.

During the early British rule, due to limited marketability of peasants' holdings and low agricultural prices, the creditors were not interested in confiscating peasants' holdings. In that situation, their interest was to keep their debtors in a state of dependence by various means of heavy charges so that he must continue to pay up indefinitely. But things changed gradually. Rising land values resulting from the increasing demand for land, rising agricultural prices, better definition by law of the peasants' rights in the land, etc. made possession of land increasingly attractive to creditors.

Growth of Commercial Crops

The growth of commercial crops was an important feature of the entire Bhojpuri region during the British rule. Among the commercial crops which came to be grown the most important ones were poppy, sugarcane and indigo.

Poppy, sugarcane and indigo cultivation had certain common features.⁴⁰ First, none of them could be

40. See, Girish Mishra, Agrarian Problems of Permanent Settlement: A Case Study of Champaran, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1978), p.79.

locally consumed by the growers or the local population in a substantial quantity. Further, poppy and indigo were almost not consumed by the local population at all. They were produced in response to not internal but external demand. Second, the production of all the three crops was organised by outside agencies. In the case of poppy it was the government which organised and regulated the production while in the case of indigo and sugarcane the foreign and Indian entrepreneurs played the role of organisers. Thus the growers did not have any direct contact with the buyers or the market. Third, advances were given in all the three cases to meet the initial expenses of cultivation and to act as inducements.

Poppy

In British India, the importance of opium increased with the development of trade relations among Britain, India and China. Opium was produced mainly for sale in China. As the demand in China grew the cultivation of Poppy increased here.

Another distinctive feature was the establishment of the government monopoly over the cultivation of poppy and the production and sale of opium. "In Bengal the cultivation of poppy was altogether prohibited except for the purpose of selling the juice to the Government. Cultivators willing to cultivate the plant were permitted to do so

only on condition of their delivering the juice to the Government at a fixed price."⁴¹ Whatever the quantity of this crop the peasant could grow was on the basis of the advances from the government. Poppy grown in violation of this condition was destroyed. A raiyat who failed to cultivate the area specified in the agreement was liable to a penalty of three times the amount advanced. Likewise the failure to deliver the specified amount of poppy was declared a serious offence.

Since the government had the sole control over poppy cultivation, it was government decision to increase or reduce cultivation that were responsible for the changes in its size. The government policy was to derive the maximum amount of revenue from exercising a monopoly control over the market. "The method adopted to that end was to maintain poppy cultivation at the level at which a relatively high prices resulting from insufficient production would not encourage the import of opium into China from other countries, or the cultivation of poppy in China itself, or large production resulting in the fall in the market price of opium and at the same time increasing the cost of opium manufacture would not reduce the revenue of the government."⁴²

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41. Romesh Dutt, The Economic History of India, Vol.2, Publications Division, Govt of India, Second Reprint, 1970, pp.110-111.
42. B.B.Chaudhuri, 'Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal 1859-85', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.7, No.1, 1970, p.50.

Given such a policy, wide fluctuations in the extent of poppy cultivation was inevitable. However, despite periodical variations the long term trend was a considerable growth.

Table 6
Area Under Poppy Cultivation

Year	Area (in bighas)		year	Area (in bighas)	
	Bihar	Banaras		Bihar	Banaras
1860-61	281,126	154,211	1875-76	470,926	378,242
1861-62	398,251	222,914	1876-77	517,337	372,245
1862-63	425,353	287,008	1877-78	405,622	342,663
1863-64	450,552	358,107	1878-79	415,289	305,820
1864-65	417,344	347,840	1879-80	461,086	438,531
1865-66	410,505	227,325	1880-81	434,786	423,265
1866-67	444,530	257,546	1881-82	460,382	389,659
1867-68	461,675	265,572	1882-83	394,232	398,952
1868-69	416,554	287,785	1883-84	399,518	409,831
1869-70	468,584	307,446	1884-85	433,161	471,232
1870-71	487,550	337,812	1885-86	453,510	498,360
1871-72	497,801	358,922	1886-87	458,266	441,018
1872-73	471,780	342,705	1887-88	447,759	410,813
1873-74	410,278	319,432	1888-89	405,860	329,917
1874-75	510,313	359,354	1889-90	398,230	373,561

Source: B.B. Chaudhuri, 'The Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal, 1859-85', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1970, p. 49.

While the peasantry found the advances lucrative, being interest free, and made during the lean period, there were certain issues linked with the cultivation of poppy which made it a largely unprofitable

and less attractive option. Firstly, opium occupied the best lands, and required a great deal of labour and skill in its cultivation. It was 'relatively unprofitable when the costs of labour were taken into account.'⁴³ Secondly, as the acreage under poppy cultivation was decided by the government and was subject to wide fluctuations, the peasants found themselves in a peculiar situation. When the Government decided to reduce the acreage and, therefore, the advances paid to the peasants, the peasants were left with no resources. Thirdly, the advances were paid to the peasants by the government through agents who were generally village money-lenders. The government policy of limiting the area under cultivation meant that some peasants eager to grow poppy had to be denied the opportunities to do so either totally or partially. This provided the agents with extra economic power. "They often misused their position to exact illegal cesses and make unauthorised deduction from the amounts due to growers on account of dryage and wastage".⁴⁴ Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, peasants continued to grow poppy partly because of their need to pay rent and debts in cash, and partly because they

43. C.A. Bayly, 'The Age of Hiatus: The North Indian Economy and Society, 1830-50', p.93, in C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright, ed., Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation, (London: Uni. of London, 1976).

44. Girish Mishra, Agrarian Problems of Permanent Settlement, op.cit., p.21.

could not disassociate from it due to their indebtedness to planters themselves.

Sugarcane

The growth in the cultivation of sugarcane had two phases. While in the first half of the nineteenth century it was almost entirely due to foreign demand for sugar, since the last three or four decades of the 19th century it was almost entirely due to internal demand. However, during the first quarter of the 19th century, sugar was not an important article of export.⁴⁵ The chief reason for this was that till 1836, there was a high duty on Indian sugar in the British market compared to the West Indian sugar which was its chief rival in this market.⁴⁶ In spite of this India was able to export sugar mainly due to the smaller cost of manufacturing sugar here and the increasing importance of sugar trade as a medium of remittance for India to England in the context of a sharp decline in India's export trade in cotton goods.⁴⁷

The equalization of duties in 1836 and the dislocation in the West Indian sugar industry caused by the

45. Shahid Amin, Sugarcane and Sugar in Gorakhpur, (Delhi: OUP, 1984), p.16.

46. Shahid Amin, *ibid.*, p.16; see also, B.B. Chaudhuri, 'Growth of Commercial Agriculture', *op.cit.*, p.43.

47. B.B. Chaudhuri, 'Growth of Commercial Agriculture in Bengal', *op.cit.*, p.43.

emancipation of slaves(1833), who provided the necessary labour for the industry, opened up a vast market for Indian sugar in Britain.⁴⁸

In Azamgarh, in 1836-7, sugarcane occupied 57,877 acres or 9.4 percent of the cultivated area and it was regarded as 'one of the greatest sugar districts in India'.⁴⁹ The sudden collapse of the sugar industry in West Indies led many West Indian planters to try their luck in India, and this led in 1846 to the sugar craze in Bihar. But the Bihar sugar craze soon petered out and later gave place to Indigo plantations on a much larger scale. In Gorakhpur the plantation drive coincided with the attempt by the local administration to extend the frontiers of cultivation. In 1831, a scheme of jungle grants on very lenient revenue for a period of fifty years was initiated. The applicants for these jungle grants for the most part were Europeans backed by the mercantile houses of Calcutta. These European speculators, either as planters, landlords or simply as traders, were instrumental in giving a tremendous boost to sugar production between 1836 and 1848.⁵⁰ In 1848, Banaras division was considered the prin-

48. *ibid.*, p.43; C.A.Bayly, *op.cit.*,p.91; Shahid Amin, *op.cit.*, p.26.

49. Shahid Amin, *op.cit.*, p.24.

50. *ibid.*, p.30.

cipal sugar growing area to which Calcutta looked for its supplies chiefly for exports. Thus, there was a big boom in the sugar exports from eastern India to Britain via Calcutta (See Table 7; the statistics pertain basically to the sugar production in eastern U.P. and North Bihar, as these were the areas of greatest activity).⁵¹

Table 7
Export of Sugar from Calcutta to England, 1833-47.

Year	Tons	Year	Tons
1833-4	1,554	1840-1	66,031
1834-5	2,435	1841-2	55,823
1835-6	7,525	1842-3	60,505
1836-7	14,033	1843-4	59,095
1837-8	22,956	1844-5	58,385
1838-9	22,403	1845-6	67,000
1839-40	28,401	1846-7	80,021

Source: Shahid Amin, Sugarcane and Sugar in Gorakhpur, (Delhi: OUP, 1984), p.27.

In the late 1840s the Indian sugar collapsed in the London market. The chief reason was that 'the gradual triumph of free-trade opened the market to numerous slave-produced foreign sugars after 1849 which had been excluded from the English market in earlier days.'⁵² Since

51. *ibid.*, p.30.

52. *ibid.*, p.32; see also C.A.Bayly *op.cit.*, p.91.

then afterwards sugarcane was grown mainly due to internal demands.

Sugarcane cultivation was carried on by the peasants under an agreement with the sugar refiners or gur traders/money lenders. Under the agreement the peasants had to deliver the gur produced in return for a cash advance. Gur was either hypothecated to the trader or sugar refiner below the market rate, or a high interest for the cash advance was charged if it was bought at the market price.⁵³ Advances were given either directly to the peasants by the refiners or distributed through the landlords. One of the factors which compelled the peasants to take cash advances was the necessity to pay rent qists (instalments). But it was also not unusual to find peasants who had mortgaged their standing crop for grain loans for seed and consumption. Thus a close link between moneylending, sugar refining and landlordism developed which dominated the cane-growing peasantry. When during 1930s a doubling of cane acreage took place in response to the demands of the sugar mills, landlords and moneylenders were still able to mediate between the peasants and the sugar manufacturers.

53. Shahād Amin, op.cit., p.62.

At each stage of the transaction in this peasant-money-lender-landlord-refiner link the peasant was denied his legitimate share of the market price. The produce was hypothecated at a rate below the market rate, the peasant was regularly underweighed, and even the charge for the Karah (boiling pan) that was hired by the peasant was pitched at a very high level.⁵⁴ But still the complex system of indebtedness and dependence forced the peasant to cultivate sugarcane primarily for raising cash for payment of rent and debts.

Indigo

The role of indigo as a means of remittance to Europe had been growing since the end of the 18th century. European merchants and servants of the East India Company used to transfer their private fortunes from India to Europe by means of bills of exchange on the agency houses or on the court of Directors in London. The credit which the agency houses and the Company obtained in India by the sale of their bills was used by them to buy Indian goods for export. The demand for indigo in the European market made it a useful commodity for these remittances, and since the late 18th century, both the Calcutta agency houses and the Company had begun to develop its production and export.

54. Shahid Amin, op.cit., p.64.

A sudden increase in demand for indigo in 1819 and an exceptional rise in its price led to an expansion of indigo cultivation in Bengal, Bihar and the North-Western Provinces.⁵⁵ In North Bihar it got a further boost during 1860s. There were mainly two reasons for this.⁵⁶ Firstly, the breakdown of the indigo system in Bengal proper led to the transfer of a part of capital invested in Bengal to Bihar. Secondly, the revolt of 1857 was more serious in Bihar and the planters in North Bihar proved to be strong props of the Company's rule. As a result, the attitude of the govt became much more favourable to them and the hands of the planters were strengthened.

There was a continuous expansion in indigo cultivation till 1890s and there was a sharp decline thereafter. The declining trend was the result of an outside factor.⁵⁷ Germany introduced a cheap synthetic dye in 1896-97 in the world market on a large scale and the demand for natural dye fell. The outbreak of the first World War gave a temporary lease of life to indigo industry because the supply of the synthetic dye from Germany stopped. But as the war

55. Asiya Siddiqi, op.cit., p.142.

56. Girish Mishra, 'Indigo Plantation and the Agrarian Relations in Champaran during the 19th century', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.3, No.4, 1966, pp.334-35.

57. Girish Mishra, Agrarian Problems of Permanent Settlement, op.cit., pp.103-105.

came to an end, indigo cultivation once again became unprofitable due to resumption of the supply of synthetic dye from Germany, and after 1931-32 indigo cultivation almost completely vanished.

Indigo plantation was primarily an European enterprise, mostly British. And the planters seldom came out of Europe with capital. By 1830 none had done so. Rather they raised capital by borrowing from Indians, from European servants of the Company or from agency houses in Calcutta.⁵⁸

Indigo cultivation was practised in Bihar mainly under two systems: zerait and assamiwar. Under the zerait system, the planter cultivated the plant on his own lands, of which he was either the zamindar or which he had taken on lease from a zamindar. The planters under this system used to cultivate the land in their possession with the help of their own ploughs and bullocks and hired labour. The tenants were liable to render service on the land and to have their bullocks and ploughs impressed for such cultivation under the orders of the factory. The factory had to pay them for this, but usually the zerait system was built

58. D.H. Buchanan, The Development of Capitalistic Enterprise in India, (New York: 1966), p.37; see also Asiya Siddiqi, op.cit., p.145.

upon unpaid or nominally paid labour.⁵⁹ However, the zeraif system was not widely practised due to such problems as of ensured labour supply during the peak season.

The most popular system under which indigo was cultivated was the assamiwar system. Under this system the planters acquired leases(thika) from zamindars at a fixed rental either for a certain term of years or until a sum of money advanced or usufructuary mortgage was repaid. Planters executed agreements with the peasants to cultivate indigo on a portion of their holdings on receiving a cash advance. If the peasant failed to grow indigo he was liable to pay heavy sums by way of damages for his breach. If the crop was not good, then whatever the reason for it may be, the peasant would receive a reduced price. Even the normal price for indigo paid to the peasants was very low. This can also be proved from the fact that most often the planters paid a larger sum to the zamindars than the actual rental and still they appropriated huge profits.

On taking thika from zamindars the planters acquired all the coercive powers of landlords. A thika had, thus, a double-edged advantage for the planters. It gave them power over the cultivators and bought off any

59. S.K.Mittal, Peasant Uprisings and Mahatma Gandhi in North Bihar, (Meerut: Anu Prakashan, 1978), p.38.

opposition from the landlords. However, another element was added to the power of the planters - the debt servitude of the peasants. Since the best lands were taken for indigo cultivation, and the peasant had to shoulder all the risks of the failure of the crop, one or two bad seasons meant that he became indebted to the planter. This load of debt was passed from generation to generation. "If you sign an indigo contract you won't be free for seven generations" was a saying in the villages.⁶⁰

The peasants had to face many other kinds of oppression. The planters had the first call on peasants' ploughs, bullocks, carts, and labour. For this they got very little or no payment and their own work suffered. Factories had also all the goonda elements in their service and they indulged in constant harassing of the peasants. The planters also, like zamindars, exacted from the peasants many kinds of illegal cesses.⁶¹ Furthermore, a system of land rotation called 'badlain' did exist. When indigo had been grown on a plot of land for three or four years it was exchanged with the cultivators for another. In exchange the cultivators were given a piece of factory's zerat land.

60. D.H. Buchanan, op.cit., p.45.

61. Girish Mishra, 'Indigo Plantation and the Agrarian Relations in Champaran', op.cit., p.349.

After two or three years cultivators and factory took possession once again of their original land. "But local officials doubted whether this final restitution ever took place. As both plots were registered as zerat the door was open for the factory to claim both lands as zerat and by this form of exchange to break hopelessly the ryots' right of occupancy."⁶²

When during the early nineteenth century, indigo industry began to suffer from the competition of the artificial dye in Europe and investments in indigo factories resulted in a dead loss, the planters devised yet another means to exploit the cultivators and to transfer their loss on to the shoulders of the cultivators. The planters now asserted the claim that the obligation on part of cultivators to grow indigo on a specified portion of their holdings was an incident of tenancy and one of the conditions of this tenancy was the obligation to grow indigo. Hence, they now claimed compensation from the tenants for releasing them from the obligation to grow indigo. They introduced various systems like sharabheshi, tawan, Hunda, Harja, etc., to accomplish this.⁶³

62. Colin M. Fisher, 'Planters and Peasants: The Ecological Context of Agrarian Unrest on the Indigo Plantations of North Bihar, 1820-1920,' in A.G. Hopkins and C. Dewey, ed., The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India, (London: The Athlone Press, 1978) p.121.

63. See S.K. Mittal, op.cit., pp.58-59; and Girish Mishra, 'The Socio-Economic Background of Gandhi's Champaran Movement', Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.5, no.3, 1968, pp.254-59.

Under sharabheshi agreements were executed by the tenants for payment of enhanced rents. In other cases the tenants purchased freedom from indigo for a lump sum, sometimes paid in cash and sometimes by a money bond bearing 12 percent interest. This method was called tawan. Some factories compelled the tenants to grow paddy instead of indigo and paid a nominal price for it or, in some cases, instead of paddy its price was realized. This system was called hunda. Yet in another cases, a yearly payment at the rate of Rs3 per bigha was realized from the tenants as long as the planter did not require indigo to be grown.

The tenants were made to sign these agreements by force and intimidation. "Not one or two but thousands and thousands of tenants solemnly made the assertion before Mahatma Gandhi that they signed or put their thumb impression on enhancement contracts under compulsion after being dishonoured and beaten."⁶⁴

From the above discussion about the growth of commercial agriculture certain conclusions emerge. Firstly, the growth of commercial agriculture was mostly related to external factors. Secondly, it was a forced commercialisation based on the operation of usurious capital and in most cases petty oppression. Thirdly, it led to an increase in peasants' indebtedness. Fourthly, while peasants

64. S.K.Mittal, op.cit., p.59.

did not get any benefit from the growing market for commercial crops, the planters reaped enormous profits. And, since most of the planters were Europeans, the huge capital accumulated went out of the country and was not reinvested in agriculture here. This made the entire base of production organisation perpetually weak and depressed. Lastly, the cultivation of commercial crops brought about a change in the production organisation itself. While the cultivation was still based on the peasant family, the autonomy of decision making regarding the production process was taken away from peasants. This further meant that whenever prices for food grain rose and peasants found it more profitable to shift to food crop cultivation, they could not do so because of the planters' monopoly over their production process.

CHAPTER III

AGRARIAN ECONOMY IN THE POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

During the decades immediately preceding the eve of 'Independence', the Indian rural scene was marked by large scale armed peasant revolts against zamindars-moneylenders-traders. The sentiments these peasant revolts generated and the ideas it aroused "compelled the state to try to reform the agrarian structure, lest peasant fury should become uncontrollable and result in overthrowing the very institution of private property as in China".¹

Land Reforms

One of the major step taken up by the Indian state immediately after 'Independence' to reform the agrarian structure was the various land reforms measures. Immediately after 'Independence' land reform legislations were enacted by the governments in various States to undo the "injustice of the British rule". The official motives behind it were many: to transfer the ownership of land from the non-cultivating 'intermediaries' to 'actual cultivators';

1. Arvind N. Das, Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980, (Delhi: Manohar, 1983), p.184.

to maximize production by organising agriculture on the basis of either medium sized, owner-cultivated holdings or of cooperatives; and, above all, to abolish, or at least bring into control, the social and economic inequalities among different sections of the rural population and to create a more egalitarian, a more 'socialistic' society.²

Land reform measures had two phases. The first phase was concerned with the abolition of zamindari system and the second phase was concerned with limiting the size of holdings.

The history of zamindari abolition in Uttar Pradesh has been a relatively smooth one in comparison to that in Bihar. But, then, even the normal process of enactment of zamindari Abolition Acts was a much time-taking and prolonged one. In August, 1946, the U.P. legislature passed a resolution supporting the principle of zamindari abolition. But it took the government almost five years to have a Zamindari Abolition Act finally in 1951.

The history of zamindari abolition in Bihar has been the most stormy one, and it is a case which most

2. W.C.Neale, Land Reform in Uttar Pradesh, India, (Agency for International Development, Spring Review), 1970, p.42.

clearly shows the collusion of zamindars and the government leaders of the time in their attempt to prevent or, at least stall, the zamindari abolition.³ After the introduction of the Bihar Abolition of Zamindari Bill in the Assembly in 1947, the zamindars of Bihar moved heaven and earth to prevent, or at least stall, the abolition of zamindari. They launched a three-pronged attack - assault on the tenants, wooing of Congress leaders and obstructing the passage and implementation of the legislation through fillibustering in the Assembly and dilatory tactics in the courts.

There was a systematic attempt by the zamindars in 1947-49 to demoralise the tenantry by physically assaulting them and their leaders. They even organised private armies and made attempts to take forcible possession of bakasht⁴ and other lands occupied by the tenants, and in the clashes which occurred many tenants were killed and many were maimed and seriously injured. When the landlords saw that direct repression was not adequate, they even threatened to have the tenants' villages bombed from the

3. The following account is taken from, Arvind N.Das, op.cit., pp.188-200.

4. Bakasht lands are lands resumed by landlords from tenants for the latter's failure to pay rent; subsequently supposedly directly cultivated by the landlord but often let out to share-croppers.

air. The police and other functionaries of the state were drafted in to protect 'law and order' and several tenants died at their hands also. Finding that even this did not help in silencing the demands for abolition of zamindari, the landlords indulged in defaming the pro-abolition leaders like K.B.Sahay, the then Revenue Minister of Bihar. When nothing seemed to succeed, the zamindars tried to get K.B.Sahay dropped from the Ministry. And when even that was forestalled, a few days before the Zamindari Abolition Bill was to be introduced in the Assembly, Sahay was run over and seriously injured in a motor accident. In addition to physical assaults, zamindars also tried to prevent the abolition of zamindari through lobbying with the Congress leaders. And, they found at least some sympathetic ears. First, they canvassed with the Father of the Nation himself. "In a Prayer Meeting at Patna Gandhiji said he had also a visit from the zamindars who, among other things, had complained of growing lawlessness among peasantry and labour. He deplored the fact...Such lawlessness was criminal and bound to involve the very peasantry and labour in ruin..."⁵ Statements like this tremendously boosted the morale of the zamindars.

5. The Searchlight, 19 April 1947, cited in Arvind N.Das, op.cit., p.191.

The zamindars got less ambiguous support from other Congressmen, the most prominent among them being Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic of India. Rajendra Prasad, whose family had for long served the Hathwa Raj as employees and held a small zamindari itself, was expected to be sympathetic towards the zamindars as indeed he turned out to be in full measure. In 1947 one group of zamindars appealed to him telegraphically as follows: "Hon'ble Rajendra Prasad New Delhi In Honour Gandhijayanti Appealing Peace Kindly Drop Abolition Zamindari Save Country Civil War".⁶ While even Rajendra Prasad could not publicly go against the stated policy of the Congress, he tried to delay zamindari abolition for as long as possible and chastised K.B.Sahay for moving so rapidly in the direction of implementing the Congress Manifesto.

Even after the zamindari Abolition Bill was finally about to be passed, important Congress leaders like Sardar Patel raised the question of compensation. He said: ". . . The Congress Governments . . . were bound to pay adequate compensation by their election manifesto. They need not be afraid of the socialists and communists. To take away Zamindaris without compensation would amount to robbery..

6. cited in A.N.Das, op.cit., p.193.

compensation must be adequate and not nominal.."⁷

The third tactic of the zamindars, that of utilizing the dilatory procedures in the legislature, bureaucracy and the courts paid off. With more than 300 amendments moved by the landlords in the Assembly, the Bihar Zamindari Abolition Bill was passed by the government in 1947 and, after the approval of the Governor-General, was finally published in 1949 as the Bihar Abolition of Zamindari Act, 1948. But the zamindars challenged several times the constitutionality and validity of the Act and only in 1952 it could become finally ready for implementation as the Bihar Land Reforms Act, 1950. At this stage, the zamindars found still another means of blocking the action. They simply refused to hand over to the state their rent rolls and related village records, and therefore, the Act had to be amended in 1954 to remove some of the procedural impediments to its implementation.⁸ Thus, through this delays eight valuable years were lost during which most of the zamindars remained in the legal possession of their holdings.

In both U.P. and Bihar, the zamindars took advantage of the delays "to put through paper partition of

7. The Searchlight, 10 January 1948, cited in Arvind.N. Das, op.cit., pp.196-97.

8. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India, (Delhi, 1956), p.19; F. Tomasson Jannuzi, Land Reform in Bihar, India, (Agency for International Development, Spring Review), 1970, pp.23-4.

joint-family properties, to suborn village officials into falsifying crucial records, to intimidate tenants or cropsharers into registering themselves as farm-servants or wage labourers, and in every way to impress upon the lesser folk of the village that, whatever may happen in the state capital, the powers that regulate the daily life of the countryside will continue to do so".⁹

The new laws of the Zamindari Abolition Acts legally abolished the zamindars' rights to collect rent and their rights in trees, forests, fisheries, minerals, mines, bazaars, etc. These rights were now vested in the state. The same laws relieved the zamindars of their responsibility for paying land revenue on such lands. For the loss the zamindars suffered from losing their rights to collect rent they were legally assured of compensation. The total compensation to be paid to the ex-zamindars was estimated at Rs1510 million in Bihar and Rs1634 million in U.P. (See Table 8). Of all the permanently settled States Bihar and U.P. had to pay compensation at the highest rates per acre. This policy only reflected the anxiety of the government to appease the ex-zamindars who had a firm grip on the social leadership in the countryside.

9. Daniel Thorner, op.cit., p.20.

The zamindars did not lose all the rights in land. In both U.P. and Bihar, they were allowed to retain their sir and khudkash land or land in "khas possession".¹⁰ Such lands were supposedly lands under their 'personal cultivation' prior to zamindari abolition. The official definition of 'personal cultivation' did not require a person to participate in actual agricultural operations, but covered even a person who cultivated his lands by his tenants, hired labour or stock, bore the entire risk of cultivation and undertook supervision either himself or through another member of the family, or even through a paid manager.¹¹

The zamindari interests were quick to exploit this broad definition of 'personal cultivation'. The provision made possible the legal eviction of thousands of tenants who could not prove that they possessed an occupancy right to the lands they had customarily tilled. Thousands were evicted illegally, by brute force. Pressures and terror were applied to assure that the cultivating tenant recognised that he had been working only as a personal servant of the zamindar or even as his hired labourer. In this manner 'khas' possessions were extended. In Bihar, an

10. See Daniel Thorner, *op.cit.*, p.24; and F.Tomasson Jannuzi, *op.cit.*, p.30.

11. See Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee, Vol.1, (Allahabad, Allahabad, 1948), p.364; and F.Tomasson Jannuzi, *op.cit.*, p.32.

Table 8

Magnitude of Compensation to be Paid to Ex-Intermediaries in Some Selected Permanently Settled States.

States	Acreage(in millions)	Total Compensation(in million) (Rs.)	Per acre compensation (Rs.)
Bihar	39.64	1,510	39
West Bengal	28	560	20
Assam	1.67	37	22
U.P.	52.52	1,634	31
Madras	17.42	207	15

Source: Gyaneshwar Ojha, Land Problems and Land Reforms, (New Delhi: Sultan Chand & Sons, Undated).

earlier estimate of the Revenue Department, about the effects of zamindari abolition, had placed the land that remained in the 'khas' possession of the ex-zamindars as 15 lakh acres.¹² Even prior to zamindari abolition, the Great Depression and the hectic days of the last few years of British rule had only helped the zamindars in extending their private possessions, so much so that on the eve of zamindari abolition the unlet sir and khudkast in U.P. amounted to 6 million acres.¹³

12. G.Ojha, Land Problems and Land Reforms, (New Delhi), undated, p.58.

13. Daniel Thorner, *op.cit.*, pp.22-23, 47.

Thus, one of the major consequences of zamindari abolition on economic inequalities was the overnight down-grading of the tenant-cultivators (particularly the small tenants and tenants-at-will) into landless labours.¹⁴ Even where the tenant did not find himself thrust into the ranks of landless labourers, he has continued to till the same lands under leases which do not jeopardise the zamindars' "khas possession" of the land. Tenancy is pushed underground, resulting in demands of exorbitant rents from tenants.¹⁵

The provision for the resumption of land for personal cultivation had two other implications resulting from the particular definition of the term "cultivator". Firstly, it left plenty of room for the persistence of non-tilling absentee landlords. The U.P. Zamindari Abolition Act provided even a legal basis for the continuance of the cropsharing system by introducing a category of "shajidars" which, in practice, was not distinguishable from the previous cropsharers.¹⁶ Secondly, since the underlying official logic behind the particular definition of

14. Anand Chakravarti, 'Some Aspects of Inequality in Rural India: A Sociological Perspective', in Andre Beteille, ed., Equality and Inequality, (Delhi: OUP, 1983), p.156.

15. WolfLadejinsky, Agrarian Reforms as Unfinished Business, (Oxford: OUP, 1970), p.336.

16. Daniel Thorner and Alice Thorner, Land and Labour in India, (Bombay: Asia Pub. House, 1962), p.7.

"cultivator" was that high-caste people are forbidden by their custom to participate in manual labour, the government by adopting such a definition, perpetuated one of the major sources of social inequality in India.

The second phase of land reform was concerned with limiting the size of the landholding sizes. But this time also the Acts contained various "flexible" clauses. For example, certain lands were liable to exemption from ceiling on following grounds: tea, coffee and rubber plantation; orchards constituting reasonably compact areas; specialized farms engaged in cattle breeding, diary, wool-raising, etc.; sugarcane farms operated by sugar factories; and efficiently managed farms consisting of compact blocks, on which heavy investment or permanent structural improvements have been made and whose break-up would lead to a fall in production.¹⁷

The innumerable loopholes in the land ceiling Acts were utilized by the landlords to set their records right. They evaded the laws through various devices!¹⁸

17. G.Ohja, op.cit., p. 112-13.

18. See Rajendra Singh, 'Agrarian Social Structure and Peasant Unrest: A Study of Land-Grab Movement in District Basti, East U.P.', Sociological Bulletin, Vol.23, No.1, 1974, p. 54; also see F.Tomasson Jannuzi, op.cit., pp. 36-37.

fictitious partitions among family members living, dead, and non-existent; fictitious land transfer in the name of loyal tenants or distant relations; transfer of land in the name of trusts like schools, temples which are mostly non-existent or in cases where they exist their manager or president is the landlord himself; establishing bogus 'co-operative farms'. One estimate puts the total area of fictitious transfers in Bihar during 1952-62 through sale deed over and above the normal rate of area annually transferred as amounting to nearly six lakh acres.¹⁹ Another result was that many tenants who survived the zamindars' offensive during the fifties were evicted during the sixties during the second offensive instigated by the ceiling Acts.²⁰

Thus, the land reform measures could not bring about any radical change in the structure of landholding. Its various provisions prevented the breaking-up of the land concentration in the agricultural sector. In fact, the methods for evading any change in the landholding pattern were manytimes suggested by the various provisions of the Acts itself.

19. G.Ojha, op.cit., Table 6.3, p.125.

20. F.Tomasson Jannuzi, Agrarian Crisis in India: The Case of Bihar, (Poona: 1974), p.83.

The larger the holdings, the greater was the power of the zamindar, both prior to and after the enactment of the legislations, to exercise political leverage, legal evasion and intimidation of tenants to protect his interests, and even to ensure that he received some compensation for those interests that he did lose.

The New Land-Tenure Structure Created By Land Reforms

One of the major goals of land reform was to create a new type of land-tenure structure which will be conducive to the development of the agricultural sector. The UP Zamindari Abolition Act created four types of tenures: Bhumidhari, Sirdari, Asami and Adhivasi.²¹

Former zamindars, and occupancy or hereditary tenants who had the right to transfer land by sale (there were few of the last two classes) were given bhumidhari tenure. Bhumidhars have the absolute security of tenure; they cannot be ejected for any reason whatsoever. They alone have the right to sell their land. The claim of the State upon bhumidhars is restricted to the amount of the old land revenue assessed on the portion of the holding which is retained. A total of about two million zamindars in UP benefited from this provision. Thus, the vast majority of the intermediaries were transferred by the Act

21. See, W.C.Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, op.cit., pp.226-29; and Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India, op.cit., pp.24-25.

into a class of privileged agriculturists.

The status of sirdars was conferred upon the entire group of previous occupancy tenants and hereditary tenants, as well as certain other long-term tenants, sub-tenants, and, in special cases non-occupancy tenants. Tenants on the leased-out sir of the larger zamindars were granted the status of hereditary tenants and thus also qualified as sirdars. The category of sirdar included no less than two-thirds of the total number of tenants and applied to nearly three-fourths of the cultivated land (see Table 9). The sirdar cannot sell or mortgage his land. There is no provision for any other form of transfer except inheritance. He can use it for agricultural or horticultural purposes only, and, he can be ejected from it for illegally transferring the land or misusing it. The sirdars are required to pay to the state as land revenue exactly the same amount which they were formerly paying to the zamindars as rent.

The asami and adhivasi tenures were created to provide a new status for the remaining group, the inferior tenants with the weakest rights in land. The asamis comprised primarily the pre-1947 non-occupancy tenants and other groups with short-lived tenancy rights. Adhivasi tenure was devised for the former tenants-at-will on the sirlands of the smaller zamindars. Both the asamis and adhivasis

continued to hold lands as tenants under the newly created bhumidhars and sirdars. An asami can be ejected from his land whenever he falls in arrears of rent or when the terms of his holding expire. Adhivasi rights were to disappear as

Table 9
Percentage of Land Held and Land Revenue Paid by the
New Tenure-Holders in Uttar Pradesh

Class	Percentage of acreage in 1953	Percentage of revenue in 1953	Percentage of acreage in 1957
Bhumidhars	31	17	31.3
Sirdars	63	75	67.2
Asamis	1	1	0.6
Adhivasis	5	7	0.9

Source: W.C. Neale, Economic Change in Rural India, (New Haven and London: Yale Uni. Press, 1962), p.241.

they purchased bhumidari rights or surrendered the land, but in 1954 adhivasis were granted sirdari status.

Provisions were also made for sirdars, asamis and adhivasis to achieve bhumidhari status on purchase.²² Sirdars, in order to become bhumidhars, must pay to the State a lump sum equal to ten times the former rent, or, in four instalments, a sum equal to twelve times the old rent. Subsequently, the land revenue due from them will be reduced, not to the level of the old revenue which is collected from the ex-zamindar bhumidhars, but to one-half of

22. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India, op.cit., p.26.

their former rent.

Asamis and adhivasis, provided that their holdings were not resumed for personal cultivation by the superior bhumidhar or sirdar, were also able to buy up bhumidhari rights and obtain the rent reduction.

It is estimated that about only one-third of the tenants could purchase bhumidhari rights.²³ And in eastern UP, most of these purchasers were traders and moneylenders who under the zamindari system had developed subtenurial rights in land.²⁵ Thus, the majority of the tenants have still very inferior rights in land, holding tenancy under bhumidhars and sirdars, liable to be ejected for various reasons. Many of these have turned into cropsharers and landless labourers. The UP Zamindari Abolition Act created a new hierarchy of tenure holders in place of the old one. But the two are all too recognizably similar.

As in UP, in Bihar also one finds after zamindari abolition a persistence of the old structure of landowner, occupancy raiyat, non-occupancy raiyat, under-raiyat, and cropsharer and landless labourer.²⁶ The Government efforts

23. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India, op.cit., p.47.

24. East Uttar Pradesh consists mainly of Bhojpuri speaking areas.

25. Amit Bhaduri, 'Class Relations and Commercialization in Indian Agriculture: A study in the Post-Independence Agrarian Reforms of Uttar Pradesh', in K.N.Raj et al (ed.) Essays on the Commercialization of Indian Agriculture, (New Delhi:OUP, 1985), p.314.

26. For a detailed account, see G.Ojha, op.cit., pp.69-74.

of recording the rights of under-raiyats has even resulted in brutal bloodshed, and the Govt itself has issued circulars to stop the recording of under-raiyats.²⁷

The 'Green Revolution'

The various land reform measures did not result in any radical change in the agricultural sector. The pattern of landownership remained highly unequal. Majority of the cultivators in Bhojpuri area continue to own very small holdings and land is concentrated in the hands of few big owners. For example, in Varanasi Division, holdings of less than 5 acres constitute 95.77 percent of the total number of holdings and cover only 47.71 percent of the total area, while holdings of more than 10 acres constitute only 1.37% of the total number of holdings but cover as much as 27.81 percent of the total area; in Gorakhpur Division, holdings of less than 5 acres each constitute 92.14 percent of the total number of holdings and cover only 63.15 percent of the total area, while holdings of more than 10 acres constitute only 1.88 percent of the total number of holdings but cover as much as 26.15 percent of the total area.²⁸

27. ibid., p.83.

28. Sridhar Mishra, 'Land Reform and the Structure of holdings in UP', Indian Journal of Economics, Vol.54, No.4, 1974, Table 6, p.455.

Land reforms failed to provide security of tenure to the majority of the tenants. A large number of tenants were downgraded into the position of landless labourers and many continued to till the same lands on oral leases in place of written one. Tenancy and share-cropping was reported to be continuing on a significant scale during fifties and early sixties.²⁹ After 'Independence', the pressure of population dependent on agriculture had increased highly in the entire Bhojpuri Area(See Table 10). With the persistence

Table 10
Percentage of Population Dependent on Agriculture

Distt	1901	1951
Gorakhpur	62.3(1921)	55.7
Deoria	71.6	93.5
Basti	64.7	90.7
Azamgarh	59.4	83.3
Varanasi	56.1	58.4
Jaunpur	81.3(1911)	80.7
Ghazipur	70.5	78.0
Ballia	66.3	73.7

Source: Report of the Foodgrains Enquiry Committee, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India, 1957, p.127.

of earlier forms of exploitation, high rent returns and plentiful supply of cheap labour, the big landowners were not

29. See, Baljeet Singh, Next Step in Village India, (Bombay, 1960), pp.33-34; and S.C.Gupta, An Economic Survey of Samaspur Village, (Bombay:1959), pp.29-33.

particularly inclined to reinvest the surplus in agriculture;³⁰ rather they were investing money on such things as education of their children.³¹ The overall situation was proving to be a fetter on the development of productive forces in agriculture.

But this does not mean that the agricultural sector was stagnant and was not showing any sign of development. The agricultural sector in the entire Bhojpuri area during 1956-57 to 1965-66 had shown increases in output, area and yield per acre of food crops as well as cash crops (See Table 11), although the increase was not very significant. Even the number of tube wells increased by 46.3 percent between 1956-61.³² But despite this growth the Bhojpuri areas was a food deficit area and the per capita output in agriculture even declined during five years between 1950-51 to 1955-56.³³ The vast masses of

30. S.C.Gupta, 'Some Aspects of Indian Agriculture', in A.R.Desai, Rural Sociology in India, (Bombay, 1967), p.311.

31. B.S.Cohn, 'Madhopur Revisited', in A.R.Desai, op.cit., p.375.,

32. R.S.Srivastava, Agricultural Labour in Eastern Districts of Uttar Pradesh, (Varanasi, 1966), p.12.

33. Report of the Foodgrains Enquiry Committee, (Ministry of Food and Agriculture, GOI, 1957), pp.125, 130-31.

Table 11
Ten-year All-crop Growth Rates and Indices of Change for Output, Yield, and Value Added per Acre 1956-57 to 1965-66.

Distt.	Indices of Change								
	Ten-year all-crop growth rates			Food Grains			Cash Crops		
	out put	area %	yield %	out put	yield	value added per acre (Rs)	out put	yield	value added per acre (Rs)
Shahabad	3.96	1.08	2.89	118	114	18.52	97	95	-32.93
Champaran	3.71	-0.49	4.20	129	108	10.82	134	119	92.91
Saran	5.68	0.68	5.00	134	131	29.03	111	110	57.11
Azamgarh	3.43	0.27	3.16	103	102	1.48	160	154	220.29
Ballia	3.84	0.47	3.37	115	111	9.63	143	135	121.83
Basti	1.63	0.53	1.11	112	108	6.79	111	115	66.52
Deoria	3.83	0.58	3.26	108	104	3.20	140	134	137.94
Ghazipur	1.80	-0.23	2.04	110	110	9.57	112	109	41.26
Gorakhpur	2.31	0.19	2.12	116	114	11.64	119	118	69.91
Jaunpur	2.37	0.70	1.67	110	105	5.20	128	128	138.55
Mirzapur	1.15	1.60	-0.46	105	97	-2.61	104	93	-9.92
Varanasi	1.82	0.43	1.39	112	109	7.92	128	118	76.47

Source: Dorris.D.Brown, Agricultural Development in India's Districts, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard Uni. Press, 1971), Table A4 & A 25.

the agricultural population was becoming progressively impoverished. Majority of the poor peasants and landless labourers were in debt. In Bhojpur districts of Eastern UP 98 percent of the agricultural labourers were found to be in debt during 1955-56, and the most important source of their loans were rich farmers.³⁴

In this overall situation the agricultural sector was fast becoming a serious threat to the stability of the ruling classes. During mid-sixties, there were clear signs of peasant rebellions breaking out in many areas. The inability of the rulers to unleash the productive forces through a restructuring of the agrarian social fabric was making the economic crisis serious. Land reform legislations by themselves had proved insufficient to defuse the agrarian economic crisis and the creation of a class of modern farmers conducting agriculture using wage labour and advanced implements of production was deemed necessary to defuse the social contradictions resulting from backward production relations in agriculture. At this stage, a systematic programme for modernising agriculture - "Green Revolution" - was launched by the Indian state with the active patronage of US imperialism. This new strategy had been actually initiated as early as 1960-61 in the name of Intensive Area Development Programme (IADP), but only in

34. R.S.Srivastava, op.cit., p.116.

few selected districts in the country. Even at this earlier stage one of the Bhojpuri districts - Shahabad - had been placed under IADP.

The new agricultural strategy was based on the introduction of modern machinery, high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, development of irrigation facilities etc. This new strategy has led to an increase in the use of fertilizers, pesticides and high yielding variety seeds as well as of credit from institutional financial agencies. Both, production in absolute terms and productivity has increased and production for market has shown upward mobility. But, since the full utilization of the modern inputs is also based on the availability of certain infrastructural facilities like that of irrigation, we find extreme unevenness in the level of development of different areas. Furthermore, the modern technologies have been introduced in a highly unequal structure of landholding pattern. This has only led to a further widening of the gap between the rich and the poor.³⁵

The consumption of high yielding variety seeds in Shahabad district increased by more than 2176 percent

35. Many studies have shown this. See, for example, Wölf Ladejinsky, 'Ironies of India's Green Revolution', Foreign Affairs, Vol.48, No.4, 1970.

between 1961-62 and 1967-68; the area covered under HYV seeds during the same period increased by 685.2 percent and the use of chemical fertilizers increased by 267.6 percent; and total institutional credit disbursed rose from Rs32.5 lakhs in 1961-62 to Rs171.6 lakhs in 1967-68.³⁶

The use of inputs like fertilizers and HYV seeds is not limited to big farmers. Even small farmers have become increasingly responsive to its use. A study in Jaunpur district found that the per acre use of fertilizers on small farms was even slightly higher.³⁷ The same study, however shows that in terms of using the institutional credit facilities small farmers are lagging behind considerably.³⁸ In case of the lowest size category of cultivators (.005-1.25 acres) the co-operatives accounted for only 10 per cent of the debts, while in case of landowners of 10 acres and above the share of the credit

36. Modernising Indian Agriculture, Fourth Report on the IADP (1960-68), Vol II, Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation, GOI, PP.99-100, 113.

37. Kripa Shankar, Pattern of Land Ownership and Backwardness, (New Delhi: 1986), PP.17-18.

38. ibid., p.50.

from co-operatives and Land Development Bank in the total credit accounted for 80.77 percent. Professional moneylenders have disappeared from the scene and now agriculturists seem to have replaced them. The agriculturists accounted for 52 percent of the total debts of the smallest category of farmers. This seem to point to a significant change in the realm of credit during the last few decades. The growth of agricultural productivity and surpluses has brought to the fore a class of rich agriculturists who lend their surplus in the same manner as professional moneylenders and zamindars used to do in the past.³⁹

The entry of such credit agencies as the Land Development Bank which provide long-term credit on low rates of interest for installing pumpsets or purchasing tractors, etc, has likewise altered the situation. By its very structure such credit agencies cannot benefit the small cultivators, because they provide loan on security of private assets such as land. Thus the changes in the credit market seem to have benefited the large cultivators who now get adequate loans from institutional credit agencies at lower rates of interest as compared to the small cultivators who get the bulk of their credit requirements from private sources at high rates of interest.

39. *ibid.*, p.51.

The structure and functioning of the institutional credit agencies has also bearings on the pattern of the capital investment by different categories of landowners. For the small landowners who already have very little surplus to reinvest in modern inputs are further barred from the loan facilities for such investment. On the other hand, the large landowners who are already capable to save for reinvestment are provided with further facilities. In this manner, the benefits of the new agricultural strategy mainly goes to the large landowners. When we analyse the purpose-wise distribution of debts for different categories of landowners this becomes more clear. As Table 12 shows 96.55 percent of the total debts of the smallest category of farmers accounts for household consumption and social ceremonies, and only 3.45 percent accounts for agricultural purposes. On the other hand, as much as 80.77 percent of the total debts of the farmers having more than 10 acres accounts for agricultural purposes. The fact that a very high percentage of loans taken by large land owners are for agricultural purposes, and out of these loans a major part is taken from Land Development Bank, which provides long term credit for purchase of pumpsets, tractors etc., clearly shows that it is the large landowners who are leading agricultural modernisation. This also shows that the big landowners are responding in a big way to the

new agricultural strategy.

Table 12
Purpose-wise Distribution of Debts in Sampled Villages
of Jaunpur District

Size category	Household consumption	Social ceremonies	Agricultural and allied Purposes	Total
.005 - 1.25	2,900 (50.00)	2,700 (46.55)	200 (3.45)	5,800 (100.00)
1.25 - 2.50	1,200 (17.59)	4,100 (59.42)	1,600 (23.19)	6,900 (100.00)
2.50 - 5.00	-	5,000 (56.82)	3,800 (43.18)	8,800 (100.00)
5.00 -10.00	-	8,000 (42.11)	11,000 (57.89)	19,000 (100.00)
10 and above	-	10,000 (19.23)	42,000 (80.77)	52,000 (100.00)
Total	4,100	29,800	58,600	92,500

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages to total.

Source: Kripa Shankar, Patterns of Land Ownership and Backwardness, (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House), 1986, p.48.

The growth in agricultural productivity and surpluses has led to an upward mobility in production for the market. But this does not mean that the sector as a whole is actively involved in the process. As Table 13 shows marketed surplus as percentage of total produce as well marketed surplus per acre tends to increase with an in-

Table 13

Size wise Distribution of Marketed Surplus Per Farm and Per Acre of Cultivated Area in Sampled Villages of Jaunpur District

Size category (acres)	Marketed surplus	Market sur- plus per farm	(Rupees)	
			Market surplus as perc- entage of total produce	Marketed sur- plus per acre
0.05 - 1.25	1,352	40.97	2.33	55.73
1.25 - 2.50	11,345	436.35	9.21	253.80
2.50 - 5.00	23,794	951.76	13.98	306.43
5.00 -10.00	33,987	3,089.33	21.54	508.86
10 and above	72,963	14,592.60	43.10	967.80
All farms	1,43,441	1,434.41	21.14	496.70

Source: Kripa Shankar, Pattern Of Land Ownership And Backwardness, (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House), P.75.

crease in the size of the holdings.⁴⁰ The Table shows, however that even the smallest category of landowners are participating in the production for market, although it may be very small. But if we consider the fact that, as we have noted earlier, 50 percent of the total debts of these farmers are meant for consumption purposes and are most often in the form^{of} grain loans, it becomes clear that the participation of small farmers in the agricultural product market is generally of the nature of distress selling.

40. S.C. Gupta and A. Majid, Farmers' Response to Prices and Marketing Policies Affecting Sugarcane and Paddy, (Delhi, 1962).

The modernisation of agriculture had led to changes in the form and magnitude of tenancy also. There is a decline in the magnitude of tenancy as cultivation with hired labour has become more profitable.⁴¹ There are particularly three reasons behind the present practice of leasing out land. Firstly, the big owners who are not in a position to cultivate all their arable land, lease out some land. This is still to some extent profitable due to high pressure of population on agriculture. Secondly, the large farmers who depend on hired agricultural labours, also lease out land to poorer cultivators. This is done because despite surplus labour in agriculture it is observed that during peak seasons there is an acute demand for labour. Leasing out land to poorer cultivators extends the big owners' control over such sections and their family members who will agree to work in the field during peak seasons. Thirdly, there are some landowners, they may or may not be large, who lease out their entire holdings because they

41. Kripa Shankar, Concealed Tenancy and its Implications for Equity and Economic Growth, (New Delhi, 1980) pp. 40-42; Patterns of Land Ownership and Backwardness, (New Delhi, 1986), pp. 40-41.

have found alternative employment in cities and have migrated with their families to cities.

Thus, we see that ownership of land is the determining factor in the allocation of production resources. Those who own 10 acres or more play the dominant role in production for market and hiring of wage labour and as such are the main agents of agricultural modernisation. They use more irrigation facilities, more agricultural machinery and more credit from institutional agencies. On the other hand, the vast majority of small peasants who constitute the majority of the rural households, by virtue of the meagre amounts of land and capital under their control, are involved in subsistence farming. The condition of the agricultural workers in the area has declined considerably during the last two decades,⁴² and many have been forced to migrate to distant places in search of employment.

42. For example, S.P.Sinha and B.N.Varma found that in Bihar the real earning of agricultural labourers decreased by about 25 percent in the decade of sixties. S.P.Sinha and B.N.Varma, 'A Study of the Level of Real Earnings of Agricultural Workers in Bihar (1961-70)', Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics, July-Sept, 1974.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The British rule introduced definite measures in the agrarian society of Bhojpuri Area which became responsible for its development in a particular direction. The primary aim of these measures was, on the one hand, to create a stable social support base for its rule and, on the other, to restructure the agrarian economy in such a manner as to make it best suited for purposes of surplus extraction as large as possible. In this regard the policy of the British underwent changes also. During the first few years of its rule the primary concern was to extract from agriculture as large a revenue as possible to meet its needs of trade and commerce. But gradually a change in the economic objectives of the British rule took place. The new objective was to make the agricultural sector a supplier of cheap raw materials for the British Industry.

To suit their purposes the British rule introduced a land-tenure system which differed from the previous land-tenure system in two important aspects. The new land policy, firstly, created a legal right of private property in the soil and, secondly, took away from the peasants their customary rights in the soil. Land became a commodity which could be bought or sold in the market.

It could be transferred through mortgage or gift. But this right to private property in land was not a full right. The British government retained with it the superior right in land and fixed its share in the profits from it in the form of revenue payable to it by the proprietors. The Government had also the right to put the lands of proprietors on auction for sale on arrears of revenue. Thus, the initial factors for the creation of a land market were introduced by the British land policy.

The right to private property on soil were conferred upon the zamindars who were members of the old landed aristocracy. They were given the right of subletting and the right to collect rents from the tenants. They were also given the right to evict the tenants from their land on failure of rent payment. Thus, the rights of rent collection and the rights of occupancy were merged together.

The British rule's initial drive for the maximization of its income from land revenue and its insistence on auction sales of landed estates on arrears of revenue resulted in a dislocation of the traditional rural society. During the initial periods of settlements auction sales of estates took place on a large scale.

Besides this, the high rate of revenue demand also made a large number of zamindars indebted to professional moneylenders and consequently a number of sales for satisfying the decrees of courts took place.

As we have seen in the second chapter, most of the zamindars in the Bhojpuri area were petty estate holders. And it was these petty estate holders who suffered most due to both auction sales and private sales. Most of the big zamindars were able to preserve their position and some even prospered. But except the Raja of Banaras, no other big zamindar participated in buying land on any significant scale.

Among the buyers of the estates three groups figured prominently: first, many existing zamindars themselves were significant buyers; second, the people holding administrative posts under the British government; and third, moneylenders and traders. Out of these three the first two categories were more important buyers. Although available data about the percentage of moneylenders and traders as buyers of estates seems to suggest about their big role in such purchases it is difficult to derive any definite conclusion, because many zamindars engaged in moneylending and trading, and many moneylenders and traders were zamindars.

During the later period of the British rule the entry of moneylenders, traders and other outsiders into the old landed society seem to have increased. This resulted primarily from the increase in the rental income of the estates and the rise in land prices. From the middle of the nineteenth century land prices rose sharply. Rental income of the estates also increased due to rising agricultural prices, increase in cultivation and the cultivation of commercial crops. This encouraged the zamindars to lease out portions of their estates to moneylenders who in due course of time developed subtenurial rights in such lands.

Transfer of peasants' land through sale and mortgage constituted another aspect of the land market. Transfer of peasants' lands resulted primarily from their indebtedness. There were several reasons for peasants' indebtedness, more important among them being the high burden of rents coupled with its ruthless collection, exaction of numerous illegal cesses, small size of holdings and the introduction by the British of system of money rents. In most cases the transfer of peasants' land was to rich tenants. Apart from the benefits of high rates of interest on loan, these rich tenants had another advantage from peasants' indebtedness. By keeping the peasants' in debt they were able to gain control over much of their

grain produce also. During the later half of the British rule when agricultural prices were usually very high, the rich tenants profited much from grain trading. Thus, during the later period of the British rule a rich tenant-moneylender-trader combine emerged on the rural scene.

Notable changes in the agricultural production took place during the British period. One of the most important of these was the growth of commercial crops. In the entire Bhojpuri area commercial crops like poppy, sugarcane and indigo were grown on a large scale. The growth of commercial crops was the result of the deliberate policy of the British Government. It was not the result of the internal dynamics of the agrarian economy of the Bhojpuri area but was depended on external factors. The cultivation of commercial crops increased or decreased with the increase or decrease in its demand in the international market. The production of these crops was organised in most cases by outside agencies. Therefore, the huge profits made out of it was siphoned out of the country, and was not reinvested in agriculture here. Furthermore, the system of cash advances on which the cultivation of these crops was carried on, resulted in increasing the indebtedness of the cultivators. Another important aspect of the cultivation of these crops was that it resulted in such

changes in the production organisation itself which took away from the peasants their autonomy in the decision-making process regarding production. Thus the cultivation of commercial crops was in reality a sort of 'forced commercialisation' in which the peasantry was brought into contact with the world market and in the process lost control over his own production process.

After 'Independence' various land reforms measures were enacted by the Government to restructure the agrarian economy. The official motive behind it was to change the old backward land-tenure structure and thus to change the production relations in agriculture. This, it was argued, would contribute to the overall development of the agricultural sector and would reduce the social and economic inequalities among the different sections of the rural population.

As we have seen in the third chapter above, the land reform measures did not result in any radical change in the agricultural sector. Innumerable loopholes present in the legislations were used by the ex-zamindars to retain most of their land in the name of 'personal cultivation'. On the other hand a large number of tenants were legally and illegally evicted from their land and were down-graded into the position of landless labourers.

The only section which seems to have benefited was the class of substantial tenants who had greatly strengthened their positions during the last decades of the British rule. The land ceiling Acts also did not bring about any significant result. Thus, the pattern of landownership remained as unequal as before. Even the new land-tenure structure created by the land reforms was not very different from the old one.

Faced with serious economic crises in the agricultural sector and the increasing threat of peasant rebellions, the government felt strongly the need to restructure the agricultural sector through modernisation. Thus, a new scheme of 'Green Revolution' was initiated during the sixties. This new scheme was based on a package programme involving modern farm implements, high yielding varieties of seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and development of irrigation facilities. As a result, the agricultural sector has shown considerable growth in terms of total production as well as productivity of both food grains and cash crops. The consumption of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has increased several times and the high yielding variety of seeds cover a considerable part of the total cropped area. Production for the market has also increased. A new class of ~~new~~ rich farmers using modern inputs and hired labour has developed.

Tenancy has declined to some extent, or at least, its form has changed. But due to the very nature of the existing landownership pattern, all the gains from these developments have gone only to further widening the gap between the rich and the poor sections of the rural population.

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