

Chapter - 5

Land Revenue and Land Reforms in the Post – Colonial Period

In the previous Chapters, it is shown that during the Colonial period the agrarian systems and agrarian structure were changed in the different parts of India by introducing various systems, such as Permanent Settlement, Raiyotwari Settlement, Mahalwari Settlement and in some parts of Bengal and India as well lands were declared as waste lands where British Govt. was the proprietor of the lands. Whatever settlement was introduced, everywhere the peasants particularly the small peasants agricultural labourers were exploited and deprived tremendously in the colonial agrarian – economy.

By introducing colonial agrarian systems, the traditional structure of India broke down more or less, the village community faced a crisis; and many benevolent Zamindars lost their Zamindari by the law of ‘Sun Set’, many peasants must sell their lands and became sharecroppers or labourers due to heavy indebtedness. Lands were utilized for commercial purposes by introducing cultivation of commercial crops like jute, tobacco, tea, blue, etc. The cultivation of commercial crops was profitable, but the profit was obtained by the Zamindars, intermediaries, Mahajans and ultimately the Britishers depriving cultivators. In a nutshell, it can be said that feudal system in agriculture was strong during the colonial period as because five or six stages of intermediaries such as jotdars, talukdars, chukanidars or Mulandars, dafadars, dar-chukanidars, dar-darchukanidars etc. were created who had only intention to gain more revenue or wealth by hook and crook depriving and exploiting the cultivators where there was no question of sympathy or cooperation to the cultivators.

After independence in 1947, the Indian Government tried to reform agrarian structure and agrarian systems like other reforms and development in different fields. As there were feudal and semi – feudal system in the agricultural field of India till then, there were many big Zamindars-Jotdars and intermediaries, many of whom had giant – sized zamindari or jotdari areas and belong to thousand acres of lands, on the other hand there were so many people who had no land to dwell or livelihood. So it was necessary to reform the agrarian system and agrarian structure by abolishing the feudal and semi – feudal system in the lands. Before independence the demand was raised to abolish the Zamindari and jotdari system. The report of Flood Commission was come out in 1940 where proposed to abolish the Zamindari and jotdari System and declared in favour of sharecroppers or adhiars to have 2/3 of produced crops. But it was not implemented in the Colonial period. (Flood Commission Report).

Resolutions taken in the Bengal Provincial State Congress conference, 1939 in presence of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at Jalpaiguri on the development issues of the raiyots as follows:-¹

The permanent settlement and all the penalty systems are to be abolished on the basis of the demands and complaints of oppressors and poor peasants and with the system of compensation.

The raiyots of Khasmahal areas, inhabitants of the forest areas, laborers and lower- graded employee are facing intensive crisis and oppressions for the complexities and systematic defects of the laws of Khasmahal land, reserve forest of Government and tea estates. So to remove their poverty and oppression the said rules and regulations are to be amended, modified and new laws, rules and regulations are to be introduced.

But it is unfortunate that these proposals could not be implemented later on, because these were placed in 'Tripuri Congress' held in March 1939 and these were rejected by saying that the proposal were left wing, Amrita Bazar Patrika wrote in this regard-

"The resolution passed unanimously, at Bengal Provincial Conference at Jalpaiguri in February, 1939 gave expression to this thought, and suggested the presentation of an ultimatum to the British Government on the issue of India's National Demand. The Jalpaiguri resolution was brought before the Congress in, 1939, but it was unceremoniously rejected."²

After independence in 1947, naturally the Government realized the necessity to reform the agrarian systems by abolishing Zamindari and jotdari systems all over India, but the task was very difficult as because the Zamindars were politically, socially and economically powerful in position and in many spheres they occupied politically strong position. In spite of that Govt. was eager to drive in the reform of agrarian structure of India. Dr. Pradip K. Bhowmik writes, "Therefore the Central Government proclaimed only those agrarian policies which were feasible within the limitations of the contemporaneous rural set up."³ He again writes, "It varied from abolition of intermediary tenures as emphasized in the first plan to reform of tenancy in the second plan and also provisions for ceiling on agricultural holdings in the third plan. The concern for tenurial reform and redistribution of land holding pattern was noticeable in the successive plan documents."⁴

Land reforms in post – independence period in West Bengal began in slow motion and it only remained in papers, practically it was not implemented in the reign of Congress Govt. The West Bengal Bargadars Act (1950), the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act (1953) and the West Bengal Land Reforms Act (1955) were passed gradually. Theoretically, by these Acts Government wanted

to abolish zamindari and jotdari systems as well as abolish all the intermediary systems.

The main reason of agrarian crisis is the failure of land reforms and the second cause is the refusal of Government to assist the peasants for irrigation, manure, loan and legal prices, the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act and the West Bengal Land Reforms Act were passed in 1953 and 1955. According to the Act, the ceiling of agricultural land has been decided 25 acres on the present and future jotes..... For not to settle the ceiling of surplus land at per family instead of person, not to take initiative to stop the unauthorized and illegal alienation, and distribution of lands, not to take the cooperation of the peasants to implement the Acts, Zamindar –Jotdars have become able to conceal lands with the help of Governments administration.⁵

West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953

In the previous chapter it has been discussed about the Zamindari and jotdari systems in different parts of West Bengal during colonial rule. There were uncountable instances and examples of the oppressions and deprivations by the zamindars, jotdars and their intermediaries.

All the while, the Zamindars were consolidating their position and status as landed nobility. From land they invaded and monopolized other fields of power and prestige. It was they who took English education and so managed to control and hold high positions in the Government open to the Indians. They thus become the elites and took to themselves the right to represent the peoplethey started selling Indian body and soul to the Western domination.”⁶

In different phases, peasants including bargadars and agricultural labourers broke out into rebellion against the all sorts of oppressions of the zamindars, jotdars and their intermediaries, but ultimately they could not be succeeded as they were not united and there was no strong political and intellectual support behind them during the colonial period. Naturally the Government of West Bengal tried to initiate the reforms in agrarian structure by abolishing zamindari and jotdari systems as a result of which the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 was passed.

By the W.B. Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 all the Acts passed and implemented during colonial rule such as Permanent Settlement Regulation, Bengal Tenancy Act, Waste Land Rules, Coochbehar Tenancy Act had been repealed. Among the many sections of this Act number 3, 4, 5, 5A, 5b, 6 and 10 – these seven sections were important. The one solitary positive good of the section 3 was administrative – the uniformization of land laws in the state and so the simplification of revenue administration.⁷

It is relevant to be mentioned here that most of the zamindars-Jotdars in all over India were under the banner Indian National Congress Party who were not desire mentally to abolish Jamindari-Jotdari systems. But from political compulsion, National Congress was bound to abolish the Zamindari and Jotdari systems accordingly the Act was passed in 1362 B.S but alienation of land had not yet been stopped.⁸

Section 4 was also relating to with the administration under which Government had to issue a notification with two successive publications – At the first stage, at least two issues of two news papers, one of which must be in Bengali language in West Bengal, notifying the first day of the first month of a Bengali year for the commencement of acquisition of intermediary rights. After being satisfied with the publications, the notification had to be published in the official gazette. After such publications, it was considered as granted that general public was acquainted with the implications of

the Act. Accordingly on the first Baisakh, 1362 B.S and the first Baisakh, 1363 B.S considered the acquired rights as vested with the Government

Section 5A and 5B are concerned about the transfers of land. Since the coming out of the Floud commission Report (1940) wherein declared the necessity of the Zamindari, and jotdari systems including intermediaries, the zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries realized that they had to hand over excess lands to the Government today or tomorrow as the systems would not be last long. So they started to transfer their lands to the near relatives, every member of the house and even the false name. Moreover they showed their lands as Bherry (land filled with water and using for catching fish), orchard which were out of ceiling, but actually the land using for cultivation was showed as Bherry and orchard or Debottor. In such a way Zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries captured land and would not transfer to the Government as vested land. So by the Section 5A, the Government had been empowered to examine the transfer of lands between 5th May of 1955 to 15th April, 1955 and 14th April, 1956, whether the transferee was legal bonafide or not. By the section 5B, all the estates which were sold, tenure and under tenure from 1st June, 1954 under any of the following Acts, Act XI of 1859, Koochbehar Act V of 1897, Bengal Regulation VIII of 1819 and Act VIII of 1885, were forbidden.

By the section 6, mentioned the limitation of khas lands possessed by the intermediaries after acquisition – 25 acres of agricultural land, 15 acres of non – agricultural land and 20.00 acres of homestead together with non – agricultural land. There was no restriction of ceiling on the lands covered by orchards, tank, fisheries and debottor land.

From the above discussions it is realised easily that the objective of the Govt. was to abolish Zamindari, jotdari systems

including all sorts of intermediaries by the Act of West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953. But it could not be implemented practically due to covetous attitude of the Zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries as well as the secret understanding between landlords and the Government officials. Moreover during the reign of congress ministry, many M.L.A or M.P came from zamindars or jotdars. They, personally, tried to maintain the interest of their own class, sometimes they concealed their own lands, and sometimes they would give fuel to the zamindars or jotdars to conceal their lands. Dr. Pradip Kr. Bhowmik wrote, "But the legal provisions were not seriously enforced. To the local level administrators and the police nothing seemed to be more natural than to see their role as defenders of the vested interests irrespective of the changes in law. More importantly, there was a conspicuous lack of political will. This was in line with the general Indian situation".⁹

Todarmal showed eight ways by which the Zamindars, jotdars including intermediaries held the lands by concealing and illegal method as follows:-¹⁰

- (1) Creation of paper tenancies in the names of kin through ante-dated dakhilas amalnamas and unregistered deeds.
- (2) Suppression and concealing of information on all the lands held by the same persons in different district.
- (3) Sales, gifts and partitioning ostensibly to prevent or to settle disputes among the partners or co – sharers as well as constituting societies, devottars or waqfs.
- (4) Benami transfers.

- (5) Partitioning with heirs by those who are governed by the mitakshara school of Hindu law of inheritance.
- (6) Engineered auctioning for lapse of payment of rent and purchasing the same tenancy back under another name preferably of some trusted relative, friends or dependent.
- (7) Converting agricultural lands into orchards, tank fisheries etc. for which there was no ceiling.
- (8) Partitioning of land through a civil court on a prior but secret agreement with the partners.

b. The West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955

A bill relating to the abolition of Zamindari System was come out in the Gazette of the Government on 5th May, 1953 and approved by the president of India in 1953 which was known as West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953. By this Act the intention of the Government was to abolish the Zamindari system, including all sorts of intermediaries and to make a direct relation between Government and the land holders. But the dishonest behaviors of the Zamindars, jotdars including different types of intermediaries, covetous attitude, and secret alliance with the Government officials lands was not occupied by the Govt. over ceiling. They still possessed their lands by different types of illegal methods.

So, another bill known as Land Reforms Bill was published in the Govt. Gazette on the 10th December, 1954 to Change the agrarian structure of Bengal and develop the agrarian economy and

the peasants including sharecroppers. Different types of problems and their solutions relating to lands and the land – related people were discussed in 12 chapters in which 62 sections and many sub – sections were in the Land Reforms Act, 1955, relating to rights and responsibility of the Raiyots, protection for the land of Scheduled tribe people, ceiling of land record of the share – croppers, revenue systems, furnish jotes and agricultural – Co – operative system, policy of the distribution of land, preparing and correction of the record of rights. ¹¹

The following table shows the contents of land reforms Act, 1955.¹²

Chapter	Subject Matter	Section of the Act.
I	Introduction	1 – 3A
II	Raiots	4 – 14(6)
II A	Protection of the lands of Scheduled tribe people	14 A – 14 I
II B	Ceiling of land	14 J – 14 Z
III	Sharecroppers	15 – 21E
IV	Revenue Systems	22 – 38
V	Acquisition of holding for consolidation and the formation of co – operative Farming Societies.	39 – 48A
VI	Policy for the distribution of land.	49 – 49A
VII	Maintenance of the record of rights.	50
VII A	Revision or Preparation of the record of rights Scheduled A – system or procedures.	50A – 51A
	Scheduled B – Power of Revenue officer assigned by Govt.	51B – 51C
VIII	Management of lands	52 – 52B
IX	Miscellaneous	53 – 62

Note:- The Section 24 – 29, 30, 31 and 32 was forbade by the Section 12, 13, and 14 of the W.B Land Reforms Act, 1965 (Amendment).

I have no intention to discuss elaborately every section and subsection of the Land Reforms Act, as it has already been discussed in various books and reports, I am eager to analyze the importance, merit and shortcomings of the Land Reforms Act referring different views and approaches in the regional, national and global context.

Importance of the Land Reforms:- It is discussed earlier that after independence, Govt. wanted to abolish zamindari and jotdari systems including all the intermediaries. In West Bengal, the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 and the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955 was passed. By these Acts, Govt. wanted to abolish zamindari and jotdari systems and all the lands possessed by the Zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries bring under ceiling, as because they possessed thousand acres of lands. The Government's main motive was to occupy all the excessive lands over ceiling and to be distributed among the landless people, agricultural labourers and peasants and the raiyots to be brought directly under the state and made owners of the lands they held.

According to the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act 1953 the ceiling of different classes of lands are as follows:-¹³

a) Agricultural land	25 acres
b) Non – agricultural lands including homestead (Only non-agricultural 15 acres)	20 acres
c) Tank Fisheries	No Ceiling
d) Orchard	No Ceiling
e) Land held by institution Established excluding for	No Ceiling

Religious and charitable
Purpose.

f) Forests were completely vested

The above mentioned ceiling of lands had been modified by the amendment in 1972 of the Land Reforms Act, 1955 which is mentioned in the chapter II B. The ceiling area according to Section 14 M has been described as follows:-¹⁴

- a) In the case of raiyot who is an adult unmarried person, 2.50 standard hectares.
- b) In the case of raiyat who is the sole surviving member of a family, 2.50 standard hectares.
- c) In the case of a raiyot a family consisting of 2 or more but not more than 5 members, 5 standard hectares.
- d) In the case of a raiyot having a family of more than 5 members, 5 standard hectares plus 0.50 standard hectare for each member in excess of 5 subject to an overall upper limit of 7 standard hectares for a family, however large it may be.
- e) In the case of other raiyot, 7 standard hectares. A standard hectare has been defined to be equal to 1 hectare in an irrigated and 1.40 hectare in other area.

The ceiling will not apply to any agricultural land held by a local authority or a raiyot in the hilly portion of the district of Darjeeling, but the exemption of ceiling provisions in respect of hill areas expired on 31st December, 1977 and so the hilly areas were then subject to the ceiling.

Though the work of land reforms started from the very beginning of the formation of independence Govt. different Acts were passed time to time, but these Acts had not been implemented properly before 1967, the formation of United Front Govt. in West of Bengal. After declaration and passing the W. B. E. A. Act 1953 and Land Reforms Act, 1955, the Zamindars, Jotdars and all the intermediaries possessed their lands by names of every member of the house, servants and relatives. Not only that they held their land declaring Bherry (land for fisheries), orchard and debottar land though these were still agricultural lands.

The Section 5A and 5B of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act empowered the state Govt. to examine transfers of land by intermediaries between May, 1953 and April 15, 1956 & April 14, 1956 to satisfy itself of their bonafide. But, for the unfair attitude of the officials and bureaucrats of the Govt., proper inquiry could not be performed as a consequence of it; the Govt. failed to acquire excess lands over ceiling from Zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries. Todarmal writes, "A transfer made principally or partially with the intention or motive of enhancing the amount of land above the ceiling set for one individual or similarly the compensation payable for land, vested with the state. So also were transfers to near kin such as wife, husband, parents, children etc, The term 'transfer' in the context meant sale, mortgage, lease, exchange gifts etc."¹⁵

Since the implementation of the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 and West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955, Communist Party had been demanding to amend these two Acts, because the weakness of these Acts had given the opportunity to the jotdar - Zamindar to be ousted the sharecroppers and to alienate the unauthorized lands.¹⁶

The work of land Records over ceiling and distribution among the landless peasants and labourers actually started from 1967 by the State Govt. of West Bengal. We get in district gazetteer of land records and surveys, West Bengal it is not possible to say the exact total quantities of lands that vested before 1967.¹⁷

Movement for Land Reforms gained momentum when the United Front (U.F) consisting of the centrist and leftist parties was voted to power in the state for two short spells in 1967 and 1969.¹⁸

After formation of the United Front Government the movement for finding out the hidden lands, occupying the khas lands, rescuing the benami lands (lands recorded in false names) reached in a top. Peasants from every corner of Bengal assembled in a movement –from occupying surplus lands in tea gardens of North Bengal to finding out the hidden lands which were shown falsely as Mechhogheri in South Bengal.¹⁹

There were specific differences with regard to Land Reforms between Congress Government and United Front Government. Congress Govt. mainly dependent on the bureaucratic process who were directly allied with the land holders, but the United Front Government did not follow the same process like Congress Govt. P.K. Bhowmik mentioned, “Clearly, the U.F Government could not rely exclusively on the bureaucracy for implementing land reforms. This was in conformed, with their assessment of the nature and character of bureaucracy in a capitalist system.....Till the first United Front ministry only about 3.5 lakh acres of land were vested in the state. But during the United Front regime nearly 6 lakh acres of land were vested in the state.”²⁰

In spite of passing the act many years ago, the work of acquisition and distribution of land has not been performed during the period of Congress rule, under United Front Government 2,32,000 acres of surplus vested land have been distributed to

almost equal number of poor peasants and agricultural laborers..... Same thing also happened in the distribution of 3000 acres of surplus land in the tea-estates. The poor peasants have protected their rights of homestead lands and the Government has taken initiative to pass the Act.²¹

Benoy Krishna Chowdhury, Land and Land Reforms Minister showed that in 1951 census, the number of cultivating owners were 1580,000, but according to 1971 census the number of holding come to 42 lakhs. The number of cultivating owners and number of holdings are not the same. These two figures clearly indicate that extensive transfer of land had taken place during the relevant 20 years.²² According to Benoy Krishna Chowdhury the Congress Government made no effort to distribute the land that had vested in the State till 1967. Systematic effort to distribute the ceiling surplus land was thus made only during the tenure of the first two United Front Governments both of which were short lived. The agricultural labourers and the poor peasants were mobilized and encouraged to occupy the ceiling surplus and benami land and distribute among themselves. This is how nearly 6 lakh acres of land was distributed.²³ Ranjan Kumar Mitra showed in his article that the Government had acquired 4.5 lac acres land of which 2.3 lakh acres land had been distributed.²⁴

West Bengal Government introduced the law while amending the ceiling law that the lands alienated up to 6th August, 1969 were legal. The organized peasant, movement of West Bengal in demanding that the lands alienated since the 5th may, 1953, were to be declared as illegal alienation. On the basis of this demand, the movement for the occupation of unauthorised and ceiling surplus lands is continuing since the last 20/25 years as a result of which more than 4 lakh acres of unauthorized ceiling surplus lands were occupied by the organized peasant movement.²⁵

The formation of the United Front Government in 1967 and 1969 was a remarkable to the landless and small peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers, during these periods crores of poor peasants, agricultural laborers and sharecroppers emerged as a creator of history with a new awareness and self confidence and emancipated themselves from the bondage of the oppressor jotdars and hoarders The organized peasant movement occupied 18 lakh bighas of land and distributed among the landless people.²⁶

Beside the land acquisition and distribution by the United Front Govt., land was occupied forcefully by the peasants lead by left parties. Ranjit Kumar Mitra pointed out that 4 lakh acres land was occupied forcefully during the reign of 2nd United Front Government.²⁷

About 3,00,000 acres of land were forcibly occupied during the United Front regime.

After United Front Government, the Congress Government adopted a new policy which was announced on May 14, 1970 not to permit any person or group of persons to take forcible possession of any land. The Government realised that it should not take action to evict the persons who forcibly occupied land genuinely belong to the eligible categories. So the Government proposed to undo forcible occupation in three types of cases : (1) Where persons who forcibly occupied the land already held more than two acres of land and did not belong to the eligible category; (2) where forcible occupation of khas or vested lands had displaced and ousted another person genuinely belonging to the eligible category who had been cultivating the land under a Government license and (3) share the land occupied belonged to a private individual who had been holding it peacefully within the existing ceiling and on an unquestionable title.²⁸

The Government took action in the above two cases to evict the person who forcibly occupied land, but in the 3rd cases it would be some difficulties to implement the law. So the Government prepared to post Additional Magistrate with the necessary powers of such cases. Beside these, the Government adopted some of the proposals of the U.F Government like fixation of the ceiling of the lands and holdings on family basis and protection to bargadars against eviction.²⁹

A meeting of Paschimbanga Pradeshik Krishak Sabha was held on 21st March 1967, declared to the workers of Krishak Sabha to increase the power of Organising democratic movement and accelerated their legal demand.”

Honourable minister Hore Krishna Konar, Land and Land Revenue declared in the press conference on 21st March, 1967 that 3 lakh acres lands acquired by the Government will be distributed among the peasants, which has not yet been distributed.”³⁰

It is noticeable that when the Government under Congress regime was failure to vest the lands and distribute to the landless people, the United Front Government took initiative to acquire land over ceiling and distribute to the landless people led by communist parties as because their main slogan and activities were anti feudal and anti-capital system. But after short period the United Front Govt. had been dissolved by the Government. Mr. Subodh Banerjee, the labour minister in the dismissed West Bengal Ministry, told newsmen on December 9, 1967 that the United Front in West Bengal would launch a state – wide civil disobedience movement on December 18, to protest against the dismissal of the Front ministry by the Governor and the installation of Dr. P.C. Ghosh’s ministry.³¹

The UF had already started work on enrolment of volunteer and setting up of an un-organizational network for launching the movement. The aim was to enroll 30,000 volunteers. The first

phase of the movement launched immediately after the dismissal of UF cabinet in 1967, was practically confined to Calcutta, the second phase was limited to urban areas in the state. In the 3rd phase, the objective of the movement was to launch in the villages to attract the peasants which was connected with procurement land reforms and Tenancy system.³²

In this way, the work of land reforms, acquisition and distribution of lands got a new motion by the interfering of United Front Ministry, particularly by the leading role of the leftist parties to the peasants, labourers and bargadars as because they started to organize themselves against the land holders who were holding lands over ceiling, and then started to occupy lands forcefully with arms. There were many instances of occupation of vested land forcefully by the Krishak Sabha in Jalpaiguri like elsewhere in West Bengal.

Anil Ch. Chakraborty, a jotdar, inhabitant of Jalpaiguri had been occupying 300 bigha lands in Chapadua village of kukurjan in the district of Jalpaiguri and obtained crops from the bargadars. This year the bargadars under Krishak Sabha capture all paddies after cutting the crops. The jotdars became failure to take action against the bargadars.³³ It is found in Jalpaiguri, (local weekly news paper) about the motion and activities of the peasants, labourers including bargadars led by Krishak Sabha. The cutting and harvesting of crops in this year is going to be finished almost safely..... The peasants proves that they can not protect their crops as they cultivate their land. Jotdars, who have occupied benami land illegally, joined the different parties of united front and they attack in different places with the support of these parties. But they ultimately, could not be succeeded.³⁴

Following the resolutions of a meeting of Krishak Sabha held on 12th January, 1970 shows the motion of activities and deep relation with the peasants bargadars :-³⁵

- (1) The quota of membership of Krishak Sabha was submitted 6025 within 12th January, 1970 and 9000 peasants became the members of Krishak Sabha in different places. It was decided that total 30,000 members are to be enlisted and asked to submit the quota of membership in the district office within 31st January.
- (2) Total 10,495 acre of khas and benami land are acquired by the Krishak Sabha in the different thanas of Jalpaiguri. Near about 5000 landless peasants are dwelling in this land with occupying the same.
- (3) 2500 regular peasant volunteers participated actively in the movement of legal demand of the peasant in the different place of the district. They (volunteers) are ready to reach different places of the district any time according to the direction of the Krishak Sabha.
- (4) Decided to be held meetings in different places and Central Convention District Krishak Sabha would be held on 22nd January, 1970 and 31st January, 1970 in Dhupguri. It is decided to assemble in the convention huge number of people from different places.

Nitai Das Chaudhuri, a former local leader of C.P.I.M who had died two years ago pointed out that the movement of occupation of khas lands and benami lands of jotdars was going on actively in the villages of Bholardabri, Banchukamari, majherdabri and many other villages of Alipurduar subdivision under the leadership of Krishak Sabha and C.P.I.(M).³⁶

Promod Nath, a local leader of C.P.I.(M) who was directly involved in the movement of occupation of land argued.

“There was huge number of ceiling surplus lands occupied illegally by the jotdars. At the first stage movement was started by Krishak Sabha of Communist Party (M), then the landless peasants out of any party or dogma joined the movement. Initially land was identified as a vested land or ceiling surplus land collecting informations from the department of land & land revenue. Then the peasants had been assembled in the spot under the leadership of krishak sabha, generally landless people joined spontaneously in the movement.³⁷

Beside the land acquisition and distribution to the landless peasants and labourers, the United Front Government passed West Bengal Land Reforms (Audit) Act, 1969 and West Bengal Land Reforms (2nd amendment) Act, 1969. By the West Bengal Land Reforms (Audit) Act, 1969, the intention of the Government was to protect the sharecroppers or bargadars from the eviction of their land and by the West Bengal Land Reforms (2nd amendment), Act, 1969, the Govt release the raiyots to pay the rent of the lands and the Government decided to fix up the amount of land revenue after reviewing properly.³⁸

898, 66 Dec. khas land was forcibly occupied in the Nagar Berubari area by the communist party and Krishak Sabha on 28.12.1969 and 15 acre benami land was occupied and distributed to 19 families on 01.01.1970 of Bhupendra Nath Roy inhabitant of Khariza Berubari.³⁹

The Krishak Sabha of Patkata area continued their movement and 52 bigha land of the jotdar Umesh Ch. Sen, 105 bigha land of Trailakya Sharan Sen 206 bigha land of Bhaben Roy, the ex-M.L.A and the leader of S.S.P were occupied and distributed among the landless 98 families.⁴⁰

20 bigha land of Dolo Panchayet of Bholardabri was occupied by the Krishak Sabha.⁴¹

75 Bigha land was occupied in Belakoba by the communist party (M) on the 28th April, 1969 and distributed it to the landless peasants. The benami proprietor of the land was Akshay Roy and the real proprietor was Samsuddin Ahamed, the Congress leader.⁴²

Adhir Saha, a local leader of C.P.I (M) of Takomari in the district of Coochbehar, adjacent to Jalpaiguri district pointed out that after identification of Khas land or ceiling surplus land the expedition for occupying lands was started under the leadership of Krishak Sabha of Communist Party (M). Beside the member of Krishak sabha or communist Party general people also joined this movement. 150 bigha lands of Nonibar Prodhan, 155 bigha lands of Avay Chand Dhani, 160 bigha lands of Baishakh Dhani 100 bigha lands of Jarman Rabha and 90 bigha lands of Dhan Proshad Dhani were occupied by krishak sabha and distributed to the landless people.⁴³

Jalpaiguri, 15th July, 1969 showed the occupation of khas lands in the different parts of the district of Jalpaiguri in such way

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Panikouri (Rajganj police station):- In this area 16 acres land was occupied led by communist party (Marxist) and Krishak Sabha and the said land was distributed among the 23 landless families.

Khalishamari Mouza (Kamakshyaguri):- About 100 bigha land of the jotdar, Dakshina Mohan Roy was occupied by the Communist Party (M) and Krishak Samiti and it was distributed among the landless peasants and bargadars.

East Chikliguri (Kamakshyaguri):- About 80 bigha land of the jotdar, Kutub Mian who possessed it illegally was occupied by the CPI (M) and Krishak Samiti, other than this more land was occupied by the Krishak Samiti from Parokata and Dakshin Parokata.

Kukurjan (Rajganj):- Jotdar Bhagaban Singh possessed huge amount of lands illegally in the dominating area of S.S.P Krishak Samiti occupied 225 bigha land from the said jotdar.

Jashodanga (Alipurduar):- In this area 118 bigha khas land was occupied by the peasants lead by D.Y.F.I.

Pangarpar (Bahadur Anchal):- 800 bigha khas land was occupied by the Krishak Sabha of Pangarpar lead by Anathbandhu Sarkar and Upen Roy, the leaders of Communist Party (M) and it was distributed among 24 landless peasants.

Rajadanga Anchal (Mal Police Station) :- 109 acre land in Cheng Mari Mouza of Majhgram village was distributed among the 71 families during 26th June to 3rd July led by Communist Party (M).

Bimal Dasgupta showed the acquisition of vested land and distribution among the landless people as follows:- Mal-Meteli circle ⁴⁵

Total vested land in Government record =16,587.41 acre,
Land occupied by Government up to April,1969=12,372.44 acre.
Land distributed among the landless peasants up to May.1969=6867.40 acre, land distributed among the landless peasants in the month of June,1969=241.95 acre. For Homestead land=64.80 acre.

Total Vested land distributed among the landless peasants or occupied by the peasants, but not distributed officially by the Government in the month of July and 10 days of August, 1969-
 Mauza- East damdim =58.11acre, Mauza- demka jhora= 55.25 acre, Mauza Hayhay pathar=18.48acre, Mauza lower Chalsa= 290.30 acre, Mauza- Nepu Chapur =60.00 acre, Raja Danga No.1 Panditpara=62.00 acre, West Sangapara=65.00acre, South Saripukuri=45 acre, North Saripkuri=35.00acre, Raja Danga Fauchhar Alam Khas=35.00 acre, Baragharia Fauchhar Alam Khas= 35.00 acre,

In different mouzas land distribution has been postponed in approximate 1849.62 acres of land In the different mauzas of Meteli Police Station.

In the occupation of the peasants without having license=2509.00acre
 Total vested land distributed after the formation of United Front Government=2914.98 acre (Approximate) .

The period of United Front Government in the second phase in 1969 was also short. After demolition of United Front a political tension was going on in West Bengal and in this circumstance, immergency period was started when no development work was performed . The condition of West Bengal is found in Desh, the Bengali Journal----

Now almost every body have realized that the condition of West Bengal is not being fovourable under the rule of Delhi..... This is an all-round failure, particularly, in the law and order

The number of murder in the emergency period has reached to near about 400. The average number of daily massacre in the emergency period is at least 2. This noisy condition and massacre is not limited in a particular zone, it has spread in every district of

the state. In the 13 months reign of United Front Government, the number of murder was less than half of the emergency period.⁴⁶

A tumult is seen in West Bengal before Puja (warship and festival of Goddess Durga). One is Bonus and another is increasing the prices of essential commodities. But this year, nothing is seen - no meeting, no procession in spite of heavy increasing of the prices of essential commodities..... The main cause of it is fear. All the political parties have realized that the political workers have become paralyzed for fear. They are unwilling to do anything openly coming out their house. All they are busy to save their life.⁴⁷

After emergency period in West Bengal, Congress Government came into power under Chief Minister, Sidhwartha Sankar Roy. Various problems and crisis were seen in all over the state. The prices of essential commodities were going up.

Where the indicator of the wholesale rate of essential things during 1961 – 62 was 100, it reached in 317 in the month of December, 1974, that means the prices had been increased more than three times only in twelve years. The prices of food increased more. The retail prices were more higher than the wholesale rate.⁴⁸

Smt. Indira Gandhi declared 20 point economic programmes on the 1st July. ... Some of which were---- to be taken initiative to decrease the prices of essential commodities; to be introduced easy process for production, collection and distribution of essential things; to be reduced the Government's expenditure strictly, to be implemented the ceiling of agricultural land, to be taken action immediately for distribution of ceiling surplus lands and recordings of lands, immediately to be taken step for homestead land for the weaker section people of the society, to be declared as illegal process where labourer had been used by note of hand, to be taken

programmes to release the indebted people from their indebtedness, to be introduced laws to postpone the collection of loan from the landless labourer, small peasants, artisans and mechanics.⁴⁹

The root of the all problems lies in the agriculture and the crisis of the agrarian systems. 20 lakh families in this state are landless agricultural labourers and 15 lakh families are marginal farmers. The demand of 35 lakh families for land is a large problem. Only 6 lakh 25 thousand acres of lands are shown as a surplus lands..... The major portions of (39.6%) 1 crores and 36 lakh agricultural lands remain only in the 4% people. The problem of having lands, the crisis of the ejection of the sharecroppers paralyzed the village economy.⁵⁰

The causes for the failure of the policies which were accepted by the National Congress Party and the Government for economic measures during 1967 – 1975 were class interest, policies for the interest of the jotdar and monopoly capitalist. The ruling party had to face on mass movement when their class interest policies became failure. Again the ruling party declared new economic policies to protect them from mass movement in view of confusing the mind of the people.⁵¹

Government circulated again and again that there were no shelter less people in the villages after completion of the work for distribution of homestead land, But huge number of landless and shelter less families were followed easily in every villages who lived in the other's land without any right, particularly in the jotdar's land, on the land beside the road and dam of irrigation.⁵² Till 1976, for the lack of proper land reform programmes, the production of food crops and other agricultural commodities had been decreasing gradually as a result of which the prices of food crops increased. Naturally ordinary people including peasants

labourers affected and they were not able to purchase sufficient food.

The internal deficit of food increased 1 lac 83 thousand tons to 9 lac 50 thousand tons during the period 1947 to 1959. The average production of rice per acre was less even than the post-war period. The average production in 1937 was 12.18 mound, during 1950-54 was 11.09 mound and in 1958 it stood in to 10.63 mound after decreasing the production.⁵³

To solve the problem of food crisis permanently, a radical land reforms be needed. If the lands of jotdars - zamindars of the state can be distributed among the lacs of poor and landless peasants, the labour of the said peasants will be utilized for the interest of the production. On the other hand, lacs of ton food crops will not be stored in the possession of Jotdars - zamaindars.⁵⁴

The following table shows the amount of lands distributed in the district and West Bengal upto 1994 – 95⁵⁵

District / State	Area of Vested land distributed in hectors	No of Beneficiaries			
		Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe	Others	Total
Jalpaiguri	37950.25	62610	26491	31143	120244
West	386842.84	830914	464108	974937	2269959

Bengal					
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Land reforms in West Bengal under Left Front Government got a new life in the history of land reforms in India after independence. There are so many views, approaches and debates about the land reforms in West Bengal, lot of writings, research papers, Ph.D. Thesis, M.Phil Dissertations, Books and journals have been came out where different scholars, writers, Social Scientist, Politicians have expressed their views and analyzed in favour and against the land reforms of West Bengal from different angles, but, I have best intention to find out the real picture of the lands and peasants since land reforms had been initiated in Jalpaiguri as else where in West Bengal, further more, I shall try my best to show the success and failure of the Land Reforms in West Bengal.

Success of the Land Reforms in West Bengal:-

Dr. P.K. Bhowmik writes, “The Left Front Government’s approach to land reform is different from that of the earlier Congress Governments in the state. The latter had adopted a policy of growth before distribution. The policy shift may be attributed to the realization by the Left Front Government that “Green Revolution” unaccompanied by through restructuring of agrarian relations would reinforce existing inequality in the agrarian sector.”⁵⁶

There are so many instances which prove that the land reforms under Congress regime remained in papers work, practically lands had not been vested over ceiling and distributed to the landless people. Jotdars-Zamindars in the villages whose lands may be accuired as khas were the main and only pillar of National Congress Party.-----With the First Five Year Plan and growing up of a tout –broker-land lord-trader, abolition of Jotdari-Zamindari was impossible to Congress Party. So a large gap was kept at the time of passing the Act for abolition of intermediary systems by which the Act was to be vanished.⁵⁷ The works were confined to the elitists and bureaucrats. The planning commission recently admitted that land reforms had been a failure at the national level barring West Bengal.⁵⁸ Pushpendra writes in his article “Liberalization and Agrarian Reforms: Some Recent Controversies,” “Tenancy situation is varied in different states. In some states (UP, Gujarat, MP, for example) it is legally prohibited. A state like West Bengal, where tenancy is allowed, achieved great success in recording the tenants and safeguarding their interests through suitable legal provision.”⁵⁹

The debate was going on between the members of ruling party (Congress) and the members of anti – Govt. parties

particularly the leftist parties in the Assembly at the time of discussions on the W.B Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 and W.B Land Reforms Act, 1955, on various issues. All most all the members and even the speaker of the Assembly declare these two Acts as “Revolutionary and Epoch – making.” Satya Kumar Basu, the Revenue Minister pointed out that as a result of passing these two Acts, the system of Feudal system has been abolished, abolished the dominant power of all. The intermediaries, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers were benefited for introduction of ownership of the state on land.”⁶⁰ But, most of the members of Anti – Government namely Benay Krishna Chowdhuri, Bankim Mukherjee, Kanai Bhawmik, Ajit Basu, Monoranjan Hazra, (all were from communist party), Charu Chandra Bhandari, Haripada Chattopadhyay, Sudhir Roy Chowdhuri, Dhasharathi Ta, Dr. Atin Basu (All were from Proja Samajtantri Dal), Hemanta Bosu, Bibhuti Ghosh, Dr. Srikumar Bandhyopadhyay (All were from Forward Block). Subodh Banerjee of S.U.C.I, Rakhehari Chattopadhyay, Gyanendra Chowdhuri boldly criticized the defects of these two Acts.

Even after the passing of these two Acts, how the Zamindars and intermediaries occupied their lands by concealing which is shown earlier. Satyabrota Dutta writes, “After passing the law the kings, great kings and zamindars of West Bengal started to step repeatedly in the house of the Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the then Chief Minister. Many of the zamindars were not able to maintain their royal palace, in this chance, they donated their wealth partly, some parts of wealth were sold and they obtained compensation for their acquisition wealth of the rest. The Department of Education and health purchased some amount of land. The Central Government did not consider such type of purchasing of wealth.

The instances of concealing lands declaring Mechhogheri, orchard by the M.L.A themselves of Congress party are seen in writing of S. Dutta, “Amongst the 37 M.L.A. in the district of 24

Parganas, 25 were from Congress Party, some of them was involved in fishery. Amongst 9 M.L.A. of Malda district, 5 were active to take benefit of ceiling (rebate) for orchard.⁶¹

It is clear that the Government did not take initiative to prevent the ejection of share croppers and unauthorized and illegal alienation of lands for the pressure of the Zamindars – Jotdars. The Jotdars – Zamindars having large amount of lands, were not only the supporter of Congress Party, many of them were prominent leaders, ministers of Congress and the members of Assembly. As a result of which Government acquired only 1 lac 22 thousand acres surplus lands whereas according to their declaration it should be 6 lac acres lands, that means, the rest of the lands have been alienated.⁶²

Some famous land- alienators were Sri Hem Naskar, the minister of cabinet, Sri Ardhendu Naskar, deputy minister, Sri Hrishikesh Tripathi, the matrimonial relative of Ajoy Mukherjee, the cabinet minister, Matrimonial relative of Sri Jadabendra Panja, the president of Provincial Congress, Sri Khagen Das, M.L.A, Ila Pal Chaudhury, M.P of Congress, All of them alienated thousand bighas of lands illegally to the relatives and friends.

Sri Fate Chand Maheshwari the biggest jotdar of Jalpaiguri district alienated 6 thousand acre lands authorized by Government. But, no step has been taken against this jotdar, because his son is a worker of Jalpaiguri Zella Congress.⁶³

Debesh Roy pointed out that a jotdar in the Duars recorded 25 acres of lands in the name of his elephant. ...A jotdar of Haldibari in the name of his only son Amir Ali Prodhan, recorded lands in such a way -25 acres for Amir Ali, 25 acres for Ali Prodhan, 25 acres for Amir Prodhan and 25 acres for Prodhan Ali.⁶⁴

In 1974, Krishak Sabha circulated at the time of starting the new settlement work that the real motive of the Government was 1. To legalise the right of the Jotdars on benami land (unauthorise land), 2. To eject the sharecroppers and peasants who occupied the unauthorise land of the jotdars 3. To record the right of the mahajans (moneylenders) on the land who took land by mortgage for indebtedness of the peasants.⁶⁵

So, from the above discussions it is shown that under the Congress regime the work of land reforms could not be started practically by demolishing traditional Zamindari and jotdari systems in West Bengal, which was come into force actually from United Front Government and later on under left front Government.

A new scope and possibility has been created in front of peasant movement and organization with the formation of Left Front Government. On the basis of the following points a large scale united peasant movement is to be built up-

1. To be find out ceiling surplus concealing land from the former Zamindar and big land holders and distributed among the landless agricultural laborers, poor sharecroppers and peasants.
2. To be organized large-scale movement for the recording of share croppers who had been ousted in the pervious years, are to be resettled in their land. They have to be provided government and co-operative loans.
3. The pattas which have been given to the persons who are unable to have government's khas land (vested land), are to be declared as rejected and the said lands will have to be distributed to the persons who are eligible to have the said lands.

4. To be corrected all the defects in the settlement record.
5. The peasants, cultivating in the jungle area have to be given pattas in their lands in stead of ejection of the peasants so far as possible.
6. To be more activated and scattered the movement of the work and wages of the agricultural labourers.
7. To be organized the large scale movement for the legal prices of the produced crops of the peasants and to be supplied essential commodities with legal prices for them.
8. To be released the poor peasants from their outstanding loans –opportunities will have to be given to the other peasants to recover the outstanding loans by easy installments.⁶⁶

Benoy Krishna Chowdhury, Land and Land Reforms minister agreed their limitations with regard to land reforms in a state. He told, “We could well realize that within the present frame work of the Constitution and the limited power that a State Government enjoys it was well high impossible to completely eliminate the feudal and semi – feudal production relation in agriculture, we therefore decided in favour of taking such measures, in the present correlation of forces, as would help enthusing and organizing the agricultural workers, bargadars (sharecroppers) and poor and small peasants who together constitute over 75 percent of the rural population and who can bring about the radical changes for transformation of the rural society – the aim of land reforms.⁶⁷

80% people of the state live in the villages and they mainly depend on agriculture. So, the Left Front Government takes

different steps for the interest of the peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers targeting on the land reforms programmers. The rent of land holders of 4 acres in irrigated areas and 6. acres in non-irrigated areas have been exempted. Bank loan has been provided to the peasants with easy terms and conditions. Farm holding bill (Amended) has been passed in last session of Assembly by which the land holders have been exempted from different types of taxes to abolish the feudal system as a result of which 45 lacs of people among 52 lacs will have not to give any kind of tax. ⁶⁸

As a land and Land reforms minister, Benoy Krishna Chowdhury took three target groups to success the land reforms policy of the Government. Firstly he took initiative for the labourers in such a way – (1) to guarantee minimum living wage, (2) to provide work during the lean months, (3) to provide house – sites for their own houses. 2nd group was bargadars (share croppers) the problem of bargadars were (a) eviction (b) Protection of rights and (c) finance.

The third target group was marginal and small farmers. It is discussed earlier that during the United Front Government land rent up to 3 acres was exempted. The Left Front Government has exempted land rent up to 4 acres of land in irrigated area and 6 acres of land in non – irrigated area. ⁶⁹

Another important factor of Land Reforms is acquisition and distribution of ceiling surplus lands which is shown earlier that the task had not been performed practically during the Congress regime, actually it got a new motion in the regime of United Front Government from various sources and the report of field survey it is found that huge number of ceiling surplus lands were vested and distributed among the landless peasants and bargadars.

The acquisition of ceiling surplus land of big - land holders is going on. Average 3.5 thousand acres of lands have been acquired

in every month. These lands have not been distributed for the injection of court. 3.45 lac acres of lands are waiting for distribution to the landless and poor peasants. Initiative has been taken to distribute the lands to the eligible persons by the permanent committee of land associated anchal panchayet.⁷⁰

Progress made by the state in respect of LRP as of December, 1995 was as follows:⁷¹

Agricultural land vested: 1.24 million acres.

Distribution of vested land: 994 thousand acres.

Bargadars recorded: 1.468 million.

No. of recipients of homestead land: 272 thousand.

From the above statistics it is followed that the agrarian structure of West Bengal changed a lot with the task of land reforms programmes taken by United Front Government and Left Front Government. Buddhadeb Ghosh shows – out of the total national vesting of around 7.3 million acres, West Bengal's share is 17 per cent, though the state has only 3.5 percent of total agricultural land. States like Bihar and UP could vest less than one – third and less than half respectively of what West Bengal had done as of 1992.⁷²

It is important to follow according to National Sample Survey which was collected from January to August, 1992 and published in 1995 that 85.88 percent farmers were marginal. Who possessed 41.29 percent land of total lands in West Bengal, small farmers were 9.48 percent of total proprietors of lands, who possessed 28.11 percent land, middle ranking land holders were only 0.71 percent who possessed 7.62 percent lands and there was no large farmers or land holders who possessed over 10 hectares lands in accordance with the report of National Sample Survey, 1992.

Classification of agricultural family and land holdings⁷³

Table – I
Percentage of Agricultural family

	Year	Marginal	small	Near-Middle ranking	Middle ranking	Large
West Bengal	1992	85.88	9.48	3.94	0.71	0.00
	1982	81.60	11.50	5.54	1.28	0.08
	1971-72	77.62	12.64	7.30	2.39	0.05
India	1992	71.88	13.42	9.28	4.54	0.88
	1982	66.64	14.70	10.78	6.45	1.42
	1971-72	62.62	15.49	11.94	7.83	2.12

Table – 2
Percentage of jotes

	Year	Marginal	Small	Near-Middle ranking	Middle ranking	Large	Total
West Bengal	1992	41.29	28.11	22.98	7.62	0.00	100.00
	1982	30.33	28.77	27.23	12.12	1.54	100.00
	1971-72	27.28	25.69	27.72	18.61	0.70	100.00
India	1992	16.93	18.59	24.58	26.07	13.83	100.00
	1982	12.22	16.49	23.38	29.83	18.07	100.00
	1971-72	9.76	14.68	21.92	30.73	22.99	100.00

Below 1.01 hect land – Marginal Farmer

1.01- 2.00 hect. small Farmer

2.01- 4.00 hect. Semi – middle ranking Farmer

4.01- 10.00 hect. – Middle ranking farmer

Above 10.00 hect. Large farmer.

Benoy Krishna Chowdhury showed the land vested by the Government and distributed among the landless peasants up to Dec, 1995 as follows – ⁷⁴

Total land vested – 28.82 Lac acres
 Agricultural Land vested – 12.80 Lac acres
 Distribution of vested land – 9.82 Lac acres
 Total number of assignees of vested land – 22.71 Lac
 Sharecroppers Recorded – 14.66 Lac
 Homestead Beneficiaries – 2.71 Lac

P. K. Bhowmik showed in his book about the land distribution during the reign of Left Front Government – “In West Bengal, till 1994, about 9,12000 acres of agricultural land had been distributed to over two million of people, of these 55 percent belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprising 26 percent of the population in the state.” ⁷⁵

All the above data shows the land acquisition and distribution in all over West Bengal and compare to all India level. Now, look at the Jalpaiguri district with regard to land reforms programmes taken by different phases after independence. Regarding Jalpaiguri district, it was the same as other parts of West Bengal that before 1967, formation of the United Front Government, the work of the land acquisition and distribution among the landless people had not been carried out practically. According to the report of land records and surveys, West Bengal, “It is not possible to say the exact total quantities of lands that Vested before 1967. From August 1967 a new intensive drive was launched for recovery of lands held in benami or through clandestine transfer and all lands vesting of which had been evaded so long.” ⁷⁶

The total amount of land held by various ex- intermediaries and tenants over and above the original stipulated ceiling, which was vested in Alipurduar Sub division of Jalpaiguri, upto 31 March 1973 amounted to 39,288.45 acres. Regarding Jalpaiguri Sadar Subdivision, there is some discrepancy between the figures given by the settlement wing and the Management wing of the Land Revenue Department. According to the former 1,68,215.05 acres of land were vested till 31 March 1973. The later wing maintains that up to that date 1,55,341.96 acres were vested. Total amount of land which was vested was not distributed, as because some amount of land was under litigation. Only 51004.53 acres of land was redistributed of which 16,046.70 acres were on raiyoti settlement and 34,957.83 acres were settled on the basis of one year license which was renewable.⁷⁷

Following Table shows the distribution of Vested Land for agricultural purpose to the landless and small cultivators in the district of Jalpaiguri –⁷⁸

Year	Area of Vested Land (Hectare)		Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribes	Muslims	Others	Total
	E.A.	L.R.					
1975-76	39461.18	5107.67	24667	15623	5031	8990	54301
1976-77	39461.18	5107.67	24667	15623	5334	9454	55078
1977-78	39461.18	5107.67	26288	16299	5334	9454	57375
1978-79	39461.18	5107.67	30935	16299	5334	16211	58779

From the above statistics, it can be said that there were no similarities in the data of land distribution among the landless and small cultivators because it is found from the report of Key Statistics of the district of Jalpaiguri, 1977 – 78 that 39461.18 hector lands had been distributed by the Estate Acquisition Act and 5107.67 hector had been distributed by Land Reforms Act. Another report of District Statistical Handbook, Jalpaiguri, 1998, showed that upto 30th Sept, 1993, 44763.94 hector lands had been

distributed to the landless and small cultivators. But, it is followed in different villages of the district, that large amount of lands have been distributed to the cultivators after 1977. D.L.L.R.O., Jalpaiguri is failure to supply exact figure of year wise land acquisition and distribution since the implementation of the land Reforms Act, 1955. They only can provide the up to date figure of the same. So, due to paucity of exact figure of year wise land acquisition and distribution, it is not possible to show a clear picture of the output of land Reforms programmes of the district in the period of present study.

Census of India, 1951 shows the land use and progress of cultivation during the course of land Reforms Programmes:⁷⁹

Table – 1 Progress of Cultivation During Three Decades:-

Average net area shown in acres –

1921	-	733000
1931	-	604700
1941	-	602900
1951	-	636500

Average area shown more than once in acres –

1921	-	89500
1931	-	52200
1941	-	29800
1951	-	39600

Average net area irrigated in acres

1921	-	307,977
1931	-	112,400
1941	-	118,221
1951	-	113,466

Average cropped area irrigated in acres

1921	-	58,169
1931	-	-

1941	-	-
1951	-	20

Key Statistics of the district of Jalpaiguri. 1977 - 78 shows the land utilization as follows:-⁸⁰

District	Area according to village Paper	Area under Forest	Area not available for cultivation	Other uncultivated land excluding current fallow	Current fallow	Net area shown	Area shown more than once	Total cropped area	Year
Jalpaiguri	630.97	168.20	122.78	112.30	14.78	212.91	82.20	295.11	1974-75
Jalpaiguri	630.97	158.85	122.78	121.10	6.69	221.55	111.23	332.78	1975-76
Jalpaiguri	630.97	158.85	122.78	121.26	5.39	222.69	128.69	351.38	1976-77
Jalpaiguri	630.97	158.85	122.78	127.96	3.50	224.88	130.66	355.54	1977-78

Census Report of India, 1981 clarified the land use of the Jalpaiguri district as on 1976 - 77 as follows:-⁸¹

- (i) Net cropped area 327.47 thousand hectare.
- (ii) Land put to non - agricultural uses = 79.64 thousand hectare.
- (iii) Barren and uncultivated waste = 1.08 thousand hectare.
- (iv) Permanent Pastures and other grazing land 0.21 thousand hectare.
- (v) Misc. tree crops and groves 8.16 thousand hectare.
- (vi) Cultivated waste = 23.18 thousand hectare.
- (vii) Other fallow land (Other than current fallow) = 1.19 thousand hectare.
- (viii) Current fallow = 2.63 thousand hectare.

From the above statistics of different sources it is followed that the average net area decreased from 733000 acres in 1921 to 636500 acres in 1951. Total cropped area was increased from 295.11 thousand hectares during 1974-75 to 355.54 thousand hectares during 1977-78. On the other hand census report of India, 1981 showed 327.47 thousand hectares cropped areas during 1976-77. The increasing of total cropped areas proves that a large portion of patit or uncultivated lands were brought under cultivation by the Land reforms programmes.

Up to 30th Sept, 1993, 44763.94 hectors lands were distributed among 118180 peasants of which 60551 were Scheduled Caste, 26059 were Scheduled tribes and 31570 were general .⁸² From the above statistics it is found that major land reforms works that was land acquisition and distribution among the landless people was performed during the reign of United Front Government and the Left Front Government.

Land Reforms Programe was not related only to the land acquisition and distribution, it included in the programme for the sufficient wages of agricultural labourers as they had no particular rate of wages for which the labourers had been cheated and deprived by Zamindars – Jotdars.

It is mentioned in the 14th State conference of C.P.I.M “The movements for the wages and other demands have been started in our state since 1973. The movement of agricultural laborers has been scattered in 6000 villages (approximate) before the silver Jubilee Conference of Krishak Sabha at Bankura. Last year it acceleratively drived away in different villages - near about in 12000 villages. The agricultural labourers have been able to collect @ Rs. 8. to and as wages in the $\frac{1}{3}$ villages and other $\frac{2}{3}$ villages the wages have been increased @ Rs. 2.00 to 3.00.”⁸³

Operation Barga

One of the parts of Land Reform Programmes was operation Barga that was related to the sharecroppers popularly known as adhiars or bargadars. In the previous Chapter it is discussed in details about the rise, growth and the condition of the sharecroppers including their reaction against the oppressions which were 'Tolagandi movement', 'adhiars Andolan in 1939-40 and Tebhaga Movement in 1946-47. It is found in the plannum of C.P.I. (M) at the time of Parliament Election in 1979 – 80.

Another important initiative regarding land reforms was 'Operation Barga'. Left Front Government amended an important part of the Land Reforms Act to protect the right and to resist the ejection of poor sharecroppers.....Ejection of sharecroppers is a punishable crime, imprisonment and fine have been mentioned in this law as a result of which a large scale ejection of sharecroppers have been obstructed.⁸⁴

In the chapter III of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955 has focused on the question of bargadars, before the Act had been passed the West Bengal Bargadar Act, 1950 was passed by the Government defining rights and obligators of the bargadars.

In the Land Reforms Act, 1955 defined the bargadars in such way – A person who under the system generally known as adhi, barga or bhag cultivates the land of another person on condition of delivering a share of the produce of such land to that person under section 16 of the Land Reforms Act, 1955-

The rights and obligations of the bargadars and their landholders have received lengthy consideration in the 3rd chapter of the West Bengal land Reforms Act, 1955.

(a) The produce of any land cultivated by a Bargadar shall be divided as between the Bargadar and the person whose land he cultivates in the proportion of 50:50 in case where plough, cattle, seeds and manure necessary for cultivation are supplied by the owner. In all other cases the proportion would be 60:40.

(b) The Bargadar shall deliver to the person whose land he cultivates the share of the produce due to him within the prescribed period and on such delivery each party shall give to the other a receipt for the quantity of the produce received by him.

(c) The Bargadar shall store or thresh the produce at such place as may be agreed upon him and the owner.

Under 15 A of the land Reforms Act, 1955 gives recognition to the hereditary right of a bargadar on the land he has been cultivating. The inheritor shall be one of his sons and the particular son who will inherit shall be chosen by the sons among themselves.

Under section 17 (1)- on four condition by which bargadars can be ejected.

- I. If the bargadar leaves the land uncultivated without any justifiable and valid reason or if he puts the land in use other than cultivation.
- II. If the bargadar gets the land cultivated by any one other than himself or a member of his family or lets any such unrelated person cultivate it.

- III. If the bargadar fails to pay to the landlord his share of the crop as due to him under law; and
- IV. If the person owning the land requires it for bringing it under personal cultivation, less by at least one hecter (2.47 acres) for the bargadar to cultivate, provided the total area of the landlord inclusive of his land already under khas possession does not exceed three hecters (7.41 acres)

Under section 17(2)-

Direct vesting of the land so resumed to the state in case the landlord does not bring the said land under his own cultivation or allows such land to be cultivated by some other person, within two years of the resumption.⁸⁵

The third chapter of Land Reforms Act, 1955 is important for the bargadars, because all descriptions given in the chapter is in favour of bargadars. But this was not in practical. Later on, the Acts of the bargadars have been amended time to time in 1966, 1970 and 1971. This amendments are-

- I) Bargadars share has been raised to 75% in case he bears all costs.
- II) The landowners is permitted to terminate cultivation of land bonafide personal cultivation on condition, however that
 - a) The extent of land so resumed by the owner along with any other hand under his personal cultivation does not exceed 7 ½ ; acres ; and
 - b) The bargadar has been granted heritable rights in respect of land he cultivates.
- III) The eviction of bargadar on grounds of neglect of cultivation was deleted.

IV) Forcible eviction has been made a cognizable offence. During the reign of left front Government the work of land Reforms got a new motion. In connection with the land reforms programmes, the work of the record of right of the bargadars started in new enthusiasm which was called operation Barga, though the works for the record of rights were started earlier since the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 and the West Bengal land Reforms Act, 1955 were passed. But it was not in practical.

7 lac sharecroppers have been reordered in the record of right till now of whom 2 lacs are scheduled caste and 1lac are scheduled tribes. The recording of sharecroppers has been continuing. Sharecroppers have been provided various loans by easy terms and conditions. In the mean time, 11 institutions (Government Undertaking and Cooperative Bank) have come forward. With the help of Panchayat organizations⁸⁶

The following table shows the compare of the recording of bargadars in Jalpaiguri district in the old method and the operation barga method :-⁸⁷

Year	Old Method	Operation barga method
1974-77	28120	X
1978	X	3,639
1979	2,278	5,624
1980	1,190	4,856
1981	73	X
1982	351	5,748
	3892	19,867

From the above table it is found that 28,120 bargadars were recorded by old method from 1974 to 1977 where as 23759 bargadars were recorded from 1978 to 1982 of which 19867 bargadars were recorded by operation Barga. So the statistics proves that old method is more successful than operation barga from statistical point of view.

Another Table shows the Recording of bargadars in Jalpaiguri district.⁸⁸

Year	Bargadars recorded in					
	W.B.E.A. Act		W.B.L.R Act		Operation Barga	
	Number	Area (acres)	Number	Area (acres)	Number	Area (acres)
Sept 1993	16985	27246.46	19318	21812.99	24343	46672.17

From the above table it is shown that before operation Barga 36303 bargadars have been recorded in the record of right, where as by the operation barga method 24343 bargadars were recorded up to Sept 1993. Here also proves from the statistical point of view that more bargadars were recorded than the operation barga method. But, regarding rights and implementation operation barga is more successful and practical than the pre-operation barga method, because before the period of pre-operation barga the bargadars could not establish their rights on land in spite of recording their names in the record of right and most of the cases bargadars were failure to have their share of the produces. Todarmal writes "The real credit of the 'operation barga' lies in the generation awakens in the bargadars to their rights and to free them of an ingrained fear, as a result of which they are presenting united resistance to the exploitation and deception by the land owning

classes.”⁸⁹ The five procedures by which operation barga is carried out which differs from the pre-operation barga are as follows:-

- (1) Identified the concerned areas of the bargadars through official discussions consulting with the leaders or representatives of all the associations of the cultivators.
- (2) Separate teams are formed at the district or sub divisional level to perform the programme comprising with junior Land Reforms officer of the concerned area, revenue officer and an experience amin and a peon under the control and super-vision of the Sub division Magistrate sub divisional Land Reforms officer and circle officer.
- (3) At the third stage data are collected through meeting with the villagers in an evening gathering and open discussions with them. The names of the bargadars and the problem related issues of the bargadars are collected, then the solution of this problems are chalked out.
- (4) At the four stages, a date is fixed, team would go on the Scheduled day in the mouza and works there, while working, the team investigate all the related issues consulting with the local authorities and local leaders and then prepared the list of the bargadars. If any dispute or objection is found within the period proper step is taken by the Revenue Officer.
- (5) At the last stage the names of the relevant bargadars would be recorded and certificates were issued to the bargadars.

From the above procedure, it is clear that the task has become effective more or less, more than 11 Lac bargadars have been recorded in the record of rights in West Bengal, but it was not satisfactory, because more than 20 Lac bargadars could have been recorded. There were many reasons for the failure of recording of the bargadars completely.

Firstly, lack of sympathetic attitude and collaboration among the team for conducting record of rights and the bargadars, villagers as well as local authorities such as panchayets and political leaders. There was a communicational gap for conducting the works successfully and systematically.

Secondly, most important reason was fear of eviction from land among the bargadars for which many bargadars kept themselves away from recording their names in the record of rights. They were in hesitation, if their names were recorded, they would be evicted from land because they had no security and completely depended on the land lords. Hillol Kumar Chakraborty writes, "The powerful landowners generally get upper hand due to the bargadars constant fear of eviction. The fear of eviction would persist so long as they remain unconscious about the rights granted to them by the Act."⁹⁰

Thirdly, biasness of the political leaders and panchayets for which bargadars were deprived from recording their names, in many cases landowners were in support of the strong political parties as a result of which they were able to conceal their land from the recording of bargadars.

Fourthly, in most of the cases a social relation between bargadars and 'Giri' like a father and son was another reason not to completely succeed in the work of recording of sharecroppers. It is found from various sources and field survey as well that in the society of North Bengal particularly in the Duars unlike in the

other parts of Bengal bargadars were completely depended on the 'Giri' treating them their parents. 'Giri' or jotdars also treated their adhiars or bargadars like a son, even in the marriage ceremony of an adhiars 'Giri' dropped waters on the heads of bride and bridegroom which was called 'Panichhita. (It is a local custom among the Rajbanshi Community people) and the 'Giri' became father and mother (the wife of Giri) of the adhiars (which was called Panichhita bap and Panichhita Mao). Unlike other parts of Bengal and elsewhere in India there was no rigidity of the feudal relation between adhiars and their 'Giri' and there was no restriction of casteism between adhiars and their 'Giri' because here it was found that the adhiars and 'Giri' belonged to the same Community. So in some cases bargadars did not want to destroy the relation with their 'Giri'.

Limitations of the Land Reforms in West Bengal

From various sources such as Government and Non-Government records, writings of different scholars, historians, economists in books, journals, periodicals dissertations and field surveys, it can be said that the land reform programmes in West Bengal particularly during the period of United Front Govt. and Left Front Govt. is a remarkable task comparing with the other states of India. In spite of that it can not be said that the land reforms programmes has been succeeded completely. There are many reasons for which it could not be a pillar of success. It is propagated that West Bengal holds the first position in India from the point of land reforms programmes. But it is not completely true, rather from the point of acquisition of land and distribution among the landless people, Jammu and Kashmir will remain ahead of West Bengal because during the reign of Shekh Abdullah 25.15% of total land was declared as surplus and same percent land was distributed among the land less peasants which is record, and West Bengal can not touch it.⁹¹

2ndly, there were many problems and defects in acquisition and distribution of ceiling surplus land by Government. In accordance with the provisions of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953 a land holder or an intermediary retained 25 acres of agricultural land excluding homestead, orchard, tank fisheries etc. Under section 5 of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953, a land holder was allowed to retain certain lands in the following ways-

- (I) Land comprised in homesteads.
- (II) Land covered by buildings and structures.

- (III) Non-agricultural land in his khas possession, not exceeding 15 acres.
- (IV) Tank fisheries.
- (V) Land comprised in teagardens, orchards, live-stock breeding, poultry farming or dairy.
- (VI) Land comprised in mills, factories or workshops.
- (VII) Land held by a local authority.
- (VIII) Land held for exclusively religious or a charitable purpose.

It is discussed earlier that many zamindars jotdars and intermediaries concealed their lands with benami record or declaring tank fisheries, gardens or, orchards or land for religious or charitable purposes, though actually these lands were used for agricultural purposes. The land holders were able to retain their lands illegally in support of some officials of land revenue Dept. and political leaders, as a result of which a lot of lands could not be acquired by the Govt. Moreover, a large number of lands had not been acquired and distributed for litigation under court. Other than these, due to some invisible reasons, a portion of acquired land had not been distributed to the landless people. Debabrota Bandhpadhya and Nirmal Mukharjee pointed out that 352782.78 acres of lands could have been distributed in 1981 of which only 94031 acres lands had been distributed upto 1992, and the rest were not distributed, the reason for not distribution is not clear.

Thirdly, the ceiling surplus land occupied by zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries was same in all parts of West Bengal. But it was not scientific because there were lot of differences in land in accordance with fertility and value in different region of

West Bengal. Production of crops was not same in all parts of West Bengal. So, the ceiling of lands measuring on quantity was a blunder, it should be fixed up in accordance with quality and value of land.

4thly, there were many differences between the landlords of North Bengal and South Bengal. The Zamindars and intermediaries of South Bengal had alternative sources of income other than their zamindaries such as business, industries and service but in North Bengal almost all the cases except very few, the zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries were completely depended on land. They had no alternative sources of income other than agricultural cultivation, particularly the jotdars of Rajbanshi, tribal and local Muslims were uneducated, simple and unconscious. It is common knowledge that in East Bengal most of the zamindars and renters were upper caste Hindus and the majority of the peasants were Muslims, while in Jalpaiguri there was no such demarcation as the majorities of the jotdars as well as the sharecroppers were Rajbanshis. Even the Muslims had their representatives in both classes.⁹² In the tribal communities, the jotdars and sharecroppers or projas belong to same community. As almost all the cases the jotdars had no alternative sources of income, they had been gradually demolishing after losing their lands by the Land Reforms programmes. In most of the cases, the lands, remaining after vesting, were divided among their sons & daughters. Naturally after one or two generation the lands gradually decreased. Not only that they became like a fish without water because they were not laborious, not efficient in other technical works, naturally to maintain their families they sold their lands. There were so many instances in North Bengal that the then jotdars sold their lands and became later on agricultural labourers or day labourers in Industry elsewhere in India. Some instances of such condition are given which is collected from field work-

Khagendra Nath Das, S/O Late Nara Nath Das, 77 years old of Chaparerpar, P.S Alipurduar Dist- Jalpaiguri, was a member of jotdar family and they had 18 hal land (270 bigha) which was cultivated by their raiyots or chukanidars. Now he has only 6 bighas of land and he has six sons and one daughter of whom only his elder son is doing service in Calcutta, rest of his five sons are jobless. His brother, Khajen Das and Brojen Das are completely poor, Khajen Das (Roy) is a day labourer and Brojen Das (Roy) is also a day labourer works on Road. ⁹³

Premanada Prodhan, S/O Late Nanibor Prodhan, 76 years, vill. Takoamari, P.O Rashikbill, Dist- Coochbehar told his father Nonibor Prodhan was a jotdar who had near about 800 bigha lands, cultivated their land by halua or projas by 50% share of produced crops. His father Nonibor Prodhan could not submit the records of lands to the Land Revenue Dept., he recorded his lands to unauthorized persons (Benami) as a result of which all most all the lands became vest, ultimately, they were able to have only 56 bigha lands by the permission of court which was divided among four brothers. Now among his four brothers Subodh Prodhan has only three bigha lands, and 3rd brother (Jakha) have no land and he became completely poor. ⁹⁴

Late Manta Barman (Manta Dhani) of Singimari, P.O. Rampur, Dist- Coochbehar had near about 500 bigha lands. He was killed by Naxalites. Among his four sons three sons had died, only one son Namalchon Barman is living with poverty. ⁹⁵

Ramesh Roy, S/O Late Santeswar Roy (Dhangu Roy), 48 years of Chapani, P.S Samuktala, Dist Jalpaiguri stated that his grand father late Bankanath Roy (then jotdar) had 300 hal lands (4500 bigha) and four sons – (1) Kalicharan Roy, (2) Ramdayal Roy (3) Brojen Roy and (4) Santeswar Roy. After vesting and division of land his father Santeswar Roy obtained 5 hal (75 bigha) land and now he (Ramesh Roy) obtained only 15 bigha lands and

his each cousin (5 brothers) obtained 4 bighas of land and they are living very ordinarily.⁹⁶

Other than these few instances there are many families of which once they were jotdars or zamindars. Now their successors have become agricultural labourers, industrial labourers, servants or doing many of them inferior works or illegal works which is a tragic situation. Now many questions arise about the success of the Land Reforms. Should it not remain any laws or systems to protect such types of jotdars or intermediaries only depending on agriculture? Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh pointed out that a proposal was taken in the conference of Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti in Jateshar in 1957 to recruit a representative of Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samiti in the committee of distribution of surplus lands as they were only agricultural-based people unlike the Zamindars of other parts of West Bengal. But the Government did not accept the proposal of the Samiti as a result of which many problems & crisis raises in the socio-economic and political situation of North Bengal.⁹⁷

One of the causes of demolition economically of the local jotdars was heavy immigration in the district from outside. As a result of immigration and changing economic policies local jotdar faced on competition with the immigrants which was a question of struggle for existence and in this life – struggle they lost their lands except few instances.

The following table shows the population increasing and their variations in the district, Jalpaiguri –⁹⁸

1872	1951	Variations 1872- 1951	1961	Variations 1951- 1961	1971	Variations 1961- 1971	1981	Variations 1971- 1981
201,659	914538	712879	1359292	444754	1750159	390867	2214871	464712

From the above statistics it is followed that the population in 1872 was 201,659 in the district including chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag which were ceded to East Pakistan at the time of Partition of India in 1947 and the variation of the population from 1872 – 1951 was 712879. The population in 1981 in the district was 2214871, population increased 130033 from 1951 to 2214871 in 1981. It can be said easily that huge number of people immigrated in the district from 1872 to 1981, accordingly the lands for cultivation were not increased. Maximum number of people of total population lived in villages, because percentage of urban population in 1951 was 7.22, in 1961 was 9.11, in 1971 was 9.60 and in 1981 was 14.05. As there were no large industries except tea – industries, major portion of population had to depend on agricultural land for their livelihood. Naturally, land crisis was seen for which local people particularly the local jotdars were affected gradually.

Fifthly, Land reforms mean not only acquisition and distribution of land to the landless people. Land reform is not only a means of securing better distributive justice but also one of improving the social status and dignity of the poor cultivator as well as his political influence.⁹⁹ Beside land acquisition and distribution, technological systems and instruments for agricultural purposes including irrigation systems, soil conservation, seeds, manure should have been improved to increase production. Because, day to day population has been increasing, lands are being divided among the members of the families after each generation; as a result of which amount of land per family have been decreasing. In such a situation production should have been increased from insufficient land, side by side lands are to be conserved from soil pollution. Manjula Bose writes in her editorial address, “Since the pressure of excess population on land will continue for some time to come in the near future, technological and organizational development should proceed, as far as

practicable under this constraint. Technological development are however easier to achieve than organizational restricting.¹⁰⁰

It is found in the field survey in the different villages of Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar district that most of the villages are out of irrigation facility, electric facility. The peasants in these villages are not aware of the modern technological improvement in agriculture, they depend on the traditional method of cultivation.

The following table shows total number of villages, total area and irrigated area in different P.S. of the district, Jalpaiguri –¹⁰¹

Sl. No.	Name of P.S.	No. of inhabited villages	Total area (in hectare)	Percentage of Cultivation	Percentage of irrigated area to total cultivation
1.	Rajganj	28	38497.41	26.02	5.49
2.	Jalpaiguri	29	44262.07	79.17	1.12
3.	Mal	101	51859.38	45.68	9.86
4.	Metiali	30	20489.39	39.84	40.10
5.	Maynaguri	77	49304.60	68.52	2.49
6.	Nagrakata	23	34073.76	83.94	1.42
7.	Banarhat	50	28391.93	47.89	8.29
8.	Dhupguri	62	25325.61	75.99	3.49
9.	Birpara	21	18717.88	71.18	9.25
10.	Falakata	63	34911.28	64.22	15.95
11.	Madarihat	28	15835.36	57.75	6.42
12.	Alipurduar	129	68472.20	67.11	2.84
13.	Kalchini	43	69512.82	29.16	10.90
14.	Kumargram	52	86984.17	19.83	11.89
	Total	736	586637.86	50.67	6.82

Upendra Nath Barman wrote, “The ceiling of Khas land has been fixed up, but no sufficient measure has been taken up for increasing productions in the land in North Bengal as a result, most of the people once depended only on land have been destroyed in the end of destiny and living completely in a impoverish condition.”¹⁰²

Beside these, communication and marketing system is one of the important factors for the economic development of the peasants. It is also found in the field survey that many villages have not proper communicational facility and marketing system. Due to insufficient roads and infrastructural facility various crops produced by the peasants are not possible to transport different parts of the country to have proper value as a result of which peasants are less interested to cultivate, sometimes they became confused what type of crops they have to cultivate.¹⁰³

In one study area of Chakraborty and Ghosh, it was found that around 85 percent of the assignees of vested lands had never seen an agricultural extension worker and no improved seeds of the field survey, even though there was a scheme to supply minikits to the poor peasants.¹⁰⁴ For the lack of all agricultural related improvements mentioned above, small and marginal peasants have been suffering from different economic crisis, beside this many of them do not have alternative sources of income and they become failure to maintain their families. So, due to heavy poverty they sold their lands and become landless labourers.

Sixthly, though it is demanded that the operation Barga is a Landmark of Land reforms programmes, but from many aspects it could not be a pillar of success (it is discussed earlier in this chapter). From different sources it is found that a large number of bargadars, probably 600,000 to 1 million, still remain unrecorded.¹⁰⁵ P.K.Bhowmik writes “At the initial stage, OB was marked with spectacular success. But the over all success was not satisfactory. Out of the estimated 2 million bargadars the Land Records Department could register the name of about one million bargadars only. The reason behind this they trend to record their rights.” Hillol Kumar Chakraborty showed in his article “The land Reforms in West Bengal and the Bargadar” that many bargadars were not interested to record their names in the record of rights due to fear of eviction. He writes, “Thus in all probability, we may

argue that a poor bargadar would naturally think that if he would claim to be recorded as a bargadar during the current survey and settlement operation, he would simply invite fresh exploitation from his landowner and may lose his barga land.”¹⁰⁶

Another reason for the failure of recording the names of sharecroppers was social ties or relation between jotdars and bargadars. It is shown earlier in this chapter that the relation between jotdars and bargadars was paternal unlike other parts of Bengal and it is found in field survey that many bargadars told that they were solvent in the jotdari system, jotdars or ‘Giri’ always used to assist them. But crisis was being started after independence due to immigration and population going up as a result of which pressure on land was increasing and exploitation took a new form.

The bargadars who were recorded in the record of right, many of them became failure to hold their land. Many times, the bargadars could not cultivate their lands due to financial crisis, then, the land owners moved to court and the bargadars were evicted for not cultivating land in accordance with the provisions of Land Reforms Act. Many times land owners have tried to cheat the bargadars as the bargadars were illiterate and unconscious. Land owners would give lump sum money to the bargadars and the owners obtained land by registration. Adhir Shaha of Takoanari, P.O. Rashikbill, Dist Coochbehar, prominent local leader of CPT(M), who was engaged in the movement of land occupation told that suppose a bargadars got 10 bigha lands in the record of rights, land owner obtained 5 bigha (50%) lands. Promising that rest 5 bigha lands would give to the bargadars (giving kawala). Sometimes it was shown that the owners would not give kawala. Due to financial crisis and poverty, the bargadars took loan from the land owners on heavy interest and later on, the bargadars left the demand of bargadari right on land getting some lump sum money. In Such a way bargadars lost their lands and became landless laboures.¹⁰⁷ Another local leader of C.P.I. (M) of

Bholardabri, P.O. Bholardabri, Dist. Jalpaiguri told that many bargadars who recorded their names in the record of right and evicted from land and Left this village, though most of the bargadars cultivated their lands in accordance with the Land Reforms Act.¹⁰⁸

From the above discussions, it may be said that Land reforms programme in West Bengal marked a new dimension in the agrarian field and the life of the peasants, particularly the small and marginal farmers in West Bengal. In spite of having many limitations and short comings peasants and bargadars have obtained the right to fight against all sorts of oppressions more or less.

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90. Hillol Kumar Chakraborty, The Land Reforms of West Bengal and the Bargadars, in Manjula Bose, Land Reforms in Eastern India, p, 97
91. Ranjan Kumar Mitra, op. cit, p, 34
92. Subhajyoti Roy, op. cit, p, 129.
93. Interview with Khagendra Nath Das, 77 years, s/o Late Nara Nath Das, of Chaparar par, P.S. Alipurduar, Dist Jalpaiguri
94. Interview with Premananda Prodhan, 76 years, S/O Nanibor Prodhan of Takomari, P.O. Rashikbil, P.S. Tufanganj, Dist – Coochbehar.
95. Interview with Premananda Prodhan, Ibid

96. Interview with Ramesh Roy S/O late Santeswar Roy, 48 years of Chapani, P.S. Samuktala, Dist Jalpaiguri.
97. Address of Prof. Ananda Gopal Ghosh in the ICSSR sponsored National Seminar Organized by Bashistha Institute held on 4th to 6th November, 2006 at Baxirhat, Dist – Coochbehar.
98. 1872 – 1951, Census 1951, p, Liv & 1961 – 1981, Census of India, 1981, series 2 – 3, West Bengal, p, 26.
99. Manjula Bose, op.cit, p, VIII.
100. Manjula Bose, op.cit, p, VIII
101. Census of India, 1981, series 2 – 3, West Bengal, p, 25.
102. Upendra Nath Barman, Uttar Banglar Sekal O Amar Jiban Smriti, Jalpaiguri, 1388 B.S, p, 50
103. Field Survey in the different villages of Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri District.
104. B.K. Sinha and Pushpendra, op. cit, p, 119.
105. B.K. Sinha and Pushpendra, op. cit, p, 120
106. Hillol Kumar Chakraborty, op. cit, p, 99.
107. Field survey with Adhir Saha of Takoamari, P.S Tufanganj, Dist – Coochbehar.
108. Field Survey with Manoranjan Debnath of Bholardabri, P. S. Alipurduar, Dist – Jalpaiguri.