

Chapter- 3

Land Devolution: Socio economic and Demographic Changes.

In the preceding chapters it is discussed about the demographic structure and the socio - economic condition of the district in the pre-colonial period. It is found that before the coming of the British, this area was ruled by the Koch Kings and the Bhutias subsequently. In this area population were meagre, particularly in the part of the Duars, only the people of some tribes namely Mech, Toto, Garo, Rabha and Drucpa lived there in the intolerable situation and distress climate. But after occupation of this area by the British in 1865 by the treaty of Sinchula after the 2nd Anglo Bhutanese war situation was going to be changed gradually. For the economic interest British Indian Govrnmnt utilized this area introducing their economic policy in the field of agriculture, land revenue, trade and commerce as a result of which demographic pattern and socio-economic condition of this area changed rapidly.

Immigration and Emigration: A New Demographic Structure of the Duars 1870-1900.

As a consequence of the Second Anglo-Bhutan War in 1865, the British Government occupied the Duars and they cast their commercial eyes on the area because it was full of natural resources, huge number of forests full of valuable timbers, animals; and the soil was favourable for cultivation of different crops. At first, they thought to collect the information about the geographical position at micro level so that they could take initiative for economic reforms and for that Mr.Rennel was assigned to make a geographical map on this area. B.C. Basu, Esq. The Assistant to the Director of the Dept. of Land and Land

Records and Agriculture, Bengal reported to the Director of Land Records and Agriculture, Bengal –

The approaching settlement of the Western Dooars is likely to have prejudicial effect on the extension of cultivation, The ryots, many of whom have only lately immigrated into the subdivision, can not have any great attachment for the villages in which they live so that the least distance may frighten them away. Besides, there is so much waste land available for cultivation and so little is the labourer with which it may be brought under the plough that may be induced to leave their present holdings and take fresh leases of waste land. They are likely to gain thereby rather than lose. Vergin soil will no doubt yield more plentifully than old land.¹ Mr. Basu pointed out more assuredly to extend cultivation for the economic benefit if they initiate some measures –

He reported-

“In connection with the subject of extension of cultivation a few words may be said regarding village sanitation. The Western Dooars enjoys the reputation of possessing a most insalubrious climate. Fever is rife in most parts of the year and epidemics are of frequent occurrencesThe present unhealthy condition of the Dooars is not unlikely to keep away many people who would otherwise like to immigrate into the estate. This consideration alone should be sufficiently strong to induce Government to pay more regard this it has hitherto done to question of sanitation. The present land revenue of the estate is about three lakhs of rupees and Govt. were only to allot one percent of the income for miscellaneous improvements, a great deal could be done to improve the condition of the tenentry”² On the basis of the information and necessity at micro level they started survey and settlement works gradually which is discussed in preceding chapters wherein it is found that the first settlement took effect from April, 1871 by W.O.A. Backet, The 2nd settlement generally took effect from the 1st April, 1880 by Ulick

Brown, The 3rd settlement was started from 1889 and ended in 1895 by D.H.E.Sunder and the 4th settlement was completed by J.A. Milligan during 1906-1916. As a result of these settlements the revenue in the Duars increased rapidly. Before the settlement the amount of annual tax was approximately Rs. 39526.00, but after the first settlement the land revenue was raised to Rs. 88,618.00, after the 2nd settlement to Rs.1,51,862.00, after the 3rd settlement it was Rs.3,74,901.00 and after 4th settlement it was Rs. 6,77,000.00 .³

B.C. Basu Esq Assistant to the Director of the Dept. of Land Records and Agriculture reported –

“The natural conditions of the Western Dooars are highly in favourable to immigration. There is an abundance of good alluvias land which can be very easily brought under the plough. The settler has not to wait long for the return of his outlay, which need not be great . A pair of bullocks costing about Rs 16 and a set of implements for Rs 2 or Rs 3 are all the stock that the needs invest in commencing cultivation . The neighbouring state Coochbehar and the district of Rangpur are pretty densely populated, so that with proper encouragement the surplus of population will naturally flow into the Western Dooars,⁴

As a part of their agrarian reforms the Britishers divided the lands into three categories in the Duars according to the quality and necessity of the land – namely (1) Lands for agricultural purposes, (2) Lands for Tea - Cultivation and (3) Lands for reserve forest. In the field of agriculture, they introduced jodari system in a new forms differing from other parts of North Bengal. After each settlement a large number of jotes were created and these were given to the jotdars by agreement or lease. Most of the jotdars did not cultivate the land directly, therefore, further devolution of land was necessary. On the basis of an agreement of revenue named ‘Pattani’ to the intermediaries on middle ranking tenure holder called Chukanidars, Dar-chukanidars, Tasya – chukanidars, Dar-darchukanidars. Moreover, there were

bargadars or sharecroppers who had no right on land. They cultivated the land of the jotdars as well as of the intermediary tenure holders. In general, the land holders under whom the bargadars cultivated the land, were called 'giri' and got 50% share of the crops.

At the first stage, as there was no shortage of land in the Duars, the jotdars, after getting lands from the Govt. by agreement or lease, collected cultivators from outside the Duars and gave many facilities including Bhuta (a kind of loan) to cultivate and dwell in the land.⁵ In the neighbouring areas of the Duars it was a propaganda among the peasants and merchant class as well, that the lands were available easily in the Duars and there was no burden or restriction for any kind of tax or revenue at the first stage, Grunning wrote, "It has always assumed in the Duars that every field under cultivation has been reclaimed at the tenants expense from the original jungle and, after the Bhutan War, it was found that the tenants held at a mere jungle rent. This was allowed to continue without change for six years, when the first settlement of the Western Duars was made, and since then the rents have been gradually enhanced at successive settlements as the country has been reclaimed and land has increased in value."⁶

B.C. Basu, Esq, Assistant to Dept. of Land Records and Agriculture reported –

For the first two years, the land pays no rent, for the next two at 3annas per acre; for the 5th and 6th years at 6-annas per acre; and for the seventh and eighth years at 8annas per acre. At the end of the 8th year the land is measured again; the portion which has been reclaimed is then assessed at the Pergunnah rates, which are Re. 1-8 for up land and Re.1-4 for low land and the unclaimed position is made to pay at 3 annas per acre. The settlement is made for 30 years. The terms appear to be very fair and are readily acquired in by ryots.⁷

Number of population in the Western Duars increasing gradually.⁸

Year	Population	Percentage of increasing
1872	90668	-
1881	1,82,687	101.49%
1891	2,96,348	62.21%
1901	4,10,606	38.55%
1911	5,19,372	26.49%
1921	5,58,971	7.62%
1931	6,61,068	18.26%

So for easily land availability in the district, particularly in the Waste land areas, people of different castes and communities were immigrated from neighboring Coochbehar, Rangpur, Dinajpur Behar and Nepal as a result of which population had been increasing tremendously. The following table shows the number of population and its variations (next page)

Population of Jalpaiguri with variations, 1872-1951 ⁹

	1872	1881	Variations 1872-1881	1891	Variations 1881-1891	1901	Variations 1891-1901	1911	Variations 1901-1911	1921	Variations 1911-1921
Jalpaiguri District	201,659	316,575	+114,916	433,334	+116,759	544,906	+111,572	661,282	+116,376	694,056	+32,774
Sader Subdivision	177,185	271,914	+94,729	360,887	+88,973	425,553,	+64,666	458,581	+33,028,	450,825	-7,756
Alipurduar Subdivision	24,474	44,661	+20,187,	72,447	+27,786	119,353	+46,906	202,701	+83,348,	243,231	+40,530

Population of Jalpaiguri with variations, 1872-1951

	1931	Variations 1921-1931	1941	Variation 1931-1941	1951	Variation 1941-1951
Jalpaiguri District	739,160	+45,104	845,702	+106,542	914,538	+68, 836
Sader Subdivision	466,087	+15,262	524,884	+58,797	546,142	+21,258
Alipurduar Subdivision	273,073	+29,842	320,812	+47,745	368,396	+47,578

Sources: - Census 1951, West Bengal District Hand Books- Jalpaiguri, A Mitra, I.C.S, Calcutta, P, Liv

For increasing population in the district, on the other hand for the increasing of land revenue one after each settlement (which was shown previous chapter), the relation between cultivators and the 'giri' namely jotdars, intermediaries and merchant classes become bitter day by day. Ranjit Dasgupta writes, ".....the adhiars (share croppers) were always treated by the jotdars as socially inferior in status, even when the two belonged to the same socio-religious group¹⁰ Apart from this, for the immigration of different types and classes of people, land crisis was seen as the land of the district turned into a commercial market. Merchants, money lenders, Mahajans, pleaders etc. were interested to get land from the Govt. by agreement. After taking land, they lived in the town and gave the land to the intermediaries who had no direct relation with the cultivators and no experience of cultivation. There were absentee jotdars who got the land only for extra income as a result of which original land holders lost their lands, particularly the small jotdars. There were also local jotdars of different communities and tribes who took land and became big jotdars. Ranjit Dasgupta writes, "Out of 5,542 transfers which came to the notice of the settlement officer, the purchaser in 3,444 were jotdars already in possession of other jotes, in 637 cases he was Mahajan, in 83 cases a pleader, in 100 cases a tea garden or its representatives, while in 12, 98 cases, the purchaser was a Chukanidar and presumably a resident cultivator. In 1912 it was ascertained that out of 9,910 maljotes as many as 3,996 were held by non-resident jotdars.¹¹

The following table shows the jotes were passing into the hands of outsiders which was made in 1905 for the Falakata tahsil-¹²

Class of people	Number of Jotes	Area in acres
Rajbansi	1,638	58665.23
Muhamadan	1,092	40739.47
Mech	381	7599.52
Jaldha	19	577.16
Garo	17	302.28
Santhal	2	24.52
Oraon	263	6,182.99
Nepali	140	4,990.49
Marwari	115	6,551.13
Up-country men	272	14,097.20
Kabuli	14	381.41
Asamese	18	1,132.65
European	7	1,036.19
All others	136	5,074.22
	4,114	1,73,523.46

From the above table it is found that about 15 percent of the settled area in this tahsil was in the hands of Marwaris, up-country men, Kabulis and "other persons" many of whom are Bengali Babus. Here another table is given which shows the different castes to which the jotdars of the Duars belong, the number of jotes and area of land and revenue paid by them after the Sunder's settlement (1889-95):-¹³

Caste	Number of Jotes	Area		Revenue paid in Rupees
		Acres	Dec	
Paharia	147	6,064	06	6,815
Chatri	67	2,502	13	3,156
Oraon	116	2,899	99	3,225
European	57	3,940	00	4,361

Mech	764	20,593	64	18,523
Kapali	8	2,09	10	367
Muhammadans	2,692	121,583	20	1,11,967
Shaha	76	3,533	42	4,217
Tanti	24	7,94	09	816
Rajbanshi	5,264	130,910	52	1,83,089
Kyasth	192	3,503	17	7,813
Bhutia	2	16	66	39
Brahman	201	11,316	37	9,191
Gope	47	3074	53	2,594
Kyan	99	12,612	87	11,979
Napit(Barbar)	34	1090	03	2,212
Hari	6	143	27	142
Banik	13	314	55	353
Mahji	5	112	98	72
Bairagi	13	270	31	341
Teli	3	175	33	216
Garro	33	938	46	694
Byadh	1	116	12	132
Mali	2	56	13	61
Baidya	2	69	01	85
Kumar	6	379	40	471
Jugi	11	456	43	556
Dobasiya	54	901	19	764
Jalda	2	31	36	20
Sutar (carpenter)	14	239	54	241
Kamar	4	76	74	61
Kalwar	1	26	53	21
Nepalise	3	69	60	67
Munda	4	111	58	87
Sanyasi	2	43	43	32
Total-	9,971	3,34,995	91	3,74,901

From the above table it is seen that the different types of people immigrated into the district, Jalpaiguri and they settled after having land, even the tea-garden labourers immigrated from Chhotanagpur and Santalpargana, out of working in the tea garden used to have land and cultivated. Grunning writes, "The increase of population is the best example of the prosperity of the Western Duars; between 1891 and 1901. The increase amounted to 38.5 percent. The rise of the tea industry has led to introduction of numbers of coolies from Chhotanagpur, the Santal Pargana and Nepal of whom, after working for some years on the tea gardens, take up land and settle in the district"¹⁴

As result of increasing population a business of land selling and purchasing started in the district. The business class, particularly the Marwaries and some servicemen, Doctors, pleaders purchased lands and gave it to the intermediaries or sharecroppers to be financially benefited. The following table shows the average sale of land per annum in each tahsil of the Duars during twelve years, from 1883 to 1894.¹⁵

Name of Tahsil	Number of Sales	Area of Land sold in acres	Assessment Rs.	Price Rs.	Price per acre Rs.	Number of years Purchase of assessment
Maynaguri	305.5	4,549	4,438	58450	12.8	13.1
Falakata	70	1,647	1442	9,225	5.6	6.8
Alipur	10.9	251	183	545	2.1	2.9
Bhalka	4	93	71	274	2.9	3.8
Ambari Falakata	8	236	209	1047	4.4	5.0

Here it is to be noted that as a result of immigration, the population of different castes and classes had been increasing gradually in the district, but the population of different tribes

namely Meches, Totoes, Garos, etc. Who were indigenous and lived independently, decreasing gradually. Statistics is given below:-

The following table shows the population of Mech community decreased gradually.¹⁶

Years	Population
1891	21,608
1901	22,350
1911	19,893
1921	10,777
1931	9,510
1941	6,886
1951	10,507
1961	13,178

The following table shows the variations of the Totos in the district-¹⁷

Year	Population
1901 (Census)	171
1910 (Mr. Ainslie, Subdivisional officer)	200
1911 (Milligan)	235
1921 (Census)	271
1931 (B. Mukherjee)	263
1931 (Census)	334

Separate colonies were established for the protection of the Mech, Garo, and Santals. Mr. Sunder settled 766 jotes covering 20,593.66 acres with Meches, but these were only a portion of the total community. Milligan writes, "A block of land approximating

20,000 acres, known as Satali, was at last settlement set aside as a reserve for Meches and Garos. Unfortunately the leases granted allowed the right of transfer and sub- infeudation to all and sundry, so outsiders soon began to creep in, for the land is very fertile in Satali.”¹⁸

Like the Meches and the Totos, the people of Garo community once lived in the Duars, left the place. Why the people left the place? It is assumed that due to identity crisis, they left the place and moved towards east. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal writes, “Analysis figures of the census report it appears that there was a large exodus of the Mech from Bengal towards Assam and then further eastwards.”¹⁹ As a result of immigration of the outsiders in the colony, the Meches and Garos began to leave the place. Here also, Milligan writes, “Soon after this the Mech exodus from the Duars began, and in 1915, I was informed that practically every Mech had moved over into Assam. I have said little of the Garos, but that is because they never patronized the colony to any extent. A number of that tribe still remain in the district in forest villages, but none in the colony.”²⁰

Condition of Peasants, Adhiars (sharecroppers), Agricultural Labourers and Tribal People

In the previous chapter, it is discussed about the land revenue systems in different phases in the district and it is followed that a new system in the land had been introduced by the Britishers as a result of which a dramatic change took place and a critical situation in the society of the district was seen unlike the society in the pre-colonial period.

In the pre-colonial period, the area of the district particularly the area of the Duars was full of jungles, most of the area was without people because of the intolerable condition and the hard diseases namely Malaria, Kalaazar etc, only the people of some tribes namely Mech, Garo, Toto, Rava, Drucpa lived there. Some tribes of Bhutanese lived there but before coming of rainy season, they left the place to save them. Surgeon Rennie in his book "Bhutan and the story of Dooars War" wrote, "The inhabitants chiefly consist of a tribe called the Mechis who appears to be the only people so constituted as to be capable of permanently enduring the climate."²¹

The life of these tribes were very simple, kept themselves out of modern civilization and complexity. They had their own customs, laws and culture by which they were governed. Every tribe had separate steps or gotras. Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal writes, "Although the Bodos including the Meches become mixed with other people they have retained their distinctive steps or gotras."²²

Immediately, after the occupation of the Duars, the local commissioner J.C. Haughton drew up a list of the landlords in the Duars in such a way - the land in the Western area was held in the following manner - Goomah, Raphoo and Bhalka were under small zamindar or teshildars (Petty Revenue Collectors) wholly under the Bhutia rules, Buxa was under a Bhutia officer (Dooar

Deo), the Northern parts of the Dooars were under Mech Sardars and the plain of Mainaguri was divided among the zamindars - the family of Hargovinda Katham, one Khurgodher Karji, and the Raikot of Jalpaiguri. There was no mention of jotdars as a class having permanent, heritable and alienable rights on land in any parts of the Dooars at this stage.²³

In the northern part of the Duars, the Meches and the Garos lived there habituated with shifting cultivation. They settled in a place few years, cultivated in the land in their own way, after few years they shifted into another place and settled there and their life was cycling in such a way.²⁴ In the Southern part of the district there were settled- cultivators most of whom were Rajbanshi community.

In the pre-colonial period, particularly in reign of Bhutias, there were two parallel hierarchies of authorities in the Duars who depended on land, collected Revenue and sent to the Bhutan Raj. Dr. S. Roy shows that the following were the main characteristics of the pre-colonial system : a) the presence of two separate but overlapping hierarchies, the first consisting of Bhutanese officials and the second of the local agrarian society; b) existence of a degree of power struggle at two levels, between the central authority of the Bhutia state and its local officers on the one hand and on the other, between the latter officers and the local potentates of the Duars; and c) the attempt of the Bhutia authorities to override the powers of the local officers and leading elements in order to encourage cultivation and maximize tribute.²⁵

In the areas of Baikunthapur Pargana and the Chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag permanent settlement was introduced since 1793. There were two large and small zamindari estates in this portion. Revenue paid by them were fixed except for cess and other levies imposed on them. Zamindars enjoyed heritable rights in the land and parcel out land for rent. The zamindars would give their estates to jotdars on agreement. The

jotdars were intermediaries between Zamindars and cultivators. Jotdars like Talukdars elsewhere in Bengal were first degree pattanidars who could give their land to the Chukanidars to get revenue, Chukanidars also sometimes give their land to Dar-dar-chukanidars to obtain revenue.

After possession of the Duars in 1865 by the treaty of Sinchula after 2nd Anglo-Bhutanese war, the British Government were interested to use this area for commercial benefit and they started survey and settlement works. As a result of these settlements the revenue in the district increased gradually which was discussed in previous chapter. As it was followed by the British that land of the Western Duars, particularly in the northern part of the Duars was suitable for tea cultivation, they invited the planters to initiate tea-cultivation. Ranjit Dasgupta wrote, "The introduction and growth of tea plantation enterprise in the district as in Assam and elsewhere in India took place with the active assistance of the colonial state and further were not the products of operation of indigenous economic forces but of exogenous development and requirements of the imperial order"²⁶

As the local people except some Nepalese, were less interested to work in the tea-garden as a labourer, the planters had to depend on the labourers imported from Chhotanagpur and Santal Pargana. Gunning writes, "A few gardens which are practically in the hills, still work almost entirely with Nepali Labour, but as a whole, the Duars gardens are dependent on labour from a distance, the chief recruiting grounds being Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas. The system of working is through sardars."²⁷ In this way labourers from Chhotanagpur and Santal Pargana namely Munda, Santals and Oraons were immigrated in the district and the condition of the labourers in the gardens was like slave. According to the 1901 census report there were 1,88,223 immigrants in the district as a whole. The bulk of them were enumerated in the Duars and about half of the immigrants were tea-garden collies from Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas. The migration statement showed that 80436

immigrants were from Ranchi district and 10562 from Santal Parganas.²⁸

There is a debate about the classes of tenants in the district. It is true that there was no uniform system or law in the whole areas of the district either in the pre-colonial or colonial period which is discussed in the previous chapter. In the colonial period, British Government introduced new system particularly in the Duars declaring waste land, but in the Duars as well the system and laws regarding land was changed in several times by the Britishers. Mr. Tweedie, first Dy. Commissioner of Jalpaiguri district, tried to show three categories of tenants in the Duars namely- 1) Jotdar, 2) Chukanidar and (3) Agricultural labourer. (T. Roy Chowdhury). But Nolan, the Commissioner of Rajshahi Division denied the classification of Tweedy. According to him there were two classes of tenants namely- (1) Jotdar and (2) Sharecroppers or adhiars.²⁹ He opined that "Beneath the jotdar, Mr. Tweedie found three classes - Chukanidars, who hold for a fixed term, being more than one year," raiyots, described as a tenants by the year at a money rent, and projas, or tenants - at-will, receiving from the jotdar the instruments of cultivation and giving to him half the produce. It is a common mistake into which one revenue officer falls after another, to assume that these four classes are always found one above the other on the some land, The last being the actual cultivator, and the other three living on his labours.³⁰ J. F. Grunning in his Gazetteer showed that under the Bhutias, there were really only two sorts of cultivators - the Jotdars, found every where in a privileged position directly under Government, and in some places the Chukanidars, tenants of the Jotdars for a term, or years by years:

There were also farm labourers, landless class, working for hire on a peculiar system.³¹ He also showed that "since Mr. Tweedie's time the most important changes which have been made are that jots are liable to sale.....the position of the Chukanidars has been raised and they now have to occupy rights while their rents can not be enhanced during the period of

settlement. There are very few dar-chukanidars and these are not recognized by Government.”³²

D.H.E. Sunder, Settlement Officer showed in his “Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars about the tenure in such a way that (a) the Government Revenue is collected from jotdars. A Jotdar is a person who holds lands directly under Government. His holding is called a jote.³³ (b) the tenant immediately below the jotdar is the chukanidar or mulandar. The rent payable by him has been fixed for the term of their settlement. His title to his holding is heritable and transferable (c) The tenant immediately after the chukanidar was dar-chukanidar. He has no right. The Govt. of Bengal, Revenue Department, wrote about these classes of tenants in letter no. 478T-R, dated 28th September 1891, as follows - “The lieutenant Governor approves your proposal that the newly created under-tenure of dar-chukani and dar-a-dar-chukani in the Duars estate should be absolutely ignored, in as much as these tenures have been made contrary to the express orders of Government.” (d) At the bottom of the tenants was adhiar (sharecropper). This tenant had no rights. He paid rent in kind, namely half of all crops he may grow on land which was allowed to him.³⁴

After completion of the third settlement by Sunder, Govt. started to keep records of land and land revenue and to maintain land revenue administration properly. Rules for the maintenance of the records of Western Duars from 1st April, 1895.

In each of the tahshil, to be called the jotdar’s Register of Mutation shall be kept up in bound volumes showing on one side the names of the jotdars with whom settlement has been made and their interests of their chukanidars and on the other side the mutation of names and interests effected from time to time. The form to be printed on the left hand side will be as follows (Figures have been entered by way of example).³⁵

		Area of jotes.	
Numbers of jote: 25		Cultivated and homestead: 40	
Khasra numbers: 100		Not cultivated	<u>10</u>
Revenue payable to Govt.: 112		Total	<u>50</u>

Numbers of jotdars	Name of jotdars	Shares	Name of permanent chukanidars	Area leased to chukanidars		Rent payable by chukanidars		
				Khasra numbers	Acres			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
						Rs	A	P
1	AB	16 annas	Y.Z	43 to 47 and 64	5	15	0	0
2	CD		W.X	81 to 89	5	17	0	0
3	EF							
	or							
	AB	8 annas	W.X	81 to 89	5	17	0	0
	CD	4 annas						
	EF	4 annas						
	or							
	AB	10 annas						
	CD	10 annas	YZ	43 to 47 and 64	5	15	0	0
	EF	30 annas	WX	81 to 89	5	17	0	0

According to Milligan, survey and settlement officer, the arable lands in the Western Duars and in the permanently settled portions of the district an apparently uniform and homogeneous system of land - holding was found in existence. He wrote, "If we except a few unimportant patni taluks, uppen chowkis and others found in the latter area, it can be said that throughout the district there are three classes of tenants, and three only, namely jotdars, chukanidars or mulandars with various derivative sub-grades differing only in degree and adhiars or projas.³⁶

According to the report of the sub divisional officer given at the time of Tebhaga movement in Jalpaiguri “ Land Lords locally known as jotdars always taking half of the share of the produce and probably this is only the bargadars are here known as adhiars that receivers of half shares. But there is absolutely no uniformity of customs or practice regarding supply of plough, cattle seeds manure and other agricultural requirements. These things vary almost in every individual case according to time and circumstances and it will be difficult rather impossible to explain the whole system here. With the questions of supply of plough, cattle etc. are involved the questions of supply of food staff and other requirements of the adhiars by the jotdars during difficult days of the former the rate of interest on the paddy advanced by the jotdars to their adhiars nature of land give to the adhiars etc.³⁷

As there were different types of jotdars in the district, there were also different types of adhiars. A big jotdar would remain in tention to have adhiars in his own land and hold them for cultivation. There being so much surplus lands in the subdivision that there was always some rivalry amongst the jotdars to find out adhiars and keep their contact. In such cases jotdars had to bear the entire burden of their adhiars both for cultivation as well as for their maintainance . In such cases jotdars apparently would give half of the produce to the adhiars but indirectly takes back almost the entire on accounting of advances, interest etc. There were another type of adhiars who had land of their own and had their plough and cattle. Their own land being not sufficient for their ploughs they took a few bighas of land from other neighbouring jotdars. Such adhiars were not much dependent upon their jotdars and did not take plough, cattle or advance paddy. They too paid half the share of the produce.

There were landless adhiars who cultivate others land apparently for the benefit of the jotdars. These classes of adhiars were more laborious for all practical purposes.

Condition of the Jotdars

It is debatable matter to discuss the condition, activities and role of the jotdars in the district, however the jotdars played a significant role in the agrarian system in the district unlike other parts of Bengal like zamindar, jotdar or talukdar. In the permanent settled portion of the district jotdars were in the position immediately after zamindars, on the other hand, in the Duars jotdars used to have land from the Government directly on agreement or lease. Either in the part of permanent settled portion, or in the part of the Duars after having lands they would cultivate lands directly by themselves or they would give lands to the intermediaries namely chukanidars or Mulandars, other than these jotdars would cultivate land by adhiars or share croppers for 50% share of the crops. Milligan writes, "Local custom would define a jotdar as one holding land immediately under a proprietor, his rent being liable to enhancement, having originally acquired a right either to cultivate it himself or to sublet it to others, his title therein being permanent and heritable but not transferable without the consent of the proprietor obtained by payment of a salami."³⁸ Mr. Backet, the first settlement officer wrote about the jotdars in the Duars "The jotdars is a man who holds in severally, joint or in common, a piece of land for which he pays revenue directly to government through its agents, the tashildars, and as long as he pays his revenue to the state his right to his jote can not in any way be disturbed. He has a transferable and saleable right in the land but his rent is liable to be enhanced by Government whenever a new settlement is made."³⁹

It is to be noted that the jotdars in the Duars were not proprietors of land, in several times they demanded to the Government to grant them the right of portion and separate accounts ascertained that jots were estates and that they should have the rights of land-holders or proprietors in this respect. But this claim had always denied and refused by the Government. Mr. Lowis in 1890 showed the real position of jotdars in such a way,

In one sense the jotdars were holders of land, but they were not land holders as contemplated in the butwara law. A jote in the Duars is indivisible; there may be sharers within it who hold separate lands and persons may have themselves entered in the toujee as having a certain interest in the jote, but such interest is never recognized as entitling the sharer to be entered in the taujee as in possession of specific plots of land, nor can a share-holder claim, like the owner of a permanently-settled estate, the jote had always been considered one and indivisible, and the Government had always refused to accord official sanction to the division of land within the jote, or to recognize officially in any way the partition of jotes into specific portions.

In the case of mal jots (jots which were in existence at the time of the 2nd settlement, the lease gives the jotdar a heritable right and permits him to transfer the whole or any share in his jots, but in the case of waste land, where a preliminary lease for a term of five years is granted, the jotdar is bound to reside on or near his jot and to bring half the area of it under cultivation and he can transfer his entire holding but not a portion of it unless, the Deputy Commissioner permits him to transfer a portion.⁴⁰

After completion of the 3rd settlement every jote of the jotdars had to be recorded in the register called jotdar's register of mutation ordinary mutation should be recorded as follows:-

Dakhil kharij effected in favour of M.N (heir or purchaser) in lieu of AB (Deceased or seller) by order of settlement officer or Deputy Commissioner, dated 16th July 1895". If the transfer of a portion of a jote or chukani holding only, the area and khasra numbers of the portion transferred must be recorded.

Application for mutation of names may be filled the tahshildar, the stamp fee being 8 annas for inheritance and 1 rupee for sale or mortgage. A register shall be kept up in each tahshil.

If no dispute arises, the tahshildar will pass the order for transfer. If any dispute arises; the tahshildar will take evidence and decide the dispute subject to revision by, or appeal to the Deputy Commissioner. ⁴¹

The jotdars in the district, Jalpaiguri were in economically prosperous. They had huge lands, no want of food, and wealth. Most of the jotdars could not cultivate land by themselves. They cultivated land by their chukanidars, somewhere cultivated land by adhiars or projas. Prosanya Kumar Roy, S/o Late Dino Nath Roy of Uttar Majher dabri, 86 years old, former jotdar expressed his view, "My father Dino Nath Roy obtained land from British Govt. by pattan. We had 120 hal lands of which 8 hal lands was cultivated directly by agriculturer- laboures and rest of the lands would be cultivated by chukanidars or Raiyots. Raiyots cultivated lands and would give us revenue and we used to give revenue to the Government, such raiyots were Gomasta Barman, Kshima Barman, Balamant Barman, Kalikanta Roy etc. ⁴² The tahshildar played a significant role to collect revenue from jotdars and supervise all the matters relating to cultivation. W. Maude, Esq. under secretary to the Govt. of Bengal Revenue Department wrote to Commissioner of Bengal, "It was brought to my notice that tahshildars very rarely leave head-quarters and know very little of their tahshil, and that the reason is that they can not get about in this country without an elephant. The Deputy Commissioner will be instructed to supply them with an elephant, whenever he can do so , either from the establishment already allowed to the district or else, if necessary I shall be willing to allow one to be attached to each tahshil in addition to that establishment. But the tahshildar if he gets this help , must really be compelled to go about, inspect and know his tahshil thoroughly, look after the hats and roads and the Government khas land & Co. see to the keeping up of the settelement records. I shall touch again on this subject in my inspection note on the settelement. ⁴³ Later on, the more responsibilities were imposed on the tahshildars. It is found in the Government record, "Each tahshildar should, with the help of his assistant or peshkar, inspect

20 percent of the jotes every year and enquire whether any unrecorded mutation has taken place, thus going round his whole in 5 years. The Settlement officer should also inspect as many as he can of the whole number, some in each of the three tahshil. When the tahshildar or settlement officer, on inspection or otherwise, learn that a mutation has not been reported, they shall report the fact to the Deputy Commissioner, who shall impose a moderate fine in lieu of cancelling the lease.⁴⁴

Another former jotdar, Khagendra Nath Das, S/o Late Nara Nath Das (kachua Dhani), 77 years old expressed his opinion, "We had no adhiars, land was cultivated by chukanidars, who obtained lands by pattan gave us revenue, tax for water, tax for road, tax for education and we used to give revenue to the Government. If the chukanidars were unable to pay the revenue in scheduled time, their land would have been seized and gave it another chukanidars by pattan."⁴⁵ But the system of cultivation was separate in Mahakalguri gram panchayet of Alipurduar Sub division. In most of the cases, there was no chukani system, lands were cultivated by adhiars or projas, they cultivated lands and used to give 50% share of crops. Adhiars were given bhuta at the time of cultivation for their food and expenditure.⁴⁶

It is found from the field survey that jotdars were very happy from all aspects. No critical situation would create among the jotdars, intermediaries and adhiars or projas, their hospitality were heartiest, any time guest were always welcome. At the time of festivals or any occasion anybody could come and take their hospitality, no want of food. The amount of revenue was not heavy or burdensome.

Sri. Dharani Kanta Das, a son of jotdar family told, "Jotdars were not oppressors like the jotdars or zamindars of South Bengal or East Bengal, the relation between jotdars and adhiars were not bitter."⁴⁷

Jotdars were co-operative in the social work as well; they always helped adhiars or projas and chukanidars. Smt. Binapani Karji, w/o Late Harendra Bhushan Karji, 83 years old (a wife of former jotdar family) told, "Various types of festivals were held through the year in the house. House was filled up with various types of people and relatives. Buffalo was sacrificed to the God or Goddess. 5-6 hal of land was given to the priest. We had 39 acre of Debottar land. the relation with Raiyot or projas was good. The people were very simple. Many people would come at the time of festivals or worships, they stayed and took meal. There was no account for this purpose. Even at the time of marriage ceremony sugar was poured in the pond for drinking the elephants. Grand father would sit down with moneybag and helped everybody." ⁴⁸

Ramesh Chandra Suba, a former jotdar of Hasimara, Jalpaiguri district opined, "During the period of Bhutanese rule, we had the total areas of Joy Gaon, Dalsing Para. We had near about 6000 to 7000 hal lands. After coming of Britishers they occupied maximum lands. We had only 20-25 hal lands during the reign of Britishers. Lands were cultivated partly by the chukanidars give lease or pattan and partly by the adhiars or share croppers. The relation between jotdars and adhiars was cooperative. Adhiars were assisted in different ways at the time of their requirements, sometimes they had been given loan without any interest, sometimes it would be without any return." ⁴⁹

One former adhiars named Sri Bhado Adhikary, 90 years old of Chapani, Alipurduar Sub-division told, "Dolchand Das, a prominent jotdar was my brother-in-law. Amongst his 66 hal adhiars only I myself is alive. He could not go on without me. In every matter he called me. He loved me. He helped me in any kind of problem. At the time of crisis he opened up his gola of paddy(store house of paddy) and allowed to take at per requirement. The relation between giri and adhiars never became bitter at that time. After cutting and threshing, paddy was divided. Feast was going on with meat, dai and chira in the house of jotdar. We the adhiars would give sweets to the jotdar." ⁵⁰

It is found in the Government Report about the relation of jotdars and adhiars in the district, Jalpaiguri, "The relation between the landlords (jotdars) and the bargadars (sharecroppers) in this sub-division has been cordial so far,It has been the custom of the jotdars in this subdivision to help the bargadars at the time of their difficulty by lending paddy at the rate of 50% interest recoverable at the time of next harvest.⁵¹ Sri Dharani Kanta Das, a son of the Jotdar family of Chapani, Alipurduar Sub-division told, "The amount of revenue was minimum. There was no want of anything or crisis of the jotdars. The relation between jotdars and adhiars was Co-operative and the adhiars were assisted in different ways." ⁵²

From the above discussions and various sources it is to be noted that the jotdars in the district of Jalpaiguri, particularly in the Duars were not oppressors like the zamindars, jotdars or talukdars in East Bengal and South Bengal and Dinajpur or Rangpur district of North Bengal. There were many jotdars who were involved in social works and would try to maintain good relation with adhiars or projas. Upendra Nath Barman wrote in his book, "There were huge amount of milk, curd and ghee, even in the poorest family there were 2/1 cows. Children, young men, old men everybody would eat milk, curd, and became healthy. there were no want of fishes, huge number of small fishes including singi, magur, shol, Bowal etc were available. No people even the poor or riches had to purchase fishes for their diet." ⁵³

Hem Bahadur Chhetri, a former jotdar of Bara Chakir Bash told, "Jotdars would give loan to the adhiars whenever it necessary. The loan would have been recovered at the time of distribution of crops from their own share. If the amount of recovery would be heavy, the adhiars again obtained 10-15 mound paddy as a loan. Jotdars always helped their adhiars whole over the years. Adhiars obtained different kind of gift and money at the time of different occasions and festivals such as Durga

Puja, Kali Puja etc. Relation between jotdars and adhiars was co-operative. ⁵⁴

Regarding the role of Jotdars in the field of public works and social Development Sunder, the settlement officer of Western Duars wrote to the Dy. Commissioner of Jalpaiguri –

“Having abandoned hope of getting any sufficient assistance from Govt. for effecting sanitary and other improvements in the Doors, I called a meeting of the Jotdars of Falakata and Alipore tehshil and explained to them that owing to the present financial pressure Government is unable to provide all the Funds which are wanted to improve the condition of the people by introducing new crops, sinking wells for the supply of good drinking water, constructing village roads & c. I impressed upon them the necessity of doing something to help themselves and I suggested them to establish a fund of their own in connection with each tehshil for improving the condition of jotdars and cultivators throughout the tehshil.” ⁵⁵

Not only that Mr. Sunder also assured the people that every rupee subscribed by jotdars would be deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank in their names and for their benefit and that no part of funds would never be expended without the sanction of the committee. Mr. Sunder also admitted that the jotdars of Falakata, Alipore and Bhalka tehshils responded and started to subscribe and develop fund.

The money collection, expenditure and balance in each of the tehshil during the year 1889 – 90 is shown here under – ⁵⁶

	Rs.	A	P
Maynaguri tehshil	2384	12	00

Falakata	1894	00	00
Alipore	1205	00	00
Bhalka	488	2	0
Total	5971	14	00

The expenditure during the year 1889 – 90 in each tehshil was as follows-

	Rs.	A	P
Maynaguri	1000	00	00
Falakata	68	00	00
Alipore	158	00	00
Bhalka	--	--	--
Total	1226	00	00

The balance unexpended in tehshil is as follows –

	Rs.	A	P
Maynaguri	1384	12	00
Falakata	1826	00	00
Alipore	1047	00	00
Bhalka	488	2	0
Total	4745	14	00

(Revenue Dept. P.V. Nov. 1891)

Major H. Bolleqe, Dy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri wrote to the Commissioner of Rajshahi division –

“Mr. Sunder, as you are well aware, has always taken a great interest in promoting the welfare of the jotdars and cultivators of the Western Duars

He found the small sums which could be allotted to him from the Government grant insufficient, and he hit upon the idea of asking the jotdars to subscribe each a small sum in order to

create a fund which should be administered by a committee of the jotdars themselves. He reported his intention to me and I cordially approved the scheme. It has been most successful so far and I am of opinion thatit will prove of material benefit to the people and to the Govt. Estate of the Western Duars. (State Archives, Calcutta, Revenue Dept. P.V. Nov 1891)⁵⁷

The following developmental works were to be done with the help of Jotdars Fund –

1. Making and improving roads, particularly the village road, clearing jungles.
2. Making wells in the central situation, then improving the water supply for pure drinking water.
3. Importing new seed and distributing the same amongst the cultivators supplying good manure for securing better outturn of crops.
4. Opening charitable dispensaries.
5. Helping poor cultivators with good cattle, providing blankets annually.
6. Assisting widows and orphans of cultivators.

Out of these benevolent activities jotdars were keenly interested to open new schools and they always expended their money for the management of those schools. Even after the independence in 1947, many jotdars donated their lands for establishing schools. There were so many primary and high schools in the district such as Mohan Singh High School of Rangali Bajna, Rammohan High School of Amguri and Padamati Rahim Uddin High School of Helapakri which were established by the initiative of jotdars⁵⁸.

Apart from improvements of this kind the administering of the fund, which would be left as much as possible to committees of jotdars themselves would work great good, teaching the people self-help and showing them that the Govt. officers take an interest in their welfare. Deputy Commissioner of Jalpaiguri wrote to the Commissioner of Rajshahi division.

‘The money obtained from the jotdars and also the hat improvement fund will I venture to say in the course of a few years enable us to materially improve the condition of the people of this large and important estate’.⁵⁹

But the above condition of the jotdars was not general picture as a whole in the district. As the jotdars, except very few, were not involved in other profession, completely depended on land and agriculture, they had to face various troubles and crisis later on. In 1930’s because of the world wide economic depression many jotdars lost their land due to outstanding revenue and indebtedness as they had no alternative income and capital. Upendra Nath Barman wrote, “There was no exemption of taxes even after selling of jote or raiyoty right of the jotdars. For the collection of outstanding, the moveable and immoveable property of the defaulter would have been ceased, even after having outstanding the defaulter had been arrested and ultimately sent to jail.”⁶⁰

Other than these many jotdars were really oppressors particularly who were absentee jotdars, lived in town and had no direct relation to the cultivators, they used to give land to the intermediaries only to be economically benefited. Naturally intermediaries namely chukanidars or mulandars, dar-chukanidars tried to collect revenue forcefully from the cultivators. Dr. Tapas Kumar Roy Chowdhury writes, “The number of absentee jotdars had increased for amalgamation of different types of people in jotdar class. In the year 1895, amongst 23,339 jotdars only 1615 or 4.5% were absentee jotdars, they would not live in the jote. The number of absentee jotdars was going up gradually. All

most all the 15% jote-purchaser's were absentee, they would not dwell in the jote as their jot-place was in outside.⁶¹ But in this respect it can not be denied that the original resident jotdars were more or less co-operative and benevolent to the cultivators, because they were born and brought up on land and had direct relation with land. but the new jotdars coming from outside of the district mostly non-resident jotdars who were from other profession namely serviceman, Doctor, pleader, trader, Mahajan etc. and they had no direct relation and experience to the lands. They purchased land and became jotdars only for commercial purposes without any sympathy or co-operation to the cultivators. Ranjit Dasgupta wrote in this regard, "But available accounts clearly show that by 1920 and in fact, by the turn of the century very significant changes had occurred in the agrarian structure of Jalpaiguri in the form of transformation of cultivating and resident jotdars into non-cultivating and even non-resident jotdars, the intrusion of non-agriculturist mahajans, traders and professional people into the rural society, the increasing concentration of landholdings in the hands of jotdars, and the impoverishment and loss of land by small land-holders and small peasants resulting in the swelling of rural poor and landless adhiars or adhiars owing tiny plots.⁶² So, the characteristics and activities of all jotdars in the district, Jalpaiguri were not the same, differing from various aspects. Yet, it can be said that jotdars of the district, Jalpaiguri, particularly in the Duars were benevolent and co-operative comparatively to the other parts of Bengal.

Condition of the intermediaries

From the previous discussions it is found that the jotdars in the permanently settled areas were intermediaries between zamindars and cultivators. On the other hand jotdars in the Duars were lease holders in the lands and it is also found that jotdars in the permanent settled areas and in the non-regulated areas (Duars) were of different characters, there were very few jotdars who cultivated lands directly, the big jotdars who belong to large areas of lands would give lands to the intermediaries, some times jotdars cultivated land by recruiting adhiars or sharecroppers and obtained half share of crops.

Intermediaries both in the areas of permanent-settled areas and in the non-regulated areas (namely chukanidars, or mulandars, Dar-chukanidars, and Dar-dar chukanidars.) were in privileged condition. Mr. Tweedie, the first Deputy commissioner of the district defined chukanidars as follows—“The tenants so called are those who holds farmers for a fixed term being more than one year, paying to the jotdars for each year of occupancy an ascertained money rent. The rights of such tenants are clearly of a temporary nature and exist only by force of the contract which may have been made between the tenants and the landlords.”⁶³

The rights, position, terms and conditions between jotdars and cultivators and the chukanidars were not clear to the British Govt. at the first stage of their rule. It was quite clear with regard to chukanidars in No.968 of the Govt. of 10th April 1878 to the address of the Board where in it was stated that - “It was also determined – that at the next settlement the reacts of the actual cultivators of the soil (not being under adhiars) should be recorded and that such cultivators should be protected from any enhancement of rent during the term of the settlement”(Milligan, p,83).⁶⁴ Mr. Sunder pointed out that a chukanidar can not be ousted from his holding except by order of a competent court, not withstanding the fact that he may not have been twelve years on a

jote.⁶⁵ In 1880, Govt. made a definite “Healthy tenant right”. In clause 6 it was provided that a jotdar must give to his chukanidar the same promise of renewal of his lease as Govt. gave to him. ---
 - clause 8 made it compulsory on the jotdar to give every chukanidar a patta in which were to be included certain terms, which were in effect those proposals of the Commissioner approved by Govt. in their No.268T”.⁶⁶ Till the settlement of 1880, the rights and possession of chukanidars were not clear, rather it was confusing among the British officers about the matter. The letter of Mr. Lowis, in which he sends up his proposals for that settlement – No. 352 R.C.T of 23rd October, 1888 comes as a surprise for he boldly defines as a chukanidar as “a person who holds within a jote on very much the terms as the same jotdar himself; his title is permanent, heritable and transferable, his original rent is a matter of contract, but it is not enhanceable..... but may enhanced at resettlement. The jotdar has no power to resume land that is the prerogative of Government alone, who may resume land in a chukani in the same way as jote land may be resumed.”⁶⁷

While going on the survey and settlement works by Mr. Sunder it confused the members of revenue department and the Govt. as well about the type of right, terms and condition hold by the Chukanidars and how the problem could be solved with the Chukanidars. Mr. Sunder wrote about the chukanidars ‘There is an unwritten law between him(chukanidar) and his jotdar that he can not be ousted from his lands so long as he pays his rent.’⁶⁸ Actually, at the first stage there were many joddars who had large number of jotes, holding thousand acres of lands and it was not possible to cultivate whole lands by the joddars. So they (joddars) would give lands to the intermediaries and naturally, it was not officially recorded at the initial stage, but after interference by the Britishers on land and at the time of survey and settlement works all the problems were raised, Government also tried to make permanent solution with tenants and make a systematize in agrarian issues. The Government of Bengal wrote in Letter No. R dated the 12th September, 1892 as follows – “The Lieutenant

Governor accepts your description of their present positions, and agrees that it should be laid down that chukanidars have a permanent tenure and are entitled to retain their holdings through that settlement, subject to the condition that the rents paid by them can be enhanced if they do not already pay 50 percent above the jotdari rates".⁶⁹

It is clear from the above discussions that the Government also had an intention to give the permanent right to the chukanidars so that they could cultivate land properly and enthusiastically as a result of which, revenue of the Government could be increased. During the settlement works of Mr. Sunder, they could come into a decision about the rights and position of the chukanidars, though it was not quite clear. Mr. Sunder, in a letter to the Commissioner, "In my opinion we should not trouble ourselves at present to record the rights of chukanidars because I am satisfied that they possess no definite rights."⁷⁰ Regarding the right to permanence, the right to inherit and the right to transfer Milligan opined as follows – "The right of transfer has never been granted to chukanidars and does not in fact, and will all deference to Mr. Lowis, never in my opinion did exist. Chukanidars cannot transfer their interest without the jotdar's consent. In respect of these three cordial points the settlement just concluded makes no new departure in principle. The degree of permanence allowed to a chukanidars is still the same as that granted to a jotdar while the right to inherit is now clearly stated and the right of transfer is specifically refused."⁷¹

But J.F. Grunning, I.C.S. agreed the view of Mr. Lowis. He wrote in his District Gazetteer, "The chukanidars are tenants holding land on a money rent immediately under the jotdars. They have a right of occupancy and transfer their lands by sale or gift. Most of them are well to do and some have jots shares in jots in addition to their chukani holdings."⁷² So it can be said that the chukanidars not only depended on the lands obtained by chukani or pattani from jotdars, rather they had their own land out of the chukani holdings as because there were many small peasants who

had their own lands, but they were not treated as jotdars. The land holders who had large size of lands and who gave lands to the chukanidars or recruited adhiars to cultivate lands, were treated as jotdars. It is found from field survey that the peasants who had more than hundred acres of land and who cultivated land by giving pattas to the chukanidars or recruiting adhiars or share croppers were treated as jotdars.

Chukanidars or Mulandars also could give lands to the Dar – Chukanidars. But initially they could not do that and it was a confusion regarding rights, authorities and position of the Dar – chukanidars among British officers which proves by the evidence of British officers as well as the Government records. But it is clear that there were under tenants of the chukanidars namely Dar – chukanidars, and Dar – a – Dar chukanidars. J.F. Grunning wrote in his Gazetteer, “The Dar – chukanidars hold their land in the same way under the chukanidars and the dar – a - dar – chukanidars under the dar – chukanidars. Most of these inferior tenants have acquired a right of occupancy under the provisions of the Bengal Tenancy Act.”⁷³ Regarding the matter of sub-tenants under chukanidar, Dr. K.K Bagchi writes, ‘Grades of sub-tenants below dar-chukanidars viz dar-a-darchukanidars and Nim dar a darchukanidars could be found and recorded only in the settlement periods of 1931-35, but it is impossible that they did exist during the settlement period of 1906 -1916 but like dar chukanidars they were also not recorded.’⁷⁴ Beside this Grunning again wrote, “It is difficult to say how the process of sub-leasing extends, but there are probably not many dar – chukanidars or dar – a – dar – chukanidars.”⁷⁵ The revenue paid by the tenants and sub-tenants as follows which is shown in the book of Subhojyoti Roy, “..... The local officers also provided a legal foundation for rack – rents. They fixed the profit of the jotdars at 50 percent of the Government revenue. This meant that among the sub-tenants recognized by the settlement the chukanidars paid to the jotdars 50% over the Government demand, the dar-chukanidar paid 80 percent and the dar – dar chukanidar paid 100 percent over the original Government demand.”⁷⁶ Mr. Lowis opined that

the dar – chukanidar had never existed at all save on paper, the so-called dar – chukanidars being merely the remnants of the old raiyot class under a new name.⁷⁷

Mr. Sunder also supported the view of Mr. Lowis. He wrote, “Dar-chukanidar – this class of tenant holds direct from the chukanidar. He has no rights.”⁷⁸ Mr. Sunder referred the Government order which proves the above view – “The Lieutenant Governor approves your proposal that the newly created under tenures of dar-chukani and dar-a-dar chukani in the Duars Estates should be absolutely ignored, in as much as those tenures have been made contrary to the express orders of Government.”⁷⁹

So, from the above discussions it can be said that there were different categories of intermediaries in the agrarian systems of the district both in the permanent settled portion as well as in the Waste Land areas in the Duars. From different sources both in primary and secondary it is found that immediately after jotdars there were chukanidars and below the chukanidars there were dar-chukanidars, dar-dar-chukanidars, dar-a-dar-chukanidars etc. we find in the book of Ranjit Dasgupta, “To sum up in the early 1870s the agrarian society in Jalpaiguri consisted of, besides the two big zamindars, three categories of agricultural population: a) the big jotdars, b) small jotdars, chukanidars and dar-chukanidars cultivating mainly with their own labour and family labour, and c) adhiars of various types, perhaps all of whom had physically cleared jungles and reclaimed land for cultivation.”⁸⁰ Among the intermediaries chukanidars were strong in position, many times they hold the power like jotdars and enjoyed the advantages like jotdars more or less. But the dar-chukanidars, dar-a-dar-chukanidars, were not so much important in the agrarian systems, their numbers were not so much noticeable. It is found the data given by S. Roy as follows, “according to a survey in 1879, out of 1,819 jotes in the seven parganas in the Duars only 13 had a dar-dar-chukanidar, i.e. a sub-tenant in the third degree, and only 156 had a dar-chukanidar, a tenant in the second degree. The

chukanidars, who had immediately below the jotdars, were found to exist only in 686. The remaining 1064 jots were still directly under the jotdars".⁸¹ There were many chukanidars who had large size of jots and many chukanidars cultivate land directly, they would give land to the dar-chukanidars and they recruited adhiars to cultivate lands getting 50% share of the crops. Upendra Nath Das, a member of chukanidars family told "During the time of our grand father, all the lands were cultivated by the adhiars getting 50% share of crops and we had 11-12 hal lands. The relation between adhiar and chukanidars were co-operative."⁸² Another former chukanidar Sri Gabinda Roy of Bholardabri told, "We obtained lands from Jotdar, cultivated lands by ourselves. We had to give revenue to the jotdars."⁸³ Sri Khagendra Nath Das, 77 years old of Chaporer par, former Jotdar told, "Chukanidars would obtained lands by pattan, cultivated lands and gave revenue including road tax, education tax and water tax. In case of failure to give revenue to the jotdars, their lands would have been ceased and give to another chukanidars. Our chukanidars were Late Khodam Das, Late Nabin Das, Bhubaneswar Das, Late Bhukalu Das, Late Phuleswar Das, Late Bhergenda Das, Late Baishakh Das, Late Mihiram Das etc (chowkidar). At the time of marriage of a son or daughter of the chukanidars, they had to give permission of the jotdars."⁸⁴

From the above discussions it can be said that among the intermediaries Chukanidars or Mulandars played vital role in the agrarian system of the district, Jalpaiguri and they were equivalent to jotdars more or less, economically strong in the position, sometimes they cultivated land directly, sometimes used to give land to the dar-chukanidars or dar-a-darchukanidars and sometimes used to give land to the adhiars some portion of lands or whole portion of land for getting 50% share of crops. However the relation between jotdars and chukanidars, chukanidars and adhiars were co-operative without some instances, in the district, unlike other parts of Bengal.

Condition of the share croppers or adhiars

It is shown earlier that at the bottom of the agrarian system in the district who had direct relation with cultivation were bargadars or adhiars (share-croppers). According to Adrienne Cooper, there were four types of land holders who recruited share croppers to have crops from land - (a) zamindars and intermediate tenure holders recruited share croppers on Khas land; (b) Raiyots who may cultivate and be defined as rich peasants and who sublet to share croppers because they had more land than they could or wanted to cultivate directly; (c) Middle class Bhadrak, non-agriculturists, tenants or purchasers of raiyoti interests who employed share croppers requiring an income in kind; (d) Members of the rural elite, including traders and money lenders, who acquired various land rights sublet to share croppers.⁸⁵ Dr. Partha Chatterjee gave an outline about the proportion of agricultural population having various kind of rights of proprietorship or occupation in such way – 1) Landlords who were proprietors and tenure holders, 2) Tenants who were raiyots of different kinds and 3) Labourers those who worked in agricultural occupations without any legal rights to land.⁸⁶

The Land Revenue Commission of 1938 – 39 conducted a survey in selected villages to find out the manner in which the land was cultivated in different district of Bengal. It was found that predominant mode of cultivation was by labourer of the owner himself and his family. On the other hand a large proportion of those having land in the possession of landlords i.e. Zamindars and middle ranking tenure holders were not cultivators themselves; much land here was cultivated by share croppers or labourers. In Jalpaiguri district 25.9 percent cultivators were share croppers.⁸⁷ There were different ways about the recruitment of the share croppers – some were proprietors of tenure holders, while others were raiyots who had sublet their land to share croppers.

There were various factors for which cultivation by share croppers increased gradually. The structure of jotes was extremely iniquitous, with a few big and even giant – sized jotes at one end and a large number of small jotdari interest at the other. More over there were many jotdars namely traders, servicemen, advocates, mahajans and money lender who were not actual cultivators, they would obtain lands by lease from Government. As these jotdars were not cultivators, they would give land to the intermediaries called chukanidars, dar-chukanidars, dar-a-dar-chukanidars, sometimes they recruited adhiars or share croppers to have 50% share of crops, they had only intention to obtain surplus for commercial purpose. From previous discussion it is found that jotdars and intermediaries as well, recruited sharecroppers to cultivate lands. In general under whom the sharecroppers or adhiars cultivated lands either of jotdars or intermediaries, called ‘Giri’ and adhiars were called ‘Halua’ in the district, Jalpaiguri.

Commercial crops were cultivated in the land of the district and these were sold in the new market introduced by colonial economy. Behind the commercialization of agriculture tea-plantation was introduced in the district to gain more money. Jalpaiguri town was connected by railways in 1878 and the Bengal Duars Railway was launched in the 1890s to open-up of Duars and the promotion of tea- industry. All these developments stimulated the process of differentiate in the rural society of the district. In such a way situation, large holding helped the big and substantial peasants to enrich themselves through exploitation of produce rents usurious money and grain lending and transfer of holding of small jotdars, chukanidars and peasants.⁸⁸

Indebtedness was also another reason for transferring of land and growth of sharecropping. There were two groups of creditor namely – (a) Jotdars and substantial peasants, (b) non – agriculturist professional money lenders or Mahajan and traders. The indebted cultivators had a burdened with heavy interest payment. Those who interested in profiting from rising food grain

prices included middle class landlords and upwardly mobile raiyots. They preferred sharecroppers to catch tenants because the required to food grains for their household consumption. It became cheaper to sublet to sharecroppers and to obtain produce rents instead of renting out cash paying tenants.

Mr. Lowis in his proposals deals at considerable length with the position of the adhiar. He wrote, ".....as regards the mere adhiar he has no right to be recorded, but his name should appear in the settlement papers and he should have the same privilege as a non- occupancy raiyot namely he should not be liable to eviction so long as he pays rent."⁸⁹ Mr. Sunder wrote about the adhiars," This tenant has no right.....he pays rent in kind, namely half of all crops he may grow on the land which is allowed to him."⁹⁰ But before Milligan no one of the British Government thought so much about the problem of the adhiars and took any kind of step to solve the problem. It was Milligan, the settlement officer who first thought about the problem of adhiars. He wrote, "Whatever may have been the extant the system in the past, I calculated in 1912 that $\frac{2}{3}$ of the cultivation in the zamindari areas was done in the way."⁹¹

For increasing population in the district, the relation between cultivators and 'Giri' become bitter day by day. In this regard, Ranjit Dasgupta wrote, ".....the adhiars were always treated by the jotdars as socially inferior in status, even when the two belong to the same socio-religious group."⁹² He also wrote, ".....while passing the jotdars house the adhiars were prohibited from wearing shoes or carrying umbrellas. In presence the jotdars, the adhiars had to remain standing or sit on the ground. Such a relationship tended to reinforce the economic power and domination by the jotdars."⁹³

The condition of the sharecroppers, small peasants including agricultural labourers was being aggravated gradually. Milligan wrote, "Adhiars or Projas have been customarily regarded as labourers cultivating the land of proprietors, jotdars

or chukanidars on a half share basis. They were not considered to have any right or title but liable to be ejected at the will of their employer.”⁹⁴ Dr. K. K. Bagchi writes about the adhiars, “ It is notable that adhiars were included in a favourable position in the Duars than their counterpart in most other part of Bengal at least upto 1920 as land was relatively abundant and number of agriculture labourers were very few in the Duars..... when land become more scarce adhiars of the Western Duars also began to face adverse terms and condition.”⁹⁵

From the evidences of different sources it is found that the adhiars or sharecroppers in the district of Jalpaiguri were in better position than the other districts of Bengal as because there was no scarce of lands, and many jotdars who had thousand acres of lands, side by side there were no sufficient people to cultivate the land. After coming of the Britishers they introduced jotdari systems and gave it to the jotdars by lease to cultivate lands which is discussed in previous chapter and to cultivate the land cultivators were brought from neighboring areas giving many facilities including bhuta (a kind of loan) and pana (bullocks for cultivation) and 2nd ly according to Dr. Ananda Gopal Ghosh the relation between jotdars and adhiars were cooperative as because they hailed from the same ethno – linguistic and cultural group which free from caste hierarchy.⁹⁶

Haripada Roy tried to show the relation between jotdars and adhiars. According to him the relation between jotdars and adhiars was like father and son. For example at the time of marriage of a son or daughter of the adhiars, the jotdars or his wife dropped water on the head of bride and bride groom (which was called panichhita) and the jotdars or his wife become father and mother called panichhita bap and Panichhita Mao (this was applied other than adhiar’s bride or bride grooms).⁹⁷

It is found from the field survey that the relation between adhiars and their ‘Giri’ were cooperative and patriarchal. Smt. Binapani Devi (Karji), 83 years old, wife of Late Harendra

Bhushan Karji told that the relation between jotdars and projas never became bitter, there was no want of food, either in any occasion or any time projas would come to the house of their Giri's and take food or any kind of help. She also told that my grand father helped the people and loved children.⁹⁸ Upendra Nath Das, 63 years, a member of former chukanidar family told, "The mentality of the adhiars were good. The adhiars assisted and did the work of the 'giri' if required and asked. The adhiars cultivated lands, after cutting the cripes it was accumulated on the common farm house (kholan), then the cripes were threshing and prepared to serve, the giris were informed to take their 50% share."⁹⁹ Sri Dharani Kanta Das 65 years, of Purba chepani, a member of former jotdar family told, "We had 66 family of adhiars. Adhiars cultivated land and would give us 50% share of cripes. The relation between jotdars and adhiars were always cooperative and hospitable. At the time of cultivation or any time other than the time of cultivation adhiars or halua were assisted by giving them bhuta (cripes for food) and pana (bullocks for cultivation), after cutting and thrushing the cripes adhiars had to give cripes to the giris for Bhuta and pana, then rest of the cripes were distributed between Giri and adhiars with 50% share, even to build the house of the adhiars, they were assisted by giving them bomboos and other materials of the house."¹⁰⁰ Sri Bhado Adhikari, 90 years old, a former adhiar of East Chepani explained his experience and sometimes he became upset and sank into depression. He told, "Among the 66 family of halua of my elder brother- in- law, a jotder, I only the halua who is living. The paddy was cutting during the month of Poush and these were accumulated on the curtiard (kholan). After the full moon of Magha, the thrushing of paddy was started in the month of Falguna, and get ready to distribute, after giving the crops for Pana and Bhuta (loan which were taken by the adhiars) to the giri it was distributed equally among the adhiars and giri and at that time a feast was arranged by the giri and we all the adhiars including the members of jotdars family joined the feast and enjoyed very much. The relation between adhiars and the giri never reached in bitterness."¹⁰¹

The local custom is that the jotdars themselves supply 16 annas seeds (where necessary) and one cattle out of two for a plough to the bargadars. Where cultivation is followed strictly on the above principle, division of produce is half and half including straw. A deviation from this general custom, results in the proportionate increase or decrease in the division of crops between jotdars and the bargadars Viz. When cattle, plough, seeds manure etc. supplied fully by a jotdar, he gets six mounds paddy from the half share of the bargadars for lending one cattle that was due to be supplied by the bargadar himself. Thus if three ploughs are engaged and the jotdars supplies all the six cattle, he gets 18 mounds of paddy @ six mounds per cattle lent, from bargadars share at the time division. This system is locally known as "pana".¹⁰²

Payment for 'pana' is always to be made in paddy and not with any other crops raised with the 'pana' system.¹⁰³

Angashree Narjinari (Basumata) w/o Rev. Jitnal Narjinari (Paster Saheb), 84 years of Bara Chawkir Bash, Mahakalguri, Dist. Jalpaiguri gives her view, "We had 8-10 hal lands and total land would be cultivated by the adhiars or projas. Paster Saheb supervised the adhiars beside the work of mission. The relation with the adhiars was co-operative. Any kind of dispute with the adhiars was not raised. The adhiars had been assisted at the time of their problems, crisis or disease."¹⁰⁴

Hisran Narjinari a former adhiar (share cropper) of Paster Saheb of Bara Chowkirbash pointed out, "I was settled here by Jitnal Narjinari (Paster Saheb). I would cultivate his land as a share cropper or adhiar for 50% share of crops. I, myself, cultivated 2 hal lands, seeds, plough, buffalo etc. all kind of instruments for cultivation would have been provided by us. The relation with jotdars was not bitter. We would participate at feast, occasions and festivals together with jotdars. There were no class division between jotdars and adhiars."¹⁰⁵

But it is to be noted that the above mentioned relation between the adhiars and their Giris in the district was not the real picture as a whole. Behind the patriarchal relation between adhiars (share croppers) and their 'Giris', the sharecropper had to face in different types of oppressions.

Beside the benevolent works of the zaminder –Jotdar, they oppressed sharecroppers and small peasants. Very few zamindars like Maharani Swarnamayee donated for this purpose, established schools. A zamindar in the village drinks blood of raiyots like Vanpaiyar flying fox of America by establishing dispensary for treatment and school, coming in the villages, The judges forget after watching schools and dispensaries, They do not hear nothing of the crying of raiyots.¹⁰⁶

There is no system of buying and selling lands in this country before the British rule. The system of buying and selling lands, have been started like commodities since the initiation of paying revenue by cash. The moneylenders have become Zamindars by capturing lands of the raiyots alleging for the outstanding of lands either right or false ways by the patronization of court. Village aristocratic Zamindars have been created by the initiation of permanent settlement.¹⁰⁷

Firstly they (adhiars) had no right on land, any time they would have been evicted from land. It is mentioned earlier in this chapter, the arguments of Mr. Lewis, Mr. D. H. E. Sunder, Ranjit Dasgupta and Dr. K.K. Bagchi which proves that the adhiars were not so much better position and happy as a whole.

The condition of the people in the villages becomes really serious in the months from Chaitra to Shraban (Behgali months, from March to August) There is no village where 25% families can eat sufficiently, 50% families can not eat twice in a day and 25% families have no abilities to have lunch at noon in the some months of the year. The people become so hunger that they sometimes are ready to eat forcefully of other's food.¹⁰⁸ Whatever

the gentlemen earn, exhaust in this time, not only exhausted but also they sell ornaments of their family wives, utensils etc one by one for their poverty to the shopkeepers. They have little hope, little smiling in the face, little symbol of life in the body until they have the drinking pot. But ultimately having no way they mortgage their ultimate pot and even their child, at last they have nothing.¹⁰⁹

Milligan wrote, "It will be clear from the foregoing narrative that while on the one hand no body had ever succeeded in finding that any rights were actually owned and exercised by adhiars, on the other hand there was a general feeling that something should be done to secure to this people some sort of tenant-right in their lands."¹¹⁰ In the 1880 settlement khatians were given to all adhiars but in 1888 Major Boilean reported that in 90 percent of cases the lands had since changed hands. During the settlement works of Milligan it was found that many times adhiars had to sign on a Kabuliyat which written by particular dewaniya or tout. The essential features of those kabuliyats were that the adhiar bound himself to repay advances, deliver half the crop, obey orders, properly cultivated the land, and vacate it at the end of the contract; his use and occupation of the land being guaranteed for one year or longer as the case might be.¹¹¹

Rajat Kanta Roy Ratna lekha Roy showed the peasant exploitation by the Zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries. They pointed out that the adhiars in Dinajpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri were nothing but a slave. Many adhiars became beggar and slave due to heavy indebtedness.¹¹²

The main obstruction of the poor raiyots for being well-to-do is money lenders. Illiterate, unconscious and poor raiyots do not think about interest at the time of borrowing. After lending, the moneylenders imposed heavy interest at their will. If the raiyots become failure to pay their outstanding in time, the money lender take a note of hands, then counts interest on interest. In this

way, sons pay off the outstanding of their fathers, sons collect the dues of their fathers.¹¹³

It is found in the Rangpur Bartabaha (Bengali Periodical) about peasant exploitation in such way:

The raiyots in this country become destitute for the pressure of revenue. They can not release themselves from recovery of revenue even eating very ordinary food sometimes fasting, no proper cloths, becoming indebted, then they try to flee. Yet, nobody follow them.¹¹⁴

The people of this country do not know the way to earn money through the industry and commerce, they rely only on agriculture depending on nature, if water and sunshine are available timely, crops are produced well other wise it gets ruined. All of the developed countries are such efficient and informative that the people in this country (India) do not know 1% of the same. After following the present distress condition of the people it seems that the animals and birds have been living happily than these people.¹¹⁵

Another cause of oppression of the adhiars was heavy interest of taking loan in cash or kind (crops). These types of interest were 'Derabari', 'dunabari' and 'darkatali'. If a adhiar would take loan in the month of September or October, after two or three months at the times of distribution of crops they had repay loan at 1.5 times (Derabari) and 2 times (Dunabari), and interest of darkatali was more dangerous which was more than 2 times or double. In such a way, adhiars or small peasants were confined in heavy indebtedness as a result of which small peasants had to sell off their lands to the Mahajans or jotdars and became adhiars in their own land and the adhiars became like a slave due to heavy indebtedness. In spite of that it can be said that the condition of the adhiars in the district, Jalpaiguri was comparatively better than the other parts of Bengal which is proved from the evidences of various sources and field survey, as

for example the condition of adhiars in the district of Dinajpur and Rangpur was more pathetic. A young peasant in Dinajpur district came into contact for five years with a Mahajan taking for expenditure in his wedding ceremony. After marriage he worked under Mahajan with free of cost. During this period his wife had to maintain her life on depending herself. In Rangpur (east) district taking advance was more dangerous. After taking advance all members of the family worked in the land of money-lenders. In case of failing to payback loan within scheduled time all members of the family would become slave of the money - lenders and they had been sold at a time or individually accordingly the will of the debtor.¹¹⁶ These types of dangerous and pathetic systems of the adhiars was not seen in the district of Jalpaiguri.

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