

Chapter 4

Resistance of the Peasants and Agricultural Labourers

In the previous chapter, it is discussed about the origin and development of the new Jotdari system in the district both in permanent - settled portion as well as in non-regulated areas that is Western Duars. It is found that the British Government started survey and settlement works, lands in the Western Duars were declared as waste lands, possessing all the lands under control, they (British Indian Government) gave the lands to the jotdars or non-cultivated jotdars namely traders, servicemen, Mahajan and money-lenders by lease or pattani, beside these lands were given to the tea-planters for tea-cultivation by lease (which is shown earlier chapter). Different types of people (Different classes and different colours or castes, religion) had been immigrated in the Duars as a result of which population had been increasing gradually (statistics are given in the previous chapter).

Prof. Ramkrishna Mukhopadhyay tried to show the difference of agrarian economy and society between pre-colonial and colonial period. According to him, the condition of rural Bengal, the village society and agrarian economy changed rapidly in the colonial period. He also tried to show that there were self-dependent village society and independent village community in the pre-colonial Bengal which was changed in the colonial period.¹ Rajat Kanta Roy and Ratnalekha Roy denied the view of Prof. Mukhopadhyay arguing that the jotdars were rich peasants before acquisition of power in Bengal by the British. They tried to show that the agrarian structure and agrarian economy had not been changed radically in the colonial period because the agrarian society could not be transformed from feudalism to capitalism,

rather the feudalism in the colonial period became stronger, capital had not deposited in agrarian purpose, rather land holder classes either proprietors or intermediary tenure holders always tried to have and increase wealth from lands.² The Peasant- exploitation was also in the pre-colonial period, however it is told that the peasant-exploitation increased in the new forms and new systems.

But Dr. Binay Bhushan Chowdhury, an eminent agrarian historian in the field of land and peasant, had not accepted the view of Roy and Roy. According to him there raised various types of jotdari powers which made the village society more critical. He tried to show the differences in the agrarian systems between pre-colonial and colonial period. The differences were from - (a) rising of powerful classes, (b) their formation, (c) the amount of land hold by them.³ It is true that in the case of Jalpaiguri as in the Dinajpur and Rangpur district new agrarian classes either proprietors or intermediaries raised as a new forms and power. But these classes were nothing new basically because these classes existed in the pre-colonial period as a revenue collector or intermediaries between peasants and rulers namely Zamindar, Dewnia, Basunia, tahutdar, tahashildar in the permanent settled portion, and soobah, Katham, Kayath or Muhuries, Dewnia, tahashildar etc were in the Duars. All were powerful both in the permanent-settled portion as well as in the Western Duars and they were connected with agricultural activities, many of them became jotdars or intermediaries in the colonial period.

It is discussed in the previous chapter, the rise, growth, development and condition of the share croppers and small peasants and it is shown how they were oppressed by their land lords or 'giris', Mahajans and money-lenders. A committee was appointed in 1921 under John Kherr to investigate land relation with a view to amending tenancy resolution. The Bill based on the Committees report declared that the 'bargadars' is a tenant.....who provided their own cattle plough and

implements of agriculture Intense agitation met these proposals and the Government had to issue a Communiqué on the 10th May, 1932 declaring their decision not to accept the particular amendment regarding sharecroppers.⁴

Another Bill was prepared by the Government officials in 1928; long debate was going on for and against the Bill. The role of the Swarajya Party on this question was against the bargadars.

The Indian National Congress was not standing for the rights of the poor peasants and bargadars, the leaders of Congress Party tried to maintain the interest of the zamindars, jotdars and intermediaries. The Congress leaders thought that their fight for freedom was against the Britishers and until this fight for freedom was over, the interest of the tenants and the landlords would so reasonably adjusted as not to create a civil war in the Country before freedom was gained.⁵ So, all references to share croppers as tenants were deleted and the right of commutation for raiyots on product rents was withdrawn.

According to W. W. Hunter there was no landless peasant in undivided Bengal before 1870. From 1870 to the last of this century took place many starvations as a result of which small peasants fell into indebtedness and poverty, they sold their land and became adhiars or bargadars of the purchasers of land.

From 1929 world – wide economic depression was going on all over the world and this affected the agrarian economy and the industry of the district, the prices of agricultural crops decreased. Ranjit Dasgupta writes. “The prices of jute.....marked an extraordinary fall.....the price index (1926-29; 100) went down to in 1931-32, 30 in 1932-33, 28 in 1933-34 it rose slightly thereafter, but was still only 52 in 1937-38”⁶

Besides the prices of jute, the prices of rice also fall down. In spite of decreasing of the prices of agricultural crops the peasants were not exempted to pay revenue, there was no abatement of tax collection, rather the revenue had been increased 45% during 1935-36 as a result of which chukanidars and small jotdars were in indebtedness and ultimately they were bound to sell their land and became bargadar or adhiars of the purchasers of land. Ranjit Dasgupta writes, "Faced with the deepening crisis large section of owner-peasants and tenants and tenants in both the permanently settled portion and Khasmahal areas were forced to sell their land and faced more closure by the jotdars-cum money lenders. The farmer, however were not totally disposed but kept on the land as bargadars or adhiars."⁷

The editor of 'Hindu patriot' writes in his article "Anyaykar" the zamindars of Bengal collect house sub-taxes other than regular rents, the raiyots do not express their unwillingness to give that said sub-taxes, at the time of collecting the sub-taxes."

Whether the raiyots give sub-taxes gladly or the Zamindars collect it keeping stones on the chest of the raiyots, how can you (editor of Hindu patriot) realise staying in the capital. Once, come in the villages and see how a Zamindar oppresses on the raiyots for collecting sub-taxes. The weak raiyots inhabitants of villages have no wealth or helper, can not complain, naturally they surrender to the oppressor in spite of having been oppressed."⁸

The following Table shows the land alienation in the Duars.⁹

	Tahashil	Number of alienation Jotes	Amount of Land in acre	Alienation % of Jotes
1.	Maynaguri	2730.5	28,577.45	17.76
2.	Falakata	1742.0	28,269.94	15.10
3.	Alipurduar	1208.9	66,222.75	46.14
4.	Bhalka	251.0	1301.90	4.00
5.	Ambari Falakata	4.0	236.00	2.52
	Total-	5936.4	124,603.03	85.52

In accordance with the report of the Bengal Land Revenue Commission (Floud Commission) in Jalpaiguri district the transferred area was constituted 9.4 percent of the total area inquired into district, and 42.1 percent of the transferred area was cultivated by bargadars or adhiars and another 39.4 percent by under tenants¹⁰ Another important information is found from the report that by 1939 in Jalpaiguri 26.6 percent of all cultivating families lived mainly or entirely as adhiars and 25.9 percent of the total cultivated area was cultivated by adhiars¹¹ But this figure is not dependable fully. According to Goswami there are reasons to consider that the actual extant of share cropping was much more extensive than these figures suggests.”¹²

Hat- Tola Movement

Every action have equal and opposite reaction, it is a natural law. Men have a power of tolerance by virtue, on the other hand men have a power of resistance, after being tolerance since long to any kind of oppression or suppression, men, one day, stand straight and protest against the oppression and suppression, naturally there are so many instances of it in history all over the world. So, the bargadars or share croppers and small peasants after suffering by different types of oppressions since long by the landlords, intermediaries, traders and money lenders, they also got ready to protest against the oppressions. 'Hat Tola' or 'Tolagandi' movement was one of the symbol of such type of protests of the peasants in the district of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Rangpur.

Peasants including bargadars had to give cess or tola to the agents of zamindars and jotdars at the time of selling their goods in the Hats (weekly markets). In accordance with the enquiry report of the Government of West Bengal in 1940 there were 6000 hats in the province owned mostly by local zamindars who either managed them with their own staff or leased them to the ijaradars on a yearly rent. In all most all of these hats tolls were collected at exorbitant rates not only from the sellers but in some cases also from the buyers.¹³

In some hats the men of zamindars and ijaradars used to collect Rs. 2 .00 per cow and Rs. 4.00 per buffalo as expenses for issuing receipts certifying such sales. The senior marketing officer, Government of Bengal conducting this investing estimated that the income of Zamindars or as ijaradars from a hat was usually between Rs. 1500/- to Rs. 3000/- per annum.¹⁴ Peasants were exploited for the heavy tola collected by the agents of Zamindars and ijaradars and that affected all sections of the peasantry and

even small and middle jotdars. Other than peasants and adhiars, teachers, village doctors, small shopkeepers were also victimized by this system.

The Conference of the district Krishak Samiti was held on 27th June, 1939, where large number of people including poor peasants, and adhiars and other sections of rural population attended the conference.¹⁵ In the meeting some resolutions were taken in favour of the small peasants and adhiars against the zamindars and jotdars' oppression including abolition of the zamindari system without payment of any compensation. Being inspired by the propaganda in the different hats against the oppression of the zamindars and Jotdars, small peasants and bargadars were prepared to start a movement called 'Hat Tola Movement'. The movement started from Maidan dighi hat under Boda Police Station with red flags and Lathis (Bamboo Sticks), Kishan Volunteers marched into the hat and raised slogans, "No tola payment by the Kishan," "Down with the oppression of the zamindars and ijaradars" etc. The ijaradars threatened the peasants. Police came and supported ijaradars, but they became failure to the united strength of the peasants.¹⁶

The police came and took the side of the ijaradars, they became failure to compromise it. Later on, the Sadar S.D.O came and in his presence a meeting was held with a peasant delegation under the leadership of Radhamohan Barman. Ultimately, they reached into a compromise and the decision went in favour of the peasants and bargadars. In the many small hats in Boda, Debiganj and Pachagar Police Stations the toll rate was reduced and in a number of small hats the toll collection came to be stopped.

Adhiars Movement

Being inspired by the 'Hat Tola Movement' peasants including adhiars started another movement in 1940 called 'Adhiars Movement'. In the previous chapter it is discussed that the adhiars had not right on land, they cultivated land only for the share of 50%, beside this they had to tolerate different types of tortures and oppressions of Giri (Land Lords - jotdars or intermediaries). More over, the adhiars had to give more taxes called 'abwab'. Such type of taxes were – 'Golamochhani' or expenses for cleaning the store house at the rate of half a mound of paddy for every adhiars, another levy was 'angina chachani' or expenses for clearing the threshing yard at the rate of half a mound per adhiars 'Bhuta Khaoa' or expenses for spreading straw inside the bullock cart of the jotdar was still another form of levy, 'Barkandaji' or expenses for maintenance of guards, 'Hari Sabha' or expenses on account of religions of gathering, 'Hari bandha' and 'Ghora bandha' or account of maintenance of elephants and horses were some more forms of levy. After clearing all such types of levy, the adhiars would get minimum amount of crops and this was not sufficient to maintain their families for which they had to take loan from the jotdars or 'Giri'. Such loans were taken mainly under three systems of interest (a) Derabari, (b) Dunabari, (c) 'darkata'. The bargadars had to repay the crops at the rate of 50 per cent (Derabari) interest of principal crops and 100 percent (Dunabari) interest of the principal crops only for a period of 3-6 months. Under the 'darkata' systems a certain quantity of crops was lent during lean season in terms of prevailing market price which was very high and the loan was calculated in terms of money value of the paddy borrowed. At the time of repayment after harvesting of the crop in the form of whatever amount of paddy was available at that amount of money.¹⁷

Not only that, adhiars had to store the crops after cutting from lands in the farm house of jotdars where they had been cheated. It is mentioned in the Government Report,

- (1) "The general custom is to stock the produce in the khamar of the jotdar before division.
- (2) Labour for carrying the produce to jotdars' khamar and for threshing it is to be supplied by the bargadars.

When shares are divided, the jotdar is to arrange to carry his share of produce to his own house. In case where jotdar's house is far away from the bargadar's lands, a spot is selected nearer bargadars house where the produce is stocked and divided as usual. Jotdar himself arranges to carry his share to his house.¹⁸

Amarendra Nath Suba, s/o Late Chandra Sing Suba of Paschim Satali, dist. Jalpaiguri argued, "We had near about 1000 hal land in Jaygaon, and in next time we settled in Satali Bosti having near about 100 hal land with exchange the land of Joygaon. Our land was cultivated by projas or adhiars. We supplied seeds, cows for cultivation to the adhiars. The adhiars had to recover the loan at the time of distribution of crops (a) 6 mound paddy for one cow (one bish) called pana, there was no interest for seeds. Paddy for food was supplied to the adhiars (a) Dera (1.5 times) and Duna (2 times) which had been recovered at the time of distribution of crops¹⁹

The Krishak Samiti realized the minds of the exploited and oppressed adhiars and during the harvesting season 1939-40 several demands were raised such as 'Reduce the interest of Karja dhan' (Paddy taken by loan), 'No interest on seed loan'. 'Put an end to all abwabs and 'Nij kholane dhan tolo' (stack paddy in your own farm house)²⁰

The volunteers and workers of the Krishak Samiti marched from hat to hat and village to village and called the adhiars to resist the oppression of the jotdars. Dr. Sachin Dasgupta in his article 'Jalpaigurir Adhiar Andolan' writes, "In this time, Nawab Musharaf Hossain who was a minister in the Haque Ministry came to Jalpaiguri, held meeting with jotdars and discussed against the communists, the operation was started by the jotdars with the help of police against the bargadars or adhiars, section 144 was introduced, arrest warrants were issued against the communist leaders, for which communist leaders had to work from secret places. Police attacked on the peasants from village to village and more than 300 peasants were arrested including the leaders of the movement."²¹

Tebhaga Movement

The intensive areas of the Tebhaga Movement in the Jalpaiguri district were Boda, Pachagar, Debiganj and Sundardighi as these were under zamindari system where permanent settlement was introduced and the condition of the adhiars was more pathetic and oppressive unlike the Duars. Here, adhiars or bargadars were like a slave of the jotdars. It is discussed earlier how the adhiars or sharecroppers were victimised and oppressed by the jotdars, mahajans and money lenders. As a result of it, a reaction took place by the adhiars and labourers called Tolagandi movement and adhiars movement in 1938-39 in the district which is discussed earlier.

The All India Kishan Sabha was formed in 1936, which organised, "partial struggles," focusing on the demands of rent-paying tenants. In Bengal the communist took the lead in organizing, the provincial Kishan Sabha, as a branch of the AIKS. Within a year Kishan Sabha units were formed in the district.²²

A commission was formed by the ministry of Fazlul Haque in 1938 and Sir. Francis Floud was selected as a Chairman of the Commission. A memorandum was sent to the Commission by Krishak Sabha for abolishing the zamindari System. The Commission submitted the report to the Government on 21st March, 1940, in accordance with the report it recommended to bring the projas or raiyots under the Government directly by purchasing lands from zamindars or intermediaries. So, it is noticeable that the Commission intended to abolish the zamindari System in Bengal, other than this the Commission was in favour of Tebhaga to the adhiars or share croppers. It is mentioned in the report of the Commission that the land-holders or 'Giris' had to

take 1/3 of the crops produced by the adhiars instead of 1/2 shares of the crops.²³

After coming out the report of Floud Commission, the conference of Pradeshik Krishak Sabha was held in June 1940 at Panjia to discuss the report of the Floud Commission and take the next step. While discussing, the Krishak Sabha realized the importance and necessity of Tebhaga but the Sabha could not take any step to start the movement for Tebhaga. But it is said that the issue of adhiars or sharecroppers got a new motion with interference of the Krishak Sabha.

The following table shows the percentage of land cultivated by Barga System:-²⁴

	District	Percentage
1.	Dinajpur	14%
2.	Jalpaiguri	26%
3.	Malda	10%
4.	Joshor	22%
5.	Khulna	54%
6.	Bakharganj	45%
7.	Bankura	29%
8.	Barishal	45%
9.	Birbhum	25%
10.	Bogura	16%
11.	Bardhwan	25%
12.	Chitagang	12%
	District	Percentage
13.	Dacca	23%
14.	Murshidabad	26%
15.	Mymenshing	14%
16.	Nadia	24%
17.	Noakhali	17%

18.	Pabna	19%
19.	Rajshahi	15%
20.	Rangpur	23%
21.	Tripura	12%
22.	24 Pargana	22%
23.	Faridpur	11%
24.	Hoogli	30%
25.	Howrah	23%

So, from the above table it is showed that a large amount of lands was cultivated by barga system in Bengal Presidency, and it was going up from 1930's due to world wide economic depression and land alienation. It is also discussed earlier that the non-agrarian people namely traders, serviceman, mahajans money lenders entered the agrarian systems by purchasing lands and become jotdars or zamindars, this classes of people preferred to cultivate the land by barga system as because it was more profitable, no capital had to be deposited. So the oppression on the adhiars or sharecroppers had been increasing gradually, as a reaction of it peasants including adhiars and labourers broke out into rebellions called Tolagondi or Hattola movement and adhiars movement in Dinajpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri districts during 1938-39. But these movements could not be fully success and could not proceed so long because of the lack of strong organization of the peasants and oppression of the zamindar, jotdars and intermediaries.

In 1943 famine started all over Bengal. The policy of the Government was mainly responsible for the famine. According to the report of Kshitish Proshad Chattopadhyay 5% peasants sold their land fully and 11% peasants sold their land partly and the land purchasers were jotdars, rich peasants and traders. 34 lac people had died and 11 lac people had lost their every thing.²⁵ Thus the transfer of cultivable land during 1943 was about 14

percent of the total cultivable land in Bengal. More over in 1943, 3,06,000 families lost 11,47,000 plough cattles as a result of famine. Out of this 8,90,000 plough cattle were lost by the poor peasants and landless labourers²⁶ In spite of having devastating famine all over Bengal, no step or measure was taken by the Government to assist the peasants, adhiars or lower class people. Abani Lahiri wrote, "On a conservative estimate the famine left about two millions of marginal and poor peasants and their families as landless rural proletariat making a big potential base for militant kisan struggle while land and its produce were still more concentrated in the hands of rich peasants, traders and money lenders. This development added a new revolutionary dimension to the post war agrarian situation in Bengal giving the Tebhaga movement its militant sweep."²⁷

In 1945, the Second World War was ended. Anti-British discontent among the people particularly the lower class people increased rapidly and they were ready to break out into rebellion in any time. The prices of essential things were going up because of the 2nd World War. In these circumstances, the Duars plantation area was going through a wave of labour agitation, a major peasant outburst took place in the large parts of the district.

The 9th conference of Bangiya Pradeshik Krishak Sabha was held from 21.05.1946 to 24.05.1946 at Maubhog. The main trend of this conference was to carry on movement against the oppression of Zamindars and their intermediaries. It was resolved--

"As soon as possible the law should be introduced to have 2/3 share of crops in favour of bargadars and 1/2 share of crops in favour of landlords in case of supplying all outputs of cultivation by the landlords such as cattle, seeds manure etc".²⁸

In September 1946, the Bengal Provincial Kishan Sabha gave the call for Tebhaga. It took place for the share of 2/3 of the

produced crops in favour of the adhiars and 1/3 for the 'Giri' recommended by the Floud Commission in 1940. After Calling for Tebhaga movement by the BPKS the leaders of the district of C.P.I and Krishak Samiti began active preparation to launch the movement. Krishna Binod Roy, the president of BPKS come to the area in late November, held a meeting with DKS and Union committees about the importance of the Tebhaga. Later on, many leaders came to organize the peasants and adhiars against the jotdars and Zamindars. Among the leaders of the Tebhaga Movement Charu Majumdar, Biren Paul, Madhab Dutta, Biren Neogi, Dipen Roy, Dulal Basu, Nripen Roy Manoranjan Dasgupta, Hara Ghosh, Gurudas Roy, and Samar Ganguly played a significant role in Tebhaga Movement in North Bengal.

The modes and the programmes of the Movement were group meetings, Mass meetings, demonstrations, Hat squads, peasant marches through the country side and other such forms were propaganda and mobilization against the oppressors. Volunteers were recruited, trained up and assigned them specific responsibilities and raised the slogans like 'adhi nai , Tebhaga chai' 'Nij kholane dhan, tolo' 'Jan debo to dhan debo na', 'Patit jami dakhil karo' 'Inquilab Zindabad'.²⁹

At first the movement was started from a village under Pachagar Thana in late November, 1946. After that the movement dispersed rapidly from village to village under Debiganj, Pachagar, Boda and the parts of Kotowali and Rajganj Police Stations. Paddy was harvested and stacked collectively in the adhiar's place or in a common place and then jotdars were asked to come there and collect their 1/3 share of the produced crops. Peasant unrest also took a new turn in the Mal and Matiali Police Stations of the district. Without any planed and programmes taken by the district leaders of C.P.I and Kishan Sabha. In spite of having no tradition and experience of the movement and no stronger organization of the peasants in the Duars because of the Government Khasmahal

area, the upsurge took place due to peasant discontent accumulating in such areas for over a long time. Sunil Sen, an eminent historian on Peasant Movement writes, "On 1 March 1947, there was a clash between Oraon peasants and the police in the Duars in Jalpaiguri district in which five peasants were killed. On 4 April another clash occurred at Mateli in this district, in which nine peasants were killed".³⁰ Sunil Sen agreed that there was no Kishan Sabha in the Duars, the Movement was started there spontaneously.

It is mentioned in the report of Sub-divisional Officer, Alipurduar: "There is no Tebhaga Movement in this Sub-division."³¹

It is true that the peasants including adhiars had discontent to the jotdars, intermediaries and the Government as well, but they could not protest strongly against all sorts of oppressions due to lack of political organization and support of the intellectuals or political leaders, but when Tebhaga movement was started in the permanent settled portion of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Rongpur districts, the adhiars and labourers of tea-estate were getting ready to fight or revolt against the oppressions at any cost. Samar Ganguly, a leader of labour organization of C.P.I had gone to attend a meeting of tea-labourers. He was requested there by oraon adhiars to carry on Tebhaga Movement in the Duars. But Samar Ganguly was not interested to do it because he thought it was not proper time to do the same in this area. Then he asked the oraon adhiars if they could provide ten thousand volunteers the movement could have carry on and he believed that it would be the herculean task, actually Ganguly tried to avoid it. But in the next day, thousand of adhiars came forth the office of C.P.I surprising the leaders of C.P.I. naturally the movement started by looting store house of paddy of a muslim jotdar.³²

Bimal Dasgupta writes , “Madhab Dutta was attacked by the gundas of jotdars in Terai and his head was cracked by the attack of lathis (stick), this news was circulated in the areas of tea-estate and rail line. Some tribal peasant came there and told ‘give a Flag’ ‘we shall go to meeting in Domahani of 1st March’. They had gone to meeting sequently, but this was not like ordinary movement, rather it was spontaneous influx of the peasants and labourers.”³³

He again wrote in the same article “The Tebhaga in the kholan (farm house) of the big jotdar, Gayanath of Mahabari Basti was a remarkable incident. Peasants and labourers were carrying out Tebhaga communicating with the peasants and labourers around 5-6 miles areas from Mahabari Bosti of Meteli Thana to the office of Krishak Sabha situated in Panoar bosti of Mal Thana. Police shooted to the peasants and labourers of Tebhaga being in favour of jotdars as a result of which Nine persons were died on the spot and seven were seriously injured.”³⁴

In 1946, communal riots was started in different parts of Bengal, the ‘Calcutta riots’ and Noakhali Riots was so intensive, that the Muslim league tried to realize the Muslim peasants to have their separate state, where Muslims enjoyed real freedom and they would be benefited other then the united country that was India. In these circumstances Krishak Sabha decided to carry on Tebhaga movement jointly Hindus and Muslim peasants to avoid the Muslim politics.

In the month of November, 1946, during harvesting time, Krishak Sabha realized that it was the high time to start Tebhaga movement. A meeting was held on the 23rd November, 1946, at Pachagar Thana of Jalpaiguri district, presided by Dr. Rafiz Uddin Ahamed, huge number of peasants including adhiars or bargadars from Boda and Pachagar Thana attended the meeting. Krishna Binod Roy, the president of BPKS congratulated the peasants of this area for their daring movement for food. After discussing

about the Tebhaga he told, this fight was not only to protect the land and farmyard of the peasants from the aggression of jotdars and stored keepers, this was the only way to live and occupy food from store-keeper.³⁵

“Came the season of harvesting paddy; threatening of jotdars and the police could not destroy the mental strength of the share croppers. Within a short period this movement spread in some parts of sadar subdivision, everywhere of Boda-Pachagar-Debiganj Police Stations, adjacent areas of Jalpaiguri in the Atoari Police Station of Dinajpur district and some parts of Domar Police Station of Rangpur District. Everywhere share croppers started to accumulate paddy in their own farmyard.³⁶

It is found in the Government Report about the intensive motion of the Tebhaga Movement in Dinajpur district: “The Kisan Samitee volunteers moved about village to village shouting various anti-jotdar slogans and asking the adhiars to did rather than part with this paddy. This produced quite a lot of bitterness against the jotdars..... Since after the middle of December, 1946, large bodies of adhiars and landless labourers started looting paddy from the fields. Their modes of operation was to come 200 to 300 hands strong upon a plot of land , finish reaping all the crops standing thereon in 30 to 40 minutes remove the same to some adhiars house and the repeat the same process in other plots.³⁷

Tebhaga movement turned in to a mass upheaval in 1.5 thousand square mile of Dinajpur, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri districts, fifty villages in the district of Maymensing of East Bengal, thirty villages in Midnapur district of West Bengal and in the three hundred square mile areas of five police stations in Jeshor District of middle and South Bengal, large areas of Kakdip in 24 parganas, Dumuria police station of Khulna district ,... The responsibility of the great upheaval of the peasants in the history of Bengal has come under Krishak Sabha suddenly.³⁸

The struggle for land is coming ahead..... Imperialism will stand by the jodars-zamindars during the period of struggle for land. But, the Calling for the struggle of lands will unite all peasants of Bengal and will start the day of last struggle. As a training of it fifty lac peasants have assembled today in the battle of tebhaga.³⁹

Bengal Provincial 4th Conference of C.P.I demanded the following important demands for the interest of the Peasants, sharecroppers and agricultural laborers-⁴⁰

1. No family can hold more than 25 acres of lands either in agriculture or non - agricultural lands. The lands more than 25 acres of the jotdar's own possession are to be acquired by the state and distributed among the agricultural laborers and poor peasants.
2. All the jotdari and intermediary rights such as zamindari, talukdari, share – cropping, lease share, rent for paddy etc are to be abolished. No non- agricultural person can possess cultivable land.
3. Those intermediaries will be looser for the abolition of zamindari, they will have to be provided Government allowance. It will be granted at per their condition @ maximum Rs. 500.00 and the duration more than 10 years.
4. Revenue is to be paid in cash and land revenue will have to be imposed by abolishing crops paying and share cropping, in a ascending order on the income of land and the persons have been exempted form revenue who can not maintain their family or can very ordinarily.

5. To be introduced cooperative systems for the developed process of cultivation. (4th State Conference of C.P.I, Bengal Provinces Committee, October, 1947, Kolkata)

Bachha Munshi, one of the leaders of Tebhaga movement in Jalpaiguri district, played a significant role in the history of Tebhaga movement working among the peasants and adhiars and fighting against the zamindars, jotdars, mahajans, money lenders and the British imperial powers. A diary written by Munshi about his experience and activities has been found. He wrote, The movement was started in the village to village against the abwab (sub-taxes) and tolabati under the leadership of communist party (taxes on selling and purchasing). Every where raised the slogans 'Land to the tiller' 'Destroy money-lending system' 'Accumulate crops in the own farmyard.'⁴¹

He also wrote, "People were being more organized after subduing in the abwab movement. Our party noticed that only the land was of jotdar among the three sources of cultivation. So the party decided that the derivable of crops of share croppers was 2/3 and 1/3 share of the jotdars. So the Tebhaga movement was started In the Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur and Rangpur districts. In this movement share croppers accumulated crops in their own farmyard they collected 2/3 share of crops, they also took straw. -----Jotdars filed the case in court, sharecroppers were attacked by lathials, firing and arresting was going on in Jalpaiguri district. 22 peasants were killed in Khapur by the bullet of jotdars. I myself and Gurudas Roy organized the peasants in Panchpir and Debiganj... Within a short period started meeting and the movement of occupying land by the sharecroppers in a organized way⁴²

From the statement of Bachha Munshi, it is followed that the movement was not only for Tebhaga, but also for occupation of land, because he clearly mentioned that beside the Tebhaga they carried on the movement to occupy lands, but it is said that the movement for land occupation was not main or active part of the movement, rather Krishak Sabha emphasized to collect Tebhaga from jotdars or intermediaries.

While going on Tebhaga Movement all the Deputy Commissioners, District Magistrates and Sub Divisional Officers were asked by Govt. to send report about the bargadars, jotdars and the relation among them, and the motion of the movement. On behalf of the the Government it was declared

“Government desire that all district Magistrate and sub-divisional officers should exert their exclusive influence to the fullest extent to bring about amicable settlements on similar lines in their own areas wherever there is any trouble or any attempt on the part of land owners for large scale eviction of Bargadars which is likely to result in a breach of peace response it got from the bargadars as a whole.⁴³

Govt. was worried following the intensive motion of the movement with regard to maintain peace and situation under control. So the Government declared-

“The undersigned directed to request that all subdivision officers may be asked to submit reports about the present relation between the bargadars and landlords in their respective subdivision particularly on the following points:-⁴⁴

- (1) Local custom regarding the sharing of the crops between bargadars and landlords.

- (2) The custom regarding stacking of the produce i. e whether is carried to the landlords khamar at the bargadars own place before the division and supply of labour for transferring the produce.
- (3) Whether there has been any movement to change the customary share this year, such as Tebhaga movement in the subdivision.
- (4) What has been the forts and progress of such movement?
 - (a) When it was started?
 - (b) Who organized the same?
 - (c) What was the effect of the movement?
(Additional, Secretary Board of Revenue.)

Maitreya Ghatak gives an over view idea about the Tebhaga movement as followed:

“Tebhaga starts in December, 1946. Agitators of outside and the educated young men of Town organize the movement. The movement had spread in the seven police stations out of twelve. Debiganj, Pachagar, Kotowali, Boda, Mal and Meteli Police Stations are particularly influenced by the Movement.”⁴⁵

He also pointed out, “Even the movement have intensified in the remote villages. Share croppers, unitedly, are harvesting and possessing crops from the land of jotdars on condition to give 1/3 share of the crops to the jotdars by getting receipt from jotdars. In the second phase, the sharecroppers collect 2/3 share of croupes from the store house of jotdars leaving 1/3 share for the jotdars. Initially jotdars were aggressive, they expect that the movement will be stopped by the local administration. Ultimately they started

to compromise with sharecroppers and give them many subsidy. Section 144 slightly bring the situation under control. However, it is suspected that immediately the sharecroppers will start cultivation against the intention of jotdars.”⁴⁶

The Sub divisional officer, Jalpaiguri gave a report on the Tebhaga movement of this Subdivision as follows.⁴⁷

“There has been a very serious movement this year to totally change the procedure of stacking of the paddy and division of the same.

The movement was started from the very beginning of the harvesting of winter paddy that is from early December 1946.

The movement was organized in the interior by educated communist workers of town and out side agitators. Without the town workers and outside agitators there would be no movement in the interior of the sub division. At the beginning some of the communist workers enlisted the support sympathy of one or two persons in each area in the interior.

At the initial stage , there was a confusion and fear among the peasants and sharecroppers to join the movement. But, after starting the movement they came spontaneously and joined the movement. Again Sub-divisional Officer, Jalpaiguri mentioned –

The movement was more or less spread over 7 thanas out of 12 under this subdivision. Thanas of Debiganj, Panchagar, and kotowali, Boda and lastly Mal and Metely were seriously affected by the movement. It can not be said that the movement had spontaneous response of the bargadars. As a result, the agitators could induce very few adhiars and bargadars to cut and took away entire produce from the land to the house of the adhiars. Cutting and taking away entire paddy from jotdars land to Bargadars house

was in fact opposed by the adhiars who thought they would be going against the existing customs. There the out side agitators and town volunteers began to visit different localities in groups of 20 to 30 organized local support and ultimately they began to compel one weak adhiars to cut the paddy from the land, take the same either to the Bargadars house or to any place according to the choice of the agitators. It may be noted here that, in fact no adhiars took part in the cutting and taking away of the paddy from the own land. In most cases the adhiars either accompanied the volunteers or had parsive consent. There was however always the factor of coercion intemidate by the agitators or the adhiars.⁴⁸

The above report is not completely satisfactory because there was no coercion or force to the sharecroppers by the agitators or the leaders of krishak Sabha to be joined the movement against their will, rather it can be said the sharecroppers and agriculturer labourers have a cordial relation with the leaders of Krishak Sabha which is shown from various sources in this chapter.

The 2nd phase of the movement was forcible taking away of paddy stackes and plough cattle's from the khamars and houses of the jotdars. Some cases of removal of paddy from gola were also received. Allegations were also made by many jotdars that the volunteers were armed with lathis, Daos, Bows and other weapons and the jotdars were threatened with violence and assault. Lately women also joined such parties which forcibly removed paddy and cattle from jotders khamars and houses⁴⁹

From the above report it is realized easily that the motion of the movement was very intensive because in the report it was mentioned that at the initial stage in spite of attacked and tortured by the jotdars and zamindars to the bargadars, it had not been possible to suppress the movement and ultimately in many cases the jotdars tried to compromise with bargadars. About the motion of the movement Ranjit Dasgupta wrote,

“The first report on enforcement of Tebhaga in Jalpaiguri district came in late November from a village under Pachagar Thana. Thereafter it began to spread to near and newer areas. On 20 December an attempt was made to enforce Tebhaga on the land of Digen Roy, a big jotdar in Sunder Dighi union under Dabiganj P.S..... Madhab Dutta, Vaidya Barman, Chaitee and few other peasant cadres were assaulted by the jotdars men and arrested by the police... next day a cadre meeting was held attended by Sachin Dasgupta and Biren Neogy, the D.K.S secretary and there was a confusion to carry on the movement. In the mean time, a peasant woman activist stood up and declared that there was no way of going back, ‘Tebhaga has to be enforced on the land of this particular Jotdar’... Renewed preparation were made and on 22 December more than 200 volunteers, both men and women carrying lathis and Red Flags with them assembled, collectively harvested the paddy ...and carried it from the field not to the latter’s kholan but to a place chosen by the peasants for the purpose of threshing.⁵⁰

Collector of 24 Parganas wrote to the Additional secretary, Board of revenue.

“Reference your No.3/60/26 L.R of 21st April, 1947; I have had the advantage of discussing the matter with my predecessors. While we quite agree that officers should use their exclusive influence to prevent large scale eviction of Bargadars we are both at one in feeling that in such cases any attempt to interfere with the established custom of half and half division would only put a premium on further agitation and further trouble. Both of us also consider it necessary to point out that it is impossible to lay down fair rates and I trust that this is a matter which will be left to the dealt with in the light of local circumstances.⁵¹

The condition of the adhiars was so pathetic for which they assembled to struggle against the jotdars, such type of oppression of the jotdars is given below which was published in Samaj Samikshya, bulletin (Mukhapatra) of Indian School of Social Science, Astam barsha, pancham-sasta sankha, 1996, and it was a Mukhapatra of 'BPK.S.

“We are listening to the life story of oppression of the share croppers sitting in the village of Panimachh Pukuriya of Pachagar Thana; We follow a lean-peasant with his wife are walking along the ridge of the field, we call him, but do not come, do not respond. Being surprised we went to their house. They were economically solvent earlier, but during the time of devastating famine in 1350 B.S. they sold their land and became sharecropper from Chukanidar..... In this year he needs loan, but jotdars Md. Aafi Mian was not agree to grant loan without any security or written deed, the jotdar asks to pledge his 3 cows and he (adhiar) is to given 10 mound paddy as on interest of 5 mound paddy only for six months. The adhiar is agreed to have a loan of 12 mound paddy on the pledge of three cows by oral agreement, he only receive 3mound paddy and it is decided that the rest will be given later on. But he went to jotdars house fourth times to receive his dues, but he returns with empty handed. All the members of the house are fasting till seven days. In this pathetic circumstance, his sister comes to his house with three children for want of food.⁵²

Another pathetic scene of adhiar family was written in this article,

I just tell a story, following same scenario in every house, went to the neighboring house. They have sold the elder daughter for want of food. The younger, but elder amongst boys has given as an adopted son two boys and a Girl are sucking dry breast-milk of their mother. The peasant and his wife are fasting since previous day.⁵³

So, from the above statement it can be easily understand how the adhiars or sharecroppers were oppressed cheated by the Jotdars, Mahajans and money lenders generation by generation and they had to tolerate all the oppression without any protest blaming on their lot. They never got justice from court or administration, because administrators or police confined an unofficial alliance with the jotdars, zamindars and intermediaries. Naturally, in the Tebhaga movement sharecroppers, small peasants and labourers come out the house and assembled to struggle against all sorts of oppressions. They got Krishak Sabha as their friend. So when Krishak Sabha demanded one volunteers and one rupee from every house the adhiars responded and provided it within very short time.

From every house adhiars came out became volunteer, taking training and joined the struggle.

Different historians and scholars have given their views from different angles about the nature and role of Krishak Sabha as well as the leaders of the Tebhaga Movement. There are lot of writings in different journals including thesis which has been published by different scholars and writers. Maitreya Ghatak in his article raised some questions about the role of Krishak Sabha - In the first conference of Bangiya Pradeshik Krishak Sabha discussing on the problems relating to agriculture and peasants but no discussions were held on the problems of Barga systems and bargadars.

In the conference of Baragram in Hugli district, mentioned the existence of Barga system and security of the Bargadars but no programme had been taken in that conference about the Barga problems and bargadars. In 1939 a memorandum was sent to Floud commission from Krishak Sabha mentioning barga system, oppressions and exploitations of the bargadars by the jotdars and zamindars, inspite of that there were discrepancy and controversy

on the question of bargadari rights and share of the bargadars of the produced crops.⁵⁴

In the conference of Panjia in Joshor district in 1940, the demand of Tebhaga had been raised first after coming out of the report of Floud commission wherein confessed the demand of Tebhaga, (Ibid). According to Dr. Gyanabrota Bhattacharja Tebhaga movement was an unorganized revolt by un-organizing agency.⁵⁵ Dr. Sugata Basu also supported the view of Bhattacharja. Andre Beteille thought that the bargadars were assigned to carry on the movement by Krishak Sabha as an agent of communist party which was not favorable for the interest of the bargadars. He also mentioned that the Krishak Sabha was not at all a peasant organization as because most of the leaders of Krishak Sabha were not peasants or bargadars themselves.⁵⁶

Dr. Binay Bhushan Chowdhuri denied the views of Bhattacharya, Sugata Bose and Andre Beteille. Dr. Chowdhuri pointed out that the bargadars were not poked by Krishak Sabha, rather the Sabha had a background of peasant movement, so the Scholars should know, why the movement of adhiars or bargadars had spread in all over Bengal.⁵⁷ We get from the contemporary report of S.D.O Jalpaiguri-

“The landlords were at first under the impression that the movement would not develop into such mass agitators and expected that they would be able to stop the movement with the help of the local authorities. So at the beginning the jotdars were adamant. Ultimately however most of the jotdars have been able to induce their adhiars to share the crop apparently by conceding to given some concession in other matters such as total remission of interest on paddy advanced by jotdars also completed to agree to accept $\frac{1}{3}$ of the crop due to the pressure of the agitators to sign Tebhaga receipts that is receipts showing accept of $\frac{1}{3}$ share by jotdars.

Besides the extreme cases on the whole this year also the general system has been the sharing the produce half and half as before between the jotdars and adhiars.”⁵⁸

It is true that most of the leaders of Bangiya Pradeshik Krishak Sabha were not peasants themselves, most of whom came from middle class family and intellectuals, yet it can not be accept the view of Andre Beteille. If we go through the history of French revolution, Bolshevik Revolution or Chinese Revolution or Long March or any of the movement or struggle we can see the intellectuals namely writers, poet, philosophers historians, scientist painters or artist - they all had a significant role in the revolution. So, it is meaningless to be the same community regarding any movement or struggle. Beside this it can not be told that the leaders of Tebhaga movement had not direct relation with the bargadars sympathetically, rather it can be said that the leaders in spite of coming from middle class family and more or less economically in better position, they realized the situation of the bargadars, small peasants and agricultural labourers sympathetically by working directly with the bargadars and they dedicated their life in the struggle. They moved door to door of the peasants and adhiars, held meeting and carried on movement concealing them from the British Indian Government. Sunil Sen wrote, “In Bengal the communists took the lead in organizing the provincial Kishak Sabha, as a branch of the AIKS, which held its first session at Bankura in March 1937. Within a year Krishak Sabha units were formed in the district. In 1937 it had only 11,000 members; with organization improving the membership rose to 1,78,000 in 1944, 2,55,000 in 1945, 2,03,382 in 1947. In the 1940s about one thousand full-time activist that included intellectuals and peasants worked in the district; they were apparently the core of the Krishak Sabha.”⁵⁹ We also get information from Government report regarding the role of communist party and Krishak Sabha-

Practically in all cases, the entire produce was removed by the agitators so to say. The adhiars themselves had very little say in the matter. In some cases quantities were left out for the jotdars according to their sweet will of the agitators. Communist workers profess that $\frac{1}{3}$ share of the jotdars have been kept in reserve under their custody but in fact that is not the case. A large part of the produce was damaged either in cutting or at the time of removal by volunteers.⁶⁰

In 1946 the prices of all essential things were going up tremendously, the prices of food crops and paddy were also so high, yet jotdars and zamindars stored paddy in their store house (gola). District Krishak Sabha demanded to the Deputy Commissioner to supply paddy in the market from the store house of jotdars to control the market prices of paddy. But the Deputy Commissioner did not respond. In this circumstances Dainik Swadhinata wrote,

“As soon as the news reached in the village, Peasants and share croppers unitedly surrounded the store houses of the jotdars, volunteers of seven unions in Pachagar Police Station guarded every store house following strictly on the brockers. 3 big jotdars, in the mean time agreed to give away the stored paddy.”⁶¹

Again Swadhinata wrote in the month of November, 1946 about the motion of the movement.

“Tebhaga movement created enthue and inspiration in the mind of the peasants of Boda, Pachagar and Debiganj Police Station. Everyday hundreds of Peasants volunteers enrolled their names for the struggle against jotdars.”⁶²

It is mentioned in the Government Report about the motion of the movement in Jalpaiguri district, “Here in this subdivision during the harvest season Communist Volunteers in batches visited

different localities established camps in the interior, enlisted local support and the helped selected adhiars to cut and take the entire procedure from their lands and stack there in places suitable for the purpose of the communist. The jotdars could not oppose as a large number of volunteers armed with lathis, scythes etc. would gather together and cut paddy of some land on each occasion when the harvesting of paddy from the fields.”⁶³

Ranjit Dasgupta wrote, “It seems to be the first to make a social relation between poor peasants and us, we stepped in the village in 1941 after passing the first year of world war and the relation with town is torned. Remaining among peasants for one and half years, sympathetically following their life, halting night sometimes in cow shed, sometimes in kitchen - all these turned the mind of Psychic world of our workers.”⁶⁴

Sushil Sen, another leader of communist party and BPKS highlighted the experience and living condition during that period in his memories as follows –

“When we arrived in the village, we did not think that we had to face in such type of critical situation. Sometimes we had to sleep in a group of pigs, sometime halt the night in the bed of straw in cow shed among cows and goats. We would eat the same which was eaten by peasants, sometimes it was only the soup of jute-leaf. We would remain fasting when they (peasants) did. Yet, we organized them against the all sorts of oppressions remaining among the peasants – because we thought always that we were communist.”⁶⁵

The adhiars, volunteers of Tebhaga movement including men and women treated the leaders of the Krishak Sabha as their friend and guide. Many times they protected the leaders of Krishak Sabha from the police of British Government. Kalyani Dasgupta the woman leaders of Tebhaga movement wrote, “Deben Jotdar of

Pachagar is a prominent and oppressive. It is being discussed in the meeting of workers whether will be gone in the farmyard of Deben jotdar or not, and have a confusion about it. In the meantime a women stand up and boldly remark, we have to go there and ultimately happen the same..... The only woman take over the treatment of Madhab Dutta in Panchpir of Boda inspite of having threatening and fear when he (Madhab Dutta) was injured.”⁶⁶

Hemanta Ghosal, leader of Tebhaga movement wrote, “When we organize the movement, the workers of Krishak Sabha could not promise their word everywhere. We had limited power. But the news, the movement of Tebhaga would be started, passed over the villages currently. ‘One rupee, one lathi, one youth’ – the number of volunteers reached to ten thousand depending on that slogan. They communicated with us earnestly and joined the Tebhaga movement in a organized way under Krishak Sabha.”⁶⁷

He again wrote about the heartiest cooperation and drastic promise to fight against the oppression –

“Ultimately the police declared warrant against leaders. To avoid this apprehension we would shelter in Tatda and Maishal of Bhangar thana, it was walking way of six hours, after finishing the walking of whole day for safe shelter sometimes it seems to be intensive, we would become so tired.....In this circumstances we had to spent without food for 3-4 days.....Sometimes lady and women of the peasant families supplied food to us – perhaps they remained fasting. Even they protected us from the aggression of police for whole night in the absence of male persons of the house.”⁶⁸

It is mentioned in the Government: “Just at this moment the movement appears to be slightly under control on account of promulgation orders under section 144 C.R.P.C. In this subdivision prohibiting was assen,bling of more than 4 persons

holding of meetings and of procession etc. It is however apprehended that very soon the adhiar under the influence of the agitators will begin to plough the lands of jotdars even against the will of the latter.⁶⁹ A daring and dedicatory incident is shown in the story of Manik Bandhyapadhyay 'Haraner Natjamai' in such a way Bhuban Mandal, a leader of Communist Party and Krishak Sabha, working in a village, one day at night police surrounded the village to arrest Bhuban Mandal. Then Bhuban Mandal sheltered in the house of Moynar ma (Mother of Moyna), Police entered the house of Moynar ma and enquired her about Bhuban Mandal, but Moynar ma surprisingly denied and she told that she did not know Bhuban Mandal, in the mean time Moynar Ma sheltered Bhuban Mandal to take rest in the room with Moyna her daughter to prove Bhuban Mandal as her son in law to the police. Police tried to identify Bhuban Mandal, but could not do it. Moynar Ma, then asked Bhuban Mandal and Moyna to go to bed and requested police officer (Manmath) to allow them to go to bed, Moynar Ma then shut the door.⁷⁰

From the above story, it is proved that, a woman took the responsibility to save Bhuban Mandal from Police and she showed her dare avoiding the prestige of her daughter in the circumstances of the contemporary conservative society, because then the society could not accept such type of incident treating it as a defaming.

Adriene Cooper argued in her thesis that the bargadars were conducted by 'communal mentality and the movement was affected by the Muslim Politics.'⁷¹ Prof. D. N. Dhanagare also emphasized the 'Primordial Loyalties' of the bargadars. According to him Muslim peasants were attracted gradually by the Muslim politics and for the demand of Pakistan and the peasants including bargadars were eliminated from Krishak Sabha and the movement against the jotdars.⁷² Peter Custers denied the views of Cooper and Dhanagare regarding communal politics. He emphasized the politics and class consciousness of the bargadars, poor peasants

and labourers.⁷³ Dr. Partha Chatterjee also admitted that the peasants were inspired to have their demand by a class interest.⁷⁴ Dr. Binay Bhushan Chowdhuri denied the much role of the Muslim league on bargadars. He showed that the Muslim peasants were influenced by the Muslim League more or less where... the organization of Krishak Sabha was weak or was not existed at all.⁷⁵ Sumit Sarkar, a prominent historian wrote in the introduction of the 'Tirish Challisher Bangla' written by Abani Lahiri.

“Today, no one almost remember that how the communists had stand hard against the communal riots and sometimes they stopped the riots. Noakhali was of course, enlighten moment of Gandhiji, but would it be forget the incident of ‘Lal Hasnabad’, few miles north of Noakhali. There, the Muslim Peasants gave shelter to the thousands of Hindus under leadership of communists”.⁷⁶

Abani Lahiri opined in the interview to Ranjit Dasgupta

“I believe, Bengal is the only place among Muslim dominant province where the Muslim peasants, after many confusion and hesitation, ultimately, assembled under the banner of Muslims league in the 1940's for the defects and error of our national leaders and different historical causes. This assemblence was not inevitable. It was proved in the election of 1937 that the Muslim peasants would remains in Muslim league – it was not inevitable.”⁷⁷

It is vital question why a large number of Muslim peasants including bargadars went under the banner of Muslim league, because just few years ago in the election of 1937 Muslim league did not get sufficient seats in Bengal, rather Krishak Proja party of Fazlul Haque obtained more seats than Muslim league, which proves that majority percent Muslims could not support Muslim league. More over after election of 1937 Fazlul Haque proposed to

National Congress to form coalition Govt. in Bengal, but National Congress denied the proposal, so Fazlul Haque formed Govt. collaboration with Muslim League as a result of which, Communal politics had been going to be strong, and Muslim people were eliminated from national politics provoking themselves and scattering the germ of communalism and ultimately communal riots had been increasing gradually, because Muslim League became success to alter the mind of many Muslim peasants including bargadars that they will be more happy if they obtained separate state where Tebhaga was unnecessary.

It can not be denied that either Communist Party or Krishak Sabha could not form strong organization in Bengal or India as a whole as a class to fight against the feudal system or Capitalism or imperialism, rather so many diversity regarding religion, caste Community etc among the people of Bengal and elsewhere in India existed till then, a large number of people were untouchable. Many national leaders either National Congress or Communist party even the extremists' revolutionary could not overcome the communal mentality. Many national leaders could not treat the lower class people that were subaltern people as their friend or brothers, even the social reformer could not keep aloof themselves from conservativeness and orthodoxy. Dr. B.R Ambedkar realizing the situation of the society like India, felt the social revolution because he believed that without social revolution India could not be prosperous, developed and could end the oppression. It is also true that without social revolution or consciousness class struggle would not be possible. So in these circumstances it was not possible to stop communal politics by communist party.

From the above discussion, it may be summaries that the peasant movements in Jalpaiguri, particularly the 'Tebhaga Movement as elsewhere in Bengal had a significant role to organize the peasants including bargadars and labourers against all sorts of oppressions of the jotdars, zamindars intermediary tenure

holders. Though ultimately the movement became failure, yet it is said that there were many reasons behind this failure. Firstly, the Communist Party of India, Bangiya Pradeshik Krishak Sabha was failure to organize the peasants including bargadars and labourers into a class in a grass root level. In the district, Jalpaiguri as else where in India, in spite of exploitation, oppression of the peasants, bargadars labourers and lower class people by the jotdars zamindars, Mahajans and money-lenders, more over oppressed and depressed of the lower castes people that was untouchables by the higher caste's people peasant or labour movement could not grow into a class struggle as a whole due to weakness, aims, and programmes of the organization of C.P.I as well as Krishak Sabha. Abani Lahiri in his article "Last battle of Bengal Peasants under British Rule" wrote, "There was a serious realization amongst the leadership of the struggle of the failure to mobilize the support and sympathy of other democratic sections of the people,"⁷⁸ He again wrote, "Explaining the peasant's demands to other democratic sections was a very important talk. But revolutionary class alliance was not built through explanatory campaigns alone. It was necessary to have the experience of common struggle. If six million peasants had started their struggle in 1945 harvesting season for which the objective condition was as favorable as in 1946, its tidal sweep would have coincided with the revolt of the RIN ratings and the barricade fights on the streets of Calcutta. The poor and landless peasants of Bengali missed this opportunity."⁷⁹

2ndly, it was wrong decision of the C.P.I supporting Russia during the 2nd world war for which C.P.I could not fight against the British power wherever it was crucial time to organized the peasants labourers including lower class and lower castes people and carry on the movement against the Imperialist power as well as oppressors because it became the bad impression among the common people of India, for the policy of C.P.I not to fight against British power during Second world war.

3rdly, the leaders of the Communist Party of India as well as Krishak Sabha were in hesitation and confusion in many respects of the bargadars while going on the movement. Some times they could not give proper decision on high time.

After 2nd world war an intensive discontent was among the peasants workers and lower class people and they were ready to dedicate themselves in the revolution, but the communist party was failure to organize them and make a revolution as the National Congress party was not in favors of revolution. Abani Lahiri gave his view in the interview.

The question was raised at the time of movement, what would be the way of obstruction against the aggression of jotdars and zamindars? Such moment has come after firing in Thumniya or Thakurgaon town –peasants come to the Samity office unitedly and told ‘give arms, we will fight, we have no arms, from where we would supply? But from the point of ideology and planning, how would be obstructed the problems? The way of non-violence of Gandhiji was not ours, then what was the alternative? We could not give the answer of this question? ⁸⁰

Another mistake of the Krishak Sabha was not to bring the small jotdars in their platform, if they could do it their organization would be strong, because small jotdars were not the class enemy of bargadars or communist party.

4thly, All India politics was also responsible for the failure of the movement. Indian National Congress and Muslim league were going to have the power of sovereignty dividing India into two Independent States-namely, India and Pakistan. The top leaders of both the parties were keenly interested to gain their power and position, Communal riots were going on all over India.

So, in this circumstance, it should not be expected from the Tebhaga Movement or the leaders of the Krishak Sabha to carry on the movement for long time and to change whole structure of the society because of the contemporary political situation and social structure of India. Despite all these limitation the Tebhaga movement was remarkable in the history of peasant movement in Jalpaiguri as well as in Bengal. Badruddin Umar has rightly remarked that in spite of having many short comings this is the only glorious movement in the history of organized peasant movement in Bengal.⁸¹

Naxal Movement

The West Bengal Estate Acquisition act, 1953 was passed and started its implementation from 1955 and then the West Bengal Land Reforms Act was passed in 1955. The Zamindari and the jotdari systems were done away with and the amount of lands possessed by any jotdar or Zamindar was brought under ceiling. By the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, a large number of jotes all over West Bengal were declared as excess lands, but all excess lands were not distributed among the landless peasants and bargadars. The jotdars and Zamindars possessed the excesses lands in the name of each member of the house, relatives, friends and even the name of their domestic animals illegally. Moreover they possessed the excess lands over ceiling declaring them as bheri and orchard though it was still under cultivators.

To analyze the peasant unrest in the 1960's in North Bengal particularly in the district of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, it is to be realized the political situation of Bengal. In the 1960's an ideological clash was going on between the two leftist parties namely C.P.I and C.P.I (M). C.P.I (M) criticized the parliamentary policy of C.P.I as the C.P.I (M) emphasized on revolutionary policy. But the election which was held on 19th Feb, 1967, the political situation of Bengal changed rapidly. Before the election, C.P.I (M) was not believed in any kind of alliance with C.P.I or Bengal Congress. But after declaring the result of the election it was found that there was no single majority party who could form the Government, INC acquired 127seats, but the congress was not interested to form the Government with other parties. Naturally, some anti-congress parties were interested to form the Government, in such a situation, the support of C.P.I. (M) was necessary. In this circumstance, a meeting of Secretariat Committee, of CPI (M) W.B was held on 24th Feb, 1967 and

decided to support the anti-congress Government, but less interested to attend the ministry. The meeting of Polit Bureau was held in Tribandram to support all the alternative (anti-congress) democratic parties to form the Government.

Immediately after declaration of the decision of C.P.I (M) to support and go to the ministry of the state of West Bengal the inner clash or ideological conflict was going up in the C.P.I. (M). The members of C.P.I (M) who believed in the revolutionary policy could not tolerate the compromising policy of the party. They boldly criticized and protested the parliamentary policy of the party. The members believed in revolutionary activities namely Sushital Roy Chowdhury, Saraj Dutta, Niranjana Bose, Asit Sen, Parimal Dasgupta, Promod Ranjan Sengupta, Suniti Kumar Ghosh of South Bengal carried on ideological and debatist movement in the party. In the same time the leaders of North Bengal namely Charu Majumdar, Souren Bose, Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santal were preparing for the revolutionary anti-parliamentary movement. They emphasized on the revolutionary peasants movement in North Bengal.

It is shown in the previous chapters that the peasants, agricultural labourers and sharecroppers in the district as elsewhere in India were victimized and oppressed by the jotedars – Zamindars and their intermediaries. It has been discussed in the next chapter that the problems of small peasants including agricultural labourers and sharecroppers had not yet been solved upto 1970's after independence. There were lacs of landless people who had not way to survive in spite of having huge number of landholders who occupied illegally large amount of lands. Actually, the land reforms Act, 1955 could not solve traditional agrarian problems. It was declared in liberation, "India which was a colony of Britain a little over twenty years ago, has now become a neo-colony of several imperialist powers, chief among which are the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union. The U.S. imperialists, the most aggressive

enemies of all mankind, are also the worst enemies of the Indian people. There neo-colonial grip over India is now complete.⁸²

Here, it is followed that the Communist Revolutionaries (Maoist) treated Soviet Union as their enemy inspite of being a socialist country. 'Liberation' pointed out, "The Soviet renegade ruling clique, which has set up again a bourgeois dictatorship in the first socialist state of the world, is actively collaborating with imperialise and has turned India into a neo-colony of both the USA and the Soviet Union. India provides the classic example of the collaboration of the USA imperialists and the Soviet neo-colonists for joint world domination."⁸³

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

A socio-political tention was going on. This noisy condition and massacre is not limited in a particular zone, it has spread in every district of the state.⁸⁴

In the document of the anti-party Sodhanbad Birodhi Sangram Committee was written,- "Comrades the nature of invertebrate and pety-bourgeois of our party leaders is not any sudden incident, it is their compromising tendency and the logical result of the organizational policy..... Today this leadership should be removed for the interest of the labour class."⁸⁵

B.T Ranadibhe wrote in Deshitaishi published on 17.3.1967, "Stop the ousting of peasants from land, stop the expulsion of labourer abatement of land revenue distribution of food in the legal process- such types of reform works would have to be started by the Cabinet."⁸⁶ But leaders of Siliguri subdivision of C.P.I (M) believing in revolutionary activities could not rely on the ministry of united Front Government and the parliamentary attitude of C.P.I

(M). So, their grievances and discontent were going up, as a result of which, they were preparing themselves for the militant action to occupy lands from rich peasant who illegally possessed excessive lands over ceiling.

They could not rely on the ideology and activities of the communist party of India (Maxist) because the central committee of the communist party of India (Marxist) adopted a political line of anti-revolutionary, opposed to chairman Mao Tse Tung's thought and Marxism Leninism. The central committee has made a declaration in favour of peaceful transition to socialism and has chosen the path of the country's progress through parliamentary democracy.⁸⁷ So, the Revolutionaries removed themselves from CPI (M). They thought that the feudal and semi-feudal systems were still existed in the Indian agrarian economy. Charu Majumdar wrote, "India is a semi colonial, semi-feudal country. So the main force which can change the colonial condition in this country is the peasantry and their anti-feudal struggle."⁸⁸ He believed, "No change is conceivable in this country without agrarian revolution. And it is the agrarian revolution that proves to be the only path towards the liberation of this country"⁸⁹.

The members of Krishak Sabha wearing red cloths, holding red coloured flag of C.P.I (M) with lathi, bows and arrows broke out into rebellion with raising slogans 'Mao-Tse-tung Jindabad' 'Militant peasants take the way of revolution.' During the first week of March 1967, peasants of Naxal bari Kharibari and Fansi dewa were ready to revolt any time against jotdars. In the month of March 20 general diary about, plunders and occupation of land were recorded. But the police did not take any action.

A group of peasants were organized by Charu Majumdar to occupy land with arms on 03.03.1967, demarcating land with red colored flag and declared it as the land of Krishak Sabha which was a sub organization of C.P.I (M). In the next two months, such types of 60 incidents were found in Naxalbari, Kharibari and

Fanshi Dewa Police Station. Beside occupation of land, cultivation of land by force, plundering of rice and paddy, threatening and attacking to the jotdars were continuing About 100 incidents of routing took place from 09.03.1967 to 22.05.1967. But police did not interfere on it from the prohibition of United Front Government, though the jotdars tried to protest these incident. The first area conference of Krishak Sabha of Siliguri Subdivision was held on 18.03.1967 and it was resolved in that conference that the lands would be occupied forcefully. Charu Majumdar, Souren Bose, Kanu Sanyal, Jangal Santal, Khokan Majumdar were promised to defeat mutual attitude and parliamentary policy of United Front Government with revolutionary activities.⁹⁰

It was disclosed in Calcutta on Januarys that a third communist party drawing inspiration from the thought of Mr. Mao Tse Tung and accepting unreservedly the leadership of communist party had for all practical purpose started functioning in the country.⁹¹

The Naxalite movement had spread in the different states of India. In the meeting of all India Co-ordination committee of communist Revolutionaries held on 08.02.1969 pointed out "It is during this period that the flames of agrarian revolution have spread out from Naxalbari to Srikakulam in the south and to Mushahari and Lakhimpur Kheri in the North. It has been the period when the peasant revolutionaries of Kerala have staged a heroic revolt that has shaken period of the bursting forth of the revolutionary liberation struggle of the Adibasi people in chotanagpur and its uninterrupted advance."⁹²

In this circumstance, committee realized to form a revolutionary party. It was mentioned "Without a revolutionary party there can be no revolutionary discipline and without revolutionary discipline the struggles can not be raised to a higher level. Only a revolutionary party can infuse revolutionary

discipline, the spirit of self sacrifice and death – defying abandon. So, for taking these struggles forward it is essential to form an All India Party and a centre recognized by all revolutionaries.⁹³

The All India Co-ordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries, which met in a plenary session from 19th to 22nd April 1969, announces the formation of the revolutionary party, communist party of India (Maxist – Leninist), based on the thought of Mao Tse Tung on 22nd April 1969, the one hundredth birthday of Great Lenin – a task it set itself eighteen months ago, setting up a Central Organizing Committee to hold congress at an appropriate time.⁹⁴

As the naxalites were completely revolutionary they emphasized on the armed struggle. To organize the peasant movement on the basis of the politics of armed struggle, they started to form militant organization with the leadership of poor and landless peasants and collect arms from different sources. They also formed a liberated zone in different parts of the country. Charu Majumdar wrote, “A liberated Zone is a peasant area from which all the class enemies have been ousted. To build a zone we require peasant armed power.”⁹⁵ But where from the peasant would obtain guns? Charu Majumdar wrote, “ The class enemies have guns and they live in the village. The guns must be snatched from them..... For this the peasant militants must be trained to set the class enemies’ houses on fire and to use all other techniques. Apart from this, we will get guns by sudden attacks on the armed forces of the Government.”⁹⁶

The tactics of the revolutionaries for organizing peasant struggle must be entirely different from the revisionist tactics. The foremost duty of the revolutionaries is to spread and propagate the thought of Chairman Mao and to try to intensify the Party

organization must organize propaganda by means of secret meetings.⁹⁷

The formation of third communist party wanted to grow up from the base through revolutionary struggles. The committee now felt that in the last one year the Naxalite movement had spread sufficiently to warrant the formation of a party to guide and coordinate the activities of communist revolutionaries in different states of India.

In the first party congress of CPI(ML) renewed its pledge to hold fast to the Mao-Tse-Tung line forge unity with the Communist Party of China accelerate the process of Guerrilla struggle and build up a strong “people liberation army.”

It approved with minor modification in the first party congress of CPI(ML) that the party’s programme to create “innumerable points of guerrilla struggles In the vast country-side with the object of creating “Red bases through annihilation of class enemies and all kind of suppressions of the peasants

Naxalites not only wanted to occupy lands from zamindars – Jotdars and intermediaries, but also wanted to smash the State power. Charu Majumdar writes, “If the Naxalbari peasant struggle has any lesson for us, it is this militant struggles must be carried on not for land, crops etc. but for the seizure of state power. It is precisely this that gives the Naxalbari struggle its uniqueness. Peasants in different areas must prepare themselves in a manner so as to be able to render ineffective the state apparatus in their respective areas. It is in Naxalbari that this path has been adopted for the first time in the history of peasant struggle in India.⁹⁸

In a circular on May 17 the Communist party (Marxist-Leninist has for the first time, taken up a programme of infiltration among workers in the industrial sector to propagate seriously the

party's 'political line in order to create a ferment among the working class. The circular clarified that, the objective of the Naxalites was neither to organize new trade unions or capture the existing ones nor to discourage the works.

It added "Our first task to give the workers our political line and to enlist their active participation in the peasants armed guerrilla struggle in the countryside. We have to impress upon them the need to annihilate the class enemies through which the state power can be captured and the liberation of the entire exploited masses achieved"⁹⁹

It was followed that there were some dissimilarities among the Naxalite leaders of the North Bengal and South Bengal, not only that the same discrepancy was followed among the leaders of North Bengal. Dr. Sailen Debnath writes, "At this stage of experimental beginning Majumdar and Sanyal had friendly disagreements as to the policies and procedures of the movement to be followed. Majumdar argued to pursue armed struggle by raising and involving small groups of armed communists against the individual class enemies But Kanu Sanyal for the purpose of armed revolution or at least initially for armed struggle to make the path of the future revolution did not consider the murder of individual class enemy at all necessary"¹⁰⁰

Naxalbari movement was extended in the district of Jalpaiguri within very short period. The small peasant's adhiars or bargadars were being organized to occupy excessive lands over ceiling from jotdars forcefully with revolutionary activities.

Though the duration of the Naxalbari movement was short, it was very significant in the field of peasant movement in India as a class struggle as because the movement was carried out by oppressed and depressed classes people that were peasants, share croppers and labourers though it was led by middle class

intellectuals who sacrificed their life in the revolution to change the society. Later on the movement and organization was extended various parts of India, even today Naxal organization and their activities were seen in South India, particularly Andharprodesh, Bihar and Bengal. Many brilliant students and intellectuals participated and devoted their life in the movement.

A documentary evidence of the link between the CPI (M-L) and the communist of East Pakistan (Marxist – Leninist) is contained in the first clandestinely published issue of Liberation, the all India organ of the CPI (M-L) the journal has proudly recorded “Our party and revolution have received and receiving the personal care and guidance of chairman Mao.” The issue published a message of greetings from the central committee of the CPIP (M-L) to the central organizing committee of the CPI (M-L) in which the East Pakistan party has stated that it has adopted the slogan raised by Mr. Charu Mazumdar; “China’s chairman is our path.”¹⁰¹

Mr. Kanu Sanyal, the Naxalite leader was arrested with Kadam Mallick and 40 other naxalites in Singijhora tea estate under Phansidewa police station on August 19, 1970. The police recovered a huge quantity of arms and immunities bomb-making ingredients and Naxalite literature from them.¹⁰²

Life in the northern half of Calcutta was paralysed on August 20 by Naxalite actions as a counterblast to the arrest of their leader, Mr. Kanu Sanyal. Over night they plastered walls with posters swearing reprisal for the arrest and went into action early morning in the course of which they set fire to seven buses and two tram cars, threw bombs and brickbats indiscriminately at passing vehicles and attacked state police and CRP pickets at several places. The latest edition of the Liberation, which was being clandestinely published and circulated, lists the names of nearly

100 land holders killed by guerrilla squads as well as the dates and places of their killing.¹⁰³

From the above discussion it is followed that the Naxalite movement turned into a militant struggle of the peasants, bargadars and workers lead by communist leaders (Maoist). In many parts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts naxalites murdered many jotdars.

Charu Majumdar wrote to a comrade by his letter “Rajniti Procharer Kaje Jor Dao”

“This year, meetings were held in many gardens of Hill and everywhere speeches were delivered in favour of militant struggle, even among the 23 speakers 13 have discussed about the importance of the militant struggle in the conference of tea estates. Labour classes have been awakening, anything may occur in any day.”¹⁰⁴

Many scholars and politicians analyzed on the activities and impact of the Naxalite movement from different angles. Many of them criticized the activities and policies of the movement. We know that the united front Government tried to introduce land reforms but could not be succeeded fully. After coming in power, Left Front Government took the initiative for land reforms in full enthusiasm with introducing operation Barga and Panchayet Raj system. For the limitation, from bureaucratic complexity, party-politics, biasness land reforms movement could not be fully successful. Here it can not be denied hat the Naxalite movement attacked the bourgeois structure of the village society. They tried to breakdown the dominant class of the village and establish classless society giving the economic right for living to the lower class and depressed class people. Partha Pratim Bandhyapadhyay writes, “The evasion of apparent change is shown by the Conscious work of the naxalites. In place of old exploitation,

oppression and chain, another chain has come in the new form – party politics, characterlessness eclipsed the mouth of change”¹⁰⁵

Charu Majumdar writes, “ Naxalbari lives and will live. This is because it is based on invincible Marxism – Leninism – Mao – Tse Tung Thought. We shall face many obstacles, many difficulties, many acts of betrayal and there will be many set backs. But Naxalbari will not die because the bright sunlight of chairman Mao’s thought has fallen on it like a blessing”¹⁰⁶

Many question raises about the policy activities and method of the Naxal movement. Firstly the organization was not so strong to create a revolution which was very much essential, if we go through the Bolshevik revolution or Chinese revolution, it is followed that a large number of people organized and participated in the revolution where as the Naxal Movement was not carried out by a strong political organization, The leaders of Naxalite movement were till then in C.P.I (M) and the movement was carried out under the leadership of Krishak Sabha, a branch of C.P.I (M). The Central Committee did not support this movement. Apart from this, there was a debate and confusion about the method and activities of the movement among the Naxal leaders, there was a discord among the leaders of this North Bengal and South Bengal. 2ndly, the line factor was one of the defects of the movement. In the situation of political disunity among the leaders and absence of strong organization, it was not proper time to start a militant movement. 3rdly, the Conflict and disconformity among the Naxalite leaders was one of the factors for failure.

It is said that of late differences had arisen between him (Kanu Sanyal) and his mentor, Mr. Charu Mazumdar, whom he had once hailed C.P.I (M-L) publication denied that there were any ideological differences in the top leadership of the party. But in the Latest edition of the Liberation’ in which Mr. Mazumdar confessed

that the party's programme was being sniped at by "Centrists within the party."

The liberation quoted Mr. Mazumdar as having told party workers that some "Comrades" in the party, while admitting the annihilation programme as a starting point of a guerrilla war were not prepared to accept it as a "higher form of class struggle, According to Mr. Mazumdar the programme relates to liquidation of big land holders, would "liberate the minds of the peasants from the weeds of selfishness, fear localism and casteism."¹⁰⁷

Like India, where majority people were depressed class that were lower castes and lower classes, and feudalism was existing in the village economy, in spite of that the communist parties were failure to form organization among the depressed class people, rather communists were confined themselves in the conflict and clash. 4thly, the communists were failure to identify the real class enemy, Some times the struggle was going on among the communists and lower class people instead of against the land lards or industrialist while going on Naxal movement.

It was found that the peasants, belong to 20-40 bighas of lands who were chukanidars under British rule, not a big jotdars or zamindars were murdered by the Naxalites. So it was the extreme technical mistake of the Leaders.

Another factor for the failure of Naxalities movement was different views and disunity among the Naxal leaders, it was followed since the formation of the Communist party. Communists were divided and gradually they formed different new parties such as C.P.I, C.P.I (M) R.S.P, S.U.C.I, C.P.I (M-L). In such way CPI (ML) was also divided and formed another party. It was learnt in Calcutta on May 18 that the left communist extremists who have kept away from the newly-formed communist party of India (Marxist Leninist) plan to form another party. Their party will also

be a Maoist party but different from the C.P.I (ML) which they allege is distorting Maoism and following the middle class evolutionism of Che Guevara, the late Cuban revolutionary .¹⁰⁸

It was mentioned in 'Desh', the Bengali Patrika

Naxalites have harmed C.P.I (M) in different ways, Firstly, they captured many active organizers. Secondly, they are the only group who showed their dare to fight physically against C.P.I (M).with a challenge. Thirdly the middle class people of the town have been removed from C.P.I (M). Fourthly, Naxalites hampered the democratic movement of C.P.I (M) by which C.P.I (M) organized maximum number of people. Fifthly, Naxalite activities have given the opportunity to the Government to appoint more police and military - those police and militaries have beaten C.P.I (M).¹⁰⁹ It is not denied that the ferocious activities among the allied parties of the front reached in such a stage during the rule of United Front Government, the naxalites were inspired by the great ideology of Mao – Tse - Tung to attack equally even the left and the right parties as a result of which 2321 persons were murdered.¹¹⁰

So, for the above limitation and setback the Naxal movement became a failure ultimately and even after 60 years of independence the society could not be changed radically as a result of which, deprivation and oppression have been continuing in all parts of India and yet communist parties are failure to enter into lower class people and depressed sections of the people. It is a failure to apply the Marxian theory in accordance with the need and necessity of the society like India and to organize the people for establishing socialism by revolution or any other process. Shashi Bhushan Singh in his article wrote, "The biggest achievement of Naxalism was that it was able to arouse the passions of the SCs against oppression. But when it came to administering justice, the Naxalites while effective against SCs

were not so effective against the supper castes, Voilent means could not be used against the supper castes because it could lead to en bloc retaliation. For example, when the oxen of one Hira Shing were stolen, he complained to the MEC about this saying that one Bhura Shing was responsible. But the MEC could not do any thing about it because he was a Rajput.”¹¹¹

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