

Chapter -VII

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The present study has examined the agrarian relations and changing agrarian social structure of Cooch Behar. The study of agrarian social structure had been initiated after the first world war with the village studies. The necessity of village studies was felt to study the rural institutions and to highlight the economic misery of the people. On the eve of independence, Indian national leaders mobilise the Indian peasantry on the issue of land reforms. Various dimensions of caste had also been studied during that period. Immediately after independence, the necessity of village studies was felt for rural development. The year 1955 was earmarked as a year of village study since a good number of village studies had been published. Initially those village studies were descriptive in nature; they discussed the village life. But gradually the village studies concentrated more on issue of specific analysis. Among the different issues; land reforms, caste system and others got an immense importance during the period of 1950s. Indian nationalist leaders and planners felt the necessity of land reforms on the question of curbing the inequality in the rural society. During the period of 1960s and 1970s the issue of social stratification in the agrarian society had been emerged. Inequality and hierarchy gained importance in the discussion of agrarian society. Thus the subject agrarian classes and power had emerged. The relationship between caste, class and power had been examined. There had been changes in agriculture in some parts of the country with the adaptation of new technology of production. The effects of commercialisation of agriculture on formation of social classes in the agrarian society had also been analysed during the period of 1980s. However, the study on agrarian social structure in West Bengal gained a new momentum when the left front government came in power in 1977. The left front government initiated various rural developmental measures for the betterment of the rural masses like tenants, agricultural labourers and poor peasants. One of the major achievements of the left front government is the implementation of the programme of *Operation Barga*. A good number of studies have been done during the period of 1990s to examine the impact of *Operation Barga*. Further to empower the rural masses the panchayat system had been revitalised by mak-

ing it 3 - tier and also by holding its regular election. Recently political forces and new technology of production contributed to agrarian changes.

In the foregoing chapters, the various dimensions of agrarian structure of Cooch Behar have been examined with the help of data collected from two sample villages. The district Cooch Behar has been selected for study since economy of Cooch Behar is based purely on agriculture. It was once a princely estate, its political status had been in a flux; from a part of a large kingdom to a princely state, again from a princely state to a revenue paying estate; and finally, to a district town by merger with India in 1950. Different dynasties ruled this region ; of which Koch Kings reigned for a longer period from 1510 AD to 1949 . Thus just 50 years back it had been a feudal estate where the king was the absolute owner of the land. *Jotedary-Adhiary* system was the backbone of the agrarian society. Ecological conditions appeared to be largely responsible for the development of the system. The vast tracts of areas were uncultivated and forests. Naturally man power was a crying need for reclamation of jungle for cultivation. Once a person involved in the process of reclamation of jungles remained as an *adhiars*. The *Jotedary* system ensured the king a major source of revenue. There were two types of *jotes* viz; the revenue paying and non-revenue paying . There were different under tenants in the revenue paying estate. These were *Jotedar, Chukanidar, Dar-Chukanidar, Dara-a-Dar Chukanidar* and *Tasia Chukanidar*. The under tenants had the right to extract surplus of rent at the rate of a fixed percent over and above the rent paid by his immediate above grade. Thus a *chukanidar* who was the immediate under tenant of a *jotedar* had to pay rent at the rate of 25 percent more than the rent paid by the *jotedar* to the King. The non-revenue paying estates were provided for rendering specialised services to the king and also to the relatives of the king for their maintenance. The non-revenue *jotes* were of different kinds like *Brahmattor, Debattor, Pirpal, Lakhiraj, Petbhata* and *Jaigir*. The agrarian society was stratified; at the bottom of the hierarchy there were *adhiars* who used to cultivate leased in land on crop share. There were two types of *adhiars*; one, who used to reside in the premises of *jotedars*, even sometimes with family members and cultivate the leased in land with

the plough and bullock of the *jotedars* and get half of the produce. They were known as *Uttanga Kar Praja*. Actually they were similar to the attached farm labourer of the present day. The other was the non-resident tenant, who used to cultivate the leased in land with his own plough and shared half of the produce. During this period agricultural labourer as a class had not emerged. Migrated labourers used to come from Bihar in the harvesting time only who worked as day labourers; they were mainly engaged in earthing works. *Chaukidari* system had been introduced in Cooch Behar during the period 1882-1883. The *Village Chaukidari Act* 1893 was passed in 1893-94. The *Chaukidars* were empowered with functions of the cops. The said act also provided the provision of panchayats who would look after the civil as well as criminal affairs of the village. One of the important functions of the panchayat was to assess the properties of the residents and to act as a liaison with outer administration of the village. Initially the act did not provide the provision for representative *panchayat*; they were appointed by the high officials of the king. The act provide the *panchayat* must be a resident proprietor holder of the land. However, the *Chaukidary Act* was amended several times. By an amendment of 1941, the provision of appointment of panchayat had been changed from the selected *panchayat* to representative panchayat. But in selecting *panchayats* the opinions of the rate paying adult male of the villages were considered only. The adult women and non-rate paying male had no role in selecting *panchayats*. Moreover, final selection was depend on the wills of the high officials of the king. The *panchayats* were appointed from amongst the landed gentry i.e. from the *jotedars* known to the officials. Thus the *jotedars* were used to enjoy political power. In most cases the *jotedars* and *adhiars* belonged to the same community i.e. *Rajbanshis* since the area was dominated by the *Rajbanshis*. Socially and culturally they were the same. That is why, no significant peasant movement was organised in the region. Caste stratification had little implications for absence of higher caste people in significant numbers in rural Cooch Behar.

In the traditional set up, the method of cultivation was primitive. Wooden plough drawn by bullock was used for land preparation. Among the different crops mainly paddy-aman and aus of

local variety with cash crops like jute and tobacco were cultivated . Fertilizer was never used. Only cow dung and oil cake were used as manure in the tobacco field . Irrigation was also limited to tobacco cultivation.

After merger with India in 1950 , the land tenure system as well as demographic structure of Cooch Behar had changed a lot. Political system had also been changed from a monarchical system to a democratic system. A large influx went on from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during the period 1950's and subsequently in 1970s after independence of Bangladesh. The rights of the intermediary classes had been abolished with the implementation of land reforms act . Thus the intermediary classes as found in the Jotedary system had been abolished. Individual ownership on land was granted. But Adhiary system continued as a major form of land management system. 1951 census data shows that 30 percent of the total cultivable land was cultivated by adhiars. Agricultural labourers as a class had been emerged; percentage of agricultural labourers during the period of 1950s and 1960s was below 10 percent to the total main workers following the 1951 and 1961 Census data. The influence of the jotedars had been in force to some extent same as it was earlier. The panchayat system had been introduced in the area in the year 1964; initially no election of panchayats was held; rather they were selected. Generally selection was made amongst the jotedars who were mostly associated with the politics of Indian National Congress. Moreover, though the land reforms act was passed, it was not seriously implemented for lack of *political will*.

After 1977 the agrarian structure of Cooch Behar appears to have been changed with the left front government being into power. The two sample villages - Guriarpar and Balaghat having some common features in respect of some amenities selected for study, are located in the subdivision of Tufanganj. The number of households of Guriarpar and Balaghat is 415 and 219 with a population of 2284 and 1233 respectively. Guriarpar is comparatively a big village. Both the villages are located by the side of the river; type of soil is also same - sandy loam. Majority of the

population is scheduled caste. They have no electricity, high school and metalled road. Both of them are heterogeneous in terms of population composition. They include the Rajbanshi, the Muslim and the Other migrated low caste people. Among the higher castes there are only three Brahmin house holds and one Kayastha. They are found at Guriarpar only. Balaghat has no higher caste people. Both the villages have Muslim population; they are more in number at Balaghat than Guriarpar. The percentage of the Hindu and the Muslim to the total population of the two villages is 76.60 and 23.40 respectively. Percentage of literacy of the 2 villager is 51.26 to the total population. Of the two villages Guriarpar (52.12) has the higher percentage of literacy than Balaghat (49.47); about 24 percentage of the total population have avail themselves of the formal education. The migrated castes include *Kaibarta, Kumbhakar, Nmasudra, Napit, Tanti, Sutradhar, Bramhin and Kayastha*. Member of these castes had been migrated from Bangladesh. However, some of the families of the Rajbanshi and the Muslim had also been migrated from Bangladesh.

Like other villages, the economy of the two villages is agriculture. About 79 percent of the total main workers are engaged in agriculture; only 21 percent are in non- agriculture activities. The non- agricultural activities include service , business , household industry (making of bidi, dhara); transport business (riding Thela, Cycle Rickshaw) and other labourers (maid servants; persons engaged in the tea stall, repairing works like cycle rickshaw Tube-well and weaving industries). The pattern of agriculture largely depends on type of land possessed by the cultivators. Soil is sandy loom; predominated by high land. The villages are predominated by small holders. The maximum size class is 12 to 15 acres .The percentage of landless, marginal peasant (below 1 acre), and small peasant (between 1 acre to 3 acre) households to the total households are 27.13,23.97 and 31.39 respectively. Thus 55.36 percent to the total households have land below the size class of 3 acres. Semi medium (between 3 to 6 acres) and medium (6 to 9 acres) holdings together constitute 14.67 percent to the total house holds. Only 2.84 percent hold land in the size class of 9 acres to 15 acres. Thus it appears that the village is predominated by small

and poor peasants. Cropping pattern is not uniform through out the villages. Mainly paddy, Jute and vegetables are cultivated. Among the vegetables potato, cauliflower and cabbage are the main. Rich peasants having irrigated land cultivate Bodo paddy and vegetables for market. The source of irrigation is tube-well. Water is lifted with the help of diesel motor pump. Of the 2 villages it is observed that areas of commercial crops are more at Balaghat than Guriarpar. Generally wooden plough driven by bullock is predominantly used for land preparation. However, recently power tiller is used in some cases for land preparation. The percentage of the total households having pumpset and shallow at Balaghat is 24 and 31 respectively where as it is 9 and 6 at Guriarpar. Among the modern farm implements used for cultivation are pump set, power tiller, sprayer and shallow. Like farm implements, percentage of households having cattle population are also high at Balaghat than Guriarpar. The cattle population include Milky Cow, Bullock, Goat, Buffalo, Duck, Hen, Pig etc. Not a single buffalo is found in the two villages. It is observed that only 33 percent of the total households have draught animals, 59 percent have Milky Cows, Poultry is found in only 18 percent of the total households. Lack of fallow land and common grazing land is the reason for declining of cattle population. The agrarian structure that appeared in the two villages is classified as owner cultivator (31.07 percent), supervisory cultivator (5.21 percent), tenant cultivator (12.15 percent), agricultural labourer (40.37 percent) and non agricultural households (11.20 percent). The owner cultivator is not a homogeneous group. Considering their control over the forces of production as well as labour use pattern, the owner cultivators have been further divided into 3 categories viz. Rich, Middle, and Poor. In the supervisory category, there are some households having small amount of land who get cultivated their land by hire labour or tenancy since they have no family member to employ. The incidence of tenancy has declined sharply. According to 1951 census about 30 percent of cultivable land was cultivated by tenant ^{in Cooh Behar,} Now it appears that only 12 percent of the households are tenants. Moreover, the incidence of absentee landlords has also declined.

In the two villages we find only 3 Brahmin and 1 Kayastha households and they are in the

village of Guriarpar .Not a single higher caste family is found at Balaghat. Thus the caste system has little implications in the two villages for absence of higher caste people. The villages are mainly dominated by the schedule caste people. In respect of caste and class relation it is observed that like other parts of India there is no co- relation between caste and class i.e., higher caste being represented in higher class. Percentage of owner cultivator is high among the Jalia Kaibartas; (42.98 percent to that total population) and it is low among the Muslims (18.98 percent). The Muslims form majority in the agricultural labour class (50.36 percent). The Rajbanshi and the Jalia Kaibarta have almost equal representation in the agricultural labourer class in the percent of 39.34 and 38.60 respectively to their respective total population. The Muslim and the Jalia Kaibarta have equal representation in the tenant class. Other castes form majority in the non-agricultural households since members of these castes are mainly from the different artisan groups like carpenter, Tanti, Kumbhakar etc. However, it appears that economic position of the Jalia Kaibarta and the Muslims is comparatively better than the Rajbanshi. The data on land transfer also confirm this observation. The land transfer data suggest that land is being transferred by sale from the Rajbanshi community to the Muslims and the Jalia Kaibartas .

In the relational aspect two major institutions viz tenancy relation and labour relation have been examined in detail. Relations between landlord and tenant on the one hand and landlord and agricultural labourer on the other hand , form an important aspect of the agrarian relations. Like other parts of India agricultural labourers of the 2 villages form as vulnerable sections of the society. 70 percent of the agricultural labourers belong to Scheduled Caste; 49 percent of them are land less and 38 percent have below 1 acre of land. 52 percent of the agricultural labourer households have more than one earners of whom 27 percent are female earners. To supplement their family income, the agricultural labourer households are also engaged in non - agricultural works. There are two types of agricultural labourers locally known as *Dinhajira Kamla* (unattached) and *Bachhar Kamla* or *Chakuri Kamla* (attached). *Dinhajira Kamla* (Day labour) is engaged for a day and at the end of the day they receive their wages. A *Dinhajira Kamla* is

engaged for 8 hours a day and gets his wage at the end of the day. In 1996 - 97 a *Dinhajira Kamla* got a wage Rs. 30/- to Rs. 35/- but a woman worker got less than her male counter part by Rs. 5/- at least. Thus Gender discrimination towards female agricultural labourers is found. *Chakuri Kamla or Bachhar Kamla* (attached labour) is engaged for a specific period usually for one year or one crop season or more than one year. They are also of two types-those who reside in the premises of their landlord and those who do not reside in the premises of their landlord. Attached labourers were usually paid wages with food and clothing. There is no uniformity of their payment system. Usually attached labourer is recruited within the caste members of the landlords. However the incidence of attached labour has declined; at present the percentage of attached labourer found to the total agricultural labourer is 6 percent only.

Tenancy as a part of land management had been a major institution in the region since the area was under the *Jotedari - adhiari* system. The *adhiars* form a major social group during the region of koch kings. The Left Front Government having assumed state power in 1977, amended various provisions of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act 1954 for protection of the interests of the tenants. The programme *Operation Barga* had been launched by the left front government to record the names of the tenants. It appears that 75 percent of the tenants have recorded their names. The incidence of recording is high among the Rajbanshis (100 percent) and it is low among the Muslims (25 percent) to their respective total. Cropping pattern of the tenant shows that double cropping system is a predominant form of cultivation. Half sharing is the predominant form of crop-sharing among the tenants. Cost sharing is associated with crop sharing. In case of half sharing the entire cost is borne by the land lords; in other cases it is by tenants. The legal safeguards as given in the West Bengal Land Reforms Act are enjoyed more by the recorded tenants than by non recorded tenants. The recorded bargadars are denied of any consumption loan. However, they are enjoying more institutional loan than unrecorded bargadars.

However, inspite of recording, it is observed, a section of tenants have surrendered / ad-

justed their leased in land with their landlords. It appears from the available data that 60 percent of the recorded *bargadars* have surrendered their leased in land. They lost their tenancy status and became either owner of the land or agricultural day labourer. Exigency of money in some cases (90 percent) on the part of landlord and in some other cases (8 percent) on the part of tenant are the main reasons for such surrender. But in some cases (2 percent) the exigencies felt by both (the land lord and tenant) are responsible. The surrendered land has been retained by the land lord, tenant and the third party (other than landlord and tenant) in the percentage of 23.08, 33.33 and 43.59 respectively. In the process of land surrender, the benefits are also reaped by some of the tenants either in cash or in land. 38.49 percent of the total surrendered tenants have not received any thing. Intimacy either in the form of caste or village plays an important role in the incidence of land surrender. 71.79 percent of the surrendered bargadars belong to the same caste of their landlord. On the other hand, incidence of non-surrender is high when the landlord and the tenant belong to separate caste. The caste intimacy plays a positive role in the incidence of land surrender. It is interesting to note that inspite of land surrendering, 51.28 percent of the surrendered bargadars have managed to increase their own land; 25.64 percent have retained the same quantity as they used to hold at the time of recording; only 23.08 percent bargadars have lost control over their lands.

In respect of tenancy and labour relations, it appear that a new set of institutions is being emerged. First the younger agricultural labourers now prefer to work on contract system in the form of piece rate system. They work together forming a group. A group may be small or big. Some times a group is formed with labourers of 20 and more who work together. Work on daily basis requires to serve 8 hours a day. While they can earn the same or sometimes more wages on contract system. It helps them increase their efficiency. At present, modernization of agriculture requires labour efficiency. Thus it also helps the landlords who cultivate on commercial basis. The engagement of agricultural labourer on contract system helps develop a formal relationship between the agricultural labourers and their landlords. Similarly, the share tenancy that is the tradi-

tional adhiary system has been gradually changing. The Landlords are unwilling to lease out their land on perpetual lease due to fear of recording. They generally prefer short term lease. Thus the share tenancy is being replaced by lease tenancy. There are three major forms of short term tenancy that have emerged in the 2 villages. These are fixed rent short terms tenancy, short - terms share tenancy, and Rent free- lease tenancy. In the fixed rent short term tenancy, a landlord leases out his land to a tenant for a fixed period against a fixed rent. There is no uniform pattern of fixed rent . It depends on landlord - tenant's intimacy. The rent is paid in cash. The agreement may be written or verbal. Under this system, the tenant bears all the costs of production and he owns the entire production. The land lord has no involvement in the process of cultivation. He just earns the rent. After the contract period is over, the land is retained by the landlord and he cultivates the same under his own control. Secondly, under the short term share tenancy, the landlord leases out his land for a specific crop season, mainly for one season. A poor cultivator or even an agricultural labourer having entrepreneurial attitude even having no capital to invest in land can lease in land. All the initial expenditures relating to cultivation have been borne by the landlord himself. The tenant cultivates the land. After harvesting and marketing the product the cost as well as profit is shared by landlord and tenant in the ratio of 50:50. Potato, cauliflower and cabbage are generally cultivated under this system. This system is beneficial to the land lord as well as the tenant because a poor tenant who is unable to invest in land can reap the benefit by this system. Similarly, a landlord who has no enterprising ability but has capital to invest can be benefited by this system. The risk of cultivation is also shared by both of them. The third category is Rent Free Lease System. The rent free lease system is generally found among the poor peasants who hold small size of land and who have no capital to invest in land. Such poor peasants usually cultivate only paddy and jute of local varieties. They are not in a position to use fertilizer to their land. In rabi season they keep their land fallow. The entrepreneurial cultivators lease in land from such families for cultivation of vegetables in rabi season only. In cultivating vegetables the tenants have to use fertilizer and other manures. After harvesting the fertilizer remains in the soil as residue which helps the owners who cannot use fertilizer in their land.

The agrarian power structure of Cooch Behar has been changed through merger of it with India and subsequently with the left front government headed by CPI(M) came into power in 1977. In West Bengal the left front government headed by CPI(M) has been reigning since 1977. They revitalised the panchayat system by holding its regular elections at an interval of 5 years. The 5th Panchayat election was held in the 1998. The left parties have retained their domination in every tier since 1977. In the region the left partners i.e. Rastriya Socialist Party and Forward Block have retained their control in both the Lokshabha seats where the 2 selected villages are located. On the other hand, the assembly segments have been controlled by the CPI(M) party. Similarly, the *Panchayat Samity and the Gram Panchayat* have been controlled by the CPI(M). There are 6 panchayat members in the two sample villages; 4 at Guriarpar and 2 at Balaghat. The Indian National Congress (Cong I) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) have equal share in the total number of panchayat members of the two villages. Out of the 4 panchayat members at Guriarpar there are 3 members from CPI(M) and 1 from Cong-I party. On the other hand, there are 2 members at Balaghat who belong to Cong-I party. Demographic features of panchayat members show that 50 percent of the panchayat members are in the age group of 25-35 years; 33 percent in the age group of 35-50 years, and only one member in the age group of 50 years and above. The marital status of the members show that no widow or widower has representation in the panchayat. 50 percent of them are married. There is a single woman panchayat of the six members. Data on family size shows that all the members of panchayat are from medium and large families. All the panchayat members of the CPI(M) belong to large families consisting of 10 to 15 members. Members' educational standard shows that they are literate having formal education; 50 percent of them have passed the High school Examination. Only 1 member has completed the Bachelor Degree.

Class character of the panchayat members has been examined in terms of occupation, family income, land holding pattern, labour use pattern and possession of farm technology. Occupational data of panchayat members show that there are two members of the CPI(M) who

are unemployed; one female member of the Cong (I) is engaged in house hold activities; two members one each of the Cong(I) and the CPI(M) are service holders; and one member of the Cong (I) is a cultivator. For a deeper understanding, the economic position of the panchayat members has been examined by analysing their family income. The sources of family income have been classified into 3 heads viz only cultivation, with service; and cultivation with business. Of the 3 panchayat members of the CPI(M) ; the family income the of two members is mainly from cultivation with service and the other from cultivation with business. On the other hand, family income of the 2 members of Cong(I) is only cultivation and the other is cultivation with service. Agricultural labourer and tenant families have no representation in the panchayat . Size of holding of the CPI(M) member is comparatively higher than the Cong-I . Data on labour use pattern show that four panchayat members (3 CPI(M) & 1 Cong-I panchayat members) cultivate their land by purely hired labour; 1 member of the Cong-I does it purely by family labour and the other one predominantly by hired labour. The house holds of the four panchayat members have more than one set of plough, draught animal, shallow, pumpset and sprayer. One member has a single set of plough, draught animal, pumpset, sprayer and more than one shallow; and the rest member has only a wooden plough without draught animal. Thus the four members of the panchayat belong to the rich peasant class and 1 to the middle peasant class. The rest member belongs to the class of the poor peasant. Therefore, class and power are largely co- related. Higher classes have more representation in the panchayat than lower classes. Adhiars and agricultural labourers have no representation in the panchayat . The economic position of all the 3 CPI(M) panchayat members has been identified as higher class. Similarly, the class position of the 2 members of the Cong I party is also high. Only 1 member of the Cong I party belongs to poor peasant.

The relationship between caste and power appears to be insignificant due to absence of higher caste people in significant number in the two villages as it is mentioned earlier. It appears that about 83 percent of the panchayat members are from the scheduled caste people; of which

the Rajbanshi alone grab 50 percent of the share. The rest 17 percent is from the Muslim community. General and OBC have no representation in the *panchayat* member. Thus caste and power have no correlation in the two villages under study in one sense, but in another sense, it is observed that since the villages are numerically dominant by the Scheduled Caste people, they have greater share in power. But analysis of *panchayat* power alone is not sufficient to analyse the rural power structure since the *panchayat* members are not the alone to deal with power. There are other persons who are represented in different committees in the two villages to govern the public affairs of the villages. Some of these committees are formal and others are non-formal. In the 2 villages such committees include *Anganwadi* Committee, School Committee, *Booth* Committee, *Mandir* Committee *Masjid* Committee and so on. Some of these committees even control and direct the activities of the *panchayat*. In the two villages under study, we find three types of committees namely Booth Committee, *Anganwadi* Committee and School Committee. About 90 persons are represented in such committees. All the caste groups have representation in those committees. Numerically the Rajbanshis have greater representation than others. In the Booth Committee, it is observed that cultivators, share croppers, agricultural labourers, service holders, artisans and other personals have representation. In the other two committees, all the above categories of persons have representation except share croppers and other occupational groups. Landless people have also representation in those committees. Thus it shows that though landless people, agricultural labourers and share croppers have no representation in the *panchayat*, they have representation in other committees. Agricultural labourers and share croppers are also sharing rural power marginally.

To sum up, it is observed that the agrarian structure of Cooch Behar appears to have undergone frequent changes with subsequent alterations in the political scenario of the area as well as forces of production in agriculture. The area once dominated by *Jotedars* and *Adhiyars*; and non existence of agricultural labourers as a class; now appears to be dominated by marginal peasants, poor peasants and agricultural labourers. Number of landless people have increased

significantly. Pattern of cultivation appears to have changed significantly with the adaptation of new technology and high yielding varieties of seeds. New crops like cabbage, cauliflower, bodo etc. which were once unknown to the region, now have been cultivated in the area. Agricultural productivity has also got an upward thrust substantially with the effective application of chemical fertiliser and irrigation. With the implementation of agrarian legislation by launching the programme *Operation Barga*, the incidence of share cropper appears to have declined significantly. A new form of tenancy i.e.; short-term lease tenancy in the form of fixed rent, or crop share or rent-free system appears to have been emerging. Similarly, in the sphere of agricultural labour relation the traditional system of engagement on daily basis is gradually being replaced by contract system in the form of piece-rate. The agricultural labourers have been unionised by a frontal organisation of the CPI(M) known as *Kshet Majoor Union*. Political development in the region helps them form such a union. They have organized and participated in various movements for fulfilling their demands. They have been able to check in-migration of agricultural labourers from the surrounding villages. The traditional bondage is being replaced by a contractual relation. More over, the incidence of attached labour has declined. Likewise, in power structure, the traditional *Jotedars* have lost their control over village affairs. The two set of power; one which is exercised by *panchayat* members and the other through different committees both formal and informal have emerged. Though in the *panchayat* institution the upper class people have an edge over others, the people from all sections including agricultural labourers and tenants have representation in the other committees managing the public affairs of the villages. Some of these committees though non formal, can control and guide the *panchayat* members. In relation of caste, class and power, it appears that caste system has no implication in the agrarian society of Cooch Behar since the higher caste people have no significant representation in rural society. In Cooch Behar, the Rajbanshis, a schedule caste community, are numerically dominated ; there are the Muslims and the migrated castes who are mainly agriculturalists and artisans. Thus caste has no relation with class and power ; but class and power are to some extent related.