

CHAPTER-EIGHT

OPERATION BARGA: CHANGING SCENARIO OF THE RURAL SOCIETY

North Bengal comprised six districts (Dakshin Dinajpur, Uttar Dinajpur, Malda, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar and Darjeeling). Later Alipurduar and Kalimpong were added to this list. In Indian map there is no existence of North Bengal. It is quite astonishing, but in spite of this, North Bengal witnessed different changing aspects of the transformation of the rural society. The geo-political atlas of North Bengal especially Malda and West Dinajpur bears special features in the changing profile in the transformation of the rural society. Geo-historical background of land of North Bengal was different. There were mixing of hills and plain lands. Different cultures developed and intermingling of caste, creed, and religion flourished throughout North Bengal. It is true that the structure of the rural society of North Bengal gradually changed with the passing of time. Pre-independence rural society of North Bengal became static but after independence some major changes took place in the field of land reforms. Several peasants' movement and government amendments changed the profile of the rural society of North Bengal. Adhinar, Tebhaga, Naxalbari movement actually changed the pattern of the rural society. Moreover, the roll of *Kishan Sabha* was very important.

As the peasants learned the strength of collective action, the *Kishan Sabha* existed in a few provinces between 1933 and 1935.¹ But these peasant unions were yet in a rudimentary stage, and there was no central organization that could guide the peasant activities. *All India Kishan Sabha* was formed in 1936.² The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and peasant leaders like Ranga and Sahajanand took a leading part in its formation. According to its manifesto, the objective of the *Kishan Sabha* is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and the achievement of full economic and political power to the

peasants and workers. In the maximum programme there was the demand for the abolition of *zamindari, talukdari, malguzari, mahajani* systems. The minimum demands which were designed to appeal to the peasant masses included moratorium on debts, abolition of land revenue and rent from uneconomic holdings, reduction of revenue and rent, licencing of moneylenders, minimum wages for agricultural labourers, fair price for sugarcane and commercial crops and irrigation facilities.³ Actually the peasants, cultivators and tenants were united under the banner of *Kishan Sabha*.

In Bengal the communists took the lead in organizing the *Kishan Sabha* which held its first session at Bankura in March, 1937. The leadership came mostly from the urban middle class. Bibhuti Guha, Kali Sarkar, Benoy Krishna Chowdhury, Harekrishna Konar, Moni Singh, Sudhir Mukherjee, Haji Muhammad Danesh were prominent leaders.⁴ All these leaders paved the way of the changing profile of the transformation of the rural society. One thing must be noted that *Kishan Sabha* tried to develop as a secular organization.⁵

In 1938 the *Kishan Sabha* was founded in Dinajpur. The question is how the *Kishan Sabha* leaders went to the grassroots and brought the peasants within the organization. In Dinajpur a small group of former revolutionaries who had joined the Communist Party and left Congress formed the leadership of the *Kishan Sabha*. Bibhuti Guha wrote the roles of *Kishan Sabha*. Rupnarayan Roy, a *Rajbanshi* peasant was an active member of *Kishan Sabha*.⁶ It was the job of the peasant cadres to arrange village meetings, distribute leaflets in weekly *hats* (market places), and enroll members and volunteers.⁷ From 1929-1936, total 15,87,639 lands were transferred and later that process continued after the famine of 1943.⁸ For this reason share-cropping system increased. The *Kishan Sabha* and Communist Party had done a great job at that time. Following table showed the actual picture-

Table No: 1.16 (Cultivation of Land by the Family Members, Bargadars and Agricultural Labourers)

Name of the District	By the family members	Through Bargadars	Through Agricultural Labourers
Malda	89.3%	9.6%	1.2%
Dinajpur	72%	14.4%	13.6%

Source: '*Tebhager Sangram*'-*Fire Dekha*, Paschim Banga Pradeshik Krishak Sabha, Kolkata, 1996, p.119

During the Adhjar movement (1938-39) and the Tebhaga movement (1946-47), the peasant cadres remained in the forefront along with the middle class leaders and mobilized the peasant masses. By the hands of *adhjars*, Tebhaga movement formed a new social structure in some parts of North Bengal especially in Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Malda. The role of the *jotdars*, *bargadars* of Terai and Duars regions was different from the *jotdars* and *bargadars* of Malda and Dinajpur because North Bengal was a mixture of 'regulated' and 'non-regulated' regions which established separate platform among the people. On the other hand, Thakurgaon and Rangpur were swept by the hands of *Kishan Sabha*. *Rajbanshi*, *Mahisya*, *Kaibarta*, *Koch*, *Deshi* and *Polia* peoples were mixing in the social base of the North Bengal's rural society. In most cases landlords were Hindus and the peasants were Muslims.⁹ This division created a new structure in the rural society.

Tebhaga movement scattered in the districts of Dinajpur, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and some parts of Malda. Communist Party and Provincial *Kishan Sabha* organized the movement. By the middle of December, 1946 lakhs of *bargadars* in numerous villages in

nineteenth districts had carried the entire crop to their *khamar*.¹⁰ In another North Bengal district, Darjeeling, the Tebhaga agitation spread to a few areas in Siliguri that included Naxalbari in which the tribal peasants were mostly involved. A new relation was set up and it created a new social dimension among the *adhiars*, cultivators, peasants and farmers. On the other hand BPKS leaders, communist leaders joined hand against *jotdars*, *zamindars* and moneylenders.¹¹ After the abolition of zamindari system, *bargadar-adhiar-raiyat* relationship reached a new height and it played a significant role in the changing profile of the transformation of the rural society of North Bengal.

A new flavour added to the rural society when the Naxalbari movement broke out in the Darjeeling district of North Bengal. We turn now to the story of the armed struggle organized by the CPI (ML) between 1967 and 1972. The Naxalbari struggle scattered three police stations of Phansidewa, Naxalbari and Khoribari in Darjeeling district.¹² Apart from these the *Rajbanshis* constituted the majority of the rural population in this region. The tribal peasants mostly *Santhals*, *Orawns* and *Mundas*, formed a large proportion of the population. As in other North Bengal districts the *bargadars* who formed about 55% of the peasants in this area were ranged against the *jotdars* who remained as always, oppressive and rapacious.¹³

Since *barga* was pervasive in the three police stations, the number of agricultural labourers was small. What is noteworthy was that the tribal peasants who worked as tenants on landlord's land also worked in the tea gardens, so that the peasant movement could rely on the support of the tea garden labourers; in fact the peasant and labour movement often went hand in hand. It would be fatuous to think that the peasant struggle in Naxalbari suddenly flared up in 1967.¹⁴ The fact was that Naxalbari witnessed continuous peasant movements since 1946. There was an intermingling relation between Tebhaga and

Naxalbari. Natures of these movements were different but the aim was same.¹⁵ North Bengal's journey from Tebhaga to Naxalbari had changed the rural society in many ways.

Most of the leaders of the Naxalbari movement came from middle class. Kanu Sanyal, Sourin Bose, Kadam Mallick, Khokan Majumder, Charu Majumder, Jangal Santhal and others were prominent leaders. Indeed, the CPI (ML) leaders of Naxalbari were veteran peasant leaders, some of whom were sons of the soil. These leaders established relationship among the peasants and cultivators. Among the Naxalbari leaders Kanu Sanyal had a close contact with the peasants and tea garden labourers.¹⁶ Throughout his life he maintained this relationship. Kanu Sanyal was clearly advocating a retreat from continuous movement centring on the immediate demands of the rural poor.

There was a shift in the situation with the formation of the Second United Front Ministry in 1969.¹⁷ The CPI (M) itself mounted the movement for the seizure of *benami land* and forcible harvesting of crops. In the winter of 1969, the RSP-led *Krishak Sabha* organized demonstrations demanding acquisition of surplus land; the CPI-led *Krishak Sabha* tried to organize forcible harvesting of paddy in *benami* lands.¹⁸ Comrade Pramod Dasgupta and Jyoti Basu organized and motivated the volunteers for work in favour of the proletarians.¹⁹ During this time many CPI (M) leaders were arrested and murdered. Turmoil spread throughout North Bengal. As the movement was no longer based on 'urban-based youth', the emergence of Charu Majumder as the foremost ideologue directly contributed to the introduction of the urban-elitist authoritarian-petty bourgeois bias in the conduct and style of the movement.²⁰ From Tebhaga to Naxalbari, the traditional rural structure of North Bengal gradually changed. By the abolition of the *zamindari* system and passing of the Land Acquisition Act, rural society of North Bengal rapidly changed.

Apparently, it can be said that from Tebhaga to Naxalbari these movements opened a new chapter of land settlements and agricultural economic crisis of West Bengal as

well as North Bengal. Later, government took the step of reform from the lesson of Naxalbari movement.²¹ After the defeat of Naxalbari, the basis of a new party was laid down by the rebels. It indicated that although the uprising was militarily a failure, its significance derived from the new light it shed on the country's socio-economic problems and the new turn it gave to communist politics.²² The 1970's new Government of West Bengal could not defy the burning problem of land reform measurement. In the five years' experience landless peasants, share-croppers tried to organize themselves and it was not a fake idea.

Land Acquisition Act and the abolition of the *zamindari* system created a new reform in the land settlement of Bengal. The Land Revenue Commission in its recommendation in 1940 clearly pointed out that there was not enough land to go round for the growing population of Bengal.²³ The right of the *bargadars* or share-croppers to their holdings should therefore be enfranchised and they should have a claim to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the share of the produce at the time of harvest. Tebhaga's manifesto was the change of agrarian structure of Bengal, by which rural society was affected most. In 1950 Bargadar Act was passed but it became inactive as the abolition of *zamindari* received the priority in land reform at that time.²⁴

In the decades since independence, West Bengal's land reform progress can be divided into three phases. The first phase (1953-1966) saw the adoption of the basic legislation, little progress in redistribution of above-ceiling land, and deterioration in the protection of *bargadars*.²⁵ In the second phase (1967-1976) West Bengal made most of the overall achievements in above-ceiling redistribution, but made little progress in protecting the rights of *bargadars*. In the third phase (1977 onwards) tremendous progress was made in recording and protecting the rights of *bargadars*, and the redistribution of above ceiling land continued, but at a slower pace.²⁶ The Left Front's most remarkable land reform measure was in launching Operation Barga, under which government functionaries recorded. The names of

bargadars were enrolled in order to provide them with greater tenure security.²⁷ Operation Barga was an attempt to distribute land among the landless peasants and cultivators. Governments' aim was that in West Bengal there should not be any landless peasants in the rural areas. But to fulfil this programme, government faced several crises.

In 1955 the West Bengal Land Reforms Act was passed for the protection of *bargadar's* right. Now the real picture of North Bengal's rural society came in front of us. Especially in Malda and West Dinajpur *zamindari* system abolished and the old *zamindars* were replaced by rich farmers in the rural areas. Actually, *zamindar's* condition gradually degraded after the Grant of *Dewani*. With the passing of time, *zamindars* tradition, administration and reforms especially in the field of lands were changed. From Mughal period to British period lot of developments took place.²⁸ Later *zamindars* were interested to collect more taxes from their *raiyats*. Old *zamindars* were replaced by new *zamindars*.²⁹ Hereditary rights of the *zamindars* were in many cases changed. It had a deep impact in the *raiyat-zamindar* relations.

Post-independence relation between *zamindar* and *bargadar* changed. The *bargadars* of different types seem to have two characteristics in common. First, they paid a proportionate rather than a fixed rent and second, they had no security of tenure. It was only in Tenancy Reforms Amendment Act of West Bengal 1955 that a partial security was granted by law but the defacto position has been as increase as ever.³⁰ A *bhag chas* (share-cropper) officer was to be appointed to look into disputes involving title to land and share of the crop. Chapter iii Section 15 A declared the right of the *bargadars* to cultivate his appointed land hereditary.³¹ The *bargadar* was to deliver the share of the produce to the land owner within seven days of the threshing of the crop and the owner to give a receipt to that effect. If the owner refused to accept the share and tenure the receipt, the *bargadar* could deposit the crop with the Junior Land Revenue Officer (JLRO) of the area within 30 days.

The most important part related to the right of eviction of the *bargadar* by the land owner. The *bargadar* also could not keep more than six hectares for personal cultivation and any excess could be returned to the land owner for settlement with a new *bargadar*.³² Apart from this it was further stipulated that the owner must stay on or near his land and supervise cultivation and income from such cultivation must be his/her mainstay. Various provisions were added to *bargadar*. The Floud Commission Report makes two recommendations in the case of *bargadars*:³³ i) *bargadars* may be declared as tenants; they need not have all the rights of occupancy. ii) The share of the crop legally recoverable from *bargadars* should be $\frac{1}{3}$, instead of $\frac{1}{2}$.

But despite such elaborate measures, evictions mounted. Moreover, there were already the spectra of acute rural unemployment. It was admitted by the Land Revenue Commission in 1940 that there was not enough land to go round. The Census of 1971 revealed that there were thirty-three lakhs of landless labour and cultivators mainly including *bargadars* no less than thirty-nine lakhs and through land ceiling under the Land Reforms Act till 1977 total agricultural land vested in the State was 10,57,000 acres out of which 6,32,000 acres could be distributed as they were free from injunctions.³⁴ It would have been a disaster if even the *bargadars* joined the ranks of the purely landless labour. Rural proletarianisation had to be stopped somewhere.

In case of genuine self-cultivation, there was an exemption upto 3 hectare, under the Land Reforms Act, 1955. Further, the *bargadars* were ruthlessly persecuted by the landlords when they wanted to defend their rights. Actually, *barga* system more widely spread in North Bengal.³⁵ There was no overt connivance but the lower bureaucracy and the court took a mechanistic and conservative attitude to kill off their cases for procedural inadequacies. The weaker section needed to be protected by the government.

In the *bargadari* system *jotdars* had an important role. In North Bengal some were pleaders and men of business who had purchased the holdings as a speculation or investment, some were poor *raiya*s. The ordinary *jotdars* were generally substantial farmers.³⁶ In the District Gazetteer of Dinajpur we find the holders of cultivating tenures were known as *raiya*s or the local parlance *jotdars*. The spread of *barga* system was related to the indebtedness of owner cultivators, implying thereby that *jotdars* were moneylenders who depressed the owner cultivators to the status of *bargadars*.³⁷ In Jalpaiguri district the Bengali traders used to give loans both in cash and in barter system gradually purchasing the interests of the tenants and reducing them to the position of *adhiars*.³⁸

Jotdars came from moneylenders as well as from other classes. Let us now sum up the different types of *jotdars* who leased out on crop sharing basis³⁹ i) urban elite, ii) traders and iii) moneylenders. First as far as *bhadralok jotdars* were concerned, the tendency to evict one *adhiar* either for self-cultivation for resetting another *adhiar* seems to be weak. Secondly, we have the type of trader cum *jotdar*. The trader had a larger degree of participation in the process of production. The third type was moneylender cum *jotdar*. Hence an important distinction has to be made between the professional and the agriculturist moneylender.⁴⁰ Many professional moneylenders were *jotdars*. On the other hand principal occupation of the agriculturist moneylender was cultivation.

It was worthy to note that importance of agriculturist moneylender has increased tremendously since independence. The relation between agriculturist moneylender and *bargadar* was most likely to change over to capitalist wage labour relation in the wake of infrastructural developments which reduce uncertainty in agriculture. We see how this had happened in post-independence period. In National Sample Survey (NSS) data we get estimates of households in the rural sector that did not own but operate some land. Among these landless tenants, most of them were *bargadars*. In West Bengal proportion of such

households has fallen from 16% in 1954-55 to 2% 1971-72. ⁴¹ NSS data in 1971-72 gave a breakdown of such households by four regions: ⁴²

- i) Himalayan- Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar.
- ii) Eastern- West Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad and Nodia.
- iii) Western- Birbhum, Bankura, Purulia and Midnapur
- iv) Central- Burdwan, Hoogly, Howrah and 24 Paraganas.

Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Coochbehar, West Dinajpur (present Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur), Malda, Alipurduar and Kalimpong (newly added) formed as North Bengal. It must be noted down that from Permanent Settlement to the abolition of *zamindari* system i.e. (1793-1953) there was only one industry i.e. tea industry. ⁴³ So pre-independence North Bengal's economy mainly flourished by the rural areas. First development took place in North Bengal after independence by the abolition of *zamindari* system and the land Reforms Act of 1955. By the abolition of intermediarie's suzerainty, North Bengal's agricultural economy flourished. But the Act became a legal fiction without proper record of rights. It was difficult to identify who was the genuine *bargadar* on the spot and more difficult to enforce it in the court of law. The land owner was the supreme authority in the rural area. The *bargadar* utterly depended on him for all his needs and the government hardly offered the alternative to rely upon. So there was the paramount importance of the record of *bargadari* rights.

In 1967 United Front Government came to power in West Bengal. They first started the land and land reforms movement of West Bengal. At that time Harekrishna Konar was the Minister of Land and Land Reforms of West Bengal. ⁴⁴ 67's land reforms movement broke down the economic social dominance of landed aristocracy. ⁴⁵ Benoy Krishna

Chowdhury wrote that systematic effort to distribute the ceiling surplus land was thus made only during the tenure of the first two United Front Government of which was short lived. Benoy Krishna Chowdhury recorded his strong argument in the Legislative Assembly. Later he joined the Left Front Ministry as Land Revenue Minister and became the chief architect of Operation Barga.⁴⁶ He deliberated upon the *zamindari* Bill in the Legislative Assembly. During the discussion it was informed that there was a possibility of transference of 18 lakh to 20 lakh acres of land to the government possession. Benoy Krishna Chowdhury also expressed his skepticism about this Bill and said, “Actually the ownership of 25 acres of land were 27,489 persons. To their possession there were about 13 lakh acres of land. Even if there were distributed 25 acres of land equally then 6 lakh acres of land may belong to government possession”⁴⁷ Later this Bill was amended. This is how nearly 6 lakh acres of land was distributed.⁴⁸ In one side there were land reforms, on the other hand, there was Naxal movement, both these were amalgated in the agricultural economy of North Bengal.

Uttarasha (Fortnightly magazine of Jalpaiguri) reports in 1969⁴⁹ “In Banshihari of West Dinajpur, 20th West Bengal State Krishak Sabha Conference was held in 1969. Several all India level leaders participated in the Conference. Some prominent names were Biswanath Mukhopadhyaya (Irrigation Minister), Z.A. Ahmed (President of All India Krishak Sabha), Bhogindra Jha (M.P), Ila Mitra, Ananta Maji, Rani Dasgupta, Nimai Murmu, Hazra Begam and others. At least 600 representatives joined the Conference. Peasants, cultivators raised the demand of right of land. Several peasants came from Malda. At that time a peasant movement continued in Malda and Dinajpur against *jotdars*. Peasants and cultivators raised the slogan ‘*Inquilab Jindabad.*’ In the conference many peasants came from Koigram, Danga of Balurghat police station; Belbari, Nandanpur, Damdama, Pransagar, Nayabazar of Gangarampur police station; Nimpur, Kardaha, Laskarhat, Vikhahar, Gurail of Tapan police station; Aminpur, Lashmipur of Kushmandi police station; Rupahar, Kamalpur, Kalyani,

Dhumpara, Bagichapur, Bataskuri, Brajaballavpur, Sirshi of Bansihari police station; Itahar, Islampur, Malda, Gazole, Habibpur, Bamongola etc. More than thousand of peasants participated in the Conference. Revolutionary leader Chaitya Roy raised the slogan-“we want unity among the cultivators.” The principal slogan of the Conference was-“*Garib garib bhai bhai, sab gariber ek larai.*”(One poor man finds a brother in another; their unity makes them to fight a same battle)⁵⁰ *po*

In 1978 it was estimated that there were no less than 30/35 lakhs of *bargadars* who needed protection. So the government had launched a new programme of land reform since 1978 titled Operation Barga. From 1978-81, 1.2 million *bargadars* were recorded in West Bengal.⁵¹ So 67's land reforms movement broke down the economic-social stability of the landed gentry and Operation Barga completely erased it. Operation Barga gradually weakened the domination of the economic-social power of *jotdars* in North Bengal.

By the Act of 1953 *zamindars* were restricted to the upper ceiling of land to 25 acres. Non-agricultural land and homestead land were not included in this Act.⁵² According to Regulation IV excess lands were under the authority of government. Hence, there was needed and enlisted a new record of land. Land Reforms Act was implemented in 1955 and from 1957 the owners of the land had to declare the actual amount of land by the Regulation 7A.⁵³ In 1964-65, no *bargadars* were found in Settlement Record. On the contrary, *bargadars* were evicted from their lands.⁵⁴

Later several corrections were made to save *barga*. In 1974 Congress government increased the upper limit of land for a family from 2.5 hectares to 5 hectares.⁵⁵ A deference was drawn from non-irrigation to irrigation land. In the mean time due to green revolution a section of the owner of the land flourished. Due to change of the upper limits of land, division of irrigational land, introduce of *barga* records, there was needed a new record of land measurement, although social and political crisis were tagged with the

measurement.⁵⁶ Before the coming of the Left Front government, work of Settlement was already started in West Bengal as well as North Bengal. In the year 1975 on 26th June, Government of West Bengal by dint of an ordinance declared that the landless families residing on another man's land would be allotted the right to 5 *kotas* of land.⁵⁷

In 1977, the Left Front government came into power and this government continued the same land reform programme under taken by Congress government only one amendment was made in the Act which protected the interests of *bargadars* (share-croppers).⁵⁸ This amendment provided the *bargadars* with the right that if he proclaimed any specific land to be under temporary lease, then he would not have to prove it. On the contrary, the actual owner had to prove that legally holder of the specific land. These reforms took shape mainly in the form of (a) redistribution of vested land (b) securing of tenancy rights, which already existed in law through a programme of universal reorganization of tenants called 'Operation Barga'.⁵⁹ Left Front government had done a great job about land reform movement. They distributed the excess land among the landless peasants and united the rural people by the introduction of Panchayat system.⁶⁰

Now the question is- what is meant by Operation Barga? Provisions for *bargadars* and the need to do something about the problems faced by *bargadars* had been recognized long back, dating to the days of the British rule. The Bengal Bargadars Temporary Regulation Bill at the end of Tebhaga movement, for example was an expression of such concern.⁶¹ Similarly, other laws and amendments were passed in the 1950's and 1970's. Operation Barga was a materialization of the provisions of existing laws.⁶² One of the major aspects of this operationalisation was the registration of *bargadars*. This was a stupendous task before the peasant organisations headed by the left forces. West Bengal had a history of *zamindari* settlement. Forms of tenancy had been inbuilt in the system in which there were no records. Oral contracts were the order of the day and any papers worth maintaining were with

the landlords and the better to do land owners. Thus identification of *barga* land was the major task before the peasant organization.⁶³

The *bargadars* were bound to the land owners politically, economically and even socially. An element of patronage too existed in the relationship between the share-cropper and the land lord. The peasant organization had to first break through his relationship and later after registration, to give protection to the *bargadars* from any attack by the old power groups like- the *bargadars* landlords. This type of measures received a boost from political and administrative support that these organizations received from the State government.⁶⁴

Operation Barga appears to be a culmination of all the anti-feudal struggle of the past, the programme itself was a struggle- a movement which received state support, a state which had the political will to implement the laws. By the implementation of Operation Barga, 6,75,000 *bargadars* (share-croppers) were registered between October 1978 and June 1982.⁶⁵ *Bargadars'* names were recorded and entered into the record of rights. Operation Barga had drawn a new picture in the rural economy of North Bengal. As regards the recording of *bargadars*, the administration had already launched a procedure, the Operation Barga in 1978. The operation was carried out in several successive stages-

Firstly: Identification of areas with appreciable number of *bargadars* in them. The identification was made through official discussions and constituted with the leaders or representatives of all the district or Sub-divisional level.⁶⁶

Secondly: Formations of teams to execute the programme at the district or Sub-divisional level as required. Each team comprises the Junior Land Revenue Officer (JLRO) of the area, revenue officer of Settlement department, an experience *amin* and a *peon*. The team works under the control and supervision of the Sub-divisional land reforms officer and circle officer, Settlement wing.⁶⁷

Thirdly: Collection of data. The terms and high officials of the local administration meet the villagers in an evening gathering. Though open discussion with them the names of all the bona-fide *bargadars* in the *mauza*'s concerned were obtained along with the problems related to their occupation. The solutions of these problems were also chalked out action outlined.⁶⁸

Fourthly: Recording of *bargadars* on a day fixed and notified ahead, a team goes to a *mauza* works there for three days, or more in case of a very large *mauza*, as decided by the concerned authorities. Within that time, the team carried out an open investigation with the help of *mauza* maps and enlisted the names of *bargadars* with full particulars of land and the owners, inclusive of both those were already in the list prepared in the evening meetings and those who were found out during the processing of the programme and at the time of investigation.⁶⁹ The list of the names so recorded with their lands was put up publicly for hours for general inspection.

Fifthly: Substantiation-The name so established go into the village record-of-rights and certificates in the prescribed form were issued to the *bargadars* in evidence of their recognized rights.

What situation can implement Operation Barga and what was the proper appraisal of Operation Barga that should be discussed: The recording of *barga* provided the share-cropper with legal security of tenure, but he still gets affected by the poor living conditions and sometimes was compelled to sell their *patta*. Measures were taken to stop this trend. The crop share norm seems to be setting for 75.25 with the *bargadar* providing the bulk of the inputs into farming.⁷⁰ The structure of tenancy was reorganized.

It must be pointed out that North Bengal has yet to fulfil the message contained in the Tebhaga, Naxalbari movement and in the programme of the *Krishak Sabha* of the Communist Parties i.e. land to the tiller.⁷¹ Of course, while the expectations are there it was

realized that those achievements were not possible in the face of uneven developments. The records of land transfer of the registration department for the 20th century clearly show that landed small land marginal peasants lost their lands to the landlord, moneylender due to foreclosure of mortgage for real or fictitious loans taken in the remote past. The Settlement Reports of the district of Dinajpur clearly report this downward mobility of the small peasant reverted as *bargadars* in their own holdings.⁷²

On the other hand, Operation Barga not only restricted the rural, social and agrarian scenario of Malda. The population of Malda was distinctively agricultural. Like any other agrarian society, in Malda too, it was the control of land that was the crucial determination in locating political power. In the land tenure system of Malda, Asok Mitra has shown that there were three intermediaries between the *zamindar* and actual cultivator.⁷³

The society of Malda was composed of numerous and diverse social groups which belonged to different ethnic, linguistic and culture groups, to various creeds and religious communities. The district in fact represented a prototype of colonized economy and society.⁷⁴ For the formation of society Hindus, Muslims and tribals especially *Santhals* played an important role. In the pre-independence period tribal people were the most susceptible who was exploited by the land lords. But after the abolition of *zamindari*, *jotdari* system and the implementation of Operation Barga rural society changed in many ways. Social status of the peasants, farmers, cultivators and tenants changed. Relations between *bargadars* and landlords were changed. Different socio-economic relations built up and created new dimension in the rural life of North Bengal. Actually, new social rural changing scenario flourished in Malda as well as entire North Bengal.

The major change in tenant relations involved the active recording or registration of share-croppers who had cultivated on the same piece of land for a number of years.⁷⁵ This registration with the development of land revenue gave them permanent and

inheritable rights to cultivate the land. Though this legal provision already existed, it had not been implemented properly. In the late 1970's, the government launched a serious drive to effectively implement the rights of the share-cropper. The tenancy rights of the *bargadar* were established by law.⁷⁶ In particular, now the onus of disproving a claim to *bargadari* rights was very clearly put on the land owners.

The objective was to provide security of tenure to the share-cropper so that, his/her livelihood is not threatened and second, he/she is encouraged to make permanent and more expensive improvements on land and adopt more modern technology. In addition, some recognized land-title was recognized to be a precondition for access to form agricultural credit. All this was obviously intended to increase the productive capacity of the land, which could then yield to stream of higher incomes for both the tenant as well as the landlord. Harekrishna Konar wrote that in Malda and West Dinajpur government officials should be careful about the rights of *bargadars*.⁷⁷ It should be noticed that *bargadar* should not be punished by the hands of *jotdar*.⁷⁸

Operation Barga was able to improve the previous situation of *raiyats*, tenants, cultivators, farmers and share-croppers. Operation Barga was the first major attempt to rectify past errors. By the Operation Barga *zamindar*, *jotdar's* domination over the *raiyats* came to an end. Leftist government announced that the eviction of *bargadar* should be stopped.⁷⁹ All Leftist political leaders, workers and *Kishan Sabha* played a significant role. They capitalized the then situation. Political activism played a major role in effectively implementing the programme. The success from district to district varied according to the strength of the political machinery.

In North Bengal, implementation of Operation Barga made a rapid change in the scenario of the rural society. In spite of the implementation of the Operation Barga, North Bengal's cultivated lands were transferred. As a result of which many peasants and

cultivators became landless. It was a burning problem. Moreover, post-independence North Bengal suffered large section immigration. Many people came from East Pakistan and were made their homeland in North Bengal. A section of people came after partition and after Bangladesh war i.e. 1971 many immigrants took shelter in North Bengal and most interesting is that migration still continues. When any crisis broke out, weak section of people came from Nepal and Bhutan. Due to Bongal Kheda movement in Assam many immigrants came from Assam. Tibetan immigrants also took shelter in North Bengal.⁸⁰

Actually frequent separatist and ethnic movement in the north-eastern provinces also increased the immigration crisis. These immigrants took shelter in Siliguri, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Coochbehar district. Apart from these a slow migration continued from 1947 onwards. When any crisis broke out in Bangladesh, people of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Pabna, Nator, Mahadevpur etc. especially took shelter in Malda and West Dinajpur. So the question rose that who are the real inhabitants of North Bengal? Some family came two hundred years ago; some one came 500 years ago. After partition those who came from East Pakistan there were 30% *Rajbanshi*, 20% tribals and the rest of the 50% caste Hindu.⁸¹ Most of the people came from East Pakistan i.e. Bangladesh. Rural society of North Bengal was changed by the coming of the immigrants and the abolition of the *zamindari* system.⁸² The historian's interest lies in trying to understand the emergence and the evolution of a society in a historical perspective, where the term society includes every aspect of a people's life. As a result of investigations the historian creates a picture of the society.⁸³

At the time of partition the total number of Hindu population in East Pakistan was at least 30%.⁸⁴ But now that number decreases day by day. Most of the immigrants took shelter in North Bengal and it is a historical fact. For this reason population increased rapidly in North Bengal. Following chart give us such information.

Table No: 1.17 (Ratio of Population in West Bengal as well as North Bengal from Census Report of 1951-1981)

Census	West Bengal	North Bengal
1951-61	32.80%	40.49%
1961-71	26.87%	33.01%
1971-81	23.17%	27.63%
Source: Census of India, 1991, West Bengal, Series-26		

In the social structure of North Bengal *zamindars*, *jotdars*, big marchants, owner of the tea garden constituted a large section of people. From mediaeval period to Operation Barga, North Bengal mainly dominated by the *zamindars* and *jotdars*.⁸⁵ They especially dominated in the socio-economic field of North Bengal. But after the implementation of Operation Barga North Bengal's rural story changed in many ways. The real credit of the Operation Barga lies in the generation of awakeningness in the *bargadars* to their rights and to free them of an ingrained fear, as a result of which they were presenting united resistance to the exploitation by the land owning classes.⁸⁶ Comparing the record of *bargadars* in the three districts of North Bengal in the old and the Operation Barga methods (1974-1982)

Table No: 1.18 Comparing the Record of Bargadar in the Three Districts (Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar) of North Bengal in the Old and the Operation Barga Methods 1974-1982

District	Year	Old Method	Operation Barga Method
Darjeeling	1971-77	5,899	x
	1978	x	1,943
	1979	360	380
	1980	640	725
	1981	457	x
	1982	640	98
			7,996
Jalpaiguri	1974-77	28,120	x
	1978	x	3,639
	1979	2,278	5,624
	1980	1,190	4,856
	1981	73	x
	1982	351	5,748
			32,012
Coochbehar	1974-77	21,063	x
	1978	6,683	6,702
	1979	2,504	10,055
	1980	3,058	3,637
	1981	3,668	155
	1982	3,668	x
			38,403
Source: Todarmal, <i>Land in West Bengal</i> , Anima Prakashani, Kolkata, 1990, p.392			

Several novels described the rural society of North Bengal after independence. We knew that Naxalite movement of North Bengal hardly influenced young people from the middle class. Samaresh Majumder shows the story of North Bengal and associated matters through the story of Animesh in '*Uttaradhikar*' and '*Kalbela*'.⁸⁷ In '*Kalbela*' it was seen that Animesh and a group of dissidents leave CPI (M) and seek a new way to fulfil their dreams. Moidul believed and boldly expressed the idea that the poor people's lives can be saved only if they can unite and seize food.⁸⁸ Animesh noticed that North Bengal changed in many ways. Middle class people and lower middle class families' rural structure changed.

Debesh Roy gives an account of socio-economic condition of North Bengal in his novel '*Teesta Parer Brittanto*'. He deals with sensitive issues like land settlement, movements etc. People from different economic strata like peasants, labourers and migrant people from former East Bengal, *jotdars*, *Rajbanshis* were related in many ways to these issues. '*Teesta Parer Brittanto*' also depicted the picture that in which way *Rajbanshi* society changed from the last quarter of 70's to the middle of the 80's.⁸⁹ From 1980 so called *Rajbanshi jote* and *Rajbanshi* standard culture broke down. Moreover, lack of middle class intelligentsia made the *Rajbanshi* more marginalized.

Actually, *Rajbanshis* (whether Hindu or Muslim) were deprived and many of them depended on land. It must be noted that Permanent Settlement introduced in Malda, Dinajpur, and Rangpur. But on the contrary, Duars, Darjeeling were non-regulated area.⁹⁰ British government was the owner of the land. *Jotdars* later got land from the British government. But after the implementation of Operation Barga *jotdars* became beggar.⁹¹ So different ethnic movement started. Jalpaiguri, Terai, Duars, Darjeeling, Coochbehar regions were swept by the ethnic movement of the *Rajbanshis*.

A turmoil that shook North Bengal particularly in the three hill Sub-divisions of the district of Darjeeling was the GNLF (Gorkha National Liberation Front) organized

Gorkhaland movement or a movement for a separate state of the Nepali speaking people.⁹² Later Subhas Ghising and Bimal Gurung added a new flavour in this movement. Though the GNLFF movement had no direct effort on *Rajbanshi* crisis but it influenced the ethnic *Rajbanshi* movement.⁹³ Later Uttarkhand, Utjas, Kamtapuri, Greater Coochbehar movement, KPP (Kamtapur peoples Party), KLO (Kamtapur Liberation Organisation), with the help of ULFA (United Liberation Front of Ahom) mainly swept in the northern part of North Bengal. A popular *Kamtapuri* slogan was-“*Marim marim kamtapuri karim*” (We will achieve Kamtapur, whether we live or die). Malda and West Dinajpur were also influenced by it. *Rajbanshis* formed *Kshatriya Samiti*. This Samiti dominated in Coochbehar, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri. After that their wings flourished in Malda and West Dinajpur also. *Kshatriya Samiti* was able to spread in the police stations of Gazole, Habibpur, and Bamongola of Malda.⁹⁴ *Rajbanshi* societies were united and spread their culture. A new formation of rural society emerged in the soil of North Bengal.

In respect of socio-cultural practices, the *Rajbanshis* had very little in contact with the local upper caste Hindus. The cultural distinction separated the *Rajbanshi* community from the upper caste Hindu society of North Bengal. The *Rajbanshis* occupied a low position in the caste hierarchy of Bengal. They were placed in the caste hierarchy along with the *Namasudras*, the *Pods* and the other *Antyaja* caste. Hunter wrote that in Malda the high caste Hindu treated the *Rajbanshis* contemptuously.⁹⁵

While the *Rajbanshi-Kshatriya* movement was making headway in the northern part of Bengal, the Malda and West Dinajpur did not lag behind. They quickly grasped the significance of this movement among to achieve a higher position for the *Rajbanshis* in the social hierarchy and responded to it enthusiastically.⁹⁶ Actually implementation of Operation Barga changed the structure of the rural society of North Bengal. Now the question is,

whether this change of rural society always accelerated in the right way. This answer can not be given in a single word.

Operation Barga in many cases gave protection to the *bargadars*. This system created an atmosphere to relief from *mahajani* system and secured the condition of the *bargadars*.⁹⁷ Government gave assurance about the right of land, hereditary right of *bargadars*, no illegal eviction of *bargadars* etc. Share-croppers got receipts about the sail of crops.⁹⁸ If cultivation enlisted as *bargadar* he/she would be able to get debt from the bank. All these attempts and methods created consciousness among the *bargadars*. P.K. Bhowmik wrote that in West Bengal, till 1994 about 9.12000 acres of agricultural land had been distributed to over two million of people, of these 55 % belonged to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprising 26 % of the population in the state.⁹⁹ Many share-croppers, cultivators strengthened their legs with the help of Operation Barga. *Barga* law strengthens the backbone of the cultivators.¹⁰⁰ By the implementation of Operation Barga 30 % people of the rural areas benefitted by this land reform programme, but it must be mentioned that Fazlul Haque during the time of Muslim League government (1937-40) and Floud Commission recommended tenancy rights of the peasants.¹⁰¹

In spite of these, Operation Barga was not free from criticism. The general criticism of Operation Barga so far has been that it was bound to create social tension and party mongering. Any radical measure for that matter was likely to offend vested interests and that was no reason to postpone good work. Party activity was obviously under party governments trying to implement their blueprints for agrarian reform and regeneration. More serious criticism comes from some trend- watchers who claim that market forces were already towards capitalist farming by wage labour. The small peasants were leasing out to big operators who took the land on *barga* and increased their operational holdings and in turn

employed them as agricultural labour on crop wages.¹⁰² In this way, Operation Barga was getting slackend.

Operation Barga deeply influenced the social life of the rural areas. The owner of the land who lost his cultivated land faced a serious problem about his profession or occupation in daily life. The person, who lost his occupation, faced a serious crisis. The new system strengthened the backbone of the *bargadars*.¹⁰³ Now the *bargadars* neglected the landlord. Landlords only got certain portion of crops from his land by the *bargadars*. But this partition of crops could not fulfil the needs of the landlords. These landless peasants were not the enemy of the state, society or the political parties. But due to less of land, they entered a life of crisis. But due to the *barga* system of government, many land owners could not arrange the marriage of their daughters. Previously who were just like farmers, the new system abolished everything. Later they became labourers. But why they faced such crisis, they did not know.

From the early 80's rural areas of North Bengal became a seat of tension and conflagrations. Many literate people left villages and took shelter in urban areas. Many middle class and lower middle class people tolerate the exploitation and atrocities of the regional level political leaders. Rural areas were under the domination of the illiterate class. At that time many leftist ideologist thought that poor people got everything. Many influential leftist village touts polluted the social life of the rural areas.¹⁰⁴ Actually *barga* law broke the backbone of the rural society. By the Operation Barga, State government wanted to distribute lands. Government always supported the landless people. But when the distribution began at that time political party leaders could not use it fruitfully in the regional level.¹⁰⁵ In many cases it was seen that vested land was again vested among the landless people due to political reason. One of the sad plights was that land politicalized time to time in the banner of political party.

After the implementation of Operation Barga, properties of *jotdars* distributed and divided among the poor peasants. Political cases were very few in number. MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971), COFEPOSA (Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 52 of 1974), DIR (Defence of India Rule, 1975-77) were implemented.¹⁰⁶ Especially MISA law was amended several times during national quelling political dissent. At that time several general cases started in North Bengal about the right of land and illegal vest. In 1968-69 a case started in the Gutin *mauza* of Balurghat police station. Political party CPM and their political workers Jamini Majumder and Paresh Nath vested the lands of Gutin *mauza* but in reality the land was recorded in the name of *adhiar* Mahananda Barman and Pacha Gyan. At this time owner of land Satyendra Nath Ghosh filed a case in the District Court of West Dinajpur and the case is filed in three Section of the Act¹⁰⁷ i) Share-cropper cultivation- crops not given to the land owner, ii) storage case- crops to be sold and the realized money to be kept under the share-cropper Board of the block. When the case is solved decision will be taken to equally distribute the amount, iii) the case had been filed due to non-submission of crops two years consecutively. At last the case was solved through JLRO. The owners of the land got their land.

In 1970 another case was filed in West Dinajpur District Court and the case was that “Actually government vested land wrongly. Owner of the land was Gopinath Shil. A case was filed between Gopinath Shil versus Susen Mardi. The land was situated at the Mulahati *mauza* of West Dinajpur (Present Dakshin Dinajpur) under the Hili police station. In this case Gopinath Shil won the case both in the District Court and the High Court also. But the question is that the land is not yet evacuated. Tribal people of this locality built houses. Officially the case is not yet solved. In 1977-78 the case started in the Dasarai *mauza* of Balurghat police station against illegal vest of land. This case extended up to Supreme Court. Again the cases started about vested land. In reality government actually defeated in this

case.”¹⁰⁸ From the sources of Malda BLRO office, several incidents were known about landlord and peasant crisis.¹⁰⁹

The experience under Operation Barga seems to be contrary. In 1980 genuine needy *bargadars* registered as 9,45,157.¹¹⁰ It has been argued on the basis of National Sample Survey (NSS) data on land holding of 1971-72 that no more than 17 lakhs have been attested by household survey to have leased in land under any term and therefore, the government estimate of 30/35 lakhs of *bargadars* is an over-estimated based on old records of the fifties.¹¹¹ But house holds may have more than one *bargadar* and it is patently clear from recent operation how difficult it is for the *bargadar* to come out and record his right despite government protection.

The *bargadars* sometimes lease lands from the land owner. Fresh lease implies free contract which was conspicuous by its absence in West Bengal. There may have been the other extreme of pauperization by which a large number of poor landless peasants may have been created. The rich land owner may have increased their operational holding under land ceiling by leasing in *barga* and from small owners reducing them to landless wage-labour. It must be noted that government will have to be careful in its preparation of record of rights. Above all having secured the rights of *bargadars*, it will have to pay more attention to the swelling number of landless labourers who seem to be the poorest rural masses.

It was to be noted that Operation Barga was not the permanent solution. It was difficult to maintain that share-cropping leads to economic development; however the government may try to give them absolute security. It can only assure the greatest good of the greatest number. Actually it was essentially a premium on subsistence. The government could not defend cases where genuine self-cultivation with wage labour was the trend. In 1975, Section 17(I) D of the Act was modified which rules out self-cultivation with hired labour by evicting the *bargadars* could not be justifiably defended.¹¹² The groundswell of landless

labour who can get job only for few days in a year on an average can not be provided with any kind of land.¹¹³ The government must find out ways and means to drain off this huge man-power surplus. Operation Barga and food for work can not at best be stop-gaps unless a veiled expropriation takes place by land grabbing under Operation Barga.

'Langal jar jami tar' (He one who owns the plough, is the owner of the land) this slogan could not implement by the Operation Barga.¹¹⁴ It must be noted that most of the *bargadars* could not hold and maintain *'barga land'*. Due to financial crisis most of them sold their lands.¹¹⁵ Hence, Leftist government's Operation Barga was challenged by various questions. In the rural areas of North Bengal it was seen that poor *bargadars* used Operation Barga as an arms against the influential land owners and *mahajans*.¹¹⁶ Actually Operation Barga changed the structure of the rural society.¹¹⁷ Many landless got land but now no political party take land as a serious issue because it is actually out of their hand. On the context of Malda and West Dinajpur many rural people transfer their land for the assurance of service. But in reality these rural people did not get service. On the other hand they lost their work or job. These large sections of rural people turned into an unemployed section. Later these peoples left their homeland for searching of works. In Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri three lakhs people lost their land and many of them were settled in Maharashtra, Gujrat, Punjab and Hariyana brick field.¹¹⁸ In reality, Operation Barga could not satisfy the common people.

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CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is clear that the transformation of the rural society of North Bengal from the Permanent Settlement to the Operation Barga (1793-1978) bears distinct features. North Bengal's geo-political atlas is representing a different shape. In this geo-political atlas there are both hills and plain lands. North Bengal's northern and southern part represents two different cultures and land structures. In the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period North Bengal witnessed different nature and pattern of the transformation of the rural society. Agitations of the peasants and toiling masses of Sannyasi, Fakir, Santhal, Indigo revolt, the Tebhaga, Naxalbari, Adhjar, Tolabati and Share-croppers' movement opened a new chapter of uprisings. Apart from this ethnic violence of the *Rajbanshi, Deshi, Polia* about the right of land draw a picture of changing rural society.

Especially Malda and West Dinajpur are inhabited by the several ethnic and religious communities such as *Santhal, Orawn, Munda, Mahali, Rajbanshi, Deshi, Polia* and Muslims. Other parts of North Bengal comprised *Rava, Metch, Limbo, Leptcha, Koch, Toto, Bhutia, Gorkha* and other *Adivashi* classes. *Zamindar* families' role was also very important about the transformation of the rural society of North Bengal. Malda's Chowdhury family and Raj Estate of Chanchol played a significant role. One thing must have to mention that before the abolition of the Zamindari Act of 1953, Chanchal Raj Estate was the largest Estate of Malda. On the other hand, in West Dinajpur Ghosh Estate, Manohali Estate, Bahin Estate, Churaman Estate and others played a crucial role in the colonial and post-colonial rule. After the abolition of *zamindari* system and the rise of intermediaries created a new turn about the relations of *zamindar*, middleman and share-croppers.

The society of Malda and West Dinajpur were comprised of numerous and different diverse social groups. The population belonged to different ethnic, linguistic groups,

various sects, creeds and different religious communities. *Rajbanshi, Deshi, Polia* and tribals like *Santhal, Orawn, Munda, Mahali* and Muslims constituted a class of major population. Both the districts in fact represented a prototype of colonized economy and society.

The changes introduced by the Permanent Settlement affected the position of the tenants, and cultivators. The cultivators and *raiya*s of Malda and West Dinajpur were differentiated more or less. Differentiations among the peasantry with the predominance of the small peasants were thus focused in the agrarian structure in the 19th and late 20th century. During the period of our study, one thing is very clear that the tribal peoples were most susceptible to pressure by the landlords. It compelled the share-croppers towards indebtedness. Apart from these common peasants lost their lands by the hands of *mahajans, jotdars* and *zamindars*.

Actually tribals and *Rajbanshis* were the most depressed class in the case of land. Several movements took place in Malda, West Dinajpur as well as North Bengal also. During the land movement, Communist Party (CPI, CPI-ML), *Krishak Sabha* always supported the common people especially peasants and cultivators. It should be mentioned that Congress politics also flows anti-British setting. But radical Congress gave birth to the emergence of 'left' trend.

Several land movements took place throughout North Bengal. The Satyam Sibam movement of Malda district was a striking case of self-reforms among *Santhals*. But with the passing of time this religious movement turned into political character. Similarly, Chatrisha, Prajar Gach Kata, Chowkidari, Chaddo Mauza, Tolabati, Adhiar, Dharmagola and Hattola movements were organized under the banner of leftism. The successful agitation against the arbitrary toll collection provided great impetus to the peasant movement. A broad peasant unity flourished from Tebhaga to Naxalbari. Though Tebhaga and Naxalbari were

represented two different views of peasant movement. By the hands of these two movements, rural society of North Bengal was gradually started changing with the passing of time.

As a result of the colonial land revenue system Rent Act; 1859, Chowkidari Act; 1871 and Tenancy Act; 1885 were passed. A new transformation found between the *Raj* and the rural society. Formation of the District Board and the three-tier Panchayat system created a new land mark about the transformation of the rural society. Apart from this participation of women in politics took a new turn in the rural society of North Bengal. It changed the socio-economic and political life of North Bengal. Implementation of Panchayat system and women's participation empowered the women of North Bengal and took a revolutionary change in the life of the rural society. Moreover participation of tribal women and others in the Panchayat election has changed the socio-economic scenario of North Bengal.

From Permanent Settlement to Operation Barga land changed its character and scope. Relations between *zamindar-jotdar-raiyats* have also been changed with the passing of time. After independence land turmoil continues. To abolish the *zamindari* system, the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953 was passed. One thing must have to mention that the Congress government made no effort to distribute the land in West Bengal till 1967. Unfortunately after the fall of Second United Front Government the *zamindar* and *jotdar* with the active support of the Congress government tried to oust the poor agricultural labourers and peasants from the land. Some times land question became turned into communal issue. In most of the cases it was found in North Bengal that the owner of the land was Hindu but the peasant was Muslim. It created lot of problem in undivided Bengal and North Bengal also. The Muslim League activists were not sitting on the provocation to intensify communalism to serve their vested interests. In 1977 Left Front government came to power and implemented the Operation Barga which changed the land politics. Land is actually treated by the hands of the party members.

The basic right to land in Malda and West Dinajpur and for that matter, in most parts of North Bengal was essentially an individual right. The perception of individual interest as collective interest was not easy to achieve. The peasant, small holders of North Bengal lived under identical yet very fragmented conditions of economic existence. Especially implementation of Operation Barga changed the entire scenario of North Bengal. By the implementation of Operation Barga a large section of peasants were finally benefitted. But this system was not free from criticism. Many *bargadars* did not hold their *barga* lands due to financial problem. They could not maintain their lands. For these reason peasants, tenants and cultivators were compelled to sell their lands. This was the sad plight of Operation Barga. Over and again, it can be said that the introduction of Permanent Settlement and the implementation of Operation Barga (1793-1978) has been changed the profile of transformation of the rural society of North Bengal.