

Preface

The present study is an analysis of the Land Revenue, Land – Tenure systems and Agrarian Relations in the Jalpaiguri District from Khasmahal to Operation Barga which has been analyzed from historical point of view at the micro – level. During this period, the land – tenure systems and agrarian relations have been changed in different times by different rulers such as under the reign of Koch rulers, the Bhutani rulers, the British rulers and ultimately the post – independent governments. The present researcher shows the changing agrarian economy and its impact on the different types of tenants of the district, the reaction of the peasants particularly the sharecroppers, small jotdars and agricultural labourers.

Land is one of the best resources in the world without which the existence of men is meaningless. The relation between men and land is like a mother and her son. So the present researcher chooses the field and he tries his best to explore the history of land related people who are the best friend of the society in devoting their life to grow food, the most important elements for surviving the human life. In spite of their dedication, hard working and self – denying contributions to the society they are the most victimized, oppressed and neglected people in the world through the ages. How these tenants became oppressive during the period of present study, are shown in a new light and analytical point of view.

Jalpaiguri District witnesses a distinctive feature in many respects of society, economy, culture and demographic pattern unlike other parts of Bengal districts. Many ups and downs have taken place, many parts of the district such as Boda, Patgram, Pachagar, Debiganj and Tetulia had to cede to Pakistan at the time of partition of India. From anthropological point of view different types of tribal people have been living in this district, other than

tribals, people of different castes and religion also living here which makes a mixed society. 'Unity in Diversity' is one of the characteristics of this district. But recently, a socio – political tension and militant activities are seen in the soil of North Bengal, particularly the district of Jalpaiguri. One of the most vital causes of these tensions and activities lies in the land – related issues which is shown in the present study.

In Jalpaiguri, unlike other parts of Bengal, British Government introduced two separate systems in the field of administration and land revenue. Regarding land revenue and agrarian economy, British government introduced permanent settlement in Baikunthapur pargana and chaklas of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhadra situated to the west of Tista river, on the other hand the Western Duars situated to the east of Tista was declared as a non – regulated area where no permanent settlement was introduced, British Government himself was the proprietor of land. Here lands were granted by lease or agreement to the jotdars and the proprietors of the tea – gardens.

Regarding agrarian relations, the district particularly the western Duars witness a distinctive character unlike other parts of Bengal. Here, the relation between sharecroppers and their giris (jotdars and intermediaries) was co – operative more or less except few instances of indigenous jotdars and absentee jotdars coming from other professions were more oppressors than the indigenous jotdars. The relation between sharecroppers and their giris among the Rajbanshi community was paternal. The jotdars or giris treated their sharecroppers or projas like a sons or daughters, even at the time of marriage of the projas, the jotdars dropped water on the head of bride and bridegrooms called "Panichhita" and became parents of the bride and bridegrooms and performed all the duties from both sides as parents and their son until death.

In the post – colonial period the work of land Reforms programmes was started since 1950's, but practically the programmes was started during the period of United Front Government in 1967 and 1969, as well as left Front Government since 1977. Land Reforms programmes in the district as elsewhere in west Bengal became a boon to the landless people and sharecroppers, because they had their right on land, on the other hand, many indigenous jotdars or intermediaries, particularly of the Rajbanshi community had lost their land many of them become destitute for their simplicity, illiterity, and having no experience of other professions like southern and eastern parts of Bengal as a result of which many discontents and grievances have been growing up in the mind of Rajbanshi people which led to socio – political tensions in the district as elsewhere in North Bengal.

The present study has shown different types of land problems in the district and some parts of boundary areas of the district such as lease land in Alipurduar subdivision, adverse land problem of kshudipara and surroundings of Manikganj as well as the problem of enclaves or Chhitmahals. In spite of having many positive sides of land Reforms programmes, this land related problems have not yet been solved for the negligence of central Government and State Government since the partition of India in 1947.

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In spite of my best trying and hardworking there may be errors. I am completely responsible for that.