CONCLUSION

The emerging land relations in Western U.P. after the abolition of zamindari system can be examined in the light of an understanding of the land system on the eve of zamindari abolition. In the North-Western Provinces (U.P.), during the British period, land settlements were made with the persons having superior rights in land and the persons with lesser rights were ignored. Only later on were inferior rights recognized and the distribution of ownership rights took place resulting in a long chain of sub-infeudation. But still the dominant form of land tenure was rent receiving individual ownership or land-lordism.

On the eve of zamindari abolition in U.P. although all land was owned or held by zamindars the total area under their direct cultivation was small. This meant that most of the land was tenant-operated, largest occupation was that by hereditary tenants.

The land was unequally distributed even among the zamindars. In the eastern districts a little more than one percent (1.20%) of the zamindars owned nearly half of the village area but in the Western districts this inequality was relatively less because here land settlements were mostly made with small and medium sized zamindars under Bhaiachara
land tenures. Inequality was found even in the distribution of Sir and Khudkasht land among the zamindars. Only 3 percent of the total zamindars had Sir and Khudkasht land of 25 acres or more. The area under Sir and Khudkasht increased even faster in the years immediately preceding the zamindari abolition, as the zamindars tried to retain as much land as possible when reforms were actually enacted.

Changes in the economic position of agricultural labour households constitute one of the most important aspects of land relations. There was a marked increase in the number of agricultural labourers during the British period and the U.P. Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act failed to check this process. Data on Western U.P. support the contention that there is a direct correlation between the ownership of land and the caste system. Generally upper castes are the main landholding castes and the lowest castes provide agricultural labour, this is shown in tables 5.12 and 5.14.

The Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act (1951) replaced the multiplicity of tenures by three types, the bhumidhar, the sirdar and the asami. The Act abolished the institution of absentee landlordism but a new class of landowners - the bhumidhars - emerged in U.P. The former zamindars retained a large part of the land they earlier owned for the purpose of self-cultivation. The occupancy tenants in some cases benefited as the lands they
had cultivated earlier became theirs by law. The landless workers did not benefit by zamindari abolition as they were outside its ambit, being neither owners of land nor taking it on rent. The essential weakness of the scheme of land reforms was that it did not envisage a programme which involved any redistribution of land amongst the poorest and the weakest sections in the agrarian sector. After the abolition of zamindari in U.P. the distribution of ownership holdings became less inequitable than it was earlier. But still marked inequalities in the distribution of land holdings persisted. One of the weaknesses of the Land Reforms Act was that it failed to check the practice of sub-tenancy cultivation through the practice of share-cropping. This resulted in the continued exploitation of small and marginal peasants and landless labourers. In West U.P. there was a decline in the proportion of land under share-cropping between 1953-54 and 1961-62 but this decline occurred much more as a result of resumption of land by landlords for the purpose of self-cultivation, than the acquisition of ownership rights by the former tenants. Due to the Green Revolution there has been a shift in the pattern of share-cropping in Western U.P. The rich peasants often lease-in land from the marginal and small peasants. But since the marginal and small peasants have a low bargaining capacity
due to their weak economic position they are being exploited through these arrangements.

The process of consolidation of holdings began in late 1950s and was completed by 1985 in Western Uttar Pradesh. During the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) alone 2.7 lakh hectares of land were brought under consolidation in the region. The consolidation proceeding by its very nature helped those owning larger areas in scattered fields and so improved the position of the richer farmers. But marginal and small farmers with single small plots obtained no benefits. In practice they often received, in exchange for their holdings, plots with inferior soil. Since consolidation did not otherwise basically affect the pattern of land relationship, it has not been discussed, at length, in this thesis.

Differences in the degree of prosperity of different agrarian classes are no longer related to the size of landholding alone, but also to the type of crop a farmer is able to grow on his land. Hence the study of the cropping pattern of different agricultural classes is of great significance. A detailed study of the changes in the cropping pattern in the region shows a marked increase in the extent of commercialisation as such as well as a shift in favour of commercial crops. Between 1950-53 to 1976-79
area under wheat (the major crop of west U.P.) as percent of the total cropped area increased by 11.3% while the increase was of the order of 2.6% and 2.3% in the case of sugarcane and oilseeds. The percentage of area under foodgrains declined by 6.5% while the area under other crops increased by the same percentage (Table 3.3).

It seems that generally poorer cultivators and sharecroppers can not afford to grow commercial crops and have to be content with inferior grains such as maize and jowar, since commercial crops require more water and fertilisers which they cannot afford. Therefore the shift in the cropping pattern has generally taken place in the case of farmers having larger landholdings; small and marginal farmers have not benefited from this shift.

The extent of shift in the cropping pattern from foodgrains to commercial crops was moderate till 1965-66 and the cropping pattern remained more or less stable. The introduction of high yielding variety seeds disrupted this stability. Sharp shifts have taken place in favour of wheat.

In the absence of detailed data on the cropping pattern of different agricultural classes in our region we are not able to point out the impact of shifts in cropping pattern on different agrarian classes, though this aspect is of great significance. Most studies have pointed out that the shift
from food crops to commercial crops is more marked in the case of lands owned by richer peasants (chapter 3).

Irrigation obviously plays an important role in the agricultural development through its effects on the pattern and efficiency of land use. The adoption of modern inputs like HYV seeds and chemical fertilisers too is intimately related to the availability of assured and timely water supply.

In Western U.P. canals were the major source of irrigation in pre-Independence period. But canal irrigation has been relegated to a secondary position in our period due to rapid expansion of tubewell irrigation. It was the non-availability of canal water at critical times and its inadequate quantity that seriously affected cultivation of HYV crops, this resulted in greater use of tubewell irrigation. In 1976-77 about 63.7% of total number of tubewells in U.P. were located in Western U.P. which shows a high degree of concentration. Tubewells provide controllable and dependable supply of water round the year, therefore, tubewell irrigation has become not only the principal mode of groundwater irrigation but also the single most important source of irrigation in Western U.P. Per cent of net irrigated area under tubewells in the region increased from 45.6% to 52.3% during 1953-56 - 1975-78. Our study shows that larger farmers have been reaping a greater advantage
from modern irrigation technology compared to small and marginal farmers due to its higher cost. On account of a relatively larger investment required for it irrigation by tubewells has brought into play the role of capital and finance in a big way, and it has become a major factor in increasing the income disparity between different classes of agriculturists through its multiplier effect on the economy of a farming unit.

The scope for any further expansion of cultivated land had reached saturation point in Uttar Pradesh by 1971. Therefore, to feed the growing population, intensification has become one of the most important policy tenets of the Govt. The use of chemical fertilisers, of high yielding variety seeds and mechanisation are the major aspects we have examined.

There has been a significant increase in the use of chemical fertilisers in the post-Green Revolution period, in Western U.P. Uttar Pradesh ranks third among Indian states in per hectare consumption of chemical fertilisers. Fertiliser consumption per hectare of cropped area in Western U.P. is above the state's overall average. Since both fertiliser and irrigation involve significant costs and hence financial resources, small farmers were found to be unable to take advantage of these inputs to the extent big
farmers did. This has increased the disparity between the rich and the small farmer even further.

Since socio-political power structure in rural India is biased in favour of the big farmers, they have a greater access to government bodies and other institutions. The large cash requirements for purchase of modern inputs, and the risk implicit in the adoption of new technology place the larger farmers at an advantage over smaller holders, and thus further accentuates the degree of disparity between different classes within a region.

Our study shows that the high yielding variety technology had a positive impact on the demand for labour in our region. Irrigation facilities led to a shift in the cropping pattern towards more labour intensive crops and to fertiliser responsive new varieties, which also required more water. This, in turn, increased the work associated with improved agricultural practices like transplanting and application of inputs (water, fertilisers and pesticides). All these, as well as weeding, necessitated by the increased use of fertiliser required more labour. Moreover, since the use of new seeds resulted in higher yields, more labour was required for harvesting and processing the crop. A shorter maturity period for crops grown with HYV seeds permitted the planting of two or even three crops a year, which increased the overall use of labour per unit of cultivated area.
But on the other hand a high degree of mechanisation resulted in displacement of labour. We find that mechanisation of agriculture has occurred on a larger scale in the districts of Western U.P. compared to other regions of the state. Consequently the tendency of displacement of human labour engaged in agricultural operations (such as ploughing, threshing and irrigation) is greater in Western U.P.

Study of the economic condition of agricultural labourers constitutes one of the most important aspects of land relations. Agricultural labourers are economically worst exploited and socially most oppressed section of the agrarian population. In addition to economic exploitation, they are socially discriminated against because a big section of agricultural workers belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

It was observed from the data available for wages for agricultural labourers (Table 5.4) that wage rates in Western U.P. were not lower than the minimum wage rates fixed by the state government. But the wage rates failed to move with the cost of living index. The increase in the wage rates was far below the rate of increase of working class consumer index. The fast rising consumer price index for agricultural labourers made minimum wage fixation less meaningful. But the
condition of the agricultural labourers of Western U.P. was found to be somewhat better than that of Eastern U.P. This was reflected in the higher wage rates in Western U.P. compared to Eastern U.P. One of the reasons for lack of increase of real wages of agricultural labourers was the absence of any trade union organisation of agricultural labourers in our area. Also, while the economic and social position of agricultural labour, in general, was found to be miserable, that of women agricultural workers was even more so. Employers seemed to have a bias in favour of employing men as against employing women in operations like ploughing and watering. This has resulted in fewer days of employment in a year for women labourers compared to men (Table 5.9).

When a large part of debt is incurred for household consumption, it is an indication of acute poverty. In U.P. 87.5 per cent of the total debt was incurred for consumption purposes by the agricultural labour households during 1950-51; the corresponding figure went down to 45 per cent in 1974-75. The percentage of indebted agricultural households to total agricultural households increased from 22 per cent in 1950-51 to 69 per cent in 1974-75.

During the 1950s the landless labourers were faced with the problem of unemployment but during the 1960s the introduction of the new technology created additional
employment opportunities though not at an adequate pace. The increase in irrigated area and the consequent changes in cropping intensity and cropping pattern have been among the most important forces working on the side of demand for labour. The introduction of HYV seeds has also exerted a positive effect on labour demand in agriculture in the region.

The ceiling legislation which began to be put on the statute book beginning with the Act of 1960, was designed to relieve the pressure on agricultural labourers by providing them with land to till on their own (the preceding Bhooman Movement had made almost no impact on land re-distribution in our region). Stricter legislation on agricultural ceiling was passed in 1975. The area actually taken over by Govt. by 1980 in Western districts of U.P. was rather modest in size, ranging from 1161 acres in Dehra Dun to 6590 acres in Muzaffarnagar district. The land actually distributed among agricultural labourers and small farmers was still smaller, ranging from 103 acres in Dehra Dun to 4322 acres in Saharanpur. Apparently, resistance by land owners in west U.P. was much greater than by their peers in Central and Southern U.P. where both the acquisition and distribution of land were on a larger scale. The area under wastelands available for reclamation by agricultural labourers in Western U.P. was also by no means large (Table 6.3).
Our study shows that the distribution of land ownership has become slightly less inequitable, at least on surface, between the period 1953-54 - 1971-72, as a result of the process of splitting up of holdings due to rising demographic pressure as well as the efforts of bigger land owners to divide their holdings among family members to bypass the land ceiling legislation. The ceiling legislation was not implemented very effectively and hence land holdings of rich peasants (bumidhars) were not reduced to any significant degree in U.P. This would, probably, be more true in case of Western U.P. where the hold of rich peasants has been much greater. The implementation of the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act, 1951, and the Land Ceiling Act, 1960, have not been sufficiently effective so as to improve the economic position of scheduled castes in our region to any marked extent.

Prices have an important bearing on agrarian structure. Our study reveals that prices of major commercial crops in the districts of Western U.P. increased at a faster rate compared to the prices of foodgrains with the exception of wheat. This has important implications as far as the economic conditions of different agrarian classes are concerned. Rich farmers are the main producers of commercial crops. Therefore this class gains from price rise in two ways: as a monopolisers of commodity surplus and from the fall in the
real wages of hired labour. The relative position of agricultural labourers deteriorates because they are the net buyers of agricultural produce. Thus price rise further accentuates the income disparity between rich farmers on the one hand and small farmers and agricultural labourers on the other.

In the realm of agricultural credit governmental agencies have acquired a greater importance. Co-operative Societies and Commercial banks have been established with a view to strengthen the economic position of the lower strata of peasantry; but they have been largely unsuccessful in fulfilling their objective. The policy to grant loans against security in the shape of fixed assets is pro-rich. This has further widened the resource gap between the large and the small farmers in Western U.P. As a result the majority of the small farmers still depend on non-institutional sources of finance for their investment need and are still forced to pay exorbitant rates of interest.

These detailed findings lead us to some broad conclusions. The agrarian relations in 1981 are vastly different from those in 1951. Self-cultivated ownership holdings are today the dominant form instead of rent receiving land-lord holdings. But there has been no egalitarian redistribution of land, rather, the original
unevenness of 'operational units' was reproduced and solidified under the Consolidation of Holdings programme. This not only preserved rich peasant farming, but helped to enlarge it. Former landlords operating Sir and Khudkasht and prosperous rich peasants have tended to grow into capitalist farmers, with HYV seeds, private tube-well irrigation, mechanisation and growing markets for agricultural produce. Owing to cheapness of labour, and the heavier labour input in small farms, this process is still not very advanced, but is certainly identifiable. Under these transformed relationships agricultural production has certainly increased and Western U.P. has made its contribution to the country's self-sufficiency in food. Production of commercial crops has increased even more. But the benefits of these changes have not proportionately reached the lower strata of the rural population, the landless labourers and poorer peasants. The land-ceiling legislation of 1961 and later years has not given them noticeable relief since the area of land acquired and redistributed under it in Western U.P. has not been very large: it has not affected the basic uneven, and therefore, inequitous pattern of land-ownership.