Chapter Seven

Our attempt to test some major conjectures and hypotheses put forward in the literature on tenurial conditions in developing countries has led to corroboration in the majority of cases. Some of the issues for which empirical support was found include - (a) relation between incidence of sharecropping and (i) the level of technical progress, (ii) the skewness of income distribution and (iii) the availability of institutional credit, (b) role of risk sharing in tenurial arrangements, (c) the comparative efficiency (productivity) of fixed rent farmers and share tenants and (d) the association between costsharing, croppsharing and provision of productive loans by landlords. It is hoped that in the process of doing specific statistical tests we have succeeded in presenting before the reader a fairly accurate picture of the tenurial scene prevailing in our study area comprising more than one hundred villages spread over six districts of West Bengal. Most of these villages have not been subjected to a study of this nature before.

The shortcomings of the work are too obvious to require elaboration. There is no doubt that the quality of the data
could have been better, but, owning full responsibility for this, the reader is only reminded that the entire project was undertaken and carried out singlehandedly under rather severe resource constraints.

The interrelationship between tenurial conditions and the timely supply or availability of various inputs deserves a more detailed treatment. The extent of tenancy in an area is not independent of the extent of unemployment facing the landless households. This was not adequately reflected in our analysis. At our level of enquiry no evidence was found for strong interlinkage of different markets or activities. Without more careful scrutiny no definite conclusion, however, should be drawn. Our approach to technological change in rural areas (Chapter-three) is a very sketchy treatment of a very complex phenomenon, as should be clear to even the most casual reader. We have plans to explore this issue in more depth in subsequent work. The same remark applies to the problem of capital market imperfection in all its complex manifestations. Last but not the least, we are fully aware of the pitfalls of facile use of statistical techniques in samples that are not truly random ("the insignificance of significance tests" - as Ashoke Rudra calls it). Our only apology (and consolation) is that we share
this guilt with a host of distinguished workers in the field. The awareness keeps us from claiming too much for our statistical results.

The serious flaws notwithstanding, our study, we hope, has succeeded in throwing some light (however feeble) on an important area of the contemporary agricultural scene in West Bengal.