

More recent empirical studies, however, raised serious questions as to the applicability of Bhaduri's model to sharecropping arrangements in general, or even to the contemporary conditions in northern India itself. One of the assumptions on which the above analysis rests is the double role played by the landlord as a supplier of both land and credit. Mabro and Griffin (1979) -- and to a certain extent Bhaduri himself -- point out that this is a feature of agrarian relations peculiar to West Bengal, but not to most Asian agriculture. Furthermore, due to state intervention and land reform in the last two decades, the credit market has become much more varied and accessible to the peasant (Mabro and Griffin, 1979:90).

The same issue was investigated in a survey covering 334 villages in northern and eastern India (including West Bengal) where the authors find no evidence of usury, or even money lending, being the main source of income for landlords (Bardhan and Rudra, 1980:291). The authors reject also the equation of sharetenancy with 'semi-feudalism,' in both its European and Japanese varieties, on the basis of two crucial variables: one is the ability, in their contention, of the sharetenant to freely change his landlord from one agricultural season to another (the rate of 'lease-bondage,' so to speak, did not exceed 8% of the cases in the most extreme example -- that prevailing in Uttar Prandash -- ibid.:290). The second condition of semi-feudalism rejected was the amount of "unpaid and obligatory services (provided) by the tenant to the landlord." Bardhan and Rudra found that in the majority of cases examined the tenants provided no labour services to their landlords whatsoever, while in those cases where such services were rendered, only a portion (between 2% in Orissa and 23% in the state of Uttar Pradash) of unpaid or underpaid services to the landlord existed (ibid.:291).