

**POST-INDEPENDENCE AGRARIAN RELATIONS IN BIHAR  
AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIAL UNREST**

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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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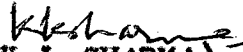
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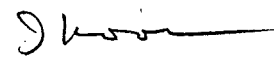
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**C E R T I F I C A T E**

This Dissertation entitled "Post-Independence Agrarian Relations in Bihar and Its Impact on Social Unrest", by Shri Phul Chand Singh for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this Dissertation should be placed before the examiners for their consideration for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

  
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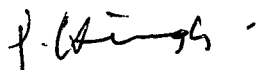
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PHUL CHAND SINGH



## INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that 'Agrarian Relations' and 'social movements' are comparatively the new fields of sociological investigations, they have drawn the attention of a large number of foreign and Indian students of sociology. The present work is an attempt to understand agrarian structure in India in general and particularly in Bihar; and its relationship with social unrest and agrarian movements.

However, at the outset it should be pointed out that in dealing with these problems both the Marxist and non-Marxist approaches will be examined. The non-Marxist framework has been applied to the understanding of caste system. But caste is only one side of Indian social reality. The other view is that social inequality in India can be better understood through class structure i.e. in terms of ownership, use and control of land. Marxist approach becomes relevant for the present study largely from this point of view.

The present study has been divided into four chapters - dealing with different dimensions of our problem. The first chapter entitled "Basic Issues in Agrarian Relations" deals with certain controversial but fundamental aspects of agrarian relations in India. These are controversial in the sense that various social scientists have

interpreted them in different ways. The first major issue is the 'mode of production' in Indian agriculture. It is well known that the classical Marxist description of the Asiatic mode of production has been, more or less, discarded by both Marxist and non-Marxist students of Indian history and society. The feudal character of the ancient Indian society, on the other hand, has been a moot point. Similarly mode of production of the colonial period has been interpreted differently. However, we will refer to the debate on the mode of production in India's agriculture.

Secondly, we will also try to understand the problem of "differentiation of peasantry" both textually and contextually in this chapter. Our main aim would be understanding of the conceptualization regarding peasantry and its application to the Indian society. Distinction can be made between the peasants in rural communities and the tribal ones. Peasants can be differentiated from urban-industrial workers as well.

Lastly, an attempt will be made to analyse the causes, nature, types and the consequences of various agrarian movements and reforms in India. A brief discussion of agrarian movements will also refer to (1) the role of various agrarian classes in Revolution, specially

the 'middle peasant thesis', and (2) the question why India could not witness a nation-wide peasant revolution? The impact of agrarian reforms such as 'Bhoodan and Gramdan Movements', and 'Green Revolution' will be evaluated in detail.

The chapter which follows immediately, has been entitled as "Social Structure and Agrarian Stratification in India". The main objective of this chapter is to explain the nature of social structure and pattern of agrarian stratification. The main emphasis is on understanding of the pattern of land distribution among different castes and its effect on power structure. The traditional Indian society refers to that period of Indian history which lasted before the impact of 'Pax Britannica' or before colonialism, and especially before the forces of industrialization came into effect. In the modern or contemporary Indian society our main concern would be to show the changes brought about in the relationship between caste, land and power, and the direction of this change. However, for practical purposes, this period has been sub-divided into colonial and post-colonial periods.

Furthermore, some space would also be given, in the same chapter, to the emerging patterns of agrarian class structure exclusively in terms of the ownership use and

control of land. The emerging pattern of class structure would be preceded by a brief history of the intermediaries to show how, in course of time, these classes came into being. The analysis of agrarian class structure would be made largely on the basis of the description of various social scientists based on their field studies, surveys, and interpretations of official data.

Lastly, the impact of the forces of green revolution on various agrarian classes would also be evaluated. This will be based largely on the findings of various researches, particularly in the areas of Punjab and Haryana. But it does not mean that other parts of India would be left out.

The third chapter is "A comparative study of agrarian situations" in which we have analysed agrarian situation in different states. Our analysis refers to the situation of post-1947 period. The selected states would be as follows: (1) Kerala and West Bengal, (2) Gujarat and Maharashtra, (3) The Punjab and Haryana, (4) Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and (5) Rajasthan.

Kerala and West Bengal together seem to be important for the present study not only because they represent the two main regions (South and North) of India but also for these states have been known for the frequent occurrence of

organised peasant movements. Gujarat and Maharashtra have geographical continuity and were part of the same formation about two decades ago. Punjab and Haryana also formed as parts of the former Punjab. Today, these two states are the heartland of the 'green revolution' in India. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar draw our attention for the fact that these states are numerically most preponderant in population, rich in natural resources, but are backward as compared to other states. A comparative analysis of these two states becomes relevant as majority of the cases of 'harijan atrocities', 'caste-conflicts', and 'caste-politics' have been reported from them. But it does not mean that caste as a factor does not play its role in the lives of the people of other parts of the country. However, even culturally these two states share certain similarities. The culture of eastern parts of U.P. is quite similar to that of Bihar. Rajasthan, on the other hand, would be taken alone precisely because of the reason that this is the state, according to Daniel Thorner, "which can claim the honour of having remained during the years before 1947 the least advanced area in India. The rank of greater and lesser landlords, led by Rajput princelings and jagirdars ruled ruthlessly over a relatively submissive jat tenantry."

The last chapter provides analysis of agrarian situation in Bihar. The main objective of this Chapter is to test certain postulates formulated in the first two chapters on the basis of the study of agrarian movements and reforms in Bihar. The study of the relationship between caste, land, <sup>and</sup> power in Bihar at various levels has been found useful. It will further help in understanding the changes in course of time, brought about by various socio-economic and political forces. An evaluation of land reforms and other measures is undertaken for understanding of relationship between ownership of land and agrarian tensions arising out of it. Finally, analysis of various agrarian movements has been undertaken. At last, it seems important to mention that the reason behind selecting Bihar as a state for the present study is, apart from the above mentioned facts, not other than the personal acquaintance of the researcher with this state.

## CHAPTER - I

### BASIC ISSUES IN AGRARIAN RELATIONS

#### Mode of Production :

There has been no unanimity among the Indian and foreign Marxists regarding the existing mode of production in Indian agriculture. There have been some advocates of capitalism, for others, Indian agrarian society is still in the pre-capitalist phase of social development. Apart from them, there are proponents of semi-feudalism, colonial, post-colonial and dual modes of production respectively.

#### The Initiators of the Debate :

Although Sulekh Chand Gupta, G.G. Kotovsky and Daniel Thorner have been the precursors of this long and till now unending debate but it was Daniel Thorner who, for the first time, drew the intellectual attention in 1970. He remarked that an advanced agricultural economy has emerged in Indian countryside which can be compared to the advanced industrial sector because it is profitable and expanding. He also stated that in the countryside, and especially in Punjab a group of 'Gentlemen farmers' has

emerged. He referred to those farmers who were earlier in other high economic professions such as industry, business and money lending etc.

This almost positive indication of Thorner towards capitalism in Indian agriculture naturally provoked others to comment. The initiative was taken by Ashok Rudra, who along with some of his colleagues simply refused to accept the scientific validity of Thorner's description of Indian villages which according to them, was based on simple visits and conversation with the farmers.

Rudra and his colleagues further made a sample survey of big farmers in Punjab because they believed that "quantitative idea can be formed only on the basis of survey based on random sampling."<sup>2</sup> However, in their study of Punjab, as they claimed, they failed to see the capitalist farmers. They further argued that the phenomenon of "Gentlemen farmers" is a rare phenomenon in the countryside.

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1. Alice Thorner, "Semi-feudalism or Capitalism? Contemporary debate on classes and modes of production in India", E.P.W., Vol. XVII, No. 49, December 1982, pp. 1962-1963.
  2. Ashok Rudra et, al, "Big farmers of the Punjab: Some preliminary findings of a sample survey", E.P.W., IV (1969), 39, Review of agriculture, pp. 143-146.



Utsa Patnaik rejects Rudra's statistical thesis because she feels that this approach is 'unhistoric' and valuable only when capitalism is already the dominant mode of production. She further says that the development of capitalism needs the required socio-economic conditions, and a farmer landlord cannot become a capitalist overnight. In short, Patnaik, unlike Rudra, prefers to characterise the existing mode of production as 'non-capitalist' to 'pre-capitalist'. However, on the basis of her field survey of 66 big farmers of the five states of Orissa, Andhra, Mysore, Madras and Gujarat concludes that, though in varying degree, the capitalist forces are emerging in the region studied. She further characterises even the rural Punjab in the same manner.<sup>3</sup>

In his reply to Patnaik, Ashok Rudra argues that as long as sharp polarization does not come into being one cannot talk of capitalistic development in Punjab.<sup>4</sup> Patnaik in her turn emphasizes that to believe that in the prevailing non-capitalistic economy a small but growing class of capitalist farmers has emerged, and to say that Indian

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3. Utsa Patnaik, "Capitalist Development in Agriculture", E.P.W., VI (1971), 39, Review of Agriculture, pp. 123-130.

4. Ashok Rudra, "Capitalist Development in Agriculture: Reply", E.P.W., VI (1971), 45, pp. 2291-2292.

agriculturists can be divided into two polarised classes, are the two different things and Rudra has confused the two.<sup>5</sup>

Paresh Chattopadhyaya blames all the above mentioned participants of the debate for not properly understanding the problem. According to Chattopadhyaya, Gupta's analysis is right except the fact that he overestimates the capacity of the pre-capitalist mode of production which is still underway in our country. Ashok Rudra is criticised for his weak theoretical analysis which has been in the opinion of Chattopadhyaya, aptly exposed by Utsa Patnaik. Lastly, he disagrees with Patnaik precisely because according to him, she gives a new definition of capitalism which lacks true Marxist spirit.

Chattopadhyaya agrees with Lenin's conception of capitalism which is the highest stage of commodity production where labour power itself becomes a commodity. He argues that "the existence of sophisticated instruments of production is not necessary for identifying capitalist. Given the capitalist

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5. Utsa Patnaik, "Capitalist Development in Agriculture: A Note", E.P.W. VI (1971s) 39, Review of Agriculture, pp. 123-30.

mode of production, for which capital as a relation is only required, the existence of 'modern equipment' would only indicate higher level of capitalism."<sup>6</sup>

Despite Chattopadhyaya's criticism Patnaik restates her earlier position and claims that Chattopadhyaya's assumption regarding generalised commodity production as necessary implying capitalist production relation regardless of the unique feature of colonial society would lead to an extreme position like that of Andre Gunder Frank with whom, according to her, Chattopadhyaya does not agree.<sup>7</sup>

Amit Bhaduri, who is supposed to be the first standard bearer of semi-feudalism of the debate, on the basis of a survey of some Bengal's villages remarks that the dominating feature of the mode of production in agriculture should be characterised as semi-feudal because it resembles more the classical feudalism of the master-serf type than the Industrial capitalism.

Bhaduri provides four basic features of the semi-feudal region studied by him. These are: share cropping, perpetual indebtedness of the small tenants, concentration of two modes of exploitation, i.e. usury and landownership in

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6. Paresh Chattopadhyaya, "On the Question of the mode of production in Indian Agriculture: A preliminary Note", E.P.W., VII (1972a), 13, Review of Agriculture pp. 39-46.

7. Utsa Patnaik, No. 5.

the hands of the same economic class, and lack of accessibility to the market for the small tenants.<sup>8</sup>

According to Bhaduri, in this area usury is an important additional source of income of the semi-feudal landlords. Generally indebtedness comes into practice because of continual need for consumption loans. Here the landlords and creditors are the same. Since the tenants cannot move away without giving back the money and the interest, and also because they do not have any substitute for this, the rate for interest goes very high (generally from 25 to 200 per cent for a period of four months). This is what Bhaduri terms as double exploitation i.e. exploitation through surplus value and through interest. He goes on emphasising that since the continuation of this double exploitation requires that the profit of the tenants, through cultivation must be lower than their family consumption and other requirements, therefore the landlords avoid technological improvement. They, according to Bhaduri, believe that this would help raising the production level of the poor peasants

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8. Amit Bhaduri, "A Study of Agricultural Backwardness under conditions of semi-feudalism", (Economic Journal), LXXXVI (1973a), 329, pp. 120- 137.

which may weaken their own (position of landlords) positions. Therefore, Bhaduri concludes that the semi-feudal relations work as an impediment to the introduction of improved and sophisticated technology.

Data collected from the villages of Bihar by Pradhan Prasad<sup>9</sup>, more or less, supports Bhaduri's stand point. According to Prasad the utilization of irrigation facilities decreases with the increase in the size of land holdings. Big landlords who employ hire labour for cultivation prefer attached labourers. Indebtness is widespread, share cropping is very common, and the daily wages so low that generally the poor are forced to take loan on very high rate of interests. He further remarks that indebtedness is the permanent feature of this region because the landlords are interested not to get back the principal amount but to enjoy the fruit of interests. He further maintains that the low utilization of irrigation and the improved facilities, as in the case of Bhaduri's study, are preferred for the same reason.

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9. H. Prasad Pradhan, "Production Relations: Achilles' Heel of Indian Planning" E.P.W. VIII (1973), 19, pp. 869-872.

Later on, the same author, on the basis of his survey findings between 1951 to 71, claims that this "semi-feudal" model, with some variation, is not only true for Bihar but also for the most parts of the country.<sup>10</sup>

Nirmal Chandra is another important participant of the debate and a strong supporter of semi-feudal thesis. Chandra, through the help of the survey data of Bengal, comes to the conclusion that it is inadequate to believe that the rural India is going through capitalistic transformation because, according to him, there are certain socio-economic forces which act as barriers to such kind of transformation. The factor, in his view, which has been largely responsible for maintenance of semi-feudalism in Indian agriculture is the forces of Imperialism.<sup>11</sup>

So far as the basic characteristics of semi-feudalism in Bengal is concerned, Chandra says that it has aptly been characterised by Amit Bhaduri. But at the same time he feels that Bhaduri has overlooked two facts. Firstly, he expresses his disagreement with Bhaduri for exaggrating the

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10. H. Prasad Pradhan, "Reactionary Role of usurers, capital in Rural India", E.P.W., IX (1974), 32,33, and 34, pp. 1305-1308.

11. Nirmal K. Chandra, "Farm Efficiency under semi-feudalism: A critique of Marginal theories and some Marxist Formulation", EPW, IX (1974), 32,33, and 34, pp. 1309-1331.

effect of semi-feudal relation as an impediment in the way of the introduction of sophisticated and improved technological tools for cultivation. This is so because according to Chandra, sophisticated equipment has taken place on large scale in Bengal. Even then, the semi-feudal relation of production persists, because by lowering down tenants' share, the landlords keep them as poor as they were earlier. Secondly, he disagrees with Bhaduri largely because of the fact that, according to him, Bhaduri overlooks the effect of massive unemployment in the countryside. The problem of unemployment, according to Chandra, explains, to some extent, the continuity of semi-feudal relations in agriculture.

Ranjit Sau agrees with Nirmal Chandra in characterising the existing mode of production relation as semi-feudal. He is also convinced that Nirmal Chandra has rightly regarded unemployment as the main factor in maintaining semi-feudalism. However, Sau proposes another factor which according to him has also been responsible for it. This is what he calls 'the determination' of small peasants to continue with cultivation.<sup>12</sup>

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12. Ranjit Sau, "Farm Efficiency under Semi-feudalism: A critique of Marginalist theories and some Marxist formulations - A comment", E.P.W., X(1975), 13, Review of Agriculture, pp. 18-21.

However, in a dramatic move of just the contradictory to his earlier stand, Ashok Rudra now feels that one can see the increasing tendencies of capitalism in the agriculture of Eastern India.<sup>13</sup> Rudra tries to substantiate his argument with the help of his experience with the West Bengal. He clearly <sup>strikes</sup> ~~strikes~~ down the findings of the two major exponents of "semi-feudalism" thesis - Pradhan Prasad and Nirmal Chandra. He argues that there does not exist the phenomenon<sup>of</sup> usury practiced by landlords as pointed out by Pradhan Prasad and Nirmal Chandra. Not only this, he further remarks, that the landowners give their land to the share croppers on lease and the share croppers themselves cultivate it with the help of hired labour. Similarly the landlords economically help them for irrigation and seeds without interests at the time of harvest.

The findings of Ashok Rudra further suggests that the relationship between the landlords and those who are attached with them such as small tenants and labourers is based on consumption loan. But such loans are given generally without interests and given back neither in kind nor in cash but in labour and the amounts of labour is calculated somewhat lower

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13. Ashok Rudra, "Semi-feudalism usury, capital etcetera" E.P.W., IX (1974), 48, pp. 1996-1997.



than the general wage rate. Rudra further says that the rate of interest is 10 per cent or more per month, but it is charged to those who do not work for the landlords but take loan. In short, he argues that usury may serve as the subsidiary source of income or surplus for the landlords in West Bengal but, as pointed out by Nirmal Chandra and Pradhan Prasad, it would be inadequate to argue that the landowning class in that state is primarily dependent on usury or money lending.

Rudra criticises Nirmal Chandra who in an earlier essay<sup>14</sup> doubts the developing tendencies of capitalism in Bengal because of lack of explicit sign of the concentration of land. Following Utsa Patnaik, he emphasises that concentration should be measured not in terms of actual holdings but on the basis of the value of land. (through measuring production capacity).

He also criticises Nirmal Chandra earlier observation<sup>15</sup> about labour surplus and argues that there is, *of course*, great deal of unemployment during the lean season but in the peak season there is scarcity of labour power. This

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14. Nirmal K. Chandra, "Agrarian Transition in India", *Frontier VII* (1975 b) 29, pp. 30-9.

15. Ashok Rudra, No. 4.

is the reason, he further says, because of which the land-owners make such arrangement so that they should get the labour whenever they need. The labourers and tenants, on the other hand, bounded by debt and other social obligations cannot freely sell their labour power. In short, Ashok Rudra, particularly in the later part of his debate, moves towards capitalism.<sup>16</sup> Thus, although he refused to accept the fact of capitalism in Punjab, prefers to characterise the existing mode of production in the agriculture of Bengal as "capitalist".

Debate on the Direction of Change after Independence:

Later on, the above mentioned debate takes a different turn and takes the issue of "direction and pace of change in India."<sup>17</sup> Utsa Patnaik argues that the trends since Independence is towards capitalist production but this tendency is some-what limited because the land lordism still persists, and land has not been distributed satisfactorily.<sup>18</sup>

Nirmal Sen Gupta, on the contrary, believe that the feudal mode is still prevalent because still the forces

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16. Alice Thorner, No. 1.

17. Ibid.

18. Utsa Patnaik, "Class differentiation within the peasantry: An approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture", E.P.W., XI (1976)39, Review of agriculture, pp. 82-101.

of Imperialism is very efficiently playing its role. It is so because India is still a part of the world capital system. This trend, according to him is capitalist trend which manifests itself in a colonial or semi-colonial society. In short, his observation is that the agrarian formation of India which was colonial-semi-feudal during the British period can be aptly characterised as "semi-colonial, semi-feudal". Though capitalism has come, pre-capitalist mode is still prevalent and capitalist development is arrested primarily by the influence of imperialism."<sup>19</sup>

Paresh Chattopadhyaya, however, believes in the "dual role of capitalism with regard to pre-capitalism"<sup>20</sup> because it tends to safeguard as well as destroy the old regime. According to him, this <sup>ea</sup>feature is not a unique <sup>ea</sup>feature of colonies or semi-colonies but present all over the world.

S.G.Lin characterizes the post-Independent Indian agriculture by "dual mode of production which is a kind of mixture of more than one modes of production which is a kind of mixture of more than one modes of production relation. In post-Independence period, according to Lin the two modes i.e. pre-capitalist and capitalist together

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19. Nirmal Sen Gupta, "Further on the mode of production in Agriculture", E.P.W., XII (1977) 26, Review of Agriculture, pp. 55-63.
20. Paresh Chattopadhyaya, "Mode of Production in Indian Agriculture: An Afterword", E.P.W., XV (1980) Review of Agriculture, pp. 85-88.

led to a dual mode of production which possesses both the internal dynamics of accommodation and conflict. But so far as its future is concerned Lin argues, that it may last long because of certain cultural and regional factors but it is not stable.<sup>21</sup>

Dipankar Gupta, taking the factor of share-cropping in rural India into consideration, argues that this is a feature of that stage of social development where capitalism dominates over feudalism but not fully. Therefore he seeks to characterise the Indian agrarian economy as a capitalist one where capitalism has not developed uniformly. He further opines that a full fledged capitalist development will take time.<sup>22</sup>

Like Dipankar Gupta, Aparajita Chakraborty also does not consider tenancy necessarily a unique feature of feudalism and argues that this kind of the Marxist notion has been developed by people like Utsa Patnaik, A. Bhaduri and Nirmal Chandra. But at the same time Chakraborty feels that the Indian agrarian mode of production is undoubtedly

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21. Sharat G. Lin, "Theory of a Dual mode of production in post-colonial India", in two parts, E.P.W., XV (1980) 10 and 11, 516-529, 565-573.
22. Dipankar Gupta, "Formal and Real subsumption of labour under capital: The instance of share-cropping", E.P.W., (1980) 39, Review of Agriculture, pp. 98-106.

pre-capitalist in nature.<sup>23</sup>

Ashok Rudra makes another shift and says that the Indian social development should not be interpreted in terms of feudalism because while some of the political economists, accept its existence in Indian history, it has been a moot point among Indian historians. Rudra believes in the argument of those historians who negate the existence of feudalism in India (Mainly R.S. Sharma and all). He further remarks that the fundamental difference between European society and India lies in the fact that while the former was characterised by violence based feudalism, India has been ideologically caste based society. The Indian caste system, Rudra concludes, although possesses some features like feudalism but functions as the main vanguard of capitalism because it works to prevent the formation of consciousness on class line.<sup>24</sup>

Gail Omvedt is in favour of dominant form of capitalism in India and also sees, as was for the first time observed by Thorner, a link between agriculture and industry. According to her, at the time of Independence

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23. Aparjita Chakraborty, "Tenancy and mode of Production" E.P.W., XVI (1981), 13, Review of Agriculture, pp. 5-14.
24. Ashok Rudra, "Against Feudalism", E.P.W. XVI (1981), 52, pp. 2133-2146.

India was a caste structured feudal society. But after, due to anti-caste measures (earlier and after independence) and anti-caste policies of the government, caste and class were separated although there still remained a broad correlation. In short, according to Omvedt, Indian agriculture is predominantly capitalist.<sup>25</sup> Recently Alice Thorner has also expressed her opinion in favour of those who believe that capitalism has come into being in Indian agriculture.<sup>26</sup>

#### Differentiations of Peasantry

Before embarking upon the problems of differentiating peasantry from the other stratas of society and differentiating it from within, it is unavoidable to have a clear picture of the conception of peasantry itself. This inevitably requires a brief mention of the major theoretical exercises by the different intellectual traditions in the fields of sociology and social anthropology. It is so because the common sense meaning of a concept can give only a blurred of the outer structure of the system. Therefore, in order to understand the internal dynamics of the system, it is necessary to have a conception defined out of actual experiences.

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25. Gail Omvedt, "Capitalist agriculture and Rural Classes in India", EPW, XVI (1981), 52, pp.140-159.
26. A. Thorner, No. 1.

Broadly speaking there have been two distinct traditions<sup>27</sup> in the literature of social science which have enriched our knowledge on peasantry. One is exclusively academic tradition developed mainly by Robert Redfield and his followers. Another tradition has been developed by Karl Marx and later on by those<sup>28</sup> who believed in Marxism: In the Marxist tradition, however, the spirit of political Motivation is more dominant.

Robert Redfield characterizes the peasant community by what Durkheim termed as "Organic" solidarity". From this point of view, peasant community is small and homogenous. It can be contrasted from the industrial society not only because it is small and homogeneous but also because, like in industrial society, absence of the element of... peasant community

community formulated by Robert RedField has been challenged by other students of peasant community. They have noted that peasant community is often divided by conflicting interests.<sup>30</sup>

The main point of departure on peasantry in Marxism comes when Marx characterises peasantry, especially French Peasantry, as politically important largely because of the fact that it lacked proper organization and communication.<sup>31</sup> But this conception of Marx has also been successfully refuted by later developments.<sup>32</sup>

However, Red Field's conception of Peasantry provides two features of its community life. These are, its mode of livelihood and its relation with other stratas of the society. It's first feature reveals that the peasant are those small holders in cultivation who cultivate their own land and to the extent. Economically independent. The second aspect refers to the fact that they are in the relation of opposition to the agricultural elite.<sup>33</sup>

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30. Ibid.

31. Marx and Engels "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonapart, in Selected Works, (Moscow, 1970).

32. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter, section on "Agrarian Movement and Reforms".

33. Robert Red Field, Peasant Society and Culture, An Anthropological approach to civilization (Chicago, 1956).



T. Shanin provides a more comprehensive understanding of peasantry by summarizing its four basic features. These are : (1) The peasant family farm as the basic unit of multidimensional social organization, (2) land husbandary as the main means of livelihood directly providing the major parts of the consumption needs, (3) specific traditional culture related to the way of life of small communities; and (4) the under dog position - the domination of peasantry by outsiders.<sup>34</sup>

The common features of these two ~~consumption~~ conceptions formulated by the two scholars representing the two traditions indicate that peasants are those who have small holdings and cultivate it themselves. They are economically independent because for the labour force they depend mainly on their unpaid family wage labour. The basic difference, on the other hand, between these two approaches refers that while Redfield sees, to use Durkheim terminology, a <sup>harmonic</sup> ~~Dynamic~~ bond between peasantry and other strata of society, Shanin stresses on the cleavages. This difference can be very briefly be summarised, as has aptly been suggested by Beteille,<sup>35</sup> by using Ossowsky's conception

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34. T. Shanin, (ed.), Peasant and Peasant Societies: Selected Readings, Penguin, 1971, "Introduction".

35. Andre Beteille, No. 29, p. 47.

of "functional" and "dichotomous" view of societies.<sup>36</sup>

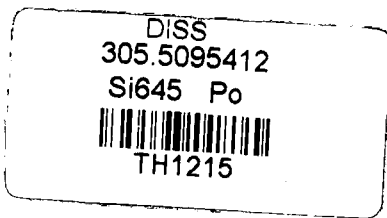
Peasantry, from the view point of comparative sociology, combines uniquely, on the one hand, an extended kinship system and marriage, and on the other, constitutes a part of the complex system of stratification. Therefore, a thorough study of peasantry requires a comparative study of peasantry and other strata of society such as industrial, and agricultural workers. It also requires an intensive and comparative study of tribes and peasantry because sometimes even Anthropologists consider peasantry as a residual category, and regard peasant societies only those which are neither tribal nor industrial. However, while the difference between tribals and peasants would be a kind of difference between two societies; the difference between peasantry and agricultural labourers would refer to difference between the two stratas or classes<sup>37</sup> of the same society.

As regards the differences between the two societies i.e. tribals' and peasants', an attempt has been made by different sociologists and social Anthropologists to

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36. S. Ossowski, Class Structure in the Social Consciousness, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.

37. For some European Sociologists 'Class and Strata' are the two mutually exclusive terms. For Dahrendorf "class" refers to the social conflict between groups, whereas "stratum" indicates about hierarchy. More or less the same view has been adopted, though in a different way by Ossowski: For a brief discussion see Beteille, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, (Delhi 1974), p. 37, (yet these two terms are used interchangeably).



conceptually differentiate tribals from peasantry. Important among them are Redfield I.M. Lewis and T. Shanin. But unfortunately these attempts do not stand effective in the Indian society because every one of them, if employed would include some tribal societies into peasant societies and vice versa. The only proper approach to make a distinction between them is to adopt an approach first developed by N.K. Bose and D.N. Majumdar<sup>38</sup> and later followed by some other scholars such as F.G. Bailey<sup>39</sup> and Andre Beteille.<sup>40</sup> This approach sees the tribes in transition or in continuum. Beteille makes this distinction through differentiating tribes and Hindu peasants and F.G. Bailey between tribes and caste. In a very brief and over simplified manner the difference refers to (a) the Relative isolation of tribes as compared to caste peasants (b) the difference of language or dialect, and (c) Religion: Animism in the case of tribals and Hinduism among the caste peasants. These all criteria proposed by Beteille had been included by Bailey who considered caste society as 'organic' and 'hierarchcal' and tribal society as 'segmentary' and egalitarian.



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38. D.N. Majumdar, A Tribe in Transition: A study in cluture pattern, (London, 1937).
39. F.G. Bailey, "Tribe' and 'Caste' in India" Contribution to Indian Sociology, (Delhi, 1961), No. V, pp. 7-19.
40. Andre Beteille, "Six Essays in Comparative Sociology" No. 29, pp. 60-73.

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Peasants are not only different from the tribals but also from the industrial workers. The peasants and the industrial workers, inspite of the fact that they belong to the same society, belong to the different strata or classes because of their different market, work, status and political situations. The only similarity between these two strata lies in the fact that their position (commonly) are believed to be lower and both these classes are considered as exploited classes.<sup>41</sup>

Before differentiating peasantry from one more stratum<sup>a</sup> of the same society, i.e. the agricultural workers, it seems important to mention that the term 'peasant' is used in two different ways.<sup>42</sup> The narrow sense of the term includes only those small holders who themselves control and own for their livelihood. This is generally adopted by most of the Marxist scholars. In the broader definition even those are included who are dependent on land through working, such as share-croppers and agricultural workers. But this so called broader meaning would be meaningful in understanding the problem.

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41. Ibid., pp. 84-86

42. Thorner, 'Peasantry in David L. Sils (ed), 1968, pp. 503-511.

The peasants can be differentiated from the agricultural workers on the basis of their market, work, status and political situation. So far as the market situation is concerned the position of peasants is generally inferior as compared to the agricultural workers, even in those areas which have experienced marked rise in wage. From the view point of work situation the position of agricultural workers is inferior to not only the peasants but their counterparts in the Industrial sector. It is largely because of the fact that they do not have job security. Not only this, the agricultural workers have more tough work to do, than the peasants. These factors of market situation and work situation lead to differences in status hierarchy. This difference becomes more bitter in the caste based society like India where status is to very great extent, determined by the kind of work one does. The chance of political consciousness is least among the agricultural workers not only because of their weak <sup>economic</sup> and social positions but also because of the absence of other facilities such as education.<sup>93</sup>

It appears that, unlike Marx verdict, the peasantry form a distinct class because of different market, work, status, and political situation. This fact has been realised

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43. Beteille, n. 29, p. 88.

even by some Marxist scholars; though in a different manner. T. Shatinin, for example, argues that the class question of peasantry could be explained in terms of degree and historical epoches. He believes that peasantry is a social phenomenon where both the Marxist and non-Marxist approaches meet together. In short, he considers peasantry as a kind of social entity having a low degree of "classness" which comes into being only during the time of crisis.

The above given account would be sufficient to locate the position of peasantry as a class or strata in the system of stratification. But sociology of stratification requires not only an intensive study of the broader gradation of the system but also of those hierarchically arranged sub-systems and sub-sub-systems which, taken together make the system complete. So far as peasantry is concerned its study from the point of view of sociology of stratification requires, apart from the study of the position of peasantry in relation to other stratas of the society; a deep insight of the internal differentiation of peasantry itself.

From this point of view, work of Lenin must be regarded as a major landmark for he neither regarded peasantry as a homogenous community characterized by elements of equality, nor gave much importance to the classical phrase of Marx that peasants were 'like potatoes in a sack of potatoes'. Lenin developed his thesis of the internal division of the peasantry in opposition to the view held by

Narodiki, and Unlike latter emphasized that Russian peasantry was characterized by inequality and exploitation. He however, divided the Russian peasantry into three subdivision of Kulak (rich peasant) Stredniak (middle) and bedniak (poor).<sup>44</sup>

However, since the theoretical construct made on the experience of one society may not be necessarily applicable to another society, therefore Lenin's classification may not stand true in the Indian context largely for this reason. <sup>THEREFORE</sup> some of both the writings of Marxist and non-Marxist students of Indian society should be selected to have atleast a broader idea about the internal differentiation of Indian peasantry.

According to Beteille, the population of Indian agriculture can be arranged hierarchically on the basis of the ownership, control and use of land. Broadly speaking, he identifies three categories of (i) Non-cultivating owners and tenure holders, (ii) owner-cultivator and cultivating tenants with recognised rights of tenancy; and (iii) share croppers and agricultural labourers. In the strict sense of the term, in his opinion, only the people belonging to category (ii) and in a loose sense (ii) and (iii) constitute the Indian peasantry. Those who fall within category (i) can not be

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44. V.I.Lenin, "The agrarian question and the critique of Marx" in his Selected Works, vol. XII, 1943.

regarded as peasants.

Beteille argues that those who can properly be regarded as peasants are not clearly defined and always (not) found in pure form. However, this class of peasants, he further remarks, though look like homogeneous category, in reality is differentiated from within. He suggests certain ways to make classification.

The first way of differentiating peasantry, he suggests, is the size of holding, but at the <sup>same</sup> time he remarks that this criterion is limited in scope because the productive capacity of land differs not only from region to region but also within the same village. Utsa Patnaik has also expressed similar kind of limitation.<sup>45</sup>

Secondly, as he remarks 'live stock and farm machinery' can also be used for this purpose. One obvious limitation of this practice lies in the fact that even the agricultural workers own cattle and plough.

The third criterion, suggested by him is the degree of participation in cultivation. The same criterion has been adopted by Thorner (one of them) to make classification of Indian agrarian population.

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45. Utsa Patnaik, n. 18.



Taking the help of all the three criteria, Beteille classifies the Indian peasant population into three categories of (i) Those who apart from their family members, are dependent on hired labour in agriculture, (ii) Those who, apart from working for themselves on their own land, work regularly for others and (iii) Those who do not work for others and do not require hired labours and who do little or both the things. In all these criteria, he points out, a cutting point can be chosen only arbitrarily. If this method is applied "there will no doubt be a broad correspondence between the classification of peasants, according to their size of holding (or income) and their classification according to the degree and extent of participation in work" . Implicitly, it seems, Beteille tends to classify the Indian peasants into three categories.

A more or less similar kind of approach has been adopted by Dalip S. Swamy who also takes the criteria of land holdings and some other such as animals, ploughs and other means as the basis in differentiating peasantry into poor, middle and well do to peasants.<sup>47</sup>

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46. Andre Beteille, n. 29, pp. 79-83.

47. Dalip S. Swamy, "Differentiation of Pesantry in India", E.P.W., vol. XI, No. 50, December 1, 1976, pp.1933-39.

Aswani Saith and Ajoy Tankha<sup>48</sup>, on the other hand, in their study of a village of the western part of U.P., take the following criteria for differentiating peasants, (a) the utilisation of loans, (b) repayment capacity, (c) tenancy, (d) ownership of assets, and (e) credit from bank to find out the transition. They too hierarchically arrange the peasants into rich, middle and poor categories but at the same time argue that the rich peasants are transforming into capitalist farming households because they use hire labour, produce for the market, and adopt modern technology for cultivation. Furthermore, they characterise the various types of peasants as groups, while taking the criteria of (a) owner-cultivators, (b) largely owner-cultivators, and (c) total poor peasants.

However, recently a group of Marxist students of Indian society and history have also tried to differentiate the Indian peasantry from within. But all of them have been discussed in a greater length in the second chapter under section "agrarian classes", therefore, there is no need of repeating them again in detail. These scholars are Joan Mencher, Nirmal Chandra, Utsa Patnaik, Ashok Rudra, Pranab Bardhan, Pradhan Prasad and ~~J. H. ...~~

Joan Mencher provides a six fold classification of Tamil Nadu's districts agrarian population. There are (i) the landless, (ii) poor peasants, (iii) Middle peasant, (iv) Rich farmers, (v) Rich farmer, capitalist farmers and Traditional landlords - again divided into three sub-classes, and (vi) Indeterminate class of large landlords. It can be inferred that, strictly speaking, only category (ii) and (iii) constitute the class of peasants. This peasantry has been differentiated from within into poor and middle peasants. The former, according to Mencher, are those who possess small pieces of land between, 1 and 2.5 acres and some of their family members go for wage work on others farm. The latter are self sufficient and possess above 2.5 acres of land. They are self-sufficient because they can exist even without doing work on other farms.<sup>49</sup>

Nirmal Chandra, in fact, does not differentiate the peasantry from within. He rather delineates the different classes of agriculture.<sup>50</sup> Utsa Patnaik, on the other hand differentiates peasant population into three categories of Rich, Middle and Poor, Rich peasants in her opinion do manual work but since, they are economically well off,

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49. Joan P. Mencher, "Problems in analysing Rural class structure" E.P.W. IX, 1974, 35, pp. 1495-1503.

50. Nirmal K. Chandra, No. 14, pp. 3-9.

therefore, generally hire wage labour. The middle peasants of Patnaik are self sufficient and self-employed. The poor peasants on the other hand do both the things—they generally go for wage labour and take other's land on lease.<sup>51</sup>

Ashok Rudra does not see any differentiation within peasantry and regards it as a part of one of the two classes (Big land lords including rich peasants and labourers: landed and landless). However, he has been criticised by Pranab Bardhan for not recognising the independent strength of middle peasants.<sup>52</sup>

P. Bardhan<sup>53</sup> while giving the agrarian classification of whole of North India differentiates peasantry into middle and poor categories. The middle peasants in his view, hire wage labour in farming while the poor generally depend on the family labour.

John Harris, Lastly, classifies the peasantry into (i) Rich Peasants, (ii) Independent middle peasants and (iii) poor peasants. The first category of peasants produce 2.4 times more than their family consumption. They may employ

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51. Utsa Patnaik, No. 18, pp. 82-101.
52. A. Rudra, "Class Relations in Indian Agriculture", E.P.W., XII, 1978, pp. 918-1003.
53. P. Bardhan, "On class Relations in Indian Agriculture", E.P.W., XIV, 19, 1979, pp. 857-60.

permanent labour but depend to a greater extent on family labour. The second category, in Harriss view, refers to those whose production is nearly 1-2 times more than family needs. they are primarily dependent and satisfied with family labour but sometimes may go for wage on other's land. The poor peasants, lastly, depend primarily on wage labour because their family farm production is not enough for consumption need.<sup>54</sup>

However, at least, it seems important to point out that the Indian Peasantry has been differentiated in every epoches of history and the phenomenon of differentiation is not the by-product of the post-independent developments in the country. Robert Eric Frykenberg rightly observes "For centuries beyond counting there have been layer upon layer of landholders and tax-officials, below whom there have been more layers of sub-holders and revenue collectors. And at the bottom have been the hosts of manual labourers."<sup>55</sup> This differentiation of peasantry has been caused, as have been very recently but aptly pointed out by Dr. K.L.Sharma,<sup>56</sup> *and varied* by different forms of tenancy *at 1-9* in different land tenure systems and in different villages of the same land tenure system.

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54. John Harris, "Why poor people remain poor in Rural South India", 'Social Scientist, (Trivendrum), VIII, 1979, 1, 20-47.
55. Robert Eric Frykenberg:(ed); Land control and social structure in Indian History (Madison, 1969).
56. K.L.Sharma "Agrarian stratification: old issues, new explanations and New Issues,

Agrarian Movements and Reforms

The study of social movements including Peasant movements has drawn the attention of a large number of social scientists interested in the comparative sociology.<sup>57</sup> Particularly the Agrarian or Peasant Movements have become a very common problem for them not only because still the majority of the world population are rural and depends on agriculture, but also because the recent developments in some countries including the third world have seriously refuted the classical marxist conception regarding the French Peasantry.

The French Peasantry has been vehemently criticised by Marx primarily because of the fact that it did not support the working class during the Revolution of 1848. It was named as "petti bourgeoisie" and regarded as not the vanguard of the new social order but the defender of the old. It was, furthermore, characterised as the representative of barbarism in the 'midst of civilization'.

Marx attributed the failure of french peasantry for not joining the working class at the time of 1848 Revolution, in its social and economic character which he characterised like the position of 'potatos in the sack of potatos'.<sup>58</sup>

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57. Karl Marx, *The class struggle in French (1848-50)*, (London, 1934), pp. 33-31.

58. Marx and Engels, *Selected Work I*, (London, 1968), Particularly "the Eighteenth Brumain of Louis Bonapart."

The French Peasantry did not behave like working class merely because of the fact that it lacked proper communication and political organisation.

The later developments such as the October Revolution organised by Bolshevik under the leadership of Lenin, the Chinese revolution of 1949 and other peasant uprisings in different parts, of the world such as Cuba, Vietnam and some other third world countries showed successfully that if organised the poor peasantry can act very much like its counterpart in the industries; so far as political action is concerned. Particularly the Chinese revolution of 1949 which was fought under the leadership of Mao, proved that it does not necessarily depend on the Industrial proletariat for direction and it can independently choose its own way of class revolution.

These events which took place in the different parts of the world have not only shown the revolutionary capacity of the peasant but clarified some of the misconceptions regarding it, originally formulated by Marx. But some problematic questions are still asked about some ex-colonial countries. Particularly about India it really becomes problematic seeing the fact that it has been shown by the

students of Indian History and Society that agrarian revolts have occurred in the different parts of this country right from the first war of Independent i.e. 1857.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, it is natural to be asked why not a peasant revolt on all India level?

But before going into the details of the different answers given by different students of social movement, it seems necessary first to present a very brief history of the various agrarian movements in the different parts of India and its nature and causes.

The history of peasant movement goes back to the Mughal period. There have been certain cases of peasant results even in this period. There are the movements of Jates<sup>in</sup> the Ganges-Jamuna region from 1660 to 1690s and the Satnami religious sect in Narnual of 1672. The reason seems to be increasing commercialization and exploitation of the peasantry by the Mughal revenue collectors in the form of taxes. These movements were led by the local princes and zamindars. It seems that they led these uprisings because even they were affected by the Mughal officials. After giving the taxes to the Mughal officials there was little left to be collected by the local rulers.<sup>60</sup>

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59. D.N. Dhanagre, Peasant movement in India 1920-1950, (Delhi, 1983), p. 25.

60. Ibid., pp. 26-27.



This exploitation of the rural poor became even more acute during the British rule. K. Gough suggests altogether 13 factors responsible for exploitation of the peasantry preparing the structural background for the different peasant revolts which occurred during the colonial period in various parts of India. Even after Independence she remarks the situation has been merely modified. The reasons which constituted the structural background for peasant uprisings according to her, are the followings: (i) During early rule of the East India Company the tax was made double than the Mughal period (ii) exploitation of peasantry both by the foreign and Indian exploiting classes such as money lenders, zamindars, British agents involved in export-import and internal trade etc. (iii) due to permanent and other settlement, exploitation of peasantry in the form of eviction etc. (iv) exploitation of poor tribals through government and non-government agents in terms of unequal trade, usuary, corvee etc. (v) an attack on the traditional Indian Industries by the British trade and tariff leading to pauperisation of rural poors engaged in this, (vi) factor of drain of wealth through salaries, debt services, colonial war, home charges etc, (vii) forced cultivation of cash and industrial crops such as

indigo and rubber, (viii) the growth of absentee landlordism effecting traditional patron-client relations or landlords-tenants relations, (ix) population growth leading to pressure on agriculture and therefore poverty in the absence of ample employment, (x) a link established between city and country due to communication, (xi) large scale famine affecting most of the tenants cultivators and the landless labourers, (xii) after 1947 failure of land reforms except the abolition of zamindars, and continued existence of evictions, (xiii) class structure or unequal distribution of the benefit of the green revolution during 1956-71.<sup>61</sup>

The agrarian movements which occurred in India have been classified by some students of social movements into different categories. Some classify them period-wise and some on the basis of the nature of the movement. Period-wise it can be classified into three phases. These are as follows: (i) the initial phase-between 1857-1921: the movements which occurred in this period can be characterised as sporadic and without leadership, (ii) the second phase: characterised by the emergence of class consciousness and

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61. K. Gough, "Indian Peasant uprisings" in A.R. Desai(ed), Peasant Movements in India (Delhi, 1978), pp. 84-89.

the leadership which fought for the peasants, (iii)

Post-Independent phase: A large number of peasant uprisings led mainly by the left political parties such as the CPI, the PSP and SP through their respective Kisan organisations.<sup>62</sup>

During first half of the 19th century in those areas which came under the permanent settlement such as Bihar and Orissa, those who failed to pay the exorbitant rent to their landlords were evicted forcibly. When the exploitation of Zamindar crossed the limit the area witnessed the peasant and Tribal uprisings. Kol and Bhumji movements are the best example of this kind. The Santhal uprising of 1855-6 was caused because the tribes considered the imposition of alien revenue as an attack on their culture. Even during the 1857 revolt the peasantry participated very actively and as Sulekh Gupta pointed out, it was more violent where the peasants were most adversely effected by the British land revenue policy.<sup>63</sup> The same thing has been noted by K. Gough.

The post 1857 period is called the landlord's paradise because of the tremendous increase in their power and wealth precisely because of the fact that they had helped the British during the revolt of 1857. However, in some parts of Bengal

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62. Uday Mehta, "Peasant Movement in India", Ibid., p. 793.

63. S. Gupta, "Agrarian background and 1857 rebellion in the North-Western Provinces" Enquiry, (Bombay), No. 1, February 1959, pp. 69-95.

where the peasants were compelled to grow Indigo under European planters, the indigo cultivators stood unitedly against the landlords in 1859-62. When their exploitation through rack-renting, illegal extortion and eviction crossed the limit in 1859, only a decade after this in the year 1871-73, in the same province of Bengal in Pubna and Bogra the peasant revolt took a more violent form. A similar kind of revolt which took place in the post 1857 revolt was the famous Deccan riots of 1875 in the Bombay presidency and other parts of country such as Punjab etc.

During the period 1885 to 1920 the Congress emerged as the largest political organization but the landlords and traditional dominance continued to persist in the organization. It was Mahatma Gandhi who for the first time took the cause of poor villagers. Even then when-ever the traditional interest and class interest came into conflict, mass movement occurred. The mopla rebellion should be noted as the best example of this period and kind.<sup>64</sup>

After the first non-cooperation movement a large number of peasant revolts have occurred against the exploiting class. A detail account of these peasant uprisings does not seem possible seeing the limited space. However, a short passage

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64. DhanagrE, No. 59, pp. 43-48.

from N.G. Ranga would fulfil the purpose at hand. "Even since the non-cooperation movement a number of Satyagraha campaigns have come to be organised against so many unjust laws and imposts, such struggle as those of Bardoli and Padanadipadu and Duddukuru in 1921 against the land tax, the struggle against Karnataka forest in 1921 and 1931-33, the anti-resettlement campaigns of Godavari and Krishna Deltas and a number of peasant struggles against landlords of Venkatgiri (1931) Tsadumn and Mungala (1939) were organised in the south by some of us. There were also the land Satyagraha in Bihar (1939) the anti-zamindari fight in Bengal and Andhra, and canal duties struggle of the Punjab and Bengal (1930), the prices struggle (1937-42) and the Debt Relief Agitation of Bengal...."<sup>65</sup>

The above given peasants uprising were against either the British exploitation in the form of various agrarian laws or the native landlords. Some of those revolts were organised on the principle of non-violence and through peaceful means. Bardoli movement of 1929, for instance, was based on Gandhian ideas and was led by Sardar Patel, a follower of Mahatama Gandhi. This movement very effectively proved that changes can be brought about even through peaceful and non-violent means.

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65. N.G. Ranga, "Indian Peasants Struggle and achievements", No. 61, p. 75.

According to K. Gough, the revolts which occurred after 1920 possessed two features. On the one hand, either these have been fought for regional or national autonomy or for complete Independence. The struggle which occurred in Kashmir, the nationalist war of Naga and Mizo and Jharkhand are the cases to substantiate the above stand.

She further mentions seven major peasant uprisings in the modern period mainly after 1942 and all of these according to her, have been organised by various communist parties. The first four were organised by the communist party of India (undivided). These were the Tebhaga Movement in north of Bengal in 1946, the Telengana Movement of the then Hyderabad in 1946-48, a movement which could continue for merely few weeks in Jhanjavur in 1948 and a small strike in Kerala in 1946-48. Rest of the three the long peasant revolt in 1966-71 led by the Andhra Revolutionary Communist Committee; the Naxalbari movement of Bengal in 1967 and lastly annihilation movement of Communist Party of India (M.L.) in 1969-70 have been organised by the Marxist groups.<sup>66</sup> All the cases of peasant uprisings noted between 1857-1970s can be divided into five categories on the basis of their nature and objectives

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66. K. Gough, No. 61, pp. 112-116.

A detail description of these seem impossible because of limited space but to mention their classification seems necessary. These are (i) Restorative movement, (ii) Religious or Millenarian Movement, (iii) Social Bandits, (iv) Mass Insurrections and (v) Liberal Reformist Movement.<sup>67</sup>

Even after 1970 several kinds of peasants movements have taken place in different parts of our country such as Bihar and Maharashtra and in some parts these movements are still not dead. In Bhojpur, for example, Naxalities are still very active.

After presenting a brief history, its nature and types, of the various cases of Agrarian movements, various theories regarding the potential of various classes in relation to revolution in general and the explanation of the role of Indian peasantry can be discussed. The questions can be raised in two forms (1) which class of peasantry in general possesses greatest potential for revolution- Rich, Middle or Poor? (2) In spite of the fact that there have been cases of large scale peasant uprisings in different periods of the Indian history, why not a nationwide peasant revolution as yet ?

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67. See Dhanagre and K. Gough, No. 59 and No. 61.

As regards the first question, according to the classical Marxist formulation which has been developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao and Later by T. Shanin the urban proletariat performs the vital role in revolution. In the rural areas on the other hand, this task is performed by the poor peasantry, the middle peasants merely allies with either class.<sup>68</sup>

In the recent years, a group of scholars have argued that it is not the poor peasantry but the middle peasants who are politically most vital for revolution. The first outstanding formulation of this kind was made by Hamza Alvi.<sup>69</sup> Alvi rejects the thesis advanced by Lenin and Mao in Russia and China respectively and emphasizes that Lenin unnecessarily underestimated the revolutionary potential of the middle peasants. According to him, it was the middle peasants who contributed most during the two revolutionary struggles of 1905 and 1917 in Russia. The middle peasants, in his view, are more prone to political revolution because (a) they are separated from the feudal bonds and therefore structurally free while the poor peasants are not (b) it is the middle

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68. Dhanagre, No. 59, pp. 1-13.

69. Hamza Alvi, "Peasant and Revolution" in R. Miliband, et al (ed), The Socialist Register 1965, pp. 244-51.



peasants who suffer most because of the breakdown of the old order. The poor peasants are less militant and suffer from backward mentality therefore, unfit for revolution. Taking the case of China, Alvi argues, the role of rural peasants (poor) has been overemphasized by Mao and in fact, it was the middle peasants who led the revolution and participated most actively.

Eric Wolf, another major exponent of "The Middle Peasant Thesis" maintains that the middle peasants are more capable for this purpose because unlike the rich and poor they are dissociated from the structural link.<sup>70</sup>

However, recently, Dhanagre has seriously challenged the middle peasant thesis both theoretically and Historically. (a) on the theoretical ground, he argues that the structural independence of the Middle peasants have been overestimated both by Alvi and Wolf. Criticising especially Alvi, he says that until recently the Indian middle peasants were dependent for credit on the village money lenders and the rich landlords (b) Both of them (Alvi and Wolf) are criticised for the formulation of the conception of middle peasants as a combination of conservatism and dynamism. Because, he says, it would be misleading to believe that it would (combination) never fail in initiating revolutionary activities.<sup>71</sup>

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70. E.Wolf, Peasants war in the twentieth century, (London, 1971) pp. 290-91 and also by the same author on peasant rebellion; International Social Science Journal, Vol.21, 1969, pp. 286-93.

71. Dhanagre, No. 59, Conclusion.

Historically too, on the basis of his study of the peasant uprisings in India, Dhanagre rejects the middle peasants thesis and emphasises that instead of allying with the rural proletariat and fighting for the revolutionary cause, it has (middle peasants) helped the big landlords and adopted a reformist means. More or less the same view has been expressed by K. Gough. According to her, the poor peasants and agricultural labouring classes constitute the main organized forum for the revolutionary movement in India.<sup>72</sup>

Barrington Moore has been one of the first few to answer the second question posed above through his famous work on 'Dictatorship and Democracy.'<sup>73</sup> Although his framework of analysis is marxist, he believes in 'Power alignment' which consists both of class position and power structure. According to him, the Indian case of peasant revolution and change does not stand fit in any of the three types of (a) bourgeois (b) the fascist and (c) the communist revolutions as the means of change. Therefore, he argues that the reason lies (a) in the traditionally passive and docile nature of peasant in India, further accelerated by the pacifying role of Gandhi and, (b) in the structural peculiarities of Indian society characterised by caste, village and socio-religious diversities.

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72. Ibid.

73. B. Moore, Jr., 'Social origins of dictatorship and proletariat lord and peasant in the making of modern world (Harmondsworth, 1966).

K. Gough, on the other hand, on the basis of her study of peasant uprisings in India after 1857 argues that there have been, broadly speaking altogether 77 cases of peasant revolts all over India. But the revolutionary spirit of the Indian peasantry has been not very impressive as compared to Chinese peasants largely because of some politico-historical forces. Thus, Gough says, throughout Mughal period and even during British after 1857 (due to different provinces) Indian society has been politically fragmented and there was lack of proper communication. Similarly like China, British India had never been disturbed by foreign invasion. That apart the British government was very powerful in suppressing the peasants revolts. Even if some revolts occurred, it was declared as communal riots.

### Agrarian Reforms

After Independence, it was the moral responsibility of the ruling party to take some reformative measures in order to eliminate the exploitation of the poor Indian peasantry. It was especially so because the Independent Indian constitution adopted the Parliamentary form of democracy where emphasis was on equality and social and economic justice.

In the first move various committees on agrarian reforms were formed by the Government of India. Important among them were, one headed by Nehru<sup>74</sup> in 1947 and another by J.C. Kumarappa<sup>75</sup> in 1948. These committees unequivocally recommended, broadly speaking for the abolition of intermediaries, and emphasised on the "land to the tiller". Later in 1950 the Congress Party formed an Economic sub-committee.<sup>76</sup> This committee submitted a memorandum to the conference of the Chief Ministers and President of Congress Party's states committees in the same year in April. After 1950 different states started passing the laws regarding land reforms and regulations.

All the state governments were guided by the same principles but in different context. In some states there was zamindari system, in other royatwari. Therefore broadly all the states passed the laws regarding:

1. The elimination of Intermediaries;
2. Regulation of Rents; and
3. Limiting the size of land properties and holdings or ceiling.

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74. Charles Bettelheim, India Independent, translated from French by W.A. Caswell, (London, 1968), p. 180.

75. Ibid., p. 181.

76. Ibid., pp. 181-182.

The first objective of agrarian reforms was to abolish the zamindari system. Officially it was claimed that between 1947-56, the zamindars disappeared. Although really the zamindars became ineffective so far as their intermediary role were concerned but it would be wrong to assume that their dominance has also been reduced due to these legislative measures.

The following facts would effectively substantiate the above given stand (i) these laws were not effective for the landlords of the rayatwari areas which constituted the 57 per cent of the total cultivated land of India. Even in the zamindari areas land known as 'Sir' was kept intact, (ii) the clever and resourceful landlords and zamindar's very efficiently escaped by dividing their holdings on paper among their near relations and family members, (iii) the powerful zamindars could not be affected because they forcibly evicted the tenants and declared the land 'under personal cultivation', (iv) Even if in some cases they were affected retained all the good cultivating land, (v) these zamindars were also not much affected because of large amount of compensation.<sup>77</sup>

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77. G. Kotvsky, "Agrarian Reforms in India", Translated from Russian by K.J. Lambkin, (Moscow, 1964), pp.46-50.

~~It~~ It is a well known fact that the legislations passed by various state governments took some more years to be implemented. Especially in the case of Bihar it took 5 years and more or less the same thing happened in the case of U.P. The big resourceful landlords and zamindars through the help of courts successfully delayed the implementation.

Commenting on the impact of land reforms in U.P. Daniel Thorner remarks : "In sum, the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari abolition Act has provided for a new hierarchy of tenure holders in place of the old one; but the two are all too recognizably similar. At the top are Bhumidars below them Sirdars, and still further down the asamis. At the bottom of the heap remain the mass of crop sharers and landless labourers. The zamindars have disappeared but these same persons have been confirmed as landholders...."<sup>78</sup>

These reformative measures affected positively as well as negatively the class of peasant tenants. Thus the top strata of tenants who hold land directly from the zamindars achieved the same status of zamindars. Particularly this happened in ryotwari areas. Even those who were not at the top strata got the benefits of it because of different feudal cesses by the heavy taxes which followed.

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78. D. Thorner, "Agrarian Prospect in India", (Delhi, 1956), p. 27.

But it does not mean that the zamindari abolition had no effect on the zamindari. Apart from the fact that intermediaries were abolished permanently even those who could retain their land had to face the economic crises. Thus Khusro remarks "thus most zamindars-type landlords were considerably weakened economically following the implementation of the reforms."<sup>79</sup> It was so because bulk of zamindar's land were taken over. Kolovsky reports that 87 per cent in U.P. and 84 per cent in Bihar of zamindar's lands were taken over.

In brief although the zamindars disappeared inspite of their resistance and different means used to protect their property, their economic position reduced. It helped the upper strata of tenants to a great extent but the position of poor agricultural workers remained the same.

#### Imposition of Ceiling:

Imposition of ceiling could be implemented only in the year 1961, almost a decade after zamindari abolition. But like in Zamindari abolition; here too there were some loopholes which enabled the big landlords to manipulate according to

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79. Kotvsky, No. 77, p. 54.

their own interest. In the words of P.C.Joshi "the wide latitude given to state governments (in defining family holding, in determining the level of ceilings, in deciding whether ceiling should apply to individual or family holding and fixing exemptions or method of distribution of surplus land) was bound to open the door for endless manipulation and manoeverings, pulls and pressures, in a manner that the very object of ceiling was likely to be put in jeopardy and even defeated."<sup>80</sup>

These measures could not effectively check the likelihood of concentration of the holdings of few big landlords and rich peasants because in quite a few cases the size of holding were smaller than the fixed size of ceiling.

Not only that, in several states in those cases where family members were more than 5 they were allowed to have some extra holdings. And according to the 8th round of national sample survey the average family size of big landlords was more than five. This provision also helped the big zamindars.

The size of ceiling was fixed by the planning commission at three times the size of family holding.

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80. P.C. Joshi, "Land Reforms in India", Perspective: An Economic Review, No. 2, December, 1961, pp.34-35.



Family holding referred to a holding of the income Rs. 1200 per year comes from that. This led to the different size of ceiling by different state legislatures. Here also the big zamindars benefited.

There were some other loopholes which consolidated the position of zamindars. These were (a) In majority of cases the unit of land ceiling was individual rather than family, (b) In few states it was not illegal to transfer the land before law was implemented. Briefly while taking the critical approach three comments regarding the impact of ceiling can be made. (1) Even in the case of ceiling the zamindars successfully took all the mechanism which they took at the time of zamindari abolition. (2) Even if ceiling could effect the large holding, it made in the sense that redistribution was done among the landlord class and as has been aptly remarked by H.D. Malviya, "The fact is that the ninety per cent of the possible usefulness of a programme of ceiling, upon land holdings has been lost and land redistribution has been <sup>and</sup> by a large a failure in our country."<sup>81</sup>

#### Tenancy:

The main objective of the tenancy legislation was "to serve the rights of occupancy (heritable) tenancy to the

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81. Quoted in Kotovsky, No. 77, p. 111.

tenants to protect them from eviction from the leased plots, and to fix maximum rates of rent payable-the legislation also provided for the right of tenants under certain conditions to acquire ownership of their plots."<sup>82</sup>

There were two kinds of tenancy, in the colonial period. These were the occupancy tenants and tenant at will. In the first category came those who enjoyed the rights of protected tenants but in the second category people did not have such right, not even nominally defined by the law.

But inspite of the law passed to protect the interest of the tenants a large number of them could not get these rights. Because (i) a large number of share cropper were not recognised (legally) as tenants, (ii) in some states the tenants could not get the permanent or heritable occupancy right. In this regard the lowest stratum of peasantry suffered most, (iii) In some states such as Andhra Pradesh and Madras the tenants were given only temporary occupancy rights and (iv) they were given occupancy rights provided they have worked on the land continuously for a long period.<sup>83</sup>

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82. Ibid., p. 128.

83. Ibid., pp. 129-131.

These legislative measures it seems, instead of giving occupancy rights to the tenants, became source of their eviction. According to A.M. Khusro 42 per cent of occupancy tenants were evicted between the period 1951-55. The same kind of opinion was given by M.B. Desai in his study of Gujarat.<sup>83</sup>

The final objective of this legislation was to give complete ownership to the tenants. These laws, therefore, provided the tenants the right to buy all or part of their holdings. But it became difficult for them to buy these lands because of large scale competition for land and high rates of land. As M.<sup>84</sup> Desai's study of Gujarat indicates that out of 770 tenants only 17 could buy land though 80 per cent of them wanted to buy it.

In short, it can be said that the main goal of tenancy i.e. "to confer rights of ownership on as large a body of tenants as possible" could not be implemented. Furthermore "as regards tenancy legislation proper, its effect has been that tenants have lost more than they have acquired."<sup>85</sup>

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84. Ibid., pp. 131 and 134.

85. Ibid., p. 138.

Thus the land reforms measures taken together could not achieve its expected goal. According to A.S. Appu, "the implementation of the enacted laws has been half-hearted halting and unsatisfactory in large parts of the country"<sup>86</sup>

Apart from the measures mentioned above by the Government, certain other measures too were taken in the way of agrarian reforms. These include, Bhoodan and Gramdan movements led by Binoba Bhave and his followers and Green Revolution. But these things also met the same fate.

A brief overview of the above discussion on the 'Basic Issues in Agrarian Relation' makes it very clear that all the three issues are subjects of various interpretations. There is no dearth of opinions so far as the issue of 'The mode of production is concerned'. But it seems that the Indian agriculture is still under the dominance of semi-feudal force (If the Marxian theoretical Paradigm is accepted). The rural India can still be characterised by share cropping, usuary, begar and in many cases by master-serf relations. But usuary is not the main source of income of the landlords. One may see the gentlemen farmers in Punjab but there is nothing like this in other parts of India such as Bihar. It would also be inadequate to compare the rural agriculture with the urban industries (on the basis of profit).

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86. P.S. Appu, "Tenancy Reforms in India", E.P.W., vol.X, Nos. 33-35, Special Number, 1975, pp. 1360-61.

In reality the economic position of even big landlords is deteriorating because in some parts of our country such as Bihar, agriculture is no more a profitable job. The absence of adequate employment as a substitute for farming is of course, acts, like an impediment for capitalist development. But it would be baseless to argue that the determination of even poor peasants to continue with cultivation is also a barrier in the way of capitalism. In fact there exists no such phenomenon in the rural areas of India. In fact the rich peasants and even the sons of big landlords want to do job outside their villages (in the city) what to talk of poor peasants. It is largely because the income which comes out of farming cannot fulfil their needs.

As regards the differentiation of peasantry, it has been recognized by the common opinion that peasants are not only differentiated from the tribals, industrial and agricultural workers but also heterogenous from within. If the criteria of land and work are used they can be ~~not~~ classified into poor, middle and rich categories. These things can be accepted inspite of opposite views regarding peasantry of the classical literature such as that of Redfield and Marx. The only moot point is the number of sub-categories in the peasantry.

Thus the classical view of peasantry regarding the ~~internal~~ structure has been rejected. Not only, that, <sup>even</sup> the classical formulation which refused to see the political capacity of the peasants has ~~also~~ been challenged successfully. It has been shown that it cannot like the Industrial proletariat. But yet certain questions are still unresolved. Thus there are different opinion regarding the role of different classes of peasants and the Indian peasantry.

But it has been shown that the poor Indian peasantry has always stood against the exploitation in the history of India. These peasant uprings have proved as one of the effective causes of agrarian reforms measures taken not only by the government but also sometimes sponsored by individual organizations. But these measures, only benefited the rich peasants. The agricultural workers and the poor peasants were left much behind in the race of receiving the gain of these measures.

CHAPTER-IICASTE, LAND & POWER:PAST & PRESENT(I) From closed to open system of stratification:  
A Non-Marxist interpretation:

The non-marxist frame-work of analysis emphasises that the traditional Indian Society was more or less a closed system. It was, according to non-marxists, not absolutely closed because some of them have proved that even in traditional India there was some scope of social mobility. M.N. Srinivas has, for example, shown that in traditional Indian Society mobility was caused by 'fluidity of Political System' and 'the availability of marginal land'.<sup>1</sup> But even then that system was not absolutely open if not absolutely closed because of the fact that the mobility was based on caste and not on individual performance. "Traditional Indian Society was based largely on the regime of caste and was to that extent a peculiarly closed system".<sup>2</sup>

In fact the caste-system has been so peculiar<sup>3</sup> to

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1. M.N.Srinivas, "Mobility in the Caste System" in Milton Singer and B.S. Cohn (edt.), Structure and change in Indian Society. (Chicago, 1968), pp. 189-199.
  2. Andre Beteille, "Closed and open social stratification in India" in Castes: Old and New, (Bombay, 1969), p. 57.
  3. Peculiarity of Indian Caste System is a controversial issue. But I feel that caste-system is uniquely an Indian phenomenon, some of its characteristics in modified or even the some form may be found in other societies.

Indian Society that it has led some students of Indian Society to reject the significance of other social organizations such as "the village community", 'Kinship' and 'religion' as the basis of studying Indian Social reality. L. Dumont and Pocock, for example, have seriously challenged the social reality of Indian Village Community.<sup>4</sup> Although F.G. Bailey, has very effectively defended the social reality of village community.<sup>5</sup>

However, the most fundamental difference between the closed and open systems of stratification lies in the fact that while in the former there is absolute correlation between different dimensions of social inequality, such as class, status and power; in the latter there is no such type of correlation. In other words in the closed system of stratification the same group or individuals would hold top position in the status hierarchy, most effective in influencing power structure and economically most powerful. In another, some one may be the richest person but may not

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4. L. Dumont and F.G. Pocock, "Village Studies", Contribution to Indian Sociology, (Delhi, 1957) No. 1, pp. 7-22.
  5. F.G. Bailey, "For a Sociology of India? Contribution to Indian Sociology, No. 3, (Delhi, 1959), No. 3, pp. 88-101.



belong to the top strata of status hierarchy and even less effective in influencing power structure than some one else. Theoretically, the closed system of stratification can be explained in terms of Marx's Conception of Base and Superstructure<sup>6</sup>, where economy always determines the superstructure (power, status, ideology etc.). The system of stratification which is open, can best be fitted into Weber's three paratite dimensions of social inequality, where he shows that none of these can be reducible to any other.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Non-Marxists, the periods which begins with the beginning of the last century, marks the transformation of the old system of closed form of stratification into a new one which can be described as comparatively a new one for there is a great possibility of individual mobility. This process was further accelerated by the forces of Independence. There were several factors which delinked, at least to some extent, the caste from other determinants of social inequality. These were,

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6. For a brief introduction of Base and Structure see Bendix, R and Lipset S.M. "Karl Marx's Theory of Social Classes" in their own (ed) Class, Status and Power: Social Stratification in Comparative Perspective. (London, 1966), pp. 6-11.
  7. Max Weber, "Class Status & Party" in R Bendix and S.M. Lipset (ed).

(1) the growth of money economy governed by Market Condition, (2) growth of caste free occupational structure, (3) emergence of the modern system of education, and (4) emergence of modern differentiated political structure including legislature and political parties.<sup>8</sup>

(a) Caste and Class: The process of delinking has been observed by quite a large number of students of the Indian Society. All of them have found that a separation between caste and class is increasing very rapidly. Here caste would largely refer to different local jatis, and class to different groups stratified hierarchically exclusively in term of ownership, use and control of land. However, for the first time this process of delinking was noted by F.G. Bailey.<sup>9</sup>

Bailey, in his famous study of Bisipara showed how land came into the market and how the warrior caste, who controlled all the land sold to other castes (mainly untouchables). He remarks "The warriors now have only 28 per cent of the land and must be considered the principal losers. What evidence indicates that before 1885 warriors owned all the lands."<sup>10</sup>

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8. Andre Beteille, *Ibid*, pp. 21-28, No.2, p.60.

9. Ibid., p. 61.

10. F.G., Bailey, Caste and the economic frontier, (Manchester, 1957), p. 49.

The same trend has been observed by other students of Sociology during their field studies in other parts of the country. The three intensive studies of some villages of Tanjore District<sup>11</sup> show that the modern different classes are not formed by the same castes as they did previously because the traditional land owning caste of Brahmins are selling their land to the non-brahmins castes and others. Similarly, Professor Srinivas in his study of Rampura shows that although earlier most of the land was owned by Brahmins, it is owned now by the Okkaligas who are the dominant caste there.<sup>12</sup> A similar kind of observation has been made by Epstein in her study of Delna and Wangala.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the above mentioned studies, a common awareness suggests that the dominant castes found in almost every region of country do not necessarily belong to the upper stratum of the caste hierarchy.

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11. The three intensive studies have been done by K. Gough "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village", in McKim Marriott (ed), *Village India, Studies in the little Community*, (Chicago, 1955), D. Sivertsen, *When Caste barriers fall*, (New York, 1963), Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power : Changing Pattern of Stratification in a Tanjore Village* (Berkeley, 1965).
12. Srinivas Study of Rampura in M. Marriott (ed), Ibid., pp. 1-35.
13. T.S. Epstein, Economic Development and Social Change in South India (Manchester, 1962), pp. 24-197.

(b) Land and Power: As regards the relationship between land and power, it has been emphasised that the dominant caste was the most important source of high concentration of powers.<sup>14</sup> However, it should be repeated again that all the dominant caste did not enjoy high position in the Caste Hierarchy but were numerically large and controlled large land holdings. But in most of the cases these dominant castes people also belonged to the upper stratum of caste hierarchy. Therefore, it seems that in the past, large land holding and high status in caste hierarchy were the two most important factors which influenced power arena most effectively.<sup>15</sup>

But since the time diarchy was introduced by the Britishers and Congress successfully involved the masses in all India movement the situation started changing. It was further accelerated after 1947. The responsible factors accelerating the process of change after independence were the adoption of Parliamentary Democracy based on adult franchise, introduction of Panchayti Raj, which incorporated in it the spirit of differentiation of Power and modern education. Consequently, now it is neither large holding

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14. Beteille, No. 2, p. 62.

15. Ibid., p. 80.

nor the caste hierarchy but "Numerical strength and organisation into parties, Pressure group and machines have acquired greater significance"<sup>16</sup> for political arena. Selig Harrison's analysis of Andhra politics<sup>17</sup> and Srinivas description of the politics of post - 1947 Mysore<sup>18</sup> explain the above mentioned point very clearly. Beteille's observation of the change in the political structure of Tanjore Village also confirms the above emphasised standpoint. According to him, "There the Brahmins constituted the traditional elite; they took the major decision and organised collective activities within the village." "Today", he further remarks, "the village Panchayat is dominated by Non-Brahmans".<sup>19</sup> It appears, therefore, from the above analysis, that a change has come not only in the state level politics but also at village level - it has come both at Macro and Micro levels.

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16. Ibid.

17. S. Harrison, "Caste and the Andhra Community", American Political Science Review, June, 1956, pp. 378-404.

18. M.N. Srinivas, No. 11, pp. 32-34.

19. Beteille, No. 2, p. 79.

According to the Non-Marxists, therefore, the main achievement of the post-1947 Indian Society is that it has successfully, although partially, delinked the association not only between caste, and class but also between these two taken together on the one hand and power on the other. Of course there are examples of people like Kamraj, Jagjeewan Ram and Karpoori Thakur who without the help of caste and class achieved high political status. But still it is partial, because the importance of caste and land holding cannot be categorically denied.

## II. From Caste to Class: A Marxist Approach:

### (1) Pre-Colonial Period

(a) Mode and Relations of Production and Agrarian Classes: Marxist approach, as usual, tries to explain the process of delinking between caste, class and power through mode of production and other similar Marxist tools. Broadly speaking, most of the Marxist Scholars believe that at the advent of British the predominant mode of production in India was feudal. It was feudal in character, for the land as the primary means of production in Indian Society was largely owned and controlled "by the feudal exploiting classes at the village level."<sup>20</sup>

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20. Gail Omvedt (ed) Land Caste & Politics in Indian States (Delhi, 1982), p. 15.

The relation of production and class structure were governed largely by the traditional Indian Caste System. In the Zamindari areas, in majority of the castes, the landlords or the upper classes belonged to the non-cultivating castes and were classified from the rural poor on the basis of Varna criterion. In most states of North India, the Rajputs, Brahmans (and Bhumiards in Bihar, particularly) constituted this class and were considered as twice-born. In the South Indian states too, this distinction was very clear. In Tamil Nadu, for example, this class was constituted by the Brahmans or vellalas. Similarly, in Kerala, though the landowning class, i.e., Nayars were Sudras in Varna hierarchy yet they were sharply distinguished from the Izheva and the untouchables, because they regarded them as excluded castes.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the exploited class of caste feudal society, according to the Marxists, has been divided into three sub-classes of Kisans or Peasants, the Kamins or artisans, and the untouchables labourers. The people who constituted the class of Kisan came from cultivating

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21. Ibid., p. 16.

22. Ibid.

castes of region, such as Kunbis, Jats, Kurmis, Reddis, Kammas, etc.. Although they belonged to cultivating class and caste, in term of Varna they were drawn from Shudra Category. The Ahirs or Yadavas also belonged to this class and similar Varna category.<sup>23</sup>

The small section of people called artisans, who in terms of Varna were levelled as Shudras but performed specific function and were given specific names to their castes according to their specific functions or occupation such as gold-smith, barbar, etc.

## (2) Colonial Period

The forces of Capitalism, to some extent, the Marxists go on to argue, was developed by the British Colonialism because the Indian tradition was not able to develop it. But even in the colonial period the force of feudalism continued to persist. This led not only to the growth and acceleration of anti-imperialist movement but also anti-feudal movement.

(a) Differentiation of Caste from Class: The most important contribution of the Britishers was the introduction of new legal rules and courts which emphasized on the recruitment in various occupation on the basis of individual

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23. Ibid., p. 18.



ability as opposed to the caste and other traditional organizational basis. The colonial bourgeoisie state came into being. But this change should not be identified as the abolition of caste-system in the sense that still the agricultural production was organised on the basis of semi-feudal base. Yet it was different from the pre-colonial period for now the population of agrarian economy was classified as 'land-lords', tenants, and 'the agricultural labourers'. The caste was differentiated from class through legal norms and court. "Caste and Class no longer Coincided."<sup>24</sup> The emergence of capitalism in Indian society made possible the separation between the economic organization (class) and the social organization (caste).

But this separation, according to the Marxists, was not complete because in the agricultural sector, the class of land-lords was constituted mainly from the upper castes, such as Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars, Vellalas, Nayars, Namburdaries, etc.

The cultivator or Kissan still came from the Peasant castes and were Sudras in the Varna hierarchy. Lastly, the class of agricultural labourers was constituted

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24. Ibid., p. 20.

by no else than the untouchables and Dalits. Thus, even in the colonial period the caste and class continued to co-exist, abroad correlation was still maintained. Yet it was only correlation and not an identity.<sup>25</sup>

(b) Isolation of Political Forces: The colonial period of India, Marxists approach further emphasises, not only witnessed an effort towards the dissociation between caste and class, but also helped in isolating political forces. The various exploitation under semi-feudalism, spread of universalistic system of education, link between urban and rural proletariat caused by the forces of Industrialization led to the large scale peasant and tribal movements in the different parts of country.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, both the Congress and Communist Parties played a very significant role. All these movement caused to the development of political consciousness among the rural proletariat to stand against not only the alien rulers but also the native land-lords and zamindars.

### (3) Post-Colonial Period

(a) Transformation of Caste into Class: The post-colonial era of Indian society, according to the Marxists, is witnessing a different kind of relation between caste,

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25. Ibid., p. 21.

26. See first Chapter Section on 'Agrarian Movements and reforms' of this dissertation.

land and power. Now the atrocities done on the harizans and dalits are in most of the cases by the rich peasants, who generally do not belong to the upper land-owning castes, such as Rajputs, Brahmins, Vellalas, etc. They are in middle castes. Cases of Belcchi, Bajitpur, pipra show, according to most of the recent Marxist scholars, that the struggle is no longer between the land lords on the one hand and peasant and agricultural workers on the other, but between the rich peasants and the poor agricultural workers.<sup>27</sup> This indicates the emerging growth of capitalism in Indian Society. These cases further "show that caste structure of rural Indian has changed in the new emerging class struggle."<sup>28</sup> But still there is a high co-relation between caste, land and power.

### (III) Overview:

A comparative analysis of these two approaches suggests that both the Marxists and non-marxists believe that dissociation between caste, land (class), and power

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27. For Recent interpretation of caste and class in India see:  
 (a) H. Dhar et al, Caste and Policy in Bihar, No.20,  
 (b) H.P.Pradhan, Caste and Class in Bihar, EPW,  
 (Bombay, 1977), Vol. XIV, Nos. 7-8.  
 (c) Ajit Roy, Caste and Class:An Interlinked View,  
Ibid.

28. Ibid., No. 20, p. 26.

has been taking place in the agrarian society of India through various historical phases. Both the approaches attribute greatest credit to the British Colonial forces for this change. These two approaches also realise that a complete dissociation between caste, class, and power is yet to reach. Till now there is no disagreement. Differences are in their approaches of perceiving social reality. While for the Marxist castes are merely the reflections of class divisions (Ajit Roy and others), and therefore, in India of today, the caste-class equation has taken entirely a different form. The non-marxists consider caste an independent variable and the concept is according to them, absolutely distinct from economic organization. It is the organizational basis of status hierarchy and a Pan-Indian Phenomenon.

The Marxist position regarding the recent caste-struggle turning into a new form of class-struggle is not very strong, because it is clear that different cases of recent caste conflicts show that it is between rich peasants and poor Harijan agricultural labourer. But what has remained unanswered is the fact whether during these conflicts the poor peasants or agricultural labourers belonging to the same peasants <sup>castes</sup> ~~castes~~ do not, at least morally, support their rich caste members. Secondly, if the atrocities

are done on the poor harijans, do not the rich and powerful Harijans feel offended and if feasible do not go to any extent for their help? These questions will remain unanswered and will lead to sheer orthodoxy if the caste and class are given the same colour.

### AGRARIAN CLASSES IN INDIA

#### Agrarian Classes in the Indian History:

Before going into the details of the various classifications put forward by different social scientists of the agrarian classes in Indian Society, it seems necessary to trace the history of agrarian structure and nature of agrarian classes in different historical epochs. It would help us in understanding how the modern landlords and other classes came into being.

(a) The Mughal Period: Taking the Mughal period of Indian history as the point of departure, it can be said that among the Mughal rulers it was Akbar, who first of all, systematically prepared a land revenue system and a bureaucratic organization to deal with it. This bureaucratic organization was constituted by the Mughal empire by appointing various local rulers who obeyed its command. These rulers were free to collect revenue on the behalf of

the empire as long as they showed their loyalties. They were known as zamindars and Mansabdars. Apart from these rulers some chieftains of caste, clan and ethnic groups also enjoyed this privilege.<sup>29</sup>

In consequence, it seems that there must be some arbitrary revenue collections and suppressions by these chiefs despite the unwillingness of the empire because these rulers must be aware of the fact that the territory is not their permanent settlement.<sup>30</sup>

There is difference of opinions regarding the concept of property in Mughal Period. Some suggest that during this period, ownership of property was communal. Although this thesis has been seriously challenged but it seems that this was the cause which led to the formulation of the myth of self-sufficient Indian villages. The main advocate, however, of the communal ownership of property was Karl Marx.<sup>31</sup> The critique of this view, on the other hand, argues that this myth was created perhaps because of the fact that very often the villagers co-operated with

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29. D.N. Dhanagre, Peasant Movements in India, 1857-1920, (Delhi, 1983), p. 26.

30. T. Raychandhary has emphasised on this point while reviewing Irfan Habib's book. See Enquiry, No.2, 1956, p. 102.

31. Karl Marx, Capital - A Critique of Political Economy (London, 1970), pp. 357-9.

each other.<sup>32</sup> The critique, on the contrary, emphasises that during this period there was private property in land and the owner was free to sale or mortgage it.<sup>33</sup>

Some students of Medieval Indian History and Society have tried to formulate a categorization of various agrarian classes. Professor Irfan Habib gives a four fold classification on the basis of "value of possessions and taxes imposed on land". The four classes were of (i) Zamindar, Money lenders, Grain Merchants, (ii) well to do or rich peasants, (iii) Majority of the Peasants poor cultivators or land-holders, and (iv) Landless labourers or agricultural workers. S. Nurul Hasan, however divides the class of Zamindars into three broad categories of (a) the autonomous chieftains, (b) the inter-mediary Zamindars, (c) the primary Zamindars.<sup>34</sup> A similar kind of indication towards the internal division of various classes of this period has been given by R.S.Cohn.<sup>35</sup>

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32. Irfan Habib, "Agrarian System of Mughal India", 1556-1707, (Bombay, 1963), pp. 120-22.

33. Ibid., pp. 123-25.

34. S. Nurul Hassan, "Zamindars under the Moughals", in R.E. Frykenberg (ed) Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, (Madison, 1969), pp. 17-32.

35. B.S. Cohn, "Structural Change in Indian Rural Society", Ibid., pp. 53-122.

D.N. Dhanagre on the other hand, merely classifies the entire Medieval Indian agrarian population into two broad categories. He calls them merely categories and not classes because he feels that in the absence of scientific data the analysis would be futile. However, his criterion is what he calls "interest in land". The first broad category, according to him, was constituted by those intermediaries who were appointed by the empire and were involved in revenue works and benefitted from the taxes. The second broad category was comprised of all those peasants who, although heterogenous in terms of caste and ritualistic background, were undifferentiated so far as their right and interests in land were concerned.<sup>36</sup>

(b) Land Settlement in the Colonial Period: The Britishers introduced three types of agrarian reforms, known respectively as the Permanent Settlement, the Royatwari Settlement, and the Mahalwari or Malguzari System. Under the Permanent settlement of Bengal, the Zamindars were conferred with the full property rights in land. Thus, these who were merely the revenue collector became the actual owners of the land.<sup>37</sup>

Royatwari System of land settlement was introduced in Madras, Bombay (including British Gujarat) and Berrar

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36. D.N. Dhanagre, No.29, pp. 29-30.

37. Ibid., p. 31.



region. Under this system the ryot (occupants) were given hereditary rights of land holding which they could sale, mortgage or give to anyone. Theoretically the ryots were the states tenants and were not supposed to be evicted as long as they paid land revenue to the state.

Thus, in principle, there seems to be a fundamental difference between the two land revenue systems discussed so far. But in the case of Royatwari, with the introduction of the principles of revisable assessment, the difference between them blurred. Because the rising rate of land revenue and the increasing demand of land due to growing population in the absence of ample alternatives for land, *compelled the land-holders to sub-let their land.* A substantial number of land-holders became rent-farmer and was followed by a series of sub-tenants and share-croppers etc. This led to the emergence of different kinds of tenant, such as 'Protected', 'Occupancy', 'Ordinary' and 'Share Cropper' alongwith 'attached labourers'.

Lastly, the Mahalwari or Malguzari system was introduced in the United provinces (excluding Awadh), Punjab and the Central Provinces (M.P.) excluding Berrar region. Under this system a village was taken as the co-operative or joint farming. In the village settled under this system, the cultivation was done under co-sharing basis which was

identified with joint ownership or communal management.<sup>38</sup> Only those as a co-sharers would be selected for paying revenue who had impressive social standing. But even in this system, the spirit of Zamindari emerged as the sons and grand-sons of land lord became dominating co-sharers and conquered tribes, caste and ethnic groups were compelled to lead the life of agricultural labourers.

(c) Agrarian Classes in Past-Colonial Period: Various Interpretations: So far as the nature of agrarian class-structure in post-colonial India is concerned, there is no dearth of interpretations. A large number of social scientists from different academic backgrounds have given their classification of agrarian classes in India based on their own field studies and experiences.

Daniel Thorner proposes mainly a three fold classification of proprietors, working peasants and agricultural labourers. But he prefers to give them distinct localised Indian names of Malik, Kisan and Mazdur.<sup>39</sup> The criteria adopted by Thorner for this classification are the forms of income obtained from land, nature of rights in land and the degree of actual involvement in cultivation.

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38. Ibid., pp. 30-34.

39. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian Prospect in India, (Delhi, 1956), p. 9.

The proprietors or Malik includes the members of those family whose agricultural income is based on the property rights in land. Although there may be other sources of income but the main or the largest source of income is derived from the share in the produce of land in the form of rent taken either in cash or kind.

Thorner further sub-divides this broad class of Malik into two sub-categories of (i) absentee land lords and (ii) smaller proprietors. The difference between these two refers to the fact that while the former possesses lands in more than one villages and do not personally participate in the work of agricultural activities. They are called absentee land lord primarily because they periodically visit their land and collect their rents. The latter, on the other hand, personally live where they possess land and do some kind of managerial work. One common thing, however, between them is that the people of both the categories want to increase the rent and keep down the wage level.

The labourer or the Mazdoor, according to Thorner, is constituted by members of those rural families who are dependent on others for their existence. They work on other's farm and get the wage either in cash or kind. Some

of them of this category may have tenancy or sometimes even property rights but these small and negligible holdings are unable to fulfil the family demands. Therefore, they have to work for others and in actual fact the difference between the poorest croppers, tenants-at-will, and Mazdoor is blurred.

In between these two classes of Malik and Mazdoor, are the people who constitute the class of what Thorner calls kisan or working peasants. Like the Malik, they also "have a recognised property interest".<sup>40</sup> Among them there may be small holders or tenants but so far as they customary rights in holding is concerned they are inferior to the Malik and superior to the Mazdoors.

These classes, Thorner concludes, are differentiated not only in terms of economic right and privilege but also in caste terms. Thus the class of Malik generally comes from the upper castes, the Kisan from peasant castes, and the Mazdoor from the scheduled castes and dalits. Similarly, a difference can be seen in their life style and standard of living. So far as the difference in their standard of living and style of life are concerned, a similar kind of observation has been made by some other students of Sociology too.<sup>41</sup>

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40. Ibid., p. 11.

41. A. Beteille, Studies in agrarian social structure, (Delhi, 1974), pp. 62-72.

A close glance at Daniel Thorner's classification suggests that he has adopted both the Marxian and Weberian methodology. There is clear tinct of Marxism in his broad classification into three on the basis of property and work (means of production and relation of production). However, when he indicates about the internal sub-division of these classes, he is influenced by weber for here his criteria of categorization are the kinds of rights and services.

Daniel Thorner's classification has been recently slightly modified by D.N. Dhanagra. Dhanagre proposes a five fold classification of Indian Agrarian Classes where except the two extreme rests are sub-divided into different sub-classes. His classification is as follows:

- (1) Land-lords: Comprises of big land-lords or to use Thorner's terminology 'absentee land-lords'.
- (2) Rich Peasants:
  - (a) Rich land lords or to use Thorner's term "Smaller Proprietors".
  - (b) Rich Peasants who possess substantial holdings, have secured or occupancy rights, and pay some rent to their land-lords.

- (3) Middle Peasants: (a) Self-sufficient land owners of medium size holdings. This corresponds to Thorner's small land-owning Kisan Category.
- (b) Corresponding to Thorner's substantial tenants of second broad category, this includes those tenants who have substantial holdings but less than what Dhanagre himself calls 'Rich Peasants', but pay high rent than the 'Rich Tenants'.
- (4) Poor Peasants: (a) Small landowners who are not self sufficient and therefore are found to rent their land.
- (b) Those tenants who have small holding with some tenurial security or in the terminology of Thorner "Poor Tenants".
- (c) Tenants at will or share cropper corresponding Thorner's share cropper of Mazdoor category.
- (5) Landless Labourers: All those whom Thorner call landless labourers of the last broad class.<sup>42</sup>

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42. Dhanagre, No. 29, p. 15.

Apart from Daniel Thorner and D.N. Dhanagre, there are also some other Indian and foreign marxists students of Indian Society who have tried to interpret the agrarian class structure of India in their own ways. However, the fundamental difference between them and those discussed above is that some of them unlike Thorner and Dhanagre, provide differently, agrarian class structure of different regions. However, their attempts are worth noting for it will provide not only the regional variations but also a general trend which is emerging in Indian agriculture. These scholars are Joan Mencher, Nirmal Chandra, Utsa Patnaik, Ashok Rudra, Pranab Bardhan, Pradhan Prasad and John Harrisf.

Joan Mencher proposes a six fold classification of the rural class structure of Chingleput district of Tamil Nadu. Her classes are (1) The Indeterminate class of large land holders: In this class she includes few those who possess more than 30 acres of land. But she says that it is difficult to decide whether they are capitalist or feudal. (2) Rich farmers. Capitalist farmers and Traditional land-lords: In this class all those households are taken who have between 15 to 30 acres of land holding. However, this class is further sub-categorised into (a) Rich Farmers: those who give a very small holding to the share cropper and cultivate rest of their holdings through hired labour. These farmers,

apart from doing supervisory work personally participate in the actual cultivation, (b) Under Capitalist farmer come those landholders who do not participate in physical work of cultivation. (c) Traditional landlords are those who generally rent out their all lands to various kinds of share-croppers and only receive the share. (d) Rich Farmers: Under this category she puts those farmers who have landholdings between 7.5 to 15 acres. These farmers, according to her, are self sufficient and after accumulating some for the future, sale for consumer goods such as radio, electricity etc. (4) Middle Peasants: In this class of farmers fall those who are self sufficient and do not depend on other for labour force. And those who have more than 2.5 acres of land and sometimes employ labourers. (5) Poor Peasants: The poor peasants possess small land holding between 1 to 2.5 acres of land and sometime go for day labour (some of the members only). (6) The Landless: The vast majority of landless poor fall in the last category. They are dependent on other for their livelihood and work on other's farms in various forms such as day-labourer, attached labourer or share croppers. (1 out of 6 type).<sup>43</sup>

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43. Joan P. Mencher, "Problems in analysing Rural Class Structure", E.P.W., IX, 1974, 35, pp.1495-1503.



It appears that for Mencher, like Thorner, size of land holdings and degree of physical work done in the process of cultivation, are the criteria for identifying rural classes. Nirmal Chandra, on the other hand, adopts a different method. He takes the income, whether coming out of land or other source, as the main base for the classification of classes in the villages of Burdwan district of West Bengal. Broadly speaking, he classifies the village population into two almost equal classes of those who give land on rent or hire wage workers on the one hand, and on the other, the poor peasants and agricultural labourers.<sup>44</sup>

The upper classes families are not very much dependent on the income which come out of agriculturiers. This class is further sub-classified into landlords, Jotedars, rich peasants and middle peasants. The landlords are dependent mainly on the income which they receive in the form of rent. The characteristic features of Jotedars is that they function in the capitalist manner. The 'Rich Peasants' sometimes do some sort of physical work (mainly like managerial work) but generally depend on others for wage labour. The middle peasants are primarily dependent on their family labour but sometimes need the help of labour outside family. This classification proposed by

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44. N.K.Chandra, "Agrarian Transition in India", Frontier-VII 29, 1975-76, pp. 3-9.

Nirmal Chandra has been very efficiently given a tabular form which is worth noting:

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Percentage of Households in different  
Rural Classes in Burdwan Village:

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	Agricultural income only	Inceom from all sources
Land lords	3.5	2.4
Jotedars	19.2	10.8
Rich Peasants	16.0	19.8
Middle Peasants	9.0	15.0
Total Upper Classes	47.7	48.0
Poor Peasants		19.9
Agricultural Workers		30.3
Others		2.1

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Source: Alice Thorner, E.P.W., December 11, 1982, Vol. XVII,  
No. 50, p. 1994.

Utsa Patnaik, taking the help of successive censers reports on land holdings, emphasizes that a high degree of concentration of land has taken place. Consequently there is a minority of group who possess so large a holding of land that they are depending on others for labour force.

On the other extreme, she argues, there is vast majority of people who possess so a small land holding that they are fully dependent, for their livelihood, on others farms. Between them there are those who neither work for other nor need labour except family labour.<sup>45</sup>

Patnaik's basis of agrarian classification is not the size of the holding for she strongly believes that this is not the sufficient criterion to determine the class position in rural society. Instead, she argues "labour exploitation criterion" symbolised through the letter 'E' should be used as the criterion for this purpose.

Howēver, these classes of landlords, Rich peasants and poor peasants are sub-divided into two categories. Table formulated by Alice Thorner would make it clear how Patnaik, like Nirmal Chandra, has also distinguished sharply between the exploited and exploiting classes. (See next page).

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45. Utsa Patnaik "Class Differentiation within the Peasantry: An Approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture, E.P.W., XI 39, 1976, pp. 82-101.

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Economic Class	Characteristics
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(1) Land lords:	
(a) Capitalist	Labour hiring greater than rent.
(b) Feudal	Labour hiring almost as high as rent.
(2) Rich Peasants:	
(a) Proto-bourgeois	Labour hiring greater than rent.
(b) Proto feudal	Labour hiring almost as high as rent.
(3) Poor Peasants:	
(a) Agricultural labourers operating land	Hiring out greater than rent payment.
(b) Petty tenants	Hiring out at most as high as rent payments
(4) Full time labourers	Hiring out only form, no rent payment.

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Source: Alice Thorner, E.P.W., Vol. XVII, No. 50, December 11, 1982, p. 1995.

The basic feature of the class of landlords including capitalist and feudal is that the members of this class do not do physical work in cultivation. They may do managerial or supervisory work. But for Patnaik these things are insignificant for it is not manual work.

The rich peasants themselves do manual labour yet they are dependent on wage labour because their source from land compell them to be dependent both on the family as well as outside labour force.

The middle peasants are basically self sufficient because they cannot dare to hire labour from outside their families. The poor peasants may possess small pieces of land but they have to rent out physical labour for their subsistence. Their consumption standard is below customary level. The same is also true for those who have been called as 'full time labourers'.

In the opinion of Ashok Rudra, in Indian Agriculture of today there exists only two-classes. These are the classes of big landlords and those of agricultural labourers. The class of agriculture labourers include in itself both the landed and landless, and the poor peasants who do not hire wage labourers.

Rudra believes that the classification made on the basis of the degree of participation in the manual work stands false in Indian context because while in some parts of country even those who cannot be included in the category of landlord do not do manual work such as ploughing because of attached prestige or social status. There are certain region such as Punjab where even women do participate in manual work.

The class of big landlords, whom Rudra calls "ruling class in Indian agriculture",<sup>46</sup> is a hybrid class of semi-feudal and semi-capitalist in character. This class is a single class. He further argues that those who fall outside these two classes do not form a class because although there are contradictions within themselves but there is lack of class contradictory relation between them and any of the two classes; though there may be subsidiary contradictions.

Although Pranab Bardhan agrees with Ashok Rudra and feels that the real contradictions in Indian agriculture is between big landlords (including rich peasants) and labourers (including landed and landless). But at the same time, he expresses his disagreement with Rudra primarily because the latter does not consider the middle

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46. Ashok Rudra, "Class Relations in Indian Agriculture", E.P.W., 1978, pp. 998-1003.

peasant as a separate class. Bardhan, on the other hand believes that the class of middle peasant is a distinct class for it neither needs wage labour nor goes for hire labour. Similarly, he does not feel that there is no contradiction between the big landlord and rich peasants and therefore constitute single class.<sup>47</sup>

Pradhan Prasad classifies the agricultural sector of Bihar in particular and the whole of North India in general into three broad categories<sup>48</sup> of (1) Top peasant only, (2) Middle and poor middle peasantry, and (3) Agricultural labourers. In the class of top peasantry come those landlords and Rich farmers who consider to work even on their own farm as contrary to their dignity. In the second class, the people may work physically for themselves but not for others. The middle peasant hire wage labour but the poor peasant cannot. In the category of agricultural labourers come that large population who are dependent for their livelihood on other farms; though some of them may possess small piece of land.

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47. P. Bardhan, "On Class Relation in Indian Agriculture", E.P.W., XIV, 19, 1979, pp. 857-860.

48. H.P.Pradhan, "Caste and Class in Bihar", E.P.W., No.27.

Lastly John Harriss gives a four-fold classification of agrarian classes on the basis of his field study of Tamil Nadu. His criteria in defining classes are "size of production resources (including land) in relation to household requirement and labour relations."<sup>49</sup> The classes are as follows: (I) Capitalist farmers: Those who possess capital four times more than their basic livelihood. They are employer of permanent labour force but nominally contribute physically in the organisation of production, (II) Rich peasants: Those whose yielding capacity is two times more than their family needs. Although they employ permanent labour but partially depend on their own family members for labour force, (III) Independent middle peasants: Those who possess yielding capacity more than 1-2 times their family requirement. Mainly dependent on family labour but sometimes work for others, and (IV) Poor Peasants: In this class come those who include even marginal farmer and agricultural workers. What they produce is not enough to fulfil the basic family requirement. Therefore, they go for the wages on other farms.

Comments and Conclusion:

The above given attempts of various social scientists deserve the following comments: (1) It is adequate to

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49. John Harriss, "Why poor people Remain poor in Rural South India", Social Scientist, (Trivendrum), VIII, 1979, p. 1, 20, 47.



consider the size of land holdings, the income which comes out of it and the degree of participation in the cultivation as the criteria for agrarian classification, (2) Size of the holding, as a criterion, cannot be rejected because despite the fact that the value of land varies very often, it is relevant because in most of the cases the big landlords hold large amounts of good land. This is the reason because of which even the laymen differentiate between rich and poor on the basis of the size of the land.

(3) If the size of the holding is substituted by 'E' - the labour exploitation criteria, it is not clear what this labour exploitation refers to and how varying degree of exploitation will be measured. (4) The degree of participation in the work may not be relevant in the state of Punjab and Haryana, but still in other parts of India one can see the land/work ratio in the form of greater the size of holding, lesser the degree of participation of the owner.

If all the above criteria are used, only three broad classes of landlords, peasant and agricultural workers can be identified. But it does not mean that these classes are homogenous. All the three classes can be sub-divided into further sub-classes. This suggests that in the Indian agriculture there are more than two classes, and the independent existence of the middle peasantry cannot be challenged.

The Green Revolution and Agrarian Classes:

The wind of the Green Revolution began to blow over some parts of the Indian country-side about a decade after the inauguration of Panchayat Raj. It happened so because the country had the misfortune of suffering extensive crop failures, famine conditions in the mid-sixties; and planning for development was diagnosed as having entered a period of crisis. The main objective of this revolution was, in the short run, to help in increasing agricultural production through the adoption of highly mechanised farming, and, in the long run, to enable the poor villagers to share in the prosperity.

So far as its short run objective is concerned it has been successfully achieved to a great extent and there cannot be two opinion about that. But as regards the long term objective "Very heated controversies have arisen regarding the distribution of gain of the green revolution."<sup>50</sup> There are mainly three opinions about it.<sup>51</sup> One group of researchers believe that the Green Revolution has successfully been attempted and its loopholes are unnecessarily

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50. A.S. Narang, "Punjab:Development and Politics", in Gail Omvedt (ed), No. 20, p. 124.

51. T.J. Byres, "The Dialectics of Indian Green Revolution", South Asian Review, Vol. 5, No. 2, January 1972.

singled out. The second opinion argues that inspite of the fact that there are certain problems, it has undoubtedly benefited all sections of society. It further argues that these problems are not beyond solution and can be hopefully sorted out. In the last category are those who categorically deny its success so far as its long term objective is concerned. They emphasize that the gains of this revolution has seriously and successfully excluded the poor section and specially the agricultural workers.

Since there is a broad agreement in the gain of its short term objective and a debate on the long term, therefore, the latter issue should be taken up. An evaluation of the recent field studies on the impact of Green Revolution on agricultural workers will help in drawing certain concrete and clear conclusions. For this purpose some important aspect of the general condition of the agricultural workers will be discussed. These are (a) the effect of Green Revolution on the employment condition, (b) it's effect on wage rates in agriculture, (c) the total share of workers in consumption and lastly, (d) evaluation of this general condition, for example, their distance from the poverty line.

(a) Employment: The recent field studies of the Green Revolution areas clearly differentiates the short term effect of the mechanised farming over employment from the

long run effect. Thus according to one view the highly mechanised farming certainly increases the agricultural demand but it takes an opposite direction as the mechanization proceeds further.<sup>52</sup> "Thus a pump set requires 25 per cent of the man-hours required for a persian-wheel, a wheat thresher 25 per cent of the man-hours needed by the indigenous method, a tractor 20 per cent of the man-hours entailed in bullock-drawn implements, a reaper 20 per cent of the man-days needed by the indigenous method and so on."<sup>53</sup>

Another experience in the field study of Punjab reveals the same thing. "Examination of 10 acres well irrigated farm in Punjab, with typical cropping pattern and using traditional technology including the persian wheel as means of irrigation, shows that on an average demand for labour per acre is 51 man-days. With the use of HYV in conjunction with other inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides etc., the demand increases to 61.1 man-days, resulting from <sup>higher</sup> ~~hier~~ yields and inputs. But when we introduce a pump-set a wheat thresher, a corn sheller, and power cane crusher, a tractor and a wheat reaper, without any change in cropping the average demand for labour goes down to 25.6 days i.e. by about 57 per cent. This loss, however, is offset to a

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52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

large degree by the additional labour required for the increase in cropping intensity.<sup>54</sup>

Thus it seems that the frequent use of water, fertiliser, insecticides and weeding and other things such as double cropping, and large volume of transportation which are the important parts of mechanised farming need more labour at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level. But, <sup>with</sup> the introduction of new farm technique such as tractor, electricity operated tube-wells, the cultivation needs much less manual power.<sup>55</sup>

Even if the official verdict is accepted, it has been noted that the total number of full days/year in wage paid employment of male agricultural workers of agricultural households increases 194 in the year 1956-57 to 208 in 1964-65 and female workers from 127 to 138 in the India as a whole. This increase is certainly not an impressive one seeing the 27 per cent increase in agricultural production of the same period.<sup>56</sup>

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54. M.H. Billings, and Arjan Singh, "Labour and the Green Revolution: The Experience in Punjab", E.P.W., Vol. IV, No. 2, December 27, 1969, pp. A-221 - A-224.
55. W. Ledejinsky, "Green Revolution in Bihar", E.P.W., September 27, 1969, Vol. IV, No. 39, pp. A-147 - 162.
56. P. Bardhan, "Green Revolution and the Agricultural Workers", E.P.W., Special No. Vol. V, No. 29-31, July 1970, pp. 1239-46.

There is one more interesting piece of calculation according to which the number of additional hired labour days that were given employment by the HYV programme in different states in India in 1968-69, and calculated proportion of the reserve of unemployed effected varied from one region to another. It was 40.7 per cent for U.P. and 24.3. per cent for Punjab at one end and 1.5 per cent and 1.8 per cent for Assam and Bihar at the other.<sup>57</sup>

(b) Agricultural Wage Rates: Although it has been noted by some that money wage rate particularly in Punjab has increased to some extent.<sup>58</sup> But if this increase is compared with the general level of price, it can be shown that the condition of agriculturallabourers has not improved much.<sup>59</sup> This is true not only of the casual labourers but also of the daily wage workers of the Punjab, Haryana and some districts selected under the Government sponsored programme of I.A.D.P. Surprisingly, the increase was found in the districts of Kerala and not in the heart land of Green Revolution. The researcher, who based his study

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57. R.K. Lahiri, "Impact of HYVP on Rural labour Market", E.P.W., September, 26, 1970.

58. A. Rudra, "The Green and Greedy Revolution", South Asian Review, Vol. IV, No. 4, July 1971, pp.291-305.

59. Lahiri, No. 57, and Rudra, No. 58.

on various report published by government officers, believes that the rise is high in wage rate of Kerala because it has been a strong hold of peasant Movements.<sup>60</sup>

(c) Accumulation of Assets and Share in Total

Consumption: A survey conducted in the economics of large-scale farming in Punjab reveals that between 1955-56 and 1967-68 farmers between 100 and 150 acres in land size increased their total land, mainly through purchase by 38 per cent, whereas farmers of 20-25 acres did so only by 4 per cent. It appears that large scale holding is becoming larger.

Another survey based on official materials regarding the share in total consumption suggests the following things, (a) there is no significant change in the relative position of the bottom 30 per cent of the rural population of the Green Revolution area and since there is high price rise in the 1960s, therefore, the relative position of those rural poor has declined. (b) between 1954-55, the bottom 10 per cent of the rural poor had to pay much more than the those who are at the top (top 10 per cent), (c) between 1960-61, and 1967-68, as the consumer price index of U.P. had been higher than those who were less poor.

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60. P. Bardhan, No. 56.

(d) General Conditions: It has been noted that between 1960-61 and 1967-68 there has been a marked percentage growth in the rural population living below the minimum level of living. The percentage growth was 40 per cent. It trebled in West Bengal and grew more than two times in Punjab and Haryana. In Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Mysore and U.P. it went up to more than 40 per cent. There are, according to this estimation, of course, some states such as Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and J&K, where there is no significant change. But at the same time there is not even a single state where a significant decline has been noticed.<sup>61</sup>

#### Findings:

The above given facts are enough to suggest that in the distribution of gain of the Green Revolution<sup>too</sup> as in the cases of land reforms and other measures, the poor agricultural workers have been treated step-motherly. The lion share has once again been captured by the landlords and rich peasants. The gain of this class of landlords and rich peasants is evident from the fact that while everywhere (barring some exception because of different reasons; Kerala)

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61. See P. Bardhan, No. 56, and a Revised data in E.P.W., Vol. V, No. 46, Nov. 14, 1970, p. 1861.



in the Green Revolutionary areas there is marked increase in the number of rural proletariat, decrease in their employment opportunity, no significant change in their wages seeing the increasing price rise and increasing cost of living of the poors as compared to the rich. They are trying to make profit not only by tactics but also by force. According to one estimation, "for Punjab it has been estimated that the number of tenant decreased between 1955 and 1964 from 583,000 to 80,000 and it is presumed that this reduction has been effected mostly through eviction"<sup>62</sup>

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62. Ashok Rudra, No. 58.

CHAPTER - IIIA COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AGRARIAN SITUATIONKerala and West Bengal:

Kerala: An increasing growth of rural agricultural workers is perhaps the most important feature of the changing agrarian situation in Kerala. Within the agricultural sector there is ample evidence of fall in the proportion of cultivator and a rise in the agricultural workers. This phenomenon has been caused, apart from various historical forces, by the two important factors which came into being as a result of the successful implementation of land reforms. Firstly, not only the hutmen-dwellers have become the owner of atleast some land but even poor peasants, who used to cultivate the land of landlords, have been conferred with occupancy right as a result of tenancy. Secondly, the poor peasants have been unable to raise the productivity of land and therefore to improve their standard of living.<sup>1</sup>

Another feature of the changing aspect of the agrarian situation in Kerala refers to the fact that there is decreasing evidence of "landlessness among agricultural labourers."<sup>2</sup> But this is largely because of the fact that

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1. N. Krishnaji, "Agrarian Relations and the left Movement in Kerala" in S.A. Shah (ed), India: Degradation and Development, Part II, (Secunderabad, 1983), pp. 280-81
  2. Ibid.

even the hutmen-dwellers who, due to land reforms became owner of some land, utilize a small portion of land for cultivation and become qualified to be called as agricultural labourers.

Increasing pauperisation of the peasant is another trend in the changing agrarian relation (especially in this century) of this state. The phenomenon of increasing pauperisation lies in the man-land ratio of this state which has highest man-land ratio in India. This state is also one of the few densely populated region of the world. But this has been so from the beginning of the 20th century. Since the growth in arable land could not keep pace with the increasing population, an increase was witnessed in man-land ratio from 1901 onward.

This pauperisation of peasant, has also been to some extent caused by partition of land. Because partition of land of a joint family among the members would lead to smaller pieces of land. In the year which preceded 1931, due to passing of regulation<sup>3</sup> for the partition of Tarwad<sup>4</sup>, property of certain communities were distributed in Travancore.

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3. Ibid., p. 286.

4. 'Tarwad' is more or less equivalent of joint family.

The above given facts may give an impression that the condition of poor agricultural workers and peasant have deteriorated in the present century. Specially the quantitative datas compell one to believe so, but if the impact of land reform is evaluated properly, it can be seen that qualitatively their condition has improved as compared to their counterparts in other states.

It is Kerala among other Indian states where land reforms have most successfully been implemented. It will be obvious by analysing only three aspects of land reforms: (1) provision regarding hutmen-dwellers, (2) regarding tenancy and (3) regarding land ceilings.

Kerala land reforms Act of 1963 which was amended respectively in 1969, and 1972 proved very beneficial for the hutmen dwellers. These dwellers were the landless agricultural labourers and would live in small huts on the land of the landlords. This act provided them right to their dwelling houses and some land. Thus the gain of the landless agricultural labourers may not have been very impressive quantitatively. But so far as the distribution of land is concerned, qualitatively it has given them better working conditions.

The tenancy in Kerala was finally abolished in the year 1963 after an amendment of Kerala land reform act of 1963. Although some of the landlords successfully could transfer their land because by that time the future course of the ruling Communist Party was known to everyone.<sup>5</sup> Yet the transfer of land was very limited at the time of implementation of tenancy.

Although some tenants had to pay the compensation but there were others who were conferred with occupancy right but never paid compensation for it. Similarly, there were some formerly big tenants who, as a result of this, became big farmers. This led to the emergence of class of capitalist farmers in some areas such as Malabar.

As regards the third aspect of land reform in Kerala i.e., ceilings; the government could not successfully implement it as it did in the case of other two above mentioned cases. It happened so because some of the land by the landlords had already been transferred. That apart there were some loopholes sufficient enough for evasion.

The cropping pattern of Kerala is also an important factor to understand the existing situation in the agriculture of that state. It is more important from the Marxist point

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5. Ibid., p. 284.

of view because that society is governed by Communist Party. The striking feature of the cropping pattern is that unlike in other states, there even the poor cultivators are involved in cash cropping such as Coconut, Pepper and other spices. This leads to strong position of the poors in the market situation and therefore slows down the process of polarization between the two classes. But it does not mean that polarization has come to a state of stagnation, but only the process is very slow.<sup>6</sup>

West Bengal: Ramakrishna Mukherjee identified the three main agrarian classes in the Rural Class structure of West Bengal of pre-colonial and colonial period. These were (a) Class formed by the occupational group of landlords and supervising farmers. Castewise it was formed mainly by the 'upper caste Hindus' (b) Class comprised by self-sufficient peasantry and some artisans and trader who came from 'low caste Hindus' and Sayad Moslims, and (c) the class of agriculture workers which included the scheduled caste, the Scheduled tribes, the intermediate group and the moselim functional caste.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Ibid., p. 288

7. Ramakrishna Mukherjee, "Rural Class Structure in West Bengal", in A.R. Desai (ed), "Rural Sociology in India", (Bombay, 1969), p. 281.

The rural economy of Bengal in the early fifties can be described as predominantly sharecropper's economy because major part of total land was cultivated by the "bargdars" (landless tenants). These tenants did not have occupancy rights over land. In 1940, the direction of desirable change was indicated by "The Floud Commission". It recommended that the bargadar should be recognised as "occupancy tenants". Similarly it recommended that the bargdars on the lands of "riyats" should be granted the status of the "under-raiyati (Protected tenants)"<sup>8</sup>.

Inspite of these land reform measures, since 1953, however, the question of providing occupancy tenants rights to Bargdars are still to be implemented. The same problem was raised in 1976 and a Committee was formed. This Committee too advocated for the tenancy rights to the Bargdars. But the job of the enactment of necessary legislation is yet to accomplished.<sup>9</sup>

Yet certain changes in the agrarian relation of West Bengal have come into being. It is no more the old agrarian economy primarily based on bargdari. Similarly, it has also

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8. Daniel Thorner, The Agrarian prospect in India, (Delhi, 1956), p. 33.

9. Kalayan Dutt, "Changes in land Relations in West Bengal", No. 1, pp. 233-324.

not followed the legislative measures introduced right from 1953.<sup>10</sup> Certain basic features of the existing agrarian situation in West Bengal are as follows.

Firstly, a change has come in the pattern of ownership. There is a decrease in the proportion of landless households but increase in the proportion of small owners. However, the proportion of holdings of small owners has not increased as has increased their members. This suggests that there is a greater degree of inequality among the land owning households. Further more, a concentration of ownership has been observed among the middle group, but this concentration has decreased among the top group.

Secondly; there is a gap between ownership and operation. There is decrease both in the proportion of landless cultivators and cultivating households. It is largely because of the fact that a large number of rural households, inspite of owning land, is leasing out their land. In short, the gap between ownership and operation increases not because the cultivators are landless but primarily because of the fact that they are leaving cultivation and leasing out their land.

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10. Ibid., p. 324.



Thirdly; there is change in the modes of tēnancy. It is indicated by the fact that the small owners who lease out their whole land had to rely on agricultural wages. In fact, the sudden increase in the population of agricultural labourers in 1971 is primarily because of the de-peasantization. Another feature of the changing mode of tenancy in rural Bengal is that small owners are becoming middle owners through leasing in but on the whole, this group of middle landowners is weakening. This change further indicates that those who do not possess land but have capital, lease in land from either the absentee landlords or from small owners in order to make profit.<sup>11</sup>

#### Gujarat and Maharashtra:

G Gujarat: Gujarat state is formed by the two regions of mainland Gujarat and peninsular Gujarat. The region of mainland Gujarat was initially a part of Bombay presidency (before 1947) and, after independence to 1960, was included in the Bombay state. The peninsular region which is constituted mainly by Saurashtra and Kutch belonged to princely states. All these states were integrated with the Indian Union in 1948. Ultimately as a result of the recognition of states both were included in the Bombay state in 1956.

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11. Ibid.

There were two different land tenure systems in the two main regions of Gujarat.<sup>12</sup> In the mainland Gujarat the predominant form of land tenure was the Riyatwari system. There the state was the owner of land, and therefore the people who tilled the state land had to pay the revenue in cash to the state through intermediaries. These intermediaries generally belonged to the patidar or Anavil Brahmin caste. But even in this area some "Zamindari oasis" in the form of Bhagdari, Narwadari and Talukdari existed.

The Peninsular Gujarat which includes Saurashtra and Kutch was characterised predominantly by the zamindari system of land tenure. There the intermediaries like Girsadars, Bhayats and Mulgirasias had the property rights in land. These intermediaries were Rajput by caste. However, the Barkhalidars who included Inamdars, Jiwaldars and Dharamdars etc. lacked property rights in land.

With the achievement of Independence, a legislation was passed by the respective government of Bombay, Saurashtra and Kutch. This legislation was successfully implemented and abolished the intermediaries. Some legislations were also

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12. Ghanshyam Shah, "Rural Politics in Gujarat" in Gail Omvedt (ed), Land Caste and Politics in Indian States (Delhi, 1982), p. 136.

passed by the state government to protect the interests of the tenants so that they could be made the owners of the land. But like zamindari system, these measures could not be effectively implemented. The prime factor responsible for the failure of tenancy was the class of Patidar land holder who possessed considerable support in the congress party and in the administration.<sup>13</sup> Evaluating the effect of these measure in Saurashtra Daniel Thorner remarks "The net effect has been to weaken the hold of girasdars on the country side, but by no means to eliminate it altogether."<sup>14</sup> Similarly M.B. Desai points out "About a half the area previously under tenancy passed into the ownership of their respective erst-while tenants. About 12 per cent of the land held by 9 per cent of the tenants continued under recognised tenancy. A little over 2 per cent of the lands of tenants slipped from their in default of payment of compensation amounts. The rest were the cases in which the tenants either denied tenancy, surrendered their lands to the landowners or kept away from from the hearings of the tribunals and, therefore, missed of their own violation to be owners of the land they cultivated on lease."<sup>15</sup>

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13. Ibid.

14. Daniel Thorner, No. 8, p. 43.

15. B.M. Desai, Tenancy abolition and Emerging pattern in Gujarat, (Baroda, 1971), p. 100.

The land ceiling act of Gujarat which was for the first time passed in 1960 was amended in 1974 in order to further down the limit on ceiling. But this measure could also not be implemented effectively.<sup>16</sup>

However, the rural class structure of Gujarat of Post Zamindari abolition periods shows that "The owner-cultivator and the owner-cum-tenants cultivators are the only two classes who own some land. The rest are landless and form the agricultural proletariat group."<sup>17</sup> Among the class of owner-cultivator, the average size of holding is 9.4 acres and 5.8 acres is the average size of ownership of the other class who holds land.

If a relationship, in the context of Gujarat, is formulated between caste structure and class division, then it can be seen that caste and class do not coincide. Because only 4.3 per cent of the owner cultivators come from Brahmins and Banias who are at the top of caste hierarchy. The other class of land owner is constituted either by intermediaries castes or by "lower castes". The proportion of the intermediaries is 44.4 per cent and 37.5 per cent among the owner cultivators and owner-cum-cultivators respectively. On the other hand, the proportion of the lower castes among the total owner is 51.3 per cent and 5.5 per cent of among the part owner. The

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16. Ghanshyam Shah, No. 12, p. 137.

17. S.M. Shah, "Rural class structure in Gujarat", No. 7, p. 287.

labourers exclusively come from lower caste.<sup>18</sup>

Maharashtra: Commenting on the very partial success of the Bombay tenancy Act which was implemented in 1948, Daniel Thorner pointed out that it failed partly because in the backward regions of this state even if the peasants were economically not very weak, they were unaware of the Act. Thus, their backwardness was the one reason of this result, for in the areas where poor but conscious peasants lived, they resented against the landlords. But poor conscious peasants were limited in number.

In fact, the concentration of land has Thorner further observes, been so high that majority of the peasants always had to face indebtedness. In this situation it was just impossible for them to be involved in judicial fights with the rich landlords. Even if some of them dared to do so, they easily surrendered their status of tenants through the provision of "protected tenants."<sup>19</sup>

The various land reforms measure taken by the government could not affect much the big landlords. Other developments such as increasing commercialization and developmental measures such as cooperative movements and the Panchayati Raj System

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18. Ibid.

19. Daniel Thorner, No. 8, p. 46.

have benefited rural rich peasants. Although the 'Green Revolution' could not spread largely due to the lack of irrigation facilities, a further differentiation in the peasantry came into being because of commercialization. Thus, "A class of Kulaks has arisen in the irrigated sugarcane and cotton areas of Maharashtra."<sup>20</sup>

The rural rich have become stronger, both economically and politically, after more than 30 years of independence, also because of highly developed cooperative credit structure. It is a fact that the Reserve Bank of India has invested a large amount of money in the cooperative movement. Maharashtra possessing most developed cooperative benefitted most. Naturally these funds were utilized more by those who dominated the cooperative societies.

Even the Panchayati Raj System, which was introduced in Maharashtra after 1960, provided the rural elite a strong hold in the administrative structure. These rural elites have emerged not only as a powerful economic class but even in the field of education they have left the lowest section much behind them. In short "this increasing concentration of power in the hands of the rural rich belonging to the major peasant castes is an important features of rural life in Maharashtra today."<sup>21</sup>

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20. Nalini Pandit, "Caste and Class in Maharashtra", EPW, Vol. XIV, Nos. 7 & 8 (Bombay, 1979), p.435.

21. Ibid.

It is, however, clear that different measures taken by the government could not affect much the agrarian structure of Maharashtra in favour of the Harijan and other backward sections. But largely due to the spread of education they, especially Mahars, are becoming more conscious about the political and economic opportunities provided to them by the government. The long tradition of political consciousness created by Jyotba Phule and Amvedkar and social consciousness generated by the spread of Buddhism have contributed a lot in this regard. Now these Mahars have been reported to compete with the caste Hindus in the field of education and services. Even in the villages there have been cases where the Mahars have tried to break the traditional feudal bond imposed through caste system by giving up flaying of dead cattle and other such degrading task. This kind of consciousness sometimes causes conflict in the villages.<sup>22</sup>

Punjab and Haryana :

Punjab : The reorganization of state in 1966 brought out some remarkable changes in the population pattern of Punjab. As the 1971 census shows, the Sikhs constitutes three-fifth of the total population. The Hindus population is

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22. Ibid.

37.54 per cent and other religious group together constitute less than 3 per cent of the total population.

Although Punjab is very often cited as the notable example of state without caste influence but it would be wrong to assume that this state has been absolutely untouched by the spirit of caste system even in its modified form. Thus the Sikhs population of this state can be categorised into ( ) agriculturist (Jats), non-agriculturist and Harijans. These castes are, broadly speaking, attached with different economic categories. The agriculturist Jats are landowners. The non-Jat population of Khatri and Aroras are involved in business etc., and most of the Harijans (Majhbis) are in agriculture or industrial workers.<sup>23</sup> Even among the Hindu population there is more or less same pattern of categorization interms of caste and class.

After Independence, even after passing of various legislative measures for the agrarian reforms Punjab was reported to be the greatest centre of tenant eviction. Even after certain measures taken by the government to improve the conditions of tenants, the landlords were found either by force or manipulation, successfully enjoying large land holdings.

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23. Amarjit Singh Narang, "Punjab: Development and Politics", No. 12, p. 118.



The landlords have been, further more, successful in diffusing the effort of the government to impose ceiling through their representatives in the State Assembly.<sup>24</sup>

Before the Green Revolution came into effect approximately one half of the land was cultivated through tenancy. Broadly speaking, there were two forms of tenancy: tenant at will and occupancy tenants. Below them there were two more classes of agricultural workers and the class of attached labours called Siris, the latter being the distinct <sup>ca</sup> feature of Punjab agriculture. The siris would do the haviest work in the agriculture and in turn were given one-sixth to one-eighth of the crop. However, if these exclusively economic categories (classes) are identified with the exclusively social categories we find that those who had "malik rights are usually Jat Sikhs or pakka sikhs. The tenants (muzara) are usually ranked as less pure Muzhabi or Muzbi sikhs (tobacco smoking, possibly liquor consuming); the siris usually are Ramdasis (Harijans) who live in a separate part of the village."<sup>25</sup>

The small holders of land, Muzara and some times even big tenants protested against the exploitation of big landlords in sometimes violent form. The reason behind this seems to be

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24. Daniel Thorner, No. 8, p. 43.

25. Ibid., p. 44.

the kind of rent they had to pay and the type of the work they had to do. Generally the tenants had to do all the works and bear all the expenditure on landlords land leased in by the former. They had to pay even the land revenue which in other parts of the country was paid by the owner.

The Green Revolution has brought about certain changes in the pattern of agriculture without substantially affecting its basic structure. As we have already noticed<sup>26</sup> that the issue of the gain of the green revolution is a controversial one and there is no need of repeating it again. But some major changes brought about by the green revolution can be summarised in brief.

First of all, Punjab of today is a land of owner cultivator and now only about 11 per cent of cultivated land is leased out.<sup>27</sup> The general style of agricultural production is that of capitalist one, and even ordinary peasant regularly hire labour for profit making. This is true even in the case of marginal farmers i.e. those who have 5 acres of holding and depend mainly on family labour.

The forces of green revolution has also affected positively employment and productivity level and the wage level of agricultural labourers. Specially in Punjab which has

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26. See chapter II of this dissertation.

27. Amarjit Singh Nagang, No.12, p. 125.

never experienced large scale landless labourers, due to mechanized farming and increased agricultural output, agricultural wages have increased. However according to one interpretation this initial gain of agricultural labour is successfully countered by the landowner. The landowner substantially weakens the bargaining position of agricultural workers by relying more on machine, refusing to give them the traditional extra help in the form of fodder for the animals of workers, and by denying to give them interest free loan in advance which was practiced earlier.<sup>28</sup>

As regards the distribution of ownership and operational holdings, as has been stated at the outset, there are still very unevenly distributed landholdings and according to one estimation land distribution has become even more skewed over the period 1961-1971.

Haryana : The agrarian situation of Haryana, on the other hand, can be briefly summarised in the following ways. (a) The Green Revolution has improved the general condition of the agricultural workers. The agricultural workers in Haryana now earn more than they used to earn before. It has resulted in improving their standard of living in real terms. They

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28. F.R. Frankel, "India's Green Revolution. Economic Gains and Political Costs, (New Jersey, 1971), quoted in Amarjit Singh Narang, No. 12, p. 126.

now have greater security of employment and it is true even in the case of casual workers. As a result of this there is shift from casual labour to permanent labour status. Further-more, the Green Revolution has also strengthened their bargaining position. But inspite of these benefits which have infact made their position stronger, there is lack of capacity of collective action among them. Surprisingly, the permanent labours whose contract are very formal, are less interested in collective action than the casual labours.<sup>29</sup> This phenomenon has been caused neither by the level of interest nor by the amount of debt but primarily by the new formal labour contract and new form of indebtness.

A kind of conservatism is increasingly taking place among the landowners as group. Thus after capital accumulation of a decade they are involved in spending on improvement of dwelling, ceremonial expenditure and other similar conspicuous consumption. In some areas they practice usury too.

The highly mechanised farming has, of course, enhanced the labour demand in the agriculture of Haryana but at the same time increasing division of household hampers it. Because in most of the cases the small land owners do not employ permanent labour, not do they depend on the casual labours but

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29. S. Bhalla, "New Relation of Production in Haryana" in S.A. Shah (ed), No. 1, pp. 318-320.

are mainly depending on unpaid family labour. This brief account of Haryana agriculture suggests that the condition of agricultural wage worker is not as good as it was expected to be made by the forces of Green Revolution.

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar:

Uttar Pradesh: Uttar Pradesh was, like the most of the north Indian states, a typical example of the closed system of stratification. It was so because before 1947 and especially till the abolition of zamindari system in 1954, different dimensions of social inequality such as caste (status) land (class) and power coincided. The landlords and zamindars of this state (broadly speaking) not only belonged to upper stratum of the caste hierarchy such as Brahmins and Thakurs (Rajputs) but were also very strong politically.

The lower caste peasants were totally dependent on their upper caste maliks because their (peasant's) land to cultivate and stay, the drinking water of well and pond, and agricultural irrigation belonged to the landlords and zamindars.<sup>30</sup> For this they had to pay not only in cash and kind but generally had to do beggar. This apart, they had to give to their maliks

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30. Rajendra Singh, "Caste, land and Power in Uttar Pradesh: 1975-1970", No. 12, p. 79.

several other kinds of payment such as bidhu (payment at the time of malik's daughter marriage) hathiahi and ghorahi ( for the purchase of elephant and horses) and Pujahi (payment for religious causes). This kind of exploitative measures were practiced all over U.P.<sup>31</sup>

But this system of closed stratification started changing in colonial period itself and manifested into the systematic and consistent erosion of landed class not only in Uttar Pradesh but whole of North India.<sup>32</sup> During 1775 to 1895 in U.P. the zamindars and big landlords saw a kind of radical attitude towards them by the British although the rule of Britishers during 1858-1947 adopted a soft attitude towards the zamindar. But, influenced by the erstwhile company intellectuals, became very radical and anti-zamindars.

The periods which followed 1947 became very disastrous for the zamindars and big landlords. With the abolition of zamindari system in 1954, the whole of U.P. and for that matter the entire north Indian state witnessed growing pauperization of the class of big zamindars. This has been reported by quite a few field studies of Basti district and

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31. M.H.Siddiqui, Agrarian unrest in North India: The United Provinces, 1918-22, (New Delhi, 1978), p. 101.

32. Rajendra Singh, No. 12, p. 83.

some village of Rajasthan<sup>33</sup>. These studies not only draw our attention towards the pauperisation of the former zamindar but also the emergence of a new middle class of some rich peasant castes.

The relative change in the agrarian situation of post zamindari abolition U.P. should not be exaggerated because the traditionally powerful zamindar even after 1954 efficiently manipulated the things and with the help of 'patwari' made a biased distribution between 'Sir' and 'kudkast' land. These former zamindars became bhumidhars and the 2/3 of the peasants continued to be holder of weak and inferior rights in land.<sup>34</sup>

Yet it is a fact beyond doubt that millions of peasant, after 1954 became owner of land through purchasing it. Not only that, a large number of what Daniel Thorner calls absentee landlord have been severed for ever. Not only 6 to 12

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33. (a) Rajendra Singh, "Agrarian Social structure and peasant unrest: A Case Study of land Grab Movement in District Basti; East Uttar Pradesh", Sociological Bulletin, (New Delhi, 1974), Vol. 23, No. 1.

(b) Rajendra Singh, "Peasant Movement in Uttar Pradesh: A Study in the Politics of Land Control in Basti District, 1801-1970" in M.S.A. Rao (ed), "Social Movements in India", (New Delhi, 1978).

(c) K.L. Sharma, 'Stress in Caste Stratification: A Study of Six Villages in Rajasthan', EPW (Bombay, 1969), Vol. IV, No. 3.

34. Daniel Thorner, No. 8, p. 47.

landlords who reside within villages but do not participate in actual cultivation are found in each U.P. village.<sup>35</sup>

This change in the agrarian structure of this state has effected the caste, land and power equation too. The newly emerged class of Kulak which consist of Ahirs and Kurmis have become very dominant. Due to their superior position in caste hierarchy as compared to Harijans or dalits, and large joint family structure, they have earned money from urban sector by sending their family members there.<sup>36</sup>

In fact the abolition of zamindari and even the forces of colonialism have benefited them most. The Harijans are still much behind these kulaks, ex-zamindars and landlords from upper castes are the only loser. Recent cases of conflict between backward class and Harijan explain this change very efficiently.

Traditional Bihar,<sup>37</sup> mainly before 1947 was not far different from U.P, so far as the system of stratification is concerned. Traditionally upper castes of Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs controlled major part of land, inspite of their weak numerical strength. Kayasths, another upper caste had a clear

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35. Ibid.

36. Rajendra Singh, No. 12, pp. 77-81.

37. A detail discription of agrarian situation both historically and in contemporary phase havebeen made in the last chapter. However, here only major points of similarities and differences will be mentioned.



lead in the field of education. These four castes together dominated the political field till 1967.

The peasant tenants belonged to the upper middle castes, although some of the upper caste poors have also been from the beginning, peasants. The agricultural worker mainly come from the scheduled castes and poor lower middle castes.

The zamindari abolition, and other measures for agrarian reforms could not effect the agrarian structure of Bihar because still there are estates which possess more than 500 hundred acres of land.<sup>38</sup> Even big landlors still have, in some cases, more than 300-400 acres of land.

But even in the case of Bihar too, a middle class has emerged. This middle class consists of the Koeris Kurmis and Yadavas. This emergence was caused, apart from the abolition of zamindari, by mechanised farming. Their newly gained strong position in the field of economy helped making them strong in the political arena also. This phenomenon has been observed by a good number of students involved in the study of society in Bihar. They remark "after the abolition of zamindari and the introduction of new technology in

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38. Daniel Thorner, No. 8, p. 35.

agriculture the upper middle castes emerged as an important factor in the politics of Bihar. The Koeris, Kurmis and Yadavas are efficient agricultural enterprenures. The generated the maximum surplus in agriculture with their newly acquired economic power they started vying for political power."<sup>39</sup>

The Scheduled castes of Bihar, as elsewhere, have found it difficult to improve their position substantially either in the field of economy or politics. Although there are certain cases of Harijan elites who are economically well off hold top position in the politics of Bihar and some time occupies prominent position in the national politics but these are the individual cases and entirely irrelevant for making universal comments.

### Rajasthan :

Till Independence Rajasthan was considered to be the least developed state in India. The land reforms measures taken by the government was resisted most <sup>a</sup>svagely in this state by its landed gentry. The resistant was natural because all of the jagirdars (intermediaries) land was cultivated by their inferior tenants. A complete and effective abolition of land reform and therefore intermediaries would have vanished

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39. H.Dhar et al, "Caste and Polity in Bihar", No. 12, p.108.

the entire community of Jagirdars. The Jagirdars and most of the princely kings have been very dominant there in terms of not only caste and wealth but power also. Therefore, probably to maintain the status quo the Rajasthan Land Reforms and Resumption of Jagirs Act of 1952 made a provision allowing these Jagirdars to keep some land for self-cultivation. This led to the mass scale eviction of the tenants and in most of the cases this was done through physical means.<sup>40</sup>

Thus these measures, could not change the old class structure of Rajasthan. The same thing has been noted by some recent studies done by some students of Sociology. Dr. K.L. Sharma<sup>41</sup> for example, on the basis of his study of the class structure of some villages in Rajasthan, concludes that even after the abolition of zamindari, jagirdari and introduction of Panchayati Raj, there is no marked changes in the class structure of rural Rajasthan.

A comparative study of the agrarian situation of the above mentioned states would suggest that all the 'agrarian reforms measures taken by the governments through land reforms have been a failure except the abolition of zamindari, in all states. Kerala is the only state where land reforms measures

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40. Daniel Thorner, No. 8, pp. 31-32.

41. K.L. Sharma, "Changing Class Stratification in Rural Rajasthan", Man in India, Vol. L, No. 3, July-September 1970.

have been implemented successfully. But even in the case of Kerala, the land ceiling could not be implemented successfully. From this point of view Bihar, U.P. and Rajasthan have been the least effected regions.

But despite the fact that the states like Bihar and U.P. have been least affected a change in its class structure (for that matters entire North India) has come into being. This has been noted by a large number of field studies which reveal the growing pauperisation of ex-zamindars (upper caste) and emergence of a 'kulak class'. The latter phenomenon has been noticed in the case of Maharashtra too.

The position of the weakers section of the society, i.e. the class of agricultural labourers hasnot improved substantially except in the case of Kerala and West Bengal. Kerala has done well than West Bengal in this regard. The position of working agriculturists have improved somewhat in Punjab and Haryana largely due to the Green Revolution. But their bargaining position have not improved substantially. Maharashtra's weakest population has been reported to be improving largely because of the consiousness generated by Budhism and its age old tradition of social movements. Although there is no correlation between caste and class in Gujarat, yet the position of lowest section has not changed substantially. Overall picture, therefore, gives an impression of some changes in the class structure which is contrary to the expectation of agrarian reforms measures in post Independent India.

CHAPTER - IVAGRARIAN RELATIONS IN BIHAR

The agrarian question of Bihar not only requires a clear understanding of the existing mode of production but also a close look at the historical forces which led to the development of this mode of production. The permanent settlement of Bengal<sup>1</sup> introduced by Cornwallis in the year 1793 is the first sequence of this series.

The permanent settlement and development of agrarian structure:

The ideological motive of the permanent settlement introduced by the British East India Company has been a moot point, but it is a fact beyond doubt that it confirmed the property right over land in zamindars. The permanent settlement of 1793, was, in consequence, so exploitative that not only it declared the big land-lords and zamindars as the owners of the land but also prepared the way for the exploitation of poor peasants and poor section of society through exorbitant rent. It was so because there was no mention of the wage through which the interest of the poor

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1. Bihar was part of Bengal when the Permanent Settlement was introduced.

peasantry could be safe-guarded. This helped in giving the feudal shape to the agrarian economy of Bihar.<sup>2</sup>

Some subsequent regulations such as the famous haftman regulation 7 of 1799, the Pancham Regulation 5 of 1812 and 11 of 1822 only helped in consolidating the strong position of the zamindars at the expense of poor masses. Through the Act 19 of 1859, Act 8 of 1885 and the renowned Bengal Tenancy Act which became with certain changes, the Bihar Tenancy Act, the rights of peasantry were recognised by law, though these were based on the basic spirit of the Permanent Settlement.<sup>3</sup>

The agrarian structure of Bihar proper till 1930s evolved under the guidelines of the Act of 1885, and in modified forms it still continues to exist. The Act of 1885, however, contained in it some worst features of permanent settlement in Bihar which was, to some extent, absent in Bengal. It was so because while in Bengal there was some aware leadership and education; the Bihar's peasantry lacked proper awareness. Apart from this, the growth rate

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2. A.N. Das, *Agrarian Unrest and Socio-economic change in Bihar 1900-1980*, (New Delhi, 1983), p. 22.

3. Ibid., p. 23.

of population in Bihar proper was higher than Bengal.<sup>4</sup> Similarly inspite of the fact that in Bihar, unlike Bengal, there were few large estates like Darbhanga, Bettiah, Banali and Dumraon etc., there were large number of small zamindars.

But even the small size of the holdings were not effectively and efficiently managed by the landlords and big zamindars themselves. They had large number of people who worked as the "highly remunerated set of middlemen" to look after their business. Barring some, these landlords did not involve themselves in the affairs of cultivation. They only confined themselves to the work of general inspection. Because actual participation in these affairs was regarded as derogatory on their part. It was so because in the Traditional Indian Society there has been a binary opposition between the amount of land holdings and the degree of participation in the physical labour.<sup>5</sup> This binary opposition between these two were formed because of concept of status symbol interpreted in terms of Purity and Pollution

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4. B.B.Chawdhury, "Land Market in Eastern India 1793-1940", Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. XII, No. 1, Jan-March 1975, p. 33.
  5. Andre Beteille, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, (Delhi, 1974), particularly Chapter "ideas and interest".

leading to hierarchy, restricted marriage, and varna occupation.<sup>6</sup>

However, these middlemen created by the zamindars and big landlords not only exploited the poor peasantry but also adversely effected the Zamindar's economic position leading to their indebtness to the extent that land came into market. Consequently a considerable amount of land passed into the hands of various money lenders.<sup>7</sup> This phenomenon of land-market was common not only to the whole of Bengal but the similar kind of trend of deteriorating condition of large holdings have been reported by some other students of sociology in other parts of India.<sup>8</sup>

It has been pointed out that the land increasingly came in the market in the whole of Bengal Province. But there were certain differences in the situation of Bengal and Bihar proper. First of all, there was variation in the land price in these two states (higher in Bihar). However, there were several factors responsible for the rising price of the land. Important among them were (1) Population growth

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6. L. Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus (trans. by M. Sainsbury), (London, 1970).
7. A.N. Das, No. 2, pp. 27-31.
8. F.G. Bailey, Caste and the Economic Frontier. (Manchester, 1957).



leading to pressure on land. (2) Increase and stability in the income of various estates and (3) Certain favourable laws. Increase and stability in the income of estates were caused by improved cultivation and cash crop farming such as jute and sugar cane.<sup>9</sup> Apart from the above mentioned factors, there were certain others which also helped in increasing income of landlords and big zamindars. These were the system of produce rent, some favourable laws and practice of joint estates.

However, there were certain important causes which led to high price of landed property in Bihar as compared to Bengal. Firstly, the revenue demand in Bengal was higher than in Bihar and it was more in bigger estates. Secondly, while in Bengal the systems of Jotedar came into being, in Bihar even the rich peasants remained under-tenants. Thirdly, in the Southern District of gangetic plains, after 1876, there came into being irrigation facilities out of Sone canal leading to increase in agricultural output and increasing the income of zamindars. This kind of irrigation facilities was absent in Bengal. This improved irrigation facilities and improved commercialization of farming of this region

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9. A.N. Das, No. 2, p. 32.

proved to be the material ground for the large scale peasant movements.<sup>10</sup> It seems that due to large scale participation of the peasantry of this region in the revolt of 1857, the Britishers would have decided to improve agriculture to stop agrarian tension in the future. Lastly, the low level of political consciousness among the peasants of Bihar, unlike that of Bengal, and growing rate of population also contributed to a great extent.<sup>11</sup>

In brief, the conditions of the poor section of the lower stratum of the agrarian society of 1930s of Bihar can be summarised by quoting one para of Arbind N. Das. "The situation in the 1930, in Bihar was such that the pressure of the zamindar and zamindar's agent or amala, defeated all efforts of the administration even to provide such limited relief as it thought fit to the oppressed tenantry. Rights of tenancy had little meaning where occupancy could not be proved, and the near universal failure to grant receipts scarcely permitted much proof. Thus the provisions of the tenancy Act regarding 12 years cultivation bringing about occupancy rights notwithstanding, the large

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10. K. Mukherji et al, "Bhojpur: the Long War" Mainstream, (New Delhi), Vol. XVI, Nos. 45-46, July 8 and 15, 1978.

11. A.N. Das, No. 2, pp. 34-35.

bulk of the tenantry was composed of tenants at will, liable to evictions, subject to oppression forced labour-begar and illegal but effectively exacted cesses-abwabs - not to speak of exorbitant rents which were ruthlessly collected".<sup>12</sup>

Agricultural surplus and the agrarian classes:

The most important thing on which the permanent settlement was based was the "share in the agricultural surplus in the control over land." The share in this surplus varied in time and region but the essence remained there. The prime mode of control over land of the landlords, therefore, was the payment made by the peasants to the landlords.

The share of the Government payable by the zamindars was fixed but the actual surplus coming out of agriculture was not known to the Government. It was largely because of the fact that the British administration was not interested in it. Secondly, the zamindars were able to hide the facts through keeping duplicate papers. Thus the extension of cultivation irrigation and income from fisheries, orchards, etc. benefited the zamindars only - neither the Government nor the peasants. These zamindars and big landlords were benefited also from some other sources such as labour rent, produce rent and homage etc.

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12. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

The system of primary tenancy, itself was very exploitative and in it the most exploitative was the "produce rents" or "bhaoli system". The produce rent system was different from another rent payable in kind by the share croppers in which there was absence of customary or legal rights. This customary produce rent has been one of the various causes of agrarian tension in this period.<sup>13</sup>

Different forms of the extortion of agricultural surplus during zamindari period:

There are four main types of agricultural surplus. These are (1) In the form of products (use value). (2) In the form of work (labour service) and in the form of money (exchange value). The surplus in the form of money is the basic feature of capitalist economy. In the pre-capitalist society the other two forms are found. In the transitional economy which is characterised by the semi-feudal or semi-capitalist mode of production, all the three forms are found. The zamindari period of Bihar, therefore, can be characterised as transitional in nature because of the presence of all three forms in varying degree and forms, and sometimes it was collected ruthlessly by the landlords.

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13. Ibid., pp. 40-42.

However, the land used by the peasants were declared as 'Bakhast' land if they failed to pay the required rent in the form of cash. The poor peasantry generally had to pay for their own land declared as 'Bakhast land' and generally the landlords would not give any kind of receipt to be produced to claim the occupancy right. This became the source of agrarian tension.

Apart from the above mentioned form of exaction, the poor peasantry was exploited through salami - money paid at the time of transfer of occupancy holding from one peasant to another, and system of corvee or Begar - physical work without payment. Not only this, "there existed in fact, an extra ordinary large number of such exactions e.g. Bhusavan (supplying <sup>FODDER</sup> such for the zamindar's cattle), motoravan (for purchasing zamindar's car), Hathiyavan (for purchasing zamindar's elephant), Begavan (for planting the zamindar's orchard), Petpiravan (when zamindar's wife conceived), Jammavan (when the zamindar was blessed with an offspring), Holiyavan (when the zamindar celebrated the Holi festival), Pakawan (when the zamindar got a boil) and so on."<sup>14</sup> A similar kind of payment was given by the poor peasants to the zamindars for their other personal causes such as for the

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14. Ibid., pp. 44-45.

education of their sons and if the zamindar gave any party to big government officials.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the above mentioned kind of the uneven distribution of land surplus, various kinds of payment in the three forms of service, goods, and money and other kinds of exploitation in all forms of lives of the poor peasantry prepared the framework under which the agrarian relation of Bihar developed till the abolition of Zamindari System and other measures adopted after 1947 by the Government of India and other independent efforts. But it does not mean, as we will see later, that these measures brought about a drastic change in the basic structure of the economy of Bihar.

#### Agrarian Movements:

Despite a general backward conditions, the agricultural economy of Bihar during the first half of the 19th century witnessed some kind of progress. It was caused by the increase of cultivation of some Cash crops like p@pp/and opium, introduction of "Potato and improved irrigation facilities.

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15. H.D. Malaviya, Land Reforms in India, (New Delhi, 1955), pp. 103-4, quoted in A. Das, No. 2, p. 45.

But the gain achieved by the limited progress in agriculture was countered by the forces of Colonialism. First of all, the de-industrialization and de-urbanization which were caused by the increasing import of goods from England had an adverse effects on agriculture, for it led to the pauperization of rural masses. Secondly, growing cultivation of cash crops such as indigo and poppy which was linked directly to the colonial trade of Britain became a barrier in the growth of food grain cultivation in the country-side. The limited growth of local industry hindered the progress in the field of other cash crops.

As a result of this "while the food crop section of Bihar's agriculture continued for a long time to exist in relatively non-commercial, subsistence set-up under condition of rack-renting, corvee and heavy indebtedness of the peasantry, the cash crop section was tied not to the operation of the Bihar, over even the Indian Market, but to the colonial market mechanism."<sup>16</sup> However, after 1920, the situation started changing in the positive direction but before it could improve to a satisfactory point, in the year 1929, the wide depression came into force leading to the plunder of the peasantry for next 12 years or so. In 1942-43, the price

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16. A.N. Das, No. 2, p. 49.

started shooting up due to second war. This further deteriorated the conditions of the poor masses. The conditions of the landowners, on the other hand improved to some extent.

In spite of the fact that the tea plantation and Industrial City of Calcutta absorbed some rural labour, those who remained in village lost their control over land, and faced worst conditions between 1931 and 1951. Only 50 per cent of the increased population were absorbed in the work other than agricultural and the percentage of the population on agriculture which was 98.8 in 1931, came to 87.3 in 1951.<sup>17</sup> The poor masses in the countryside was not only adversely effected by the unnatural population growth but some other factors too contributed in this regard. Since there was abundant cheap agricultural labourer in the rural areas, the position of landowner in the form of money lenders became strong. It was so because now the poor peasants were dependent on them not only for the payment of land rent but also for fulfilling their basic family requirement.

Thus, the predominant mode of production in Bihar which was "semi-feudal"; with the rapid commercialization and

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17. A.N. Das, No. 2, p. 50.



economic unification of the country, made a link between politically isolated villages. The peasantry of this region which had been unconscious traditionally, as compared to Bengal, stood against the landlords and big zamindars. Although there had been some cases of peasant revolt even earlier such as 'the Santhal Insurrection of 1955-56, Munda uprising of 1899-1901 and Indigo riots of 1867, 1877 and 1907, but only after the first world war it took a different form of more sustaining and continuing character.

Movement of Champaran: A  
Sociological Interpretation:

The Champaran Satayagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi in the year 1917 was probably the first in the series of new agrarian movements after the first world war. How this all happened is known to everyone. Therefore, it would be suffice to analyse the movement from the view point of this study. We will, therefore, deal mainly with (i) nature of the leadership of the movement and (ii) the characteristics of the movement in general.

It is generally assumed that there were only three constituents of this movement. These were the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, a group of Bihar advocates, and some people

from agriculture such as Rajkumar Shukla. It is also argued that the peasantry of that region remained inactive. This kind of argument has been put forward by a large number of Conventional Historians and some other writers on this movement of Bihar.<sup>18</sup>

A critical analysis of the socio-political dimensions of Champaran Movement, and particularly its leadership would suggest that this movement was limited in its scope. It was so, largely because of the fact that while there was a<sup>19</sup> wide-spread grievance against the British forced indigo planters, the local leadership was involved in it mainly because of its own interest.

Thus recently some students of social movements have rightly argued that to say that the peasantry of Champaran remained completely passive is to hide the facts. Jaques Pouchcapaduss for example, observes that the local leaders like Rajkumar Shukla, Khendar Rai, and Sant Rautt belonged to that class of rural Bihar which could be characterised as rich peasantry. Because the Independent size of the holding

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18. For a brief description of the analysis made by the conventional historians see A.N. Das, entitled "The seeds of Peasant", No. 2.
19. Jaques Pouchcapaduss, "Local leaders and the Intelligentsia in the Champaran Satyagraha." Contribution to the Indian Sociology, (New Delhi), November 1974.

of these leaders, were many times more than the average size of the holding of Champaran of that period.<sup>20</sup>

The rich peasants of Champaran were afraid of the British Indigo plantation because of the rising prices of food grains and cash crops like sugarcane etc. Especially the developed facilities of irrigation made them conscious of the fact that by cultivating indigo they were suffering a massive economic loss. Not only the economic interest of the local rich peasants clashed with the foreign indigo planters. The local rich peasantry was also jealous of the alien power because of forced labour force. According to the local customs, the local high caste people and especially the landlords had the first right to employ the agricultural workers on their farms. It was so because of the fact that being the high caste people, they would not think in terms of doing physical work by their own hands.<sup>21</sup>

The local rich peasants were also annoyed with the alien power because the ~~latter~~ were proving as a barrier in expanding the money lending capacity of the farmers. It

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20. G. Mishra, "The Socio-economic Background of Gandhi's Champaran Movement". Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1968.

21. A.N. Das, No. 2, p. 60.

should be born in mind that the local leaders like Shukla and Khendar Rai were money lenders.<sup>22</sup> This is also a fact that the Indigo-planters encouraged the local agricultural workers through advance payments every year,<sup>23</sup> though for their own purpose. However, the advance payment by the alien rulers was on free interest unlike the money lending by the indigenous landlords and money lenders. It is interesting to point out that the second level leaders like Dr. Rajindra Prasad and Anugrah Narayan Singha were too the big zamindars.

The above analysis of the socio-economic and political aspects of the Champaran Movement indicates that (i) the theory of middle peasant propogated by some students of agrarian movement does not stand valid in this context because the local leaders of this movement were infact rich peasants. (ii) The movement, from the view point of socialist revolutionary apprach, was limited in its scope because the leaders of this movement were active more because of their own interest and less for the rural poor masses.

However, one should not draw a conclusion, as some marxists students of social science do, that even Mahatma Gandhi'

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22. Jaques Pouchcapaduss, No. 19.

23. G. Mishra, No. 20.

stand was a bourgeois stand.<sup>24</sup> One should try to see the context in which Gandhiji had to seek the cooperation of middle and rich peasants and even landlords etc. Mahatma Gandhi was aware of the fact that the foreign colonial forces were more dangerous and exploitative than the indigenous feudal capitalist forces. Because under colonialism, the poor masses were exploited both by the foreign colonial forces and the native feudal, capitalists elements. And any revolutionary mass movements cannot be successfully fought with these two forces, at a time. It was more true in the Indian context for at different phases of freedom struggle, the Indian bourgeoisie has aligned with the Britishers. Most of the Marxist writers should agree with the above, given arguments. Gandhi's later activities such as his movement for the upliftment of the poors like Harijans and his life long struggle for communal harmony are suffice to suggest that he was no less progressive than any leader in the history of mass revolution in the world.

Kisan Sabha: Kisan Sabha grew up out of the Sri Sitaram Ashram at Bihta (Patna) established by Swami Sahjanand Saraswati. The exploitation by the landlords of Masaura

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24. A.N. Das has vehemently criticised even Mahatma Gandhi, No. 2.

(near Gaya) contributed most in its formation. Initially Sahjanand did not take up the issue for he believed that this would provoke landlords and lead to further exploitation of the peasantry. But ultimately when he became convinced about the notorious exploitation of that locality, he decided to form an organization which would promote harmony between the landlords and kisan. The initial objective of this organization was to avoid tension in the countryside but soon after Sahjanand started believing in class struggle after seeing the adamant attitude of the landlords.

In the meantime, tension in other parts of Bihar, partly due to Bakhasht issues and partly because of a Bill supposed to be passed by the dominant factions of legislature supported by the big landlords and zamindars. This bill was meant to amend the tenancy act. Some peasants leader like Ramdayalu Singh, and Pandit Yamuna Kargee etc. decided to form an All Bihar Kisan Sabha to pressurise from outside for dropping the Bill. Ultimately it was formed on 7th November, 1929, with Sahjanand as the President and S.K.Sinha (first C.M. Bihar) as the General Secretary.

This organisation inspite of opposition from certain sections of congressmen and political leaders became so popular that it successfully forced the government to withdraw

the Bill; which if passed, would have further weakened the position of the peasants.<sup>25</sup>

Agrarian Movements in Contemporary Bihar:

There are certain similarities and differences between the contemporary movements and those which occurred in the past due to agricultural exploitation in Bihar. In both the phases some extra economic issues such as caste factors, were common.<sup>26</sup> So far as the difference is concerned, in the social movement, which occurred in the 1960s and 70s, the main participants came from low socio-economic order of society. They were mainly the poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural workers belonging to the scheduled castes and other weaker sections of the society.<sup>27</sup> The second point of difference lies in the fact that unlike under zamindari system, now these poor section of people had to fight with the new rich peasant which emerged as a consequence of the abolition of zamindari system.<sup>28</sup>

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25. A.N. Das, No. 2, pp. 88-95.

26. Arun Sinha, "Belchhi Revised", EPW, 6 August, 1977.

27. R.S. Joshi, "Dark World of Harijans and Adivasi", Link (Delhi), 5 June 1977.

28. Gail Omvedt (ed), Land Caste and Politics in Indian States (Delhi, 1982), pp. 1-36.

Post-1947 Period. Struggle for the Sathi farms:

The Sathi farms movement was the first important agrarian movement in post-independent Bihar. It was launched in the Champaran District where Gandhiji had launched his famous 1917 Movement against forced indigo farming. In fact the root of this movement goes back to pre-independence days of the first Congress Ministry (under Provincial Autonomy). It was started against the misconduct of Mr. B.B.Verma who was appointed as the first Indian Manager of the Bettiah Raj which was under the court of wards. Mr. Verma had settled large amount of land not only on the name of his kinsmen but also on the name of some of important congress leaders and some industrialists like Birla and Nepani who wanted to establish sugar-cane plantation for their factories. This was just against the rule of settlement of such lands in a ward of 'Encumbered estate'. Due to peasants resistance, the congress party and some of its leaders, Brajapati Mishra was chosen as the mediator between the Peasants and Shahis (another party on whose name too but later the land was transferred).

Mr. Mishra not only said that only 45 acres of land should be surrendered by Shahi but settled some land on his



own name too. The peasants refused to accept this settlement. In the meantime Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya, on behalf of the Socialist Party, intervened. But ultimately on the advice of Sardar Patel the settlement between Mishra and Shahi was cancelled by the government of Bihar. Mr. Mishra made a trust and transferred the land on the name of trust. For the cancellation of the settlement with Shahi, the government of Bihar passed a legislation called "Sathi land restoration Act, 1950". But it was declared null and void by the Supreme Court. Although the land is still under the control of these big shots, this movement became a source of inspiration for the peasant struggling against their exploitation in other part of Bihar.<sup>29</sup>

#### Case of Jhakia Village :

One of them was the movement of Jhakia Village of the eastern part of the same Champaran district. There the peasants stood against the social and economic exploitation of landlords. On the social level the poor peasants who belonged to the lower caste hierarchy refused to pay the traditionally continued respect to the upper caste landlords. For the economic exploitation, they took the question of wages of agricultural labour and on both the levels, inspite

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29. A.N. Das, No. 2, pp. 223-225.

of the resistance from big landlords and state powers, they successfully showed their strength by increasing the wage of 6 Katchi seers to 9 Katchi seers.<sup>30</sup> After 1960, although cases of peasant revolts against their exploitation have been reported from different part of Bihar but some regions have been the strong holds of organised movements. In most of the cases the participants have been guided by the ideology of one of another faction of CPI (M.L.). Three cases of this period from different parts of Bihar would be suffice to indicate the kind of exploitation of peasantry and their locally organised strength. Although these small cases of peasant revolts are regional in character, yet draw the attention of not only the government officers and national leaders but also social scientists.

(A) To begin with the "Land grab movement" which came into force after the failure of the various measures of agrarian reforms such as the land reforms and Bhoodan Movement. A resentment culminated among the evicted poor tenants and the agricultural labourers.

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30. Ibid., pp. 226-228.

Even in this case there were several reasons other than economic which helped in growing the landgrab movement in 1970s. These were (1) Inspiration <sup>from</sup> the landgrab movement of Bengal and some parts of Bihar, (2) the fall of Congress in 1967 and coming into power of the Joint Front Ministry in Bihar. Because it was believed that various parties of the front such as CPI, Socialist and Jharkhand were favourable to the poors. (3) Commitments of this new government, perhaps because of its own political purpose, and enactment of some legislations such as the abolition of "The Tata Jamindari Act" and (4) The stated firm decision of the government to implement land reforms and ceiling.

This movement took a momentum in the three districts of Purnea, Muzzaffarpur and Monghyr and the peasants (especially the evicted tenant) started capturing the evicted land. In spite of opposition of various political parties such as Jansangh, B.K.D., and an effort for mediation by J.P., it could not be checked. The poor peasants continued to occupy more and more evicted and ceiling surplus lands.

Ultimately the government had to publish the name of 125 big zamindars like Dharbanga, Hathua, Kur<sup>s</sup>ela, and Ramgarh etc., and announced that their surplus would be

immediately brought into ceiling Act of 1961. It was also announced that notices are being served to 5 big zamindars of 587 blocks. Through these measures government could narrowed it down to some extent. But unfortunately it came to end when on 18th August, 1970 the C.P.I decided to withdraw this movement.<sup>31</sup>

(B) Masaurhi (Patna District) also witnessed some cases of peasant uprisings in this period. Till 1970, Madhuban village of Dhanarug block of Patna district some square miles of land would be cleared by the Harijans for their settlement on the instructions of the government. But after it was cleared Yadav rich peasants captured it by force. This led to the killing of three Yadav land owners of a nearby village called Patharhat. After that village was declared "Naxalite-infected."

Neema Village, in Punpun block of the same district was a notorious case of exploitation by the landowners over the poor peasants (mostly harijans). The struggle started between the landowners and the agricultural labourers on the issue of wages prescribed by the government. Under the leadership of Virda Mushar in 1975 they refused to do begar and sent their women to the landlords houses for work.

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31. Ibid., p. 239.

32. Ibid., pp. 239-240.

ultimately they were brutally suppressed with the help of state power and its para military force.<sup>32</sup>

(C) Bhojpur: Like in other parts of Bihar, in Bhojpur too the agrarian Movements have seen the remarkable difference between the two major phases of peasant movements. It is a well known fact that in the first war of independence the peasantry of this region fought bravely under the leadership of Kunwar Singh and his associates. During the final phase of national struggle, in 1930s and 1940s, too the peasantry was led by upper caste rich peasant leaders.<sup>33</sup> The peasants of this region fought against Zamindari system with the help of Kisan Sabha under the leadership of Triveni Singh.<sup>34</sup>

But the period which followed the 1947 have witnessed an entirely different equation. Most of the peasant struggles have been fought between the upper caste rich peasants and the lower castes (mainly SCs) agricultural labourers and poor tenants.

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32. Ibid., pp. 239-240.

33. K.Mukherjee et al, No. 10.

34. Max Harcourt, "Kisan population and Revolution in Rural India: the 1942 Disturbances in Bihar and East United Provinces" in D.A. Low(ed) Congress and the Raj, London, 1977).

One of the <sup>important</sup> ~~rest~~ causes responsible for spread of agrarian tension in the contemporary Bhojpur is the mechanised farming as a result of "Green Revolution". The agricultural workers (mainly the attached workers) who were paid both in cash and in kind<sup>35</sup>, now found it very difficult to survive because the large scale farming in the long run needs less manual labour.<sup>36</sup>

This disappointment of the agricultural workers who mainly hail from lower castes and scheduled castes were given the ideological support of some Naxalite leaders like Satyanarayan Singh and Kesho Prasad Singh. These were the outsiders. But some people from themselves too come to the forefront. In most of the cases, however, these grassroot revolutionaries were compelled by the landlords to fight against the traditional suppression of the zamindars. One of them was Jagdish Mahto who was Harijan? by caste and would teach in H.D. Jain School, Arrah; the most prestigious school of that locality.<sup>37</sup> In the 1967 election of Bihar, Jagdish Mahto was a staunch supporter of Ram Naresh Ram, a C.P.I. candidate. The main contest was between Ram Naresh Ram supported by the

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35. A.N. Das, No. 2, p. 249.

36. See Section "Green Revolution and agrarian classes" of Chapter II of this work.

37. Talk with some friends of that region.

backward castes agricultural labourers and other lower sections, and Raj deo Ram (P.S.P.) supported by landlords.<sup>38</sup> On the polling day Jagdish, on the polling booth of his village Ekwari resisted against the rigging done by Nathuni Singh, the biggest landlord of the village. As a result, he was brutally beaten-up and was hospitalised for several days. There he changed from an ordinary teacher to a naxalite leader.<sup>39</sup>

But in the meantime several events occurred in Bhojpur district. The poor peasant under the guidance of Satya narayan Singh started occupying some land in Buxar diara (river bank land of Buxar). Charu Majumdar visited this region. Jagdish Master and others mobilised the oppressed Harijans and demanded for 'Harijanistan'. But this movement too, like other was suppressed. But it seems that although the flame has been extinguished but the fire is still there inside the ashes.

#### Agrarian Reforms:

The problems of agrarian reforms could become the issue of high priority at the level of policy making only

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38. This constituency was a 'reserved' constituency.

39. A.N. Das, No. 2, p251.

after independence. Broadly speaking, to quote P.C.Joshi, after independence "there emerged three major agrarian theses and, based on them three blue prints for political action relating to the land problem. These were contributed by three major political trends in the country."<sup>40</sup> These were (1) the Congress party which came into power and advocated for the land reforms within the framework of parliamentary democracy. (2) The Communist party of India which gave the slogan of "Land to the Tiller" through militant mobilization of the Peasantry, and (3) Some followers of Mahatma Gandhi under the leadership of Vinoba Ji who wanted to solve the problem through 'Sarvodaya' and latter through "Bhoodan-Grandam Movement".

All the measures adopted for agrarian reforms sponsored more or less by the three major above mentioned political trends have been critically examined on All-India level elsewhere in this thesis. There is, therefore, no need of repeating it again largely because of the fact that what is true on All India level is more true for Bihar. This is precisely so because (1) Bihar was one of the first

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40. P.C. Joshi, Land reforms in India: Trends and perspective, (New Delhi, 1975), p. 38.



state, to pass land reforms legislation and any study dealing with evaluation of land reforms would certainly make an evaluation of the situation in Bihar, (2) Bihar has been the heart land of Bhoodan and Gramdam movement. Therefore, an evaluation of this movement in India is in fact the evaluation of its effect largely in Bihar, and (3) Communist sponsored movement like land grab movement has already been evaluated (especially its nature and scope) in the preceding section on "agrarian movement in Bihar". Yet, a brief evaluation of land reforms, Bhoodan movement and Green revolution seems necessary to see their effect exclusively in the context of Bihar.

Inspite of the opposition from different officials and unofficial sections of Bihar, the government of this state, largely due to the efforts made by K.B. Sahay, made its first legislative attempt to abolish the zamindari system in 1947. But it took altogether five years to become a law to be implemented.<sup>41</sup>

But even this act allowed the Zamindars to retain their 'Sir' and 'Khudkast'. Thus even today there are big landlords and estates having more than 500 acres and in some cases even around 1000 acres. The old structure is, although

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41. A.N. Das, No. 2, pp. 199-200.

in modified form, still continues to exist and still there are landowner, occupancy raiyat, non-occupancy raiyat, under raiyat and bataidars (share cropper).

In 1974, on the request of Jai Prakash Narayan, a combined survey of Sociologist, Psychologist and Economist was made of the developmental efforts done in Mausahari on behalf of Gram Swaraj Movement. After the survey the sociologists remarked "there still remain a wide gap between the idea of the movement and the social realities with which one is confronted in the gramdan village." The psychologist noted that the changes that have come "are far from being radical and consequently, have failed in restructuring either the village economy or the minds of the people. At best they have provided some relief to the system." The economist remarked "The semi-feudal social formation got a rude shake-up in the wake of the poor peasant movement in Musahari..... The poor, it seems had a brief period of respite. But this did not last long. The Sarvodaya movement, and the intensification of the process of agricultural transformation from above without altering the land distribution pattern and relation of production and by pouring in aid from outside in terms of inputs, employment opportunities, infrastructural items etc.,

has once again tilted the power balance against the rural poor. Semi-feudalism has staged a come-back."<sup>42</sup>

After a survey of post land reforms Bihar, Daniel Thorner remarked "In short neither zamindari abolition nor Bhoodan persuasion (although Bihar has ~~been~~ the site of the most intensive Bhoodan efforts in the whole of India) has been able to transform rural Bihar. It remains a stronghold of large land holders and hierarchical property rights; leasing, subleasing and eviction are all common."<sup>43</sup>

As regards the effect of various programmes launched in the name of "Green revolution, Various schemes were not totally fruitless. Agricultural production and productivity improved somewhat. But these all things were for the best in the best of all possible worlds because if the distribution of land is more or less the same, the improved mechanised farming would help only those who possess lands.

#### Caste, Land and Power:

An analysis of the relationship among the three dimensions of social inequality would be worth doing

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42. A.N. Das, No. 2, pp. 213-214.

43. Daniel Thorner, The agrarian prospect in India, (Delhi, 1956), p. 35.

both from the view point of theoretical exercise and to understand certain basic trends in the society of contemporary Bihar. Theoretically by examining the relationship among these factors through various historical phases, it can be seen whether any of them (caste, land or power) acts like a 'base' ~~and~~ influencing others according to its own way or not. Although the study of the recent trends emerging in Bihar would also to some extent add in formulating certain theoretical postulates but it would help more in understanding the changes which are coming in the social structure of Bihar.

Castewise, the Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs and Kayastha form the upper stratum of the social hierarchy. Yadavas, Kurmis and Koiris are the three important sections which constitute the backward class other than the scheduled castes and tribes. These three backward castes constitute the half of the total population of the backward class. The chamars, Dusadhs and Mushars are numerically dominant among the scheduled caste.

All the upper castes constitute only 13.22<sup>44</sup> per cent of the population of Bihar. But unlike their weak numerical

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44. Roy, Ramashraya, "Caste and political recruitment in Bihar" in R.Kothari (ed), Caste in Indian Politics, (New Delhi, 1970), p. 229.

strength they had been more dominant in the society of Bihar largely because of their high ritual status in social hierarchy (caste hierarchy) dominant economic position and therefore, capacity to influence the decision making process. In the caste hierarchy, the Brahmins constitute the upper most stratum followed respectively by the Bhumihars, and Rajputs.<sup>45</sup> Although the Kayasthas position is no. 4th in the ritual hierarchy but has taken the lead in the field of education.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, so far as the distribution of land is concerned the Brahmins (including Bhumihars) and Rajputs hold a considerably major part of land. In short, therefore, "The zamindars, the tenants, land-lords, cultivators and big peasants, were mostly upper caste Hindus. The poor peasants were mainly from what is today known as scheduled caste and middle castes. The poor middle peasantry and the middle peasantry were drawn mainly from middle castes."<sup>47</sup>

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45. Although other castes may not accept this view that Bhumihar comes just after Brahmins. It is a case of "an effort by one caste to enhance its social status and resistance by other.
46. B.B. Mishra, The Indian middle classes: Their growth in modern Times, (London, 1961), p. 54.
47. H.P. Pradhan, Caste and Class in Bihar, EPW - Annual Number February 1979, p. 481.

The situation, however, could not change much even after the abolition of the zamindari system. Thus, according to one observation "The middle caste were predominantly tenants of pre-independence days. After the abolition of zamindari, a section of them became owners of substantial lands, the others became middle or poor peasants, some others were pushed down to become agricultural labourers. The scheduled castes were reduced to poor peasants and agricultural labourers."<sup>48</sup>

Thus, even in the case of Bihar, it seems that the economic position of a particular caste is highly co-related with its ritual status in the caste hierarchy. Inequality inherent in terms of economic position and caste hierarchy have further culminated in other fields too. Thus due to contact with the British colonial forces, it was Kayasthas among the four upper castes who got more benefit in the fields of education,<sup>49</sup> followed by Brahmins, Bhumihars and Rajputs. It seems further that when any opportunity is created from outside, it is generally the upper stratum which gets the lion share. Here one important thing to note is that inspite

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48. Dhar et al, "Caste and Polity in Bihar" in Gail Omvedt (ed), "Land caste and Politics in Indian states." No.28.

49. Ramashraya Rey, No. 44, p. 232.

of the fact that the Brahmins who have been at the top of ritual hierarchy and others like Bhumiars and Rajputs who are dominant economically, education benefited to the Kayasthas. Reason seems to lie in the fact that since the Kayasthas were neither economically well off nor higher in the caste hierarchy, therefore, they must have chosen education as the means to maintain their upper position in the Societies.

However, this inequality in the field of education and its access of various castes started changing, although not in a very remarkable way. This change was shown not only in the access of education among various castes of the upper strata, but even among lower castes. Education and especially the higher education is a kind of factor which is to <sup>a</sup> great extent determined by the economic capacity one possesses. Therefore, it was generally those castes who were economically dominant started strengthening their position in the field of education. Thus the Brahmins, Rajputs and Bhumiars percentage of literary increased. Even the other backward castes such as Kurmi and Koiries developed a lot. In comparison to other mentioned above the position of scheduled castes could not change much.

This relatively closed system of stratification,<sup>50</sup> started changing after the country in general and the society of Bihar in particular came to be influenced by the force of Pax-Britanica.<sup>51</sup> Because as has been noted by various social scientists no society remains static for ever. The British forces not only influenced our society from outside by creating new means of communication, transportation and political institutions but also the Indian tradition from within. As a consequence, this internal element of Indian social structure started changing through an efforts by various lower castes to improve their special status by imitating the culture and ritual habits of upper castes.<sup>52</sup>

In Bihar, these efforts of social mobility was made initially through organised action of various castes association and Varna association. However, the organized

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50. Concepts of 'Closed' and 'open' systems of stratification have been discussed in the second chapter of this work.
51. This change has been discussed in detail by Prof. Srinivas in Caste in Modern India and other essays, (Bombay, 1962) and Beteille in Caste Old and New (Bombay, 1969).
52. See Srinivas, "A note on Sensitization and Westernization" in Caste in Modern India and Other essays". No. 51 and "Sensitization and Westernization" in "Social Change in Modern India" (Bombay, 1966).



social action on the part of various castes association was confined to social realm but soon touched the political dimension of the social structure. "The Varna (or a fraction of it) became the basis of a political calculus; the concept which was relevant only for a peculiar rationale of a peculiar social order assumed new importance in the new realm of politics"<sup>53</sup>

In this race of status mobility, the lower castes people naturally remained behind the upper castes. In the field of politics too, the backward castes people entered after the Higher castes people, and occupied dominant position at much later stage of political development.

The origin of caste politics goes back to the pre-independence days in the year 1911. It was manifested clearly in the issue of separation of Bihar from Bengal.<sup>54</sup> The Kayasthas of this state under the leadership of Sir Sachidanand Sinha were very active <sup>there</sup> ~~these~~ days. In fact, the Kayasthas, who were leading in the field of education were afraid of the Bengalis who dominated the sphere of public service and other opportunities primarily because of the fact that they came first into the contacts of

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53. R. Roy, No. 44, pp. 237-38.

54. Dhar et al in Gail Omvedt, No. 28, p. 105.

Britishers. Although the separation of Bengal and Bihar, in the beginning fulfilled the purpose of Kayasthas but later on, other castes too started struggling for it. This competition among different castes led to alliance and counter-alliance of different castes according to need of the time both on social and political forums. In the political field, it was evident from the competition among the leaders of different castes for dominant position in the congress party.

However, if the political development in Bihar is interpreted in terms of caste and the alliance formed out of it, a trend can be very clearly indicated. This trend shows that till 1967 the four castes of the upper stratum of social hierarchy have been dominant in the political area of Bihar. In 1967, for the first time, the backward castes seriously and successfully challenged the upper castes dominance in Bihar politics. It should be mentioned that in 1967 the Yadavas, as the single caste, sent the largest number of representative in the state legislative assembly. But till then there was equal division in the membership of the assembly, between the upper and the backward castes. After that and specially when the Janta Party came to power in 1977, the backward castes clearly outnumbered the upper castes. The 26% reservations for the backward caste people in the various jobs of Bihar was passed and implemented after 1979.

Commentary Remarks:

In conclusion, it can be said that the permanent settlement was permanently unsettled in Bihar. The zamindari system was abolished largely due to the efforts of K.B. Sahay, Swami S. Saraswati and some peasant movements. But these measures have effected negatively, to some extent, the big land lords and zamindars and to a large extent positively the rich middle caste peasants. Other measures such as 'Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement' and the 'Green Revolution' have also followed the same direction. Increasing pauperization of big zamindars and emergence of economically and powerfully strong castes peasants are the effects of these measures. But the position of lower castes agricultural workers has not improved significantly.

It can be also pointed out that the unequal distribution of land, and the exploitation of the poors arising out of it, very often causes large scale peasant rebellions. In most of the peasants uprisings in Bihar, the poor peasants who were the worst sufferer have always participated under the leadership of rich peasant leaders. It was only during 1970-80, that these movements have been led by their own leaders, but they too have been guided by the ideologies of the rich outsiders in the form of Naxalties leaders.

As regards the relationship between caste, land and power, the old regime has been weakened in course of time. Although even today there is high co-relation between them, in the politics of Bihar today, it is neither the big landlords, nor the high castes people but the dominant numerical strength of the backward castes people seem to be most effective in constituting the assembly structure in their own favour. The dominant economic position and the high ritual status together (of the upper caste people) cannot dominant over the numerically strong position of the backward castes in the assembly.

CONCLUSION

The traditional Indian society which existed before the colonial period should aptly be regarded as the typical example of the closed system of stratification. It should be considered as comparatively closed society primarily because of the fact that there was no possibility of social mobility based on individual efforts. Although, of course, there were cases of social mobility among various castes. Consequently, there was concentration of resources in the same individual or group of individuals. In other words, there was a summations of roles, hence inequality and lack of social mobility.

With the advent of colonialism, this relatively closed system started changing. In fact, no system can remain static for ever. The colonial forces in the form of modern education, developed means of communication, new political institutions and industrialization not only altered the structure of the traditional Indian society but also provided some kind of dynamism. The first major effect was seen on the pattern of social hierarchy in Indian society. The process of incongruence between caste, land and power began with new land tenure systems, English education and salaried jobs.

This process of incongruance was further accelerated by the post-colonial developments. But it would be wrong to assume that this process has reached the stage of complete dissociation between caste, land and power. It is a fact that unequal distribution of economic resources was the main cause of agrarian tensions in the British period. It is today as well. The poor peasants have been fighting against their exploitation right from the Mughal period. During colonial period and even after it, specially from 1857 till today, a large number of peasant revolts have occurred in different parts of the country. These movements alongwith other factors compelled the Government of Independent India to implement certain land reforms in order to protect the interests of the poor peasants and agricultural workers. Not only that, some other measures have also been taken by some social workers. For example, Binoba Bhave started 'Bhoodan and Gramdan Movement'. But all these measures failed to achieve their true objectives. The measures have in fact, benefited the middle caste rich peasants who have emerged as 'kulaks' in almost all parts of the country. Broadly speaking, the poor agricultural workers have remained unchanged.

A comparative study of different states shows that Kerala is the only state where land reforms measures have benefited the poor agricultural workers. Even the conditions of the poor agricultural workers of Bengal is not much better than other states. In the states of Punjab and Haryana, the bargaining power of the agricultural workers for increased wages has not improved. This is surprising because these two states are regarded as the heartland of the 'Green Revolution'. In other states, for example, in Bihar, U.P., Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the landed groups, to a great extent, managed to escape from the negative effects of land reforms.

Thus these measures could not substantially change the agrarian class structure. Still a large amount of land is controlled by a few (in most of the cases by the upper castes) hands. The middle caste peasants are still involved in actual cultivation, although some time they hire wage labourers. The agricultural workers, on the other hand, are facing the same problems as they did before. The Indian peasants, for example, cannot only be differentiated from the class of landlords and agricultural workers, but they are a heterogeneous lot. They have been divided into rich, middle and poor peasants.

The middle peasantry, according to H. Alavi and Eric Wolf, possesses the less potential for revolution. According to them, the middle peasants are more inclined towards revolution because they are structurally free and least effected by the crisis. The 'middle' peasants thesis can be challenged both theoretically and substantially. At the theoretical ground it can be asked if the middle peasants are less effected by the crisis why should they go for revolution? In the context of Bihar, it has been noted that during Champaran Satyagraha most of the local leaders came from the class of landlords, and they actively participated in it. In the peasant uprising, which took place in the 1970s and 80's in Bihar, it was generally the poor peasants who stood against the exploitation of landlords and big zamindars. In short, it seems that it is not middle but rich and in most of the cases poor peasantry who take the initiative.

So far as the question of the nature of Indian peasantry is concerned, it is not proper to characterise them as docile. Village community and caste-system might have stopped them in achieving their final goal of nation-wide socialist revolution but the lack of proper organization seems to be most crucial impediment in this regard. Proper consciousness on class lines may transfer them from 'class



in itself' to "class for itself". In fact the classical Marxist conception of the French peasantry seems valid because Marx clearly attributed the failure of the French peasantry to the fragmented nature of living and a lack of communication and organization.

The lack of proper communication and organization alone should not be regarded as the prime variable in the way of revolution. If the Marxist approach is accepted, there must be a certain basic environment for revolution. Revolution, according to Marx, will always be followed by social structure characterised by capitalist mode of production. This theoretical construct has provoked some Indian and foreign Marxists to look for the exact mode of production in Indian agriculture. All of them have given different interpretations. But so far the capitalist mode of production does not seem to be dominant in rural India. The rural sector of our country is still characterised by share-cropping, usury, and in some areas by "master-serf" relation of feudal type. The 'Gentlemen farmers' of Daniel Thorner is still a rare phenomenon in most parts of India and particularly Bihar. Similarly, large scale farming cannot be compared to the industrial sector in terms of profit. But at the same time it would also be unrealistic to believe that the forces of capitalism are altogether absent.

In fact a large number of Marxist scholars characterize the contemporary Indian agriculture as capitalist. Not only this, they interpret the recent conflicts between the Harijans and the backward classes rich peasants as the symbol of capitalist formation in the countryside. But this interpretation is more or less like that developed by Dumont and Pocock who rejected the social reality of village community in the Indian society. The arguments of Marxist scholars do not convince a critical mind. If the rich and poor of the same backward castes together fight against all the harijans including rich and poor, it must be regarded as a case of caste-conflict, not a class-conflict.

The fact that caste-system exists as a pivotal system cannot be negated easily. It is still a major force in the countryside. But it does not mean that class analysis is totally irrelevant for studying Indian society. In fact the relevance of caste and class can be understood in terms of their respective arenas of influence. In spite of the fact that caste has played a very important role in the Indian society; uneven distribution of resources such as land has always been source of agrarian tensions. It happens so not only because land is the source of material income, but also because it is a symbol of status and basis of power.

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