

Aspiring for Mobility: Social Change in an Agrarian Context

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DECLARATION

This dissertation titled "Aspiring for Mobility: Social Change in an Agrarian Context", submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any other University or Institution.

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We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*I dedicate this research work to
Maa, Papa
and
my Supervisor, Prof. Surinder. S. Jodhka*

ABSTRACT

Change is an inevitable and ultimate virtue of any society. It can be in any form: structural, social, economic or political. This work concerns a theoretical understanding of this idea of change in society via transformations in the agrarian context. These transformations are visible in concrete structures but are mostly propelled by aspirations, desires for mobility and change. To substantiate these arguments, this study is located among Jats in western U.P., who act as a catalyst for change. Though there are many reasons for the change, this work tries to understand these changes through the tool of aspirations in the agrarian context. At the theoretical level, this work borrows from Giddens's theory of structuration and Bourdieu's ideas on habitus. It aims to understand how the desire to change and to move ahead or beyond one's current position emanates within a community but gradually turns into broader waves of change in the society. Since this work is located within a specific setting, it also tends to locate the effects of geographical setting (western U.P.) and the substantial positioning (Jats) in the society. To provide this enquiry a legitimate academic space within the broad field of agrarian studies, this study discusses major theoretical debates from the Russian countryside to their journey within the Indian context. Along with this, it also highlights the major trends that have emerged in agrarian context in India, post-Green Revolution phase. Apart from this, it also employs major theoretical and empirical researches conducted among Jats in western U.P., which tend to contribute in explicating how certain kinds of aspirations emerge and what empirical forms they tend to take when they turn into reality. This study also entails a study of caste-, class- and gender-specific influences not only on aspirations but also on the whole conception of change. Though the immediate concern of this enquiry is to understand the idea of change originating in a specific setting, among a specific category through the tool of aspirations, at the broader level it aims to establish 'aspirations' as sociological conceptual tool that can be applied to other fields for further generation of knowledge.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The idea of change has been conceptualised or explored in Sociology for the past many decades, and it remains to be one of the important projects since inception of the discipline. It was this process of change that has kept many sociologists and social thinkers engaged in deciphering its causes, its nature and the major implications it has on society. After all, if one speaks at an abstract level, this is what social scientists generally do: they observe any stream of change, go into the details of its occurrence along with the future predictions regarding the forms it will possibly take and finally the articulation of its consequences on society or within a specific social sphere. Sometimes they also pass on certain guidelines for the development of future academic researches. Thus, it is the different ways of unfolding this process of change that distinguishes various traditions in Sociology. Though philosophical reflection upon many aspects of social life existed in the Indian tradition for a long time, historically the systematic study of Indian society, says Bottomore, began during the period of the British rule. In Sociology, because of its inter-connectivity with other disciplines, there are largely four trends¹, classified by Ahmed (Ahmed, 1996: 244). They are: Philosophically oriented, Indological and Historical, Social Anthropological and Empirical. In Indian context, it was the first two trends which were mainly adopted by Indian sociologists, whereas the British colonial administrators introduced the anthropological approach followed by empirical concern of American sociologists. In contemporary times, it is the mixture of all these approaches which are employed in studies done in the Indian context. Therefore, following the same stream of thoughts, the present study explores the changes in agrarian context within a specific region in India through the tool of aspiration of a community dominant in that region.

To be precise, the statement of the problem for this study lies in unfolding the idea of change whether it is economic, social, political, cultural or structural in nature in

¹ See Imtiaz Ahmed (1996). *Notes on Sociology in India*.

the agrarian context through the tool of aspirations of Jats settled in western part of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) in north India. This change is certainly complicated in nature because, when this community of Jats aspires to move up, then this process is intertwined with the concepts of caste, class and gender, which have major repercussions on this process of change as a whole. Also in terms of seeking a farsighted goal, this study aims to develop aspirations both theoretically and empirically as a significant sociological tool for future studies.

To talk about three central tenets of this research, i.e. aspirations, Jats and the region where the study is located, i.e. western U.P., the aspirations certainly have something to do with wants, calculations, preferences, choices, desires and dreams. They exist in almost all societies, and they are never individual instead they are always formulated in the interaction or in the thick of social life. The widening practice to study aspirations has too narrowly focused on very simplistic notions about it, leaving the hidden intricate operations of power, privilege, and social exclusion. Though there are numbers of studies available today, which take into account different dimensions that have played their part in formulating certain kinds of aspirations in different contexts. However, these studies have largely kept themselves limited to only few aspects, required to study those specific contexts in which they were conducted. And while doing this the hidden dynamics behind construction of aspirations were left untouched. To talk about Jats, they are one of the dominant agrarian communities in the western region of U.P, and their aspirations are important not only because they are expected to determine their future attainments but also because in long run their aspirations can help us to observe the broader stream of change taking place within this community and the context in which they are located. Also, if asked why particularly this community, then the Jats as a community are important because of the specific place that they have in agrarian settings since the colonial times (Dutta,1999:8). Regarding the region, i.e. western U.P. then the state of U.P. in the northern India holds significant position in the country at all social, economic and political fronts. It was a union of historical and geographical regions brought together under the colonial administration and used to be called united province. Gradually, other provinces joined in, and it was renamed as Uttar Pradesh in 1950. Depending on their geographical locations, there are four major districts in U.P, western, central, eastern and southern (Singh, 2001:2961), and it is the western region that this research will explore.

Method and Sociological Perspective

There has been a growing interest in the study of agrarian change in Sociology in the past several decades. This research aims at a comprehensive study of the existing literature along with a description of the Jat community and its specific dynamics to show how the idea of change actually percolates in Indian society. This study is located within a specific region and is constrained because of time and space, but as Akhil Gupta (1998) mentions that every research should aim generality in the end², this exploration also strives for the same. Before going to the details and major arguments of the problem, a researcher needs to explain the larger sociological framework or frame of reference used in visualising the research topic since sociology has come to be recognised both as a field of enquiry and mode of approach to the study of man and the society in which he resides.

Over the years, research on agrarian development has drawn from a range of different social theories to gain insights in the changing social structure for instance the debate between Marxist and non-Marxist approach regarding the changes in the Russian countryside, eventually mark the beginning of agrarian studies. Hence, citing the sociological frame of reference used in the research enables one to analyse how social theories are used in field or specific contexts. Therefore, at the level of aspirations, Bourdieu's work on habitus comes handy, and to understand the larger process of change in U.P. and among the community of Jats, Giddens' theory of structuration stands useful. Mathew Jones and Helena Karsten (2008) have talked about Giddens' structuration theory and its use in information systems research. According to Jones and Karsten, Giddens is known for his dynamic conceptualisation of structure as being continuously produced and reproduced through situated practices which facilitate the study of change (Jones and Karsten, 2008:128). Giddens' theory is a general theory of social organization, and it has no specific linkages to any specific situation as he deals with social phenomena at a higher level of abstraction. The central concern of his theory was the relationship between individual and society. Rejecting the old traditional view that perceives constitution of social phenomena as either by objective social structures or by an autonomous human agency, he proposes a mutual co-existence of both the structure

² See Akhil Gupta (1998). *Postcolonial developments: Agriculture in the making of modern India*.

and the agency. Giddens's theory of structuration developed as a result of deficiencies in the then present sociological theories, namely the functionalist and the structuralist approaches that gave importance to the structures and viewed agency as inherently inept. Similarly, there were interpretative sociologists such as Schultz and Garfinkel, among others, who focussed on primacy of action over structures. But both the approaches lacked support for those situations where overemphasis on one component cannot provide the required answers. Therefore, he emphasised on structuration that involves a mutually constitutive duality (Jones and Karsten, 2008: 130). Giddens's theory also talks about the specific constitution of structure and agency. For him, Structure makes sense largely through three³ dimensions i.e. signification, domination and legitimation, which are maintained, sustained and changed through agency's action. This idea of agency too is accompanied by an important feature, i.e. every individual must know about the working of the society by the virtue of his/her participation in it. And this knowing is also at three⁴ levels: the discursive consciousness, the practical consciousness and the unconscious source of cognition. Giddens' theory is useful to the present study in the sense that it is the mutuality of both the structures, that is the context and the agency, which together formulate a unique version of social change. Also, the structure and agency in this research work along the same dimensions that Giddens has carved out. Along with Giddens, even Bourdieu's theory on habitus and its critical evaluation is useful in understanding the aspirations and the strategies that the community of Jats formulated to attain the position that they had aspired to reach. Roland Lardinois in his essay "Pierre Bourdieu: A Sociologist in Action" discussed the major works of Bourdieu as an act of reverence to him and to his contribution to Sociology. Bourdieu was known for his profoundly innovative body of work that challenged the dominant intellectual practices in Sociology. He was known for bringing in the cultural and social dimensions in sociological enquiries which until then were underestimated. According Lardinois, to

³ See Mathew R. Jones and Helena Karsten (2008). *Giddens's Structuration Theory and Information Systems Research*, P 129, in which Giddens uses the example of dress code/uniform to explain these dimensions of structures. According to which a particular kind of dress becomes symbol of significance (say in Office), symbol of domination (say a policemen's uniform) and a symbol of legitimation (say a school uniform).

⁴ Ibid. P 132. It is precisely at this level that his concept of Double Hermeneutics emerge which is about awareness of how society works along with awareness of sociological accounts of social practices too i.e. to say that in his theory the agent is aware of not only the social conditions but also of their own actions in the process.

develop and propose his arguments, Bourdieu took recourse to three notions⁵: Field, Capital and habitus. Out of these three, habitus stands to be most useful tool (for this study) as it enables an agent to not only perceive and evaluate the world but it also orient their actions (Lardinois, 2002: 1020). For Bourdieu, individuals being socialised agents are sort of individualised forms of the social, which works through the help of both physical and mental habitus. Also, this habitus is not a fixed entity inscribed inside the individuals; in fact, it is socially produced, therefore subject to change depending on the requirement of the situation. Francois Collet (2009) did a critical evaluation of Bourdieu's theory of Habitus by bringing in Herbert Simon's theory of action. This will enable us to understand actions and aspirations of Jats as a mixture of both habitus and rationally planned out strategies. Though Collet uses Simon's work to highlight that in certain situations only habitus cannot help the agent to prepare a draft of his actions and future strategies for instance in certain economic situations the agent have to think rationally. But despite its particular implementation, this critical analysis of Bourdieu's theory adds to our understanding of Jats' actions and strategies regarding their present and future state of affairs.

Structure of the Dissertation

This study contains five chapters that cater to separate concerns/issues but together they constitute a holistic study of change with all its nuances at play via a specific community through specific tools. Hence to talk about them separately then there is an introduction which try to present a review of all those studies which have majority been done in the field of agrarian change, or the studies which have discussed different agrarian issues depending on the space, theoretical framework and time in which they were located. So it is a kind of review story of Agrarian studies. The introduction is followed by three core chapters, each of which deals with significant components of this dissertation. Chapter II, titled "Social change in U.P", deals with the major trends of change in the region which hold significance in understanding not only the community which stands as the mainstay of this work but changes in this region also enable formulation of general trends of

⁵See Roland Lardinois, 2002. Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002): A sociologist in Action. P 1020. According to Bourdieu, Field can be understood as a structured social space organised around specific theoretical and practical stakes. Capital is that resource which agents acquire or inherit and habitus is socially and historically structured principle through which the social world is perceived and evaluated.

change and development be its structural, cultural or political in nature. Chapter III, titled “Jats: Past and Present”, deals with ethnographic studies done on this community along with a review of studies done on separate fronts with altogether different intentions analysing the strategies (Cultural, political, educational) of Jats to reproduce the dominant status that they enjoyed in their region. Chapter IV, titled “Aspirational Mobility: Locating Gender Dynamics”, deals with the issues of gender in this field (Agrarian context), within this region (Western U.P.) and within this community (Jats), which bring all those nuances which were otherwise pushed under the carpet, on the front stage whenever the questions of change are analysed in India especially on certain grounds within agrarian context. The gender dimension is also important in highlighting the differential nature of aspirations. Finally, the chapter Conclusion entails a summary of the dissertation along with a discussion on aspirations as it was the aspirations, which acted as the major propelling force for this enquiry. Since there is a lack of literature on the theories behind aspirations, this dissertation will end with certain specific questions, which must be raised to develop this concept theoretically for future researches in Sociology.

Some Relevant Literature

Literature on agrarian change is vast. For the purpose of a brief introduction, I have divided it into four possible subsections. The first section is about how classical studies from Russian countryside with a debate between Marxist and Non-Marxist thinkers have travelled down to Indian context leading to emergence of various debates like Mode of Production debate, Farm-size Productivity debate, debate around the relevance of Marxist or Non-Marxist approaches in the Indian context. The second section highlights the changes in the concern of a sociologist engaged in the field of agrarian change, i.e. it talks about the changes in areas of interests as initially it all started with peasantry studies which gradually paved way for rural studies with institutional establishment of Rural Sociology as a separate branch in Sociology. The third section is about the studies done in the Indian context around array of topics separated majorly on the grounds of temporal distinction. Therefore, it entails studies done in pre- and post-independence context. This temporal change was quite significant as it marked the change in the nature of research done in this field. The fourth section is about the contemporary developments in this field. These developments are twofold: some of them are about same old

questions but new perspectives been laid out and others are about new concerns all together which shows the potentials hidden in this field for further social science researches.

Agrarian Change through Major Classical Debates

Theories of agrarian change can trace their roots back to the classical Marxist writings and its opponents, both dealing with explication of change in society especially in the Russian Countryside. The major players in the debate were Kautsky, Lenin belonging to Marxist camp and Chayanov belonging to Non Marxist Camp. And the major debate was regarding differentiation of peasantry or the effects that peasantry have due to development of capitalism in Russia. According to the classical Marxist conception, with the development of capitalism in agriculture, the agrarian class structure will be like that of industries. That is to say that there will be two classes, the capitalist bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat. Farms will be capitalist's estates run through machinery and landless labours. According to this analysis the petty commodity producers will vanish and there will just these two antagonistic classes (Djurfeldt, 1981:168). Marx's ground rent theory⁶ stands as one of the most pertinent predictions about the development/penetration of capitalism in agriculture. The system of ground rent that he came up with differs from pre-capitalist rent in being only a part of the total surplus value created in agriculture. Marx's theory of ground rent depends on the relation and consequent influence of two economic processes, i.e. land rent and profit and it presupposes 1) a capitalist mode of production and 2) capitalist landed property. Following Marx's ideas, Lenin argued that available evidence shows that capitalism as a general mode of production has already entered the agriculture sector, and a process of 'Depeasantisation' and "Differentiation" was taking place leading to the division of agrarian class into two antagonistic classes: agrarian bourgeoisie and proletariat. In contrast, A.V. Chayanov argued that (Thorner,

⁶ See K. Mark. Capital Vol. 3 or G. Djurfeldt. What Happened to the Agrarian Bourgeoisie and Rural Proletariat Under Monopoly Capitalism? 1981. Pp 169. Marx theory of ground rent is a theory to determine the production price in agriculture. Following Adam Smith Marx agree that the crop which is central in subsistence of population, determines the economic condition for other crops (Djurfeldt, 1981:169). In 19th century England this crop was wheat and its production price was determined by marginal cost of producing wheat i.e. to say the cost of producing the wheat on the least fertile land, plus average rate of profit, determines the production price. If a farmer has more favourable conditions than he can sell the crop with a surplus profit. But if he rents the land than his landlord can appropriate the surplus profit as 'Ground Rent' (Djurfeldt, 1981:169). This is the Marx ground rent / differential rent theory where the surplus profit gets transformed into ground rent.

1966) Russian economy can best be categorised as peasant economy operating according to its own laws and logic by using largely the family labour to satisfy their subsistent needs. Unlike Lenin, the main force to bring change was change in life cycle of the family. The difference in family income was due to variations in consumers versus worker's ratio in family farms. Hence, the change was brought through demographic differentiation⁷.

Following more or less the same arguments as those of Lenin, Karl Kautsky argued through his analysis of agrarian situation in Germany in the late 19th century, that capitalism has surely penetrated but this doesn't mean a total dissolution of small scale peasants. Moreover, cultivation through family labour was effective way of decreasing the production cost, which in the long run is beneficial for the development of capitalism. But despite being linked to the capitalist mechanisms, its autonomy was not jeopardized, hence no depeasantisation but still lot of differentiation through different trajectories (Davuluri, 2011). Kautsky's use of Marxist approach is quite relevant even today to answer any agrarian question. His theory has some amount of dualism i.e. on one hand he talks about borrowing the classical Marxist way how capitalism will enter the agriculture and on the other hand he observes certain trends specific to his days, which do not fit with classical Marxist way, hence he deals with them at the theoretical level. He starts with classical Marxist conception where there is concentration of capital, application of scientific temper which would gradually force the peasants out of production and will convert them into landless wage labourers. The big estates lost and the middle peasants gained grounds, while the small land holdings got fragmented. The breakthrough in this system will be brought in by the ability of the peasants to resist (Djurfeldt, 1981:175). For him, these details were enough to show applicability of the

⁷See G.Djurfeldt. What Happened to the Agrarian Bourgeoisie and Rural Proletariat Under Monopoly Capitalism? .1981. Pp 184 . Lenin have famous two roads to development of capitalism in agriculture. Each path leads to the capitalist relation of production and antagonistic class formations. The only difference between the two paths was the absence or presence of landlords as the source of agrarian bourgeoisie. According to him the decreasing size of American farms was an expression of increased capitalism. Though Chayanov never criticised Lenin directly but his main work 'The theory of peasant economy' can be read as a polemic criticism against Lenin's unilinear differentiation theory. For Chayanov Russian countryside did experience change , which was more of a demographic differentiation according to him but the forms, the extent and the rate of growth that Lenin explained was which he explained was over estimated.(184)

Marxist theory in the 19th century agrarian situations which can be periodised⁸ depending upon which stage of development they were at.

Debates in India around the agrarian question also take inspiration from the classical debates in Russia and are largely divided into Marxists and Neo-populist camp. In the Indian context, various scholars like Patnaik (1987) and Byres (1981) have argued that Lenin's model of differentiated peasantry class formation are very much present even in post-independent India. There is income and assets inequality among peasants which leads to creation of antagonistic classes. Also, processes like Green Revolution and liberalisation have led to mass, market-oriented production which has further increased the commodification and the capitalist tendencies to dominate not only in the production processes but also within production relations. But even among those who followed Marxist tradition there is a tendency to divert into different direction. For instance, there are some scholars [Banaji (1977), Harris (1982, 1987)] who follow Kautsky's arguments that growth of capitalism in agriculture have not led to depeasantisation, and have in fact led to the existence of small scale producers as they are functional in developing capitalism further. Also within the same pool of thought there was further differentiation regarding the nature of these small scale producers. Where there are some like Banaji (1977) Alavi (1987) who believed that they exist like a formally derived categories of Marx, with no independence as such but scholars like Harris through his work in north argot district of Tamil Nadu have explicated that they do retain a degree of autonomy and independence. In contrast to the Marxist approach, the contemporary Neo-populists in India like Harris (1985), Lipton (1989), Atwood (1979) have taken the hold to the view point that family based peasant production is not determined by capitalist's logic. Though they agree that family mode of production does not exist like it used to exist but the production system is still run via its own logic of production and development. Hence, socio-economic change among the peasantry in the

⁸ Ibid., Pp 178. He periodised the relations between the urban-based, industrial capitalism and agriculture into three periods: 1) first period is the breaking up of autonomous feudal structure which is generally called a feudal structure or pre capitalist mode of production. This period occurs before the capital production enter agriculture. 2) In European history there is a second stage too, which is characterised by emergence of capitalist tenants and trade between industry and agriculture. 3) Third stage is evident by a shift in the terms of trade which according to Kautsky holds domination after 1857 and for him import of grains from the outside brings this change though the price determination is quite different from the ones in capitalist mode of production.

Indian context can be understood through two major approaches, i.e changes inflicted through demographic factors supported and explained by Neo-populists and changes inflicted through economic influences that moulds economic relations between households supported and explained by Marxists (Davuluri, 2011).

In the 1970s, interest in all these classical theories revived especially around the questions related to mode of production in India. For many years various scholars have argued about the existing mode of production in Indian agriculture. There have been proponents of capitalism, pre capitalism, semi feudalism, colonial and post colonial modes and recently a dual mode. Hamza Alavi (1982) influential work “India: Transition to Colonial Capitalism” has probably given a new beginning to the mode of production debate in India, which was first mooted by Utsa Patnaik “Specificity of the colonial system” (Thorner, 1982: 1997). In his work, he examined the pre-colonial structures⁹ of the Indian society and the way it was transformed under colonial impact. Though Indian society had existence of certain urban centres and its own manufacturing units, they all got a blow with rise of the industrial revolution in England in front of which Indian Industries could not compete. All of this led to restructuring of the Indian society along the colonial experience (Alavi, Burns Knight et al, 1982:25). Professing the colonial mode of production in India he argued that neither ‘feudalism’ nor contemporary rural ‘capitalism’ can be theoretically grasped in India because of its experience with imperialism which can further elaborate the reason for massive production in colonial agrarian economy as it was encapsulated within the highly industrialised world. According to him, a particular feature of colonial mode of production is availability of cheap labour to work in agricultural fields and industries from large section of population which can be called destitute small holders. Also, regarding class contradiction, there is no struggle between feudal lords and urban bourgeoisie or wage labourers. In fact, there is rise in Peasant militancy (Thorner, 1982:1997). Rudra (1975) and Omvedt (1975) both criticised Alavi’s arguments as they were full of vagueness with regard to the post colonial phase in India. Omvedt holds that conflict between capitalists and feudal elements do exist. Following Rudra and Omvedt , Bagachi also rejected prevalence of

⁹See Hamza Alavi, P. L. Burns..et all (1982). Capitalism and Colonial Production. Pp 2. where for Alavi the precolonial structures were feudal in nature and he outlined certain characteristics of feudalism: 1) unfree labour, 2) extra economic coercion in the extraction of surplus, 3) Fusion of economic and political power at the point of production, 4) self sufficient or subsistent economy, 5) an economy based on simple production .

colonial mode of production by citing the contribution that agriculture made to the national income which in fact he believed is possible through a continual interchange between pre capitalist and capitalists system¹⁰.

Another study in Deccan economy by Jairus Banaji, dealing primarily with the same issue, also rejected colonial mode of production. For him, the existence of capitalist relation of exploitation, production expansion and possibilities of proletarianisation reveal that capitalism mode of production do exist in India but not on a national scale. Banaji, by distinguishing among the regional, national and international level in the 19th century Deccan economy argued that

Capitalist relation of exploitation signifying the less developed forms of capitalist production had emerged...and were widespread and in some districts dominant...but for India as a whole the bourgeoisie mode of production in its developed or adequate structure was neither dominant nor widespread (Thorner, 1982: 1998).

All of these criticisms later made Alavi alter his position and proposing “peripheral capitalism” in India. For him, the colonial impact brought about a specific colonial type of ‘Bourgeoisie Revolution’ in the colonies establishing a structure of colonial capitalism (Alavi, Burns et al. 1982:53). Kathleen Gough also contributed to the debate through her study and description of farming practices¹¹ in Thanjavur district in Tamil Nadu, where she found existence of both capitalist and pre capitalist characteristics prevalent at least in Thanjavur part of Tamil Nadu (Thorner, 1982:1999).

Though the debate still continues but if one closely reads the classical approaches to agrarian question then they certainly provide some insights which help us to understand the issues that we are facing in contemporary agrarian situations, especially in reference to the mode of production debate in India. Classical theories aimed to produce general theoretical principles which can later be applied to the specific historical contexts (Adnan 1985: 53). Therefore, what is being tried to convey is that when these theoretical arguments are implemented empirically especially in a complex context like India, then do give birth to new observations, but it is this critical dialogue between the theoretical formulations and imperial evidence will not only keep the debate around the

¹⁰ See Alice Thorner.(1982). Semi- feudalism or Capitalism? Pp1998. Bagchi is cautious about how to label the “amalgam of usury, bondage, wage-labour and tenancy prevailing in the Indian countryside”. He lists ‘semi-feudalism’, ‘semi-capitalism’, ‘neither feudalism nor capitalism’, and ‘both capitalism and feudalism’ as possibilities but does not mention ‘colonial mode of production’.

¹¹ Ibid. For detailed description of the six prominent conditions that gave her clues for characterising the farming practices in Thanjavur to be capitalists in nature, see P 1999.

agrarian questions alive but it will also add more to the diversity of the historical experiences of agrarian sector on theoretical grounds (Adnan 1985: 62).

From Peasant Studies to Rural Sociology

If one looks at the decades old literature in the field of agrarian change then one of the clearest development is in the context of institutionalisation of the discipline i.e. to say that now there is a change in the ways the studies are recognised. From being merely a study on peasantry societies, the contemporary literature is formally recognition under the banner of Rural Sociology. This subsection is Precisely about mapping this transition from peasantry studies to form rural sociology. The roots of peasant studies can be traced back to Shanin's study of a Russian Peasant household. For Shanin, peasant households form the basic nuclei of peasant society. He stated that "The life of the family is the life of a farm" (Shanin 1971:31). The specific nature of a peasant household like it being a basic unit of production, consumption, property holding, socialisation, moral support and a source of mutual economic help seems to contribute to the characteristics of peasantry as specific social phenomena all over the world (Shanin 1971:30). Following the same tradition, i.e. giving same amount of importance to peasantry mode of life academically even Robert Redfield studied and compared three peasant communities, namely Boeotian of 6th century B.C, Maya Indians of Yucanta and rural People of Surrey to delineate 'peasant view of Good Life'. According to Redfield, 'peasants were real link between east and west' (Redfield, 1960:106) because they share some amount of unity and there are certain features¹² present among all the peasants universally. Redfield asserted that peasant's emphasise on agricultural industriousness as a prime virtue is because it guaranties them security, respect and the religious feelings (ibid: 108). For him, along with the universal characteristics there is one thing that distinguishes them from primitive, i.e. they are aware about another dimension to civilised life outside the village in the powerful town (ibid: 133). Therefore he emphasised on this "heteronomous" characteristic of peasantry according to which they hold a view of good peasantry life which is not restricted to the way they see themselves but the town also form an aspect of

¹² See Robert Redfield (1960). *The little communities: Peasant Society and culture* (Part II) P 107. These features are mystic attachment to farms, the family as a social group, the emphasis on procreation, and fundamental orientation towards life is largely unchanged etc.

this moral life. To them these outsiders also offer a model but whether to like it or avoid it is in the hands of peasants (ibid: 134).

Though Redfield recognised the tendency to change within the peasant communities but he failed to avail a formal recognition to his enquiry from being more than a mere anthropological exploration. The establishment of a specific branch of Rural Studies within Sociology can be located amidst the American Society's crisis in the late 19th Century. Rural studies is an ongoing project that emerged when capitalism was entering American society, due to which urban centres outpaced the economic growth of European countries but within their own countries America faced huge rural urban inequality which escalated into farm crisis situations¹³. As a result, a thorough analysis of the rural American society was done for nearly half a century, which gradually resulted in not only establishment of Rural Studies as a major component but also made these issues an integral part of American Society (Summers and Brown, 1998: 641). If one looks back, then certainly with growing capitalist tendencies, it is largely the urban sector which has been prioritised but time and again there have been number of proponents¹⁴ who advocated the need to keep the study of rural people alive as it is among the rural communities that potential to change lies.

To conceptualise further the framework to study rural change, Cloke and Goodwin (1992) used Harvey's notion of "structured coherence". Their larger aim was to provide a unified approach to study rural change in the midst of number of available perspectives. As a result, one of the possible strategies is to unite the concept of agriculture and rural together so that significant political, social and economic insights can be grasped (Cloke and Goodwin, 1992: 322)¹⁵. For them, this holistic approach can be attained by applying regulationist concept in research, which believes that any sort of change cannot be automatically perceived but it has to be secured through range of norms and mechanisms. Hence to perceive the overall changes in agrarian sector which are

¹³See G.F. Summer and D.L. Brown (1998). *A Sociological Perspective on Rural Studies*. P 640. In 1900, the government, under the guidance of President Roosevelt, formed a commission which was responsible for reporting the reasons of failure of industrial capitalist system.

¹⁴ Ibid. P 641. There have been Neo classical thinkers for whom rural areas are under productive and have trapped resources within. For some proponents of modernisation, the spatial inequality between rural and urban will gradually fade into nothingness.

¹⁵See P. cloke and M. Goodwin. conceptualising countryside change. 1992. P 322. according to them if one look back at the rural researches in 1970s, then there is a clear bifurcation that one will get to see between researches focussing on agrarian political economy and those looking at rural change in general. Therefore what is required is an holistic approach which can analyse the changes in totality.

often perceived as crisis, one need to apply the regulationist concept as it allows viewing things in totality. Seeing the current situations where different academic concerns have created a conceptual hiatus even Newby calls for a similar holistic approach where rural sociology will be firmly integrated to Sociology of agriculture (Newby, 1982: 67).

Though the kind of unity or expansion that Newby demanded, developed the grounds for debate¹⁶ but in the later run this broadening of the approach/ perspective was appreciated. A.R. Desai brought in similar claims for even rural studies in India. Where according to him, there were number of studies done in this field by economists, political scientists, social workers and many more but most of them were partial in their approach as their goals were limited to their respective concerns only (Desai, 1956:9). Therefore, to conduct a systematic study in India we also need a holistic approach which can take into account diverse mechanisms present in a complex context like India¹⁷. If one goes deeper, then according to Desai, in India to develop rural sociology one needs to pay attention to villages from various angles as it constitute the central component in the Indian rural context (Desai, 1956:13).

Indian Context

The Journey of agrarian Change in India has its specific trajectories because of its complex nature. Therefore the studies done either in rural context or related to developments in agriculture are largely separated in Pre and Post independence phases so that the complexity can be articulated properly. As Pointed Out by Desai, villages are really significant categories within Rural Sociology. For him, “It is like a theatre where different dynamics unfold themselves” (Desai, 1956: 13). And it was most probably one of the main entering point before independence for scholarly research in traditional Indian society. Villages have been a locus of cultural and social elements characterising the Indian society. For many sociologists and social anthropologists, it represents India in microcosm and lot of characteristics about Indian society at large can be deciphered through it (Jodhka, 2002: 3343). Beteille (1980) marks the beginning of rural studies in India via study of villages which have been called peasant communities in India. For

¹⁶See H. Newby. The Sociology Of Agriculture. 1983. P 69. A debate between those who were favouring development of Sociology of Agriculture further as Rural Sociology have hardly had any significance as against the proponents of a group that supported an appropriate amalgamation of both the approaches.

¹⁷ee A.R. Desai. Rural Sociology: its need in India. 1956. Pg 9, where he talked about the specific needs for rural studies in India.

Beteille, Indian village has been a subject of scholarly for a century years starting from the classical studies in the 19th century by sir Henry Maine and B.H. Baden Powell. It has not only been a subject of scholarly research but also an important subject in India consciousness for instance for Bose Indian villages had values that stood close to Indian civilisation (Beteille, 1980: 107). Similar importance to Indian villages (both academically and for the formulation of state policies) have been assigned by Jodhka (2002)¹⁸ where he focussed on the popular images of Indian village through the ideologies of three prominent Indian political figures (Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar) in India by doing a sociological analysis of nationalist movements. Beteille highlighted certain features¹⁹ of ideal-typical village in India which were exposed to change through wars, conquests, migration, colonisation, land revenue and other policy systems and it was probably change in the village structure which propelled further researches.

Talking about the major factors of change then land reforms notably stand as one of the prominent factors. They cannot be dealt with strictly as an economic measure, nor can we view them only as a matter of administrative strategy. They are both and much more. In a country where agriculture is way of life for the dominant section in population, ownership and management of land has several cultural, psychological and sociological dimensions, which needs to be understood in depth (Lal, 1982:1). History of land reforms in India can be traced back to Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Movement started to realise the dream of Gandhi which was about attaining Swaraj, which means a democracy based on decentralisation of political as well as economic powers (Aggarwal, 1993: 19). Before the introduction of formal ways to organise land, there were three main forms of land tenure system: Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari²⁰ which gradually paved way for institutional measures through five year plans under which agriculture was given top position in the priority list crafted for structured development of the country for initial five terms. These majors were mainly about abolition of intermediaries, fixing of ceiling on holding and reorganisation of agriculture through a) the consolidation of holdings, b) through prevention of fragmentation, c) through development of co-operatives (Lal, 1982:5).

¹⁸See S.S. Jodhka. Images of rural India: In Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar. 2002. P 3344

¹⁹See, A.Beteille. The indian village:past and Present. in Habsbawn (ed) Peasant in history.1980.P 110.

²⁰See Sheo Kumar Lal: Sociological perspective of land reforms. 1982. P 3.

Along with land reforms, state-led initiatives to increase the productivity of land in the form of Green Revolution also brought in changes in the structure of Indian Society at the level of agrarian class structure and the consequent agrarian relations among those classes. Soon after Independence, when the state-led factors of change were not introduced, Daniel Thorner tried to comply with the diverse class structure present in rural context. Despite the diversity of social arrangements on land in different parts of India, he formulated three criteria to develop a class model which were about 1) type of income obtained from soil, 2) nature of rights, and 3) the extent of field work actually performed. And on the basis of these criteria, he came up with three important classes, i.e. *mailk*, *kisan* and *mazdoor* which was further bifurcated into various categories within, depending on the context in which they were discussed (Dhanagare, 1983:14). Since then, there have been large debates around assigning a proper class structure to agricultural communities. For example, John Mencher's proposed six fold classification consisting of 1) the landless, 2) the poor peasants, 3) the middle peasants, 4) rich farmers, 5) traditional landlords (rich farmers and capitalist farmers, and 6) indeterminate class of large land holder. Similarly, Utsa Patnaik argued for three fold classification depending upon the "concentration of the means of production" containing 1) small minority of households that had abundance of land, 2) large minority of households with scarcity of land and 3) the middle range petty producers, Ashok Rudra's propagated existence of only two grand classes of big landlords and landless labourers, Pranab Bardhan stressed for threefold classification based upon the intermixing of class and caste dynamics which includes 1) top peasantry containing upper castes, 2) middle and poor middle peasantry containing middle caste Hindus, and 3) agricultural labourers containing schedule class and schedule tribes, etc represent those few models among many within Indian context in post independent phase which tried to delineate a class structure for rural India (Thorner, 1982:1993-1996). When talking about agrarian structure and the changes it went through it is nearly impossible to ignore the Peasant movements which according to Jacques Pauchepadass is closely related to class structure. For him, the initial approaches to agrarian movements are dominated by Marxist analysis of Peasantry where the opposition between two antagonistic classes leads to revolts. Lenin divided rural society into 5 classes: landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor proletariat and rural proletariat and with each level at socio-economic ladder the support for revolution varies (Pauchepadass, 1980:136). In the history of revolts in India peasants have always played an important role, and there have

been scholars like Eric Wolf (1971) and Hamza Alavi (1973) who also found middle range peasant class to be the main driving force of revolts at least in initial stages (Pauchepadass, 1980:137). These complex class structures also affect the patterns of relations that exist among the agrarian classes for instance Jan Breman in his work "Patronage and Exploitation" discussed how with the breaking down of the Jajmani system or patronage²¹, the intensity of inequality increased leading to massive changes in economic structure with the rise of a predominantly landless category of labourers. In traditional colonial society, there was existence of bondage in many gradations with a complete control of the landlord on the socially and economically weak class who without much exception belonged to the untouchable or tribal castes (Breman, 1974: 7). Though from outside the system looks repressive but still some amount of security was guaranteed by the patron to the client. With the coming of capital/technologically-intensive farming not only the class structure got altered but the relations also got changed. Now the labourer is free but he/she is still landless without any surety of employment. Therefore, since colonial times to the post independence phase, the agrarian structure in India has experienced a huge amount of change and the process is still on.

New Trends

As India slowly progressed towards development, the concerns of a sociologist also diverged in two major directions, i.e. there was emergence of new areas of research and there was emergence of new perspectives to the old research problems (Jodhka, 2009: 145). Researches in India were criticised for lacking a tradition of its own because the kind of concerns they had were brought to them by the researchers from the more advanced western countries. But now according to Beteille there is a developed attention to the fact, particularly to the facts collected through intensive field work. There is also a more precise set of concepts and categories which makes it possible for us to finally study the agrarian social structures by highlighting all those components that stand crucial in contemporary times (Beteille, 1974: 7). In contemporary times there is a whole

²¹ See, Jan Breman. Patronage and Exploitation. 1974. P 18. By Patronage he meant a pattern of relationships in which members of hierarchically arranged groups possess mutually recognised, not explicitly stipulated rights and obligations involving mutual aid and preferential treatment. The bond between patron and client is personal and is contracted and continued by mutual agreement for an indeterminate time.

range of new areas that have emerged in sociology which are accompanied by interconnection between different fields for instance there is an interconnection between

a) gender and agriculture: Though gender is an important category of analysis in sociology, recently it has been incorporated even in agrarian studies since their experiences regarding rural transformations were different than those of their male counterparts. Hence, issues related to their land rights (Aggarwal, 1994), to differential outcomes of movements for justice and equality (Saradamoni, 1982) to the oppressive outcomes of the Green Revolution (Pai, 1987) are few broad concerns that researchers deal with;

b) ecology and agriculture: Only recently the issues related to ecology were viewed in the light of contemporary agrarian development, as the new agrarian practices have had negative repercussions for not the ecology but also for the society in large in the form of growing cultural and ethnic violences (Shiva, 1989) and increasing number of Farmer's suicide (Jodhka, 2006),

c) mobility studies and agriculture: Whenever one talks about social mobility than the inner urge to change, before the actual movement is one of the necessary things to be kept in mind. Social mobility is significant because it not only changes the position of particular individual or group but it also alters the entire social structure leading to its restructuring. Social mobility studies in rural contexts are inciting lot of interest among sociologists dealing with agrarian transformations as it hold serious implications for rural social structure for instance social mobility in villages of Tamil Nadu due to local industrialisation and social policy have led to consolidation of family farming and have made the underdogs of old agrarian economy to take an exit which in the long run had serious implication on rural class structure (Djurfeldt, Athreya et al, 2008: 50). Social mobility in rural contexts are simultaneously simple as well as complex in nature than urban areas (Arutiunian, 1973: 321) therefore their close scrutiny can enable us to unfold the growing complexity in rural structures etc.. Along with these new fields there is also revival of interest in areas like peasant movements, agrarian crisis, village studies etc. In contemporary times, farmers' movements in India are repressed by various organizations, and of late they have been thought to be an advanced rural militancy because of their innovative ways to stage the protests and explicate their demands. According to Banaji nowadays, the peasant movements are described as new type of peasant movements precisely because of their way of protest and the kind of

demands they put forward (Banaji, 1995: 228). In other contexts along with women, environment, and Dalit movements, they have come to be recognised under the rubric of New Social Movements^{22, 23} (Arora, 2001: 84). Similarly, the area of agrarian crisis has to be viewed beyond it being a byproduct of ecologic crisis only. It has to be viewed again in the fresh light where class and caste lines intersect each other and where new ways to analyse growing agrarian crisis can be applied. Following the same kind of trend, even the village studies need to be re thought and re worked. Dipankar Gupta in his work “Wither the Indian village?” urges to look back to the ways Indian villages and the rural urban nexus have been studied in the academia. According to him, there is a need to re think at two levels: first, though the changes have been recognized with regard to the notions used to study villages, at the conceptual level, villagers and villages have been understood through same old categories which have seen village as an unchanging category, hence the need to rework at the conceptual level; Secondly, he argues that the changes which are occurring in the rural context are not really only because of the urbanization but it is also due to the changes happening within the villages, the changing power structure and the changing land holding settings. So it is true that there are lot of pulling forces from urban areas in the sense that there are plenty of jobs and other opportunities that are attracting them but the out migration is also due to inability of the village structure to hold back its population. So, the impetus of change is also very much present within the villages. Hence, the villagers are leaving their agrarian past for their uncertain agrarian present (Gupta, 2005: 751). Therefore, to study situations like these where to live in villages and be alienated from the agriculture are present simultaneously, there is surely a need for developing new analytical categories (Gupta, 2005: 751). Hence, despite variations in the contexts and the concerns, the need to revive interest in agrarian sector with new conceptual tools is ubiquitously felt.

²² See Vibha Arora. Politics of class(ness) in the farmer’s movement in India. 2001. P 84. Conceptual analysis of new social movements can be traced back to Alain Touraine (1976) who differentiated new social movements on the basis of discursive characteristics of new social movements. For instance unlike old social movements which oppose dominance through metaphysical, social principles, new social movements pose challenge by a direct call to personal and collective actions.

²³ Ibid.. Pp 88. Gail Omvedt explained new social movements to be revolutionary in aspirations and anti systemic in their impact. They are single issue efforts aiming to bring social change.

Conclusion

To conclude, the agrarian question in India and in the West was formulated differently by different people depending on the context in which they were located, the perspective they were using and the theoretical school they were part of. But there was still something in common among them all (across space and time), which held them together. Also, the huge amount of literature dealing with separate issues in agrarian context shows that the agrarian structure has certainly transformed from its earlier versions, and this transformation has influenced as well as changed all those structures with which it intersected in its journey to change. Though an attempt was made in this chapter to give a review of all possible trends in agrarian sector, the journey toward transformation is still on, hence creating new space for further sociological enquiries.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL CHANGE IN WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

In the 20th century, Indian Sociology grew from being an enterprise of a small elite group to a recognisable size and shape which was able to voice up its concerns and interests in the global arena (Welz, 2009: 635). In its infancy, Sociology was largely the locus of struggle as the main concern of scholars was limited only in establishing its appropriate subject matter and its mode of enquiry suitable to Indian context. Though that struggle is still ongoing at its own pace, what it certainly added to the discipline is its unprecedented growth. This chapter deals with the various modes that sociological enquiries have taken since the time its path to progress was debated and discussed. These modes have been located within a specific context of western U.P. so that before proceeding to the context-based effects on aspiration, one must be aware of the number of transformations western U.P. has been through. Hence, a thorough understanding of the context is required to not only map the different dimensions of change but also to understand the location of Jats who are the main concerns of this study. Therefore, starting with discussion on general growth of sociology, the chapter weaves through different spheres of society together, i.e social, political and economic domains, along with a section on comparing these context-specific changes across different states. Welz in his study summaries three broad phases in Indian sociology.²⁴ The first phase was of its very inception in the Indian context from the colonial heritage, the second phase was all about the struggle from the 1950s to the 1980s regarding Indianisation of this westernised thought, and the third phase was about the emergence of a number of perspectives that helped link Indian sociology to the global trends (Welz, 2009: 635). Despite the scope for so much of diversity and intersectionality in the approach, there was one consensus among the scholars, which was on the fact that the Indian society was is going through a massive change be it in its structural formations, cultural patterns,

²⁴ See Frank Welz. 2009. *100 years of Indian Sociology: From social anthropology to decentring global sociology*.

social institutions or political process. The impetus for this change was both a source from within and from the outside world.

Since the inception of Sociology, many scholars, Indian as well as global, have tried to explicate this idea of change (Deshpande, 2003). M.N.Srinivas's work is probably the most influential work, in which he talks about two major forms: changes due to the process of Sanskritization²⁵ and westernisation²⁶. According to Deshpande, though different scholars located different forms of change in different institutions, at the larger level all the studies were oriented towards modernity,²⁷ as being modern was correlated with being developed and being progressive. For him, an added momentum to this frame of mind was provided by the phase of cold war where there was total hegemony of the United States. Quoting Myrdal, Deshpande mentions that in this scenario, the popularity that theories of growth, development or modernisation got was inevitable. Modernity is gradually becoming the object of intense desire, as it promises different resources with which may be the marks of the colonial subjugation can be erased. But at the same time, it is also a source of anxiety as it puts danger to one's indigenous identity (Deshpande, 2003:79). Therefore, in this context, where everyone and everything was aiming to be modernised and developed, change in their traditional outlook and form was quite obvious. And it was this change which at different point in time and in different forms was captured by various scholars.

This chapter is concerned with deciphering different patterns of change within a specific setting, which in the long run enable 'us' (the social enquirers) to understand the larger waves of change flowing within the Indian society. To an extent, an enquiry of this kind was even necessary for a research problem picked up in this dissertation. Since a holistic analysis of the setting in which the main protagonist of this research are located is quite necessary to understand the complexity around processes that the community of Jats

²⁵ It refers to the process that seem to have occurred throughout India, where the low Hindu caste, tribal or any other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology and the way of life in the direction of the direction of a high and a twice born caste with a view of claiming a higher position in the caste hierarchy (Deshpande,2003:69).

²⁶ It refers to the changes introduced in the Indian society during British rule, which still continue to be there and in some cases its there with an added momentum. It refers to an inclusive, complex, and many layered concept. Though the upper caste is particularly active in mediating it, but almost all castes are affected by this which bring a radical change in Indian society and culture (Deshpande, 2003:70).

²⁷ See Giddens. A. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Pp 1 where he explained modernity as a mode of life (social) or organisation which had emerged in Europe from about 17th century onwards and which subsequently became worldwide in its influence.

encountered. Hence, this study, which explores the western part of the state of Uttar Pradesh, is divided into five subsections: the first section deals with the political economy of the state of Uttar Pradesh, which entails a discussion of its geography, history, demography and the broad economic and political structures. The second section deals with the kind of agrarian transformation it has experienced, as the western part of the state was largely agrarian in nature. It discusses the changes/ transformations from land reforms in the colonial times to the present day farmer's suicide scenario in post green revolution and land settlement phase. The third section deals with the political transformations, as historically this state has been a politically vibrant state. Since independence, it has been a host to a lot of political dramas, which explains a lot not only about the state and its nature but it also helps one understand the developments that have been taking place in the larger Indian polity. Fourth section deals with the social and economic transformations that the state has been subjected to. Its economy which was dependent on agriculture and its social sphere which was closely related to its polity and economy have also experienced a great amount of transformation since independence. Lastly, the fifth section is about comparing the state of U.P. with other states in India, which have experienced more or less same forms of transformations. This section in the long run provides us some substantial clues to generalise the phenomena of change observed in U.P. to the Indian level.

U.P. has always been a key state to understand major social, political, cultural and economic transformations in India. Beyond the specific purposes that the scholarly researches done in this state hold, they have also been useful in forming preliminary grounds to understand the broader structures of change/transformations. This state have been a host for not only major economic programmes like green revolution and different forms of land settlement bills but have also been the breeding ground for lot of political mobilisations for instance backward class movement, dalit uprising, rise of hindutva ideology and many other have all started in this state (Pai et al, 2005). Therefor this state by being the site of different socio-eco-political process, hold lot of importance in understanding different patterns/ forms of change in Indian context. These changes may be different in their articulations and may occur in different spheres of this agrarian society/ countryside but at the broader level they represent the growing aspirations of the people and different sectors and spheres which will get manifested through the number of transformations discussed in this chapter.

Political Economy of Uttar Pradesh

The state of U.P. is basically an artifact, largely made up of all those units which were brought together under the colonial administration by conquest or annexation from the Nawabs of Awadh, the Marathas and from the king of Garhwal (Singh, 2001). It was called “a collection of geographic and historical regions” (ibid: 2961). The state was initially divided into two distinct administrative units, the northwest province and Awadh. In 1902 they were consolidated, and the region was called United Province. Gradually, the regions adjacent to it also joined in and the region was renamed in 1950s as Uttar Pradesh (North Province). Since it is a large state, it is further divided into four districts known as western, central, eastern and southern U.P. (ibid: 2961). Since independence, the state has witnessed several movements leading to a reconstitution of the state according to new dynamics. Uttar Pradesh is one of the most populous states in the country, accounting for more than 16% share in the country’s population.

Geographically, it is the fourth largest state in India. The pace of urbanisation is also lower in the state as compared to most of the other states in the country. Though the state developed since the Green Revolutions, the growing population hindered the state’s growth rate. According to official records,²⁸ on the scale highlighting social indicators of growth the state stands on the 13th or in some cases on the 14th position among the major 16 states (Official website of Uttar Pradesh Government). Being a state large in size and dense in population, it has remained low on the development scale, which was further accompanied by the presence of a number of social dividers like caste, class and religion, among others. For instance, the most prosperous section in the population is the one constituted by higher caste Hindus who are rich and have better employment, and they roughly constituted only 20% share in the population. Whereas on the other hand, the Muslims and the backward classes and caste-like Dalit (ex-untouchables) who constituted the major portion in the population were placed real low on the prosperity scale (Jeffrey et al, 2014: 6).

The state has a unique profile in terms of caste and religious communities as well. It is the presence of different caste and ethnic groups that adds to its diversity, which

²⁸ See the official website of U.P. Government for deeper factual details on population, sex ratio, literacy rate etc at up.gov.in/upecon.aspx.

makes it a mirror to the larger Indian reality. Kumar in his analysis of occupational diversification in U.P. and its economic and demographic repercussions, talks about the class and caste situation in U.P. as they put significant influence on state's economy and polity. According to Kumar, U.P. can be cited as a state with failed development and identity politics which were made intense further by poor governance. He called the development there "socially specific" where only selected castes by dominating the economic and political sources of powers can participate in the discourse of development as compare to their low caste and class counterparts who are trapped²⁹ in their social situations. In terms of population, it can be divided into three major blocks: the first block is of upper caste Hinduism mainly Brahmins, Rajputs and Baniyas who dominate government jobs and land ownership in the state. The second block is of middle-caste Hindus who are also middle class like Jats and other castes like Gujjars, Yadavs and Kurmis who are categorised as Other Backward Classes (OBC). Rest of the population is comprised of Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Most Backward Classes. Even at the level of religious diversity, there are mainly two religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, who have great social implications on the politics of U.P. These two communities are further divided into several sub-castes, amongst whom the backward castes are present in majority (40-42%) and are also politically active as the upper cream of this slot had advantage of government. Then come the schedule castes (25-30%) who are also gradually gaining political grounds. In terms of number the upward castes (20-22%) are a minority but in terms of social and cultural influence they dominate (Pai, 1993:24). Regarding the performance at educational, health, and employment level the state had regional variations. Northwestern part along with Haryana and Punjab was the epicentre of Green Revolution in the 1960s and the 1970s, which has contributed most in the prosperity of this region over other parts of the state. Otherwise too the state is located between Ganga and Yamuna river belts, i.e. it comprises almost half of the Gangetic plain, which is one of the most fertile lands in the world (Sharma and Poleman, 1993: 23). It is this fertility of land which makes it a viable place to grow wheat and sugarcane, the main crops of the state. Though numerically it is the SCs and Muslims who

²⁹ See Kumar. S. (2014). In Jeffrey (ed) *Development Failure and Identity Politics in Uttar Pradesh*. P 20. For him, they were trapped in double sense, i.e. they were restricted in terms of spatial mobility and even within the same space they were they were trapped in the most menial jobs.

dominate, at the level of land ownership within the agrarian structure, it is the Jats, Gujjars and Tyagis who dominate (Kumar, 2104: 21).

Land and agriculture are two important dimensions around which not only the economy but even the identity of its population is tied. It is the kind of land settlement and the farming practices which differentiate western region from the others. Beginning from the colonial times, Britishers established two types of land revenue systems in United Province, Talukdari and Zamindari. In Awadh (Western), the rights of revenue collection and ownership were granted to Talukdars, while in the north-eastern province it was given to individual zamindari (Pai, 1993: 22). Different systems of revenue collection laid down breeding grounds for regional and class variations which were reflected later in their land holding patterns³⁰. The regional variation was most vivid between eastern and western parts of the state, especially in the context of agrarian performance in which the western region is more developed. Difference between the two regions was not simply due to the Green Revolution; in fact, it can be traced back to almost a century ago, where the British officers on the basis of dressing pattern distinguished the two regions. Later in 18th century, eastern (Varanasi) provision was considered more progressive because of its developed economy. But by the mid-19th century, the prosperity of east was outshone by the agrarian success of the western region (Stokes and Ian Stone, 1984), and the reason of regional disparity then was the difference in land tenure system as well as development of land irrigation system in western U.P. and not in eastern U.P. Whereas the eastern part was governed under the permanent zamindari system, the western region, in contrary, was run by the bhaichara system, which is closely associated with owner cultivation (Sharma and Poleman, 1993: 36). Though both the regions experienced demographic pressure, the owner cultivators adapted the changes more easily which was visible in their relative growth rate. Hence, due to a number of reasons the state was full of not only diversity and but even disparity between the diverse elements.

³⁰ See Pai. S. (1993). *Uttar Pradesh: Agrarian Change and Electoral Politics*. Pp 22-23.

Agrarian Transformations

The question of agrarian change holds high importance to any idea of development in India. To capture the kind of transformation that social or economic sphere has gone through, one needs to analyse the structure that exist in agriculture. Joshi (1969) in his work on the agrarian social structure highlighted not only the description of structures that existed before independence but also the kind of changes that occurred since independence (Joshi, 1969: 479). The study of agrarian structure is largely a study of groups connected to land since land is one of the main asset/chief elements in agriculture. One of the ways of studying the agrarian structure is through studying its property structure, where there are differential land rights. But this approach is not enough because there is usually a complex web of relations present in the field. Therefore, one of the appropriate ways is to relate the property structure to the productive activity, i.e. 'who does what?', which differs historically like there was serfdom associated with the feudalism, there was wage labour associated with capitalism (ibid: 481). In the Indian context, both these phenomena were complicated as there was lot of gradation within the category of landowners and those who worked on land of the other. And if one creates some sort of class schema, even then there are many bifurcations within each class. In India, this disparity is not only in the economic sphere but it is in the social sphere too. However, despite these divergences those who worked on land were able to hold themselves as a class and voice against the exploitation of landlords (ibid: 482). Therefore, seeing the diversity in the Indian context there were majorly three broad approaches in analysing agrarian structure: The first approach regards 'tradition' as an intrinsic element of and conceptual referent to the study of structure. For instance, a study done by Dumont (1970) on caste in India is in a way his way to come to terms of the Indian tradition. The second approach is about using nature, natural or indigenous categories as providing basic analytical approach is the study of structure. For instance, a study by Beteille (1974), in which he stated that in order to identify Indian class structure, the first step to take was to look into the Indian society itself along with the terms that native people used to define themselves, their relations and their universe around. The third approach is about adopting concepts drawn from established sociological traditions like that of Marx, Weber or Durkheim (Bose, 1989:183).

Quoting Myrdal, Joshi talked about two major conceptions that have dominated the thinking about the Indian agrarian social structure. It is either a structure composed of a mass of poor tenants united in opposition to absentee landlords and their local agents or a structure composed of self sufficient cultivating families living harmoniously. Myrdal in his work 'Asian Drama' also pointed out that if India's situation would have been closer to any of these situations, then it would have been comparatively easier to study its structure and the dynamics around. He also mentioned two unique features of Indian agriculture, i.e. limited role of class movements rooted in clear antagonism between two opposite classes and in the Indian case there is no clear class bifurcation. And secondly, the rise of populist movement having an amorphous ideology often expressed thorough religious, casteists and communal idioms (Joshi, 1969: 485). Soon after independence, under the major project of being modern, some planned agrarian changes were introduced. One of the fundamental changes was the demolition of zamindari, talukdari and jogidari system and establishment of new forms of property relations. With the sharp decline in the number of absentee landlords, there was not only change in the composition of who owned³¹ land but even among tenants, there was some change as they came into direct contact with the state. Another important transformation was due to modern large scale farming which invited the moneyed man from the business and other professional classes to agriculture. Since the agriculture income was still under-taxed, there was emergence of new 'Gentlemen farmers' who invested in agricultural production to earn profits (Joshi, 1969: 488). Along with these, probably the most significant change was due to rural-urban migration propelled by changes in agrarian structure. Generally, mobility attained through migration is understood as very simple, naive category where one assumes a simple, neutral movement of workers from village to the city. But a close reading of the planed agrarian movements shows that the rural-urban interface has a different nature³² to it, which give birth to a unique pattern of migration leading to emergence of new forms of rural- urban nexus (Bose, 1989: 192).

³¹ See Joshi.P. (1969). *Agrarian Social Structure and Social Change*. P 486. He sorted three major classes. first was of resident land owners, second was of numerically large, petty and small landholders and finally the third class was the most innovative one as it move aways from feudalistic characteristics to the commercial and capitalist type of relationships.

³² See Bose P.K. 1989. *Dimensions of Agrarian change*. P 193. For a long time the increased urban population was understood as a demographic issue without paying much attention to the city- countryside relationship which led to the ignorance of those internal and external factors that caused migration and urbanisation.

Apart from this summarised picture of agrarian change, if one really breaks down the series of changes that India has experienced in its agrarian context, then there are two main themes around which different processes are attached. The first theme is about changing patterns of land, which entails lot of interventions from government that resulted into significant changes in the agrarian social structure. This is followed by the state-planned phase of the Green Revolution, which was accompanied with the situation of perpetual agrarian crises. To trace the developments and transformations that had happened around the question of land, one needs to go back to the land tenure system in British India. The system of land revenue and later land tenures were the chief concerns of the governments for which official agencies were formed so that they could generate knowledge from the ground, making it convenient for the government to formulate taxation policies. As a result, land was systematically organised which in the long run influenced the economic and social organisation of the village (Powell, 1907). The whole of British India was divided into different provinces, which were governed by its local administration which in total were subordinated to the Supreme Government, supervising on behalf of the crown (Baden-Powell, 1907:14). Every province was further divided into small districts, which were the “Fundamental Administrative Units”(Baden-Powell,1907:22). These units, according to the Land Revenue Act, were entitled to share “the produce of every bigha of land” (Powell, 1907:51), i.e. cultivable land with the government. This way of organising land and its cultivation pattern later when India gained independence got altered at many levels. But the fact that farming land or agriculture have always been an important source of capital generation and a major sight to assert control and power dynamics is there for a long time. This question of land got intertwined with the question of caste soon after Independence. Since Indian rural society is inherently hierarchical and unequal, the same amount of inequality was even visible in its land-holding patterns. Largely, landowners were from the upper castes, cultivators from the middles castes and agricultural labour from the schedule castes and tribes. Though the legislative measures in terms of land reforms were enacted for the protection and promotion of land rights among the schedule castes and tribes and it did bring some change, there still were many hindrances that came in their implementation, leaving the deprived categories on the same floor (Mohanty, 2001:3859).

Further, the Green Revolution, like land reforms, has also been considered one of the dominant methods for rural development. The Green Revolution was all about

introduction of HVY seed, extensive use of technology, provision of funds and other facilities to increase the production. Green Revolution increased production and provided immediate solution to the growing demand for food, but it also had differentiated impact on different sections of rural society and in some sense it increased the socio-economic inequalities in rural India. Dhanagare (1987) in his work on assessing the impact of green revolution has urged to look at the Green Revolution beyond the HYV production, i.e. it should be defined as a large scale application of modern science and technology to agriculture or as a broader ideology of rural transformation (Dhanagare, 1987: 137). He called the Green Revolution technology, which is capital intensive in nature, a pro-rich and peasant-biased initiative which is clearly visible if one looks at the state of Punjab and western U.P., which were the hosts of this change. The Green Revolution was thought as one of the greatest achievements of mankind over nature as the former was able to go beyond the limits of the latter. It was perceived as a global response and a carefully designed techno-political strategy for peace by the developed nations for the emerging hunger crisis in developing countries (Shiva, 1991:12). However, if one looks beyond its immediate impact, then the reasons behind different ethnic, political and ecological crises and the wide regional disparity can be traced back to the roots of the Green Revolution. Probably one of the major negative repercussions of the Green Revolution is the perpetual agrarian crisis manifested through farmers' suicides. Farmers' suicides highlight the glaring paradox of India's journey towards development. It shows how partial and one-dimensional we have been in planning projects for agrarian development especially with reference to green revolution whose returns were short lived (Singh, 2012: 184). Though agriculture still makes substantial contribution to the country's GDP, despite this, it is constantly marked by a systematic crisis reflected through farmers' suicides (Lokniti, 2014). As Jodhka (2015) points out, what makes these events of farmers' suicides more significant is the fact that they present India's unique story towards change which is many a time highlighted by drastic events like farmers' suicides. The dominant narrative of farmers' suicides highlights the problems that agrarian structure in specific is facing but at the larger level it shows that a farmer committing suicide is not simply a problem of a household but it is closely tied up economic and social aspirational change.

Talking about the regional specificities of western U.P, in this context, i.e. agrarian change, then being an important player in the agrarian economy of India, the

kind of changes that have been mentioned above were equally experienced or observed in U.P. especially in the western part. In comparison with other agriculturally dominant states, there have been few situations which were unique to western U.P. only. For instance, in the state of Bengal there was statutory type of landlordism like zamindari system, whereas in U.P. it was usurious type of landlordism like royatwari. Secondly, in the post-green revolution phase there were more owner cultivators in western U.P. as compared to other states or in fact as compared to its eastern province. Also in western U.P. the hold of caste in agrarian and political affairs was much stronger as compared to other regions (Joshi, 1969:484). Therefore, though there will be a lot of regional specificities, all one needs in the end is the presence of a holistic approach to make sense of the agrarian transformations that western U.P. experienced as region connected to the wider stream of change flowing in the country.

Political Transformations

Despite several decades of development planning and the emergence of political parties representing interests of people across the spectrum of caste and class, U.P. still remains one of the unequal, poor and corrupt states. However, if one looks deeper, then there is a little twist in the story, in the sense that U.P. did progress in terms of political confidence of marginalised sections of the rural population, increased assertion of poor and real improvement in the living conditions of ordinary people. According to Jeffrey et al, these changes in villages and connected urban neighbourhoods are the result of a wider process of democratisation in U.P. (Jeffrey et al, 2014: 2). Though the pre-conditions required for the development of formal democracy have largely been absent in U.P. yet it quickly thrived as a formal democracy due to its participation in anti-colonial struggle in the past and also due to presence of multi party system. UP's political history can be divided broadly into three phases: 1950-67 when the congress party ruled largely with the help of local party mediators. Then came the second phase from 1967-90s which was associated with the rise of political parties led by prosperous farmers leaders for instance Charan Singh (Brass, 2011). This was the post-green revolution period when agriculture and its related dynamics were the main proponents in economic as well as political spheres. Third phase was 1991-till present. The last decade of 20th century is generally very significant in India's story of change as in this decade India altered its way towards development by adopting liberalised, globalised and privatised ways. Also in this year,

the debate around caste reservations also came in the public front and in U.P. it took especial turns in the sense that the caste reservation struggles were marked along the political mobilisations around the question of caste. With all these changes and phases U.P. was able to represent itself as a state with formal democracy. Though it is only with rightful addressing of social problems and with meaningful participation by all the section in the population, that this formal democracy can be turned into a substantive democracy (ibid: 5).

U.P. though belongs to a particular socio-eco-political context but it still provides an important site to understand larger economic and political developments in India. For Pai (2007) there are three significant changes/ developments in U.P. that makes its story a unique yet general in approach. These are rise in primordial identities, their transformative impact on the political processes and the trajectory of the political economy of reforms and governance (Pai, 2007:15). In 1990s at the political front caste and communal identities formulated the mass base for politics. An upsurge from below by Dalits, OBCs questioned the way politics used to get practiced in U.P. Along with political upheavals, U.P. simultaneously experienced a steep fall in its economic growth rate, leading to severe financial crisis in the state. Earlier U.P. used to be called a part of the BIMARU state (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) but gradually it stood quiet below even other BIMARU states (ibid: 16). It was under these conditions that the state adopted the neo-liberal economic policies. Therefore all these developments i.e. political transformations due to uprising of narrower identity based parties and economic reforms in the form of neo-liberal policy, altered not only scenarios in U.P. but their effect were felt in the larger context too (ibid:17).

The literature around political transformations in U.P. can be clubbed in three major groups: one that talks about very elementary forms of politics and governance i.e. the literature around establishment and growth of panchayati raj in India. Second group consists of all those studies which discuss different forms of political mobilisations in U.P., namely around the elements of caste (Dalit and Backward castes discourse), Class (New farmers movement) and religion (Rise of BJP and Communal politics). And finally, researches that try to present large picture of political development in India by tracing their roots and source in regional politics.

Development as a conscious effort involve the state and its different institutions, which entailed a number of approaches in its scrutiny, in its course and progression. But

one of the central institution that contested the centralist state approach to development are the village and community values, local decision making mechanisms, which shows that need for devolution of power is deeply rooted. The Need is also deep in the sense of its history of development which can be traced back to India's colonial experiences³³. It started with Ripon Resolution in 1882, which aimed at involving a class of public spirited men. As result district boards and talks were set U.P. with nominated members who were expected to look after certain concerns/areas (Lieten and Srivastva, 1999:16). Finally the district board act of 1992 led to the reconstitution of the boards as elected bodies and with the dawn of independence, voices within Indian national congress also came U.P. for a village centred approach along with establishment of village based democracy, i.e. Panchayati Raj. As a result when India gained independence according to article 40 included in Part IV of the constitution, a directive for state government to advice them to take steps to organise village panchayats was constituted. Despite this due to political upheavals and agrarian unrest soon after independence, it took some years before panchayat structure could be placed in place (ibid: 19). Though community development programmes under five years planning were constructed by planning commission as an essential step in transforming the social and economic life of village people but to make the changes more substantive in nature, an especial committee called "Balwant Ray Mehta committee" (ibid: 20) was built up. This committee recommended certain changes in Panchayat legislation in which "democratic decentralisation" was recommended, which entails inclusion of three tier structure (Village-Block-District) so that power, resources, responsibilities could be channelised properly. But such changes had negative repercussions too for instance there were rise in incidence of rationalism and feuds between them due to caste, religion distinctness and Balwant Ray Mehta committee had no solution for such situation. Also in late 1960s with onset of green revolution there was need for centralised policy and administration for rightful resources distribution, as result the community/ local self government topic in the form of panchayats got sidelined. In the late 1970s, with changes at national front the issue was raised again and as result a new committee called "Ashok Mehta Committee" (ibid: 2) was constituted by Indian government. This committee seeing the failure of previous

³³ See Lieiten and Srivastva .1999, Unequal Partners. Pp 16. *Decentralisation in India* (Maddick, 1970) preceded the establishment of the country councils in England and new bodies were seen as appendages of the central administration.

committee and on the basis of their experience in the field gave certain recommendations. For instance they recommended reservation of seats for women within Panchayat bodies, more involvement of political parties so that better linkages can be built and greater accountability can be assured. As a result of this 43rd constitutional amendment bill (1977) was drafted which the directive principle into a mandatory principle which instructed all government to take PR function effectively. Hence the 73rd amendment (1992) that we have in the context of Panchayati raj system in India is more or less a by product of this 1977 recommendation only. Since then the importance of panchayats for effective functioning of rural society was felt by the government across different states (Sodhi and Ramanujam, 2006). They are important because they acted as a significant link between local leadership enjoying the confidence of the local people and the government which help in translating the policies into actions effectively (Singh, 1994: 819). According to Singh (1994) there are two view points on panchayati raj performance: One group holds the point of view that the panchayati raj functionaries are interested and engaged only in power politics which create tension in village among different communities. Whereas the other view point attributed the reason of failure of panchayat raj to lack of funds, co-operation and support from the government (ibid: 820). Though the functioning of panchayats was analysed differently among different states but in total their importance cannot be denied in making democracy effective in rural settings.

Now moving ahead from village level panchayats, the politics of U.P. is centred on the questions of caste, class and religion. The question of caste is central in U.P. not only in the context of economy, i.e. agriculture but also in the context of politics. Zoya Hasan (1989, 1998) in her analysis of Politics in U.P. has argued that Uttar Pradesh being in the heart of India has been the nerve centre of Indian politics since the late 19th century (Hasan, 1989). For her casteism and communalism (seeing the emergence of backward and lowers castes and Ayodhya confrontation between Hindus and muslims) were two major tenants that defined political picture in U.P. (Hasan, 1998:1). In U.P., it is largely the upper castes who have maintained their dominance in politics and economy and whose authority were challenged by people from low caste and class. For instance, the general discussion around government policies reveal that these policies favoured the rich uppers castes and classes more which was later on challenged by middle and low caste peasants and agricultural labourers (Hasan, 1989: 133). Therefore, the political mobilisation of middle castes (Farmer's movement) and lower castes (Dalit uprising)

shows the importance of caste in U.P. (Ibid: 189). In fact post 1990s (with the emergence of Dalits as an important political player in the local state politics) is regarded as a decade of Dalits where political scientists and social thinkers across different disciplines were all engaged in contributing significantly to the rising Dalit discourse. Dalits have always been the prominent vote bank to the mainstream political parties in India and in U.P. specifically and the rise of BSP was considered as political resurgence of Dalits in mainstream politics. The political aspiration of Dalits got structured through BSP as after years of lack of representation, it was BSP that provided them the much awaited political space and a leadership that will give them a voice (Kumar, 2004: 1780). But this rise of Dalits needed to be observed carefully as it was originated in a place that already had a turbulent experience with caste and its involvement in different social institutions. So for instance the involvement of Dalits was recognised as an important development in politics which has influenced not only the politics of U.P. but has also created an impact on national politics. Still, it has been perceived as an ‘unfinished business’ (Kumar, 2004) or a revolution³⁴ that was unable to bring any broad structural changes or transformations at local level (Jeffrey et al, 2008). Pai also argued that the uprising of Dalits has certainly made significant contribution to Indian polity but to maintain their political positions in U.P. they need to maintain alliances with other backward castes in countryside (Pai, 1997). As she noted the growth of internal tension between the recently politically mobilised caste of Dalits under the socio-cultural process of Ambedkaristaion³⁵ and the OBCs like Yadavs, Khurmis, Gujjars who have also received a forum for articulation of their assertive identities and demand. The result of such confrontations leads to emergence of changed political preferences among the castes present in U.P. for instance those sections among the backwards and the lower castes, who were called “Political Orphans” (Pai and Singh, 1997: 1361) and who were still unable to voice their demands U.P. on the front stage, got pacified by the space provided to them by other political parties like BJP. All these political turns and twists have led to

³⁴ See Jeffrey et al. (2008). *Dalit Revolution*. P 1365. Among the political scientists, there is development of view point that a Dalit revolution is taking place in north India by seeing the transformations happening in local party politics. They add on to this argument particularly with a reference to a ‘new generation’ of low caste political activists. Jeffrey et all argue that this ‘new generation’ of politician who are educated and are politically aware do provide lot of support to Dalit revolution hypothesis but there is hardly any evidence for substantial transformation in political, social and economic contexts.

³⁵ See Pai and Singh (1997). *Politicisation of Dalits and Most Backward Castes*. P 1356. Ambedkaristaion refers to tremendous growth in the consciousness among Dalits about the life and ideas of Baba Sahib Ambedkar.

change in the dialectics of Dalit aspirations which manifested in their demand for extension of Affirmative action (Pai, 2008). This demand has given air to a debate in which politicians and scholars have taken contrasting positions. Whereas one section is asking for extension of job reservation to overcome the growing discrimination in the employment practices in the neo-liberal phase, the other section is asking for introduction of policy of diversity through supplier/dealership³⁶ in the field of business and industry for Dalits by both the government and private sector. All these debates and discussions show that no matter class divisions were quiet sharp in UP, but still the caste lines were the dominant yardsticks around which the social structure and politics in U.P. is organised (Hasan, 1989: 194).

Apart from caste, Pai in her study (1993) on electoral politics in U.P., where mobilisation around agrarian issues and caste was of great significance especially during elections, noted that even class played an important role. Highlighting the importance of class, she focussed on the political developments within the state starting from the formation of BKD (Bhartiya Kisan Dal) in 1960s to the political ascendancy of rich and middle class farmers under the leadership of Charan Singh within in Janta Dal. Her most important contribution was that class based changes were equally important in the countryside as they were strongly present in the backyard of larger caste based mobilisations (Pai, 1993: Preface). Following Pai even Jeffrey and Lerche in their study of dimension of dominance in U.P. found that class plays a really significant role especially in everyday politics (Jeffrey and Lerche: 2000). For them class not only influence the working of local state functioning but they also get reproduced in return. For instance, a class of rich Jat farmers have differential access to state administrations as compared to the low caste Dalits which not only affect the way state will circulate its resources or the way state will exercise its power but this differential access will also help these Jat farmers to reproduce and maintain their upper class positions (ibid, 2000:92). But along with Caste and Class in contemporary times there seems to be a need for “recognition of religion ” (Jodhka and Mahajan, 2010) as the attributes of modern world which were signalling toward ‘post secular’ societies are tempered by events like 9/11 which demands reappearance and recognition of religion and religious communities in

³⁶ See Pai. (2008). *Changing dialectics of Dalit aspirations*. P 228. The SD policy arose out of Bhopal conference (2002) that represented a search for alternative policies for Dalits as a product of a partnership between intellectuals and activists.

the public domain (Ibid: 1). The re-emergence of religion in politics is quite explicitly visible in the state of U.P. especially in the Post congress era (Hasan, 1998), where BJP largely gained ground by patronising the needs and concerns of Hindus which were otherwise ignored in the politics of caste and class. By practicing their Hindutva Politics they not only tempered the U.P. political situation but have also made significant appeal to the aspiring middle class in the city.

All these political developments in U.P. from ground level governance of Panchayats to caste, class and religion based political mobilisations contribute significantly to India's contemporary history of change. Though these changes initially may not be able to gain global attention but now the pace with which India is developing in the global arena, it certainly demands some attention to its unique story of transformations. Corbridge and Harris (2000) called for 'reinvention of India' seeing the process of liberalisation, Hindu nationalism and emergence of popular democracy in India especially in a state like U.P. which has been the host for most of these phenomena. They have talked about series of political developments within India and the events that have led to India's reinvention simply to signify the kind of change Indian society has went through. Though the changes were in Political and Economic contexts but they has implications for almost all spheres leading to a changed, a reinvented India (Corbridge and Harris, 2000: Preface). According Corbridge and Harris, though all countries are in a sense being imagined and reimagined all the time but India have been the subject of a particular and a very "deliberate act of invention". Before independence, a group of young educated men began to debate and formulate a draft for what kind of country India will be in future, as a result of their debate they come U.P. with the ideas of making a modern, democratic and a secular state endowed with a sense of development. Then comes the second phase in India's journey towards development and hence changes in 1990s where vigorous attempts to re-imagine the country, its economy and society were made. This phase along with consciously planned strategies can also be characterised more as a phase of default resulting from failed strategies of Nehruvian modernisation mission (ibid: Preface). For them the story of reinventing India does not stop here as India is a place full of heterogeneity marked by class, caste and religion. Therefore this post 1990s reinvented model of India by Hindu nationalism got failed in convincing and fulfilling the demands of all those sections which were on margins or have experienced inequalities based on caste, class, gender, religion and various others. Their assertiveness and struggle according to them is a result of "Progressive Ruralisation" of Indian Politics

which provided space for every community to voice their concerns U.P. in the mainstream politics.

Therefore, though the analysis done above on the political developments or transformations in India throughout the case of U.P. was limited only to certain post independence movements but in the long run they were able to show that independent India is continuously not only changing but is also re-writing and re-inventing itself within the discourse of development propelled by rising aspirations of its people.

Socio- Economic Transformations

The Economy of western Uttar Pradesh is closely related to agriculture and agrarian production which is majorly limited to the cultivation of wheat and sugarcane. Since the region, as mentioned above, was located in one of the most fertile parts of the country, in terms of production output, U.P. has always been counted amongst the leading producer of sugarcane and sugar in the country. The origin of sugar industry in U.P. can be traced back to the establishment of a local refinery factory in Kanpur in 1874 by an English management agency (Damodaran and Singh, 2007: 3952). But since independence, there have been certain temporal and regional shifts in the progress of sugar industry. At the temporal level the journey of sugar industry can be divided into three broad phases: pre-independence to soon after independence phase of rising production, a declining phase from the 1960s to 1990s as the focus of production was shifted away from sugar cane and finally the revival phase with the start of the century marked by accelerated growth rates (ibid: 3954). At the regional level, initially the sugar industry grew in eastern part of the state, even the initial refineries were placed in eastern U.P. only but gradually with time due to less production cost, the industry got shifted to western and central regions creating regional variation within the state. Agriculture in a whole is really important not only for the economy but also for the larger socio- political spheres. As it is, access to the land and the form of work done on land that defines the identity of any person residing in rural India. Land is not only a source of economic security but also a source of pride (Jodhka, *The Tribune*). The kind of work one does on the land is also a marker of their caste identity as caste still holds lot of importance in deciding the occupation of different castes and many a times it also play an important role even in political affairs. Traditionally organised caste structure around land got altered with coming in of green revolution technology in the field and with growing connection of the economy of U.P.

to the world outside under the influence of neo- liberal policies. Therefore, as the economy is closely attached to the social structures especially in the countryside any change in the economy also brought similar kind of change in the social spheres too.

Similar Experiences

The kind of transformations that western U.P. has experienced at the level of changed land holding Patterns, changed agrarian relations, changes in the forms of labour and changes in its political sphere, have also been experienced in other parts of the country like in the state of Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha. It is useful to draw patterns like this where similar experiences can be shared and some amount of generality can be attained as it provide authenticity to the claims made via a close scrutiny of a specific site.

In the context of agrarian transformation, the states of Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have experienced similar patterns of change as that experienced by U.P., as all these states have also been the host of the Green Revolution. Therefore, the kind of changes that farmers, land, labourers and broader agrarian relations have been through in U.P. can also be found in these states. For instance the condition of agricultural labourers in western U.P. despite the growth in agrarian production, availability of government built facilities and rise in incidences of political mobilisation was quiet similar to those present in Haryana. Jodhka (Jodhka, 1994 and 1995) in his study captures those patterns of change amongst agricultural labourers which have emerged especially in post green revolution period. For him far from being a privileged class, attached labourers are the most deprived class in the agrarian economy in the sense the conditions under which they work and the wages they get in return are worse than their casual labourers counterparts. Also even though there is hardly a case of inter generational bondage, the labourers themselves voluntarily get into a contract because of their credit needs. So, the labour they offer in return is like a mortgage in return of the interest free credit they borrow from the creditors. There are elements of the lack of freedom, which makes this system a mortgage system rather than a substance guarantee arrangement in the post green revolution phase (Jodhka, 1994: A-103). While discussing these emerging patterns in Haryana he also gets into larger debate (here

especially with Tom Brass³⁷) on the nature of change in Indian agrarian economy. He argued that though Tom Brass in his analysis of nature of Indian peasantry (1991) was right in pointing out the unfree relationship but in the field it was difficult to find supporting facts for his idea of 'deproletarianisation', as successful mobilisations to come out of the exploiting conditions were present among the workers. There were also changes in the local power structures which not only provided means to the lower caste workers to agitate against the repressive demands of the land owning castes but it also enabled the erosion of ideology of patronage and loyalty. Furthermore, there was growth of communication between villages and the urban centres which opened up news avenues for the labour classes (ibid: A-104). This space to mobilise was present even among the labourer class in U.P. who belonged largely to scheduled castes. Apart from this even the pattern of land cultivation was quiet similar in western U.P. and Haryana. The Bhaichara System that Pai (1993) talked about in her work where owner cultivators cultivate their land and occasionally take help from the labourers on peak seasons in return of some share from the crop is quiet similar to the pattern followed in Haryana. Here too the labourers were generally from the lower castes and were most of the times indebted to the rajput landowners. Here, the labourers were known as 'Sahji', who work on the plot of the landowner and in return receive a share of the cultivation (ibid).

Similarly, changes in the sphere of land relations were observed in Punjab as they were in U.P. Gill (1989) discussed the changing land relations post land reform period in Punjab. Before implementation of land reforms, Major part of land revenue was collected through tenant cultivation which was of two types: 1) Occupancy and 2) At will. In Punjab tenants at will cultivated majority portion of land. The tenants were also of two types: Owner tenants and Purely tenants, but in general the land was concentrated in few hands like in western U.P. its limited to only high caste and some middle caste Hindus like the Jats. In the 1970s Punjab agriculture experienced massive amount of change on the fronts of changed land holding patterns due to land reforms³⁸ and changed land cultivation processes due to green revolution. He referred to that class of capitalist farmers which were observed even in the coastal Andhra Pradesh by Carol

³⁷ See Jodhka. S. S. (1995). *Agrarian Changes, Unfreedom and Attached Labourers*. For more details on the debate between Jodhka and Tom Brass on the condition of agricultural labour in India.

³⁸ See Gill. S. S. 1989. *Changing Land Relations in Punjab*. Pp 79. Land reforms which were implemented after independence were generally of four kinds: 1) Abolition of Intermediaries, 2) Tenancy reforms, 3) Ceiling of landholding, 4) consolidation of holdings.

Upadhyaya(1988) and in Western U.P. Roger Jeffery (2011) especially with reference to capitalist mode of production propelled by green revolution. Also with strengthening of Panchayati Raj on rural grounds, there was reorganisation of rural life accompanied by modernisation of agriculture (Gill, 1989: 84). Even in Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu, more or less similar kinds of changes were visible. Gough (1978) in her research on agrarian relations in south eastern India marked out certain forms of change which were almost like those that western Uttar Pradesh had experienced. For instance due to land reforms and green revolution there was expansion of capitalist farming, land ownership became exclusive, there was rise in middle ranking rich farmers and bonded labour was gradually disappearing (Gough, 1978).

At the level of politics along with consolidation of Panchayats and political rise of low caste and classes, there were other deeper changes too which Bailey (1963) observed in the Orrisa and which were similar to the patterns emerged in western Uttar Pradesh. Bailey argued that political conflict or cooperation is one among many ways through which people usually communicate with each other (Bailey, 1963: 228). Though he observed the political movements specific to Orrisa, i.e the Oriya nationalism, the independence movement in Orissa and the hill against the coast struggle but the conclusions he derived from them were applicable even in other situations. For instance he stated that politics and social follow each other because the social interaction beneath political interaction in the elite arena³⁹ makes it easier to understand that there exist a bounded universe where commotion in one influence the other (ibid: 230). Therefore, the kind of change he observed in Bispara village due to interconnection between social and political spheres in the sense that untouchables were able to establish relationship beyond the arena traditionally defined for them and was also able to challenge their old masters after gaining political power, just like Dalits in western Uttar Pradesh.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is not just the agrarian economy or the polity but even the larger social structures that have experienced similar forms of change across different states. The

³⁹ See Bailey F.G. (1963). *Politics and Social Change in Orrisa*. P 226. By Elite arena he meant that in free elections every adult in Orrisa is a potential actor but voters are more like crowd at the foot ball match. There cheers might influence the course of the game but the game is still played by the men on the field and in the political arena state politicians are an elite class of professional politicians. Thats why it is preferable to call the arena an elite arena.

commonality of experiences not only enable us to look out for generality but it also stand as a testimony to the fact that no matter these processes of change were observed within different states, they were propelled by different factors or for that matter they adhere their region specific forms. But the fact that they intersect with each other at some point in their progression or they share similarity with each other proves that Indian society is changing, its structures, economy and polity are going through major transformations.

CHAPTER THREE

JATS: PAST AND PRESENT

This chapter traces the historicity of the community of Jats, who have not only been a significant caste in the rural western U.P. but have also been a catalyst of change. A glance through their past and present, the ways through which they have recognised themselves and have been recognised by others, is essential to unfold the nature of their aspirations. All of this might enable one to decode the background details of all those series of change which increasingly contributing to a wave of transformation that society at large is encountering. Talking about the institution of caste, then, like any other aspect of social life, it has been present in the Indian context as a dynamic reality which cannot be ignored. What we know today about caste and its association with other social institutions is only through academic writings and researches, which for a long time were influenced by the presence of colonial administrators (Jodhka, 2012: 140). Discussion on Jats with reference to caste is essential also because the aspirations and the consequent social change that this work is trying to look at, roams around the aspirations of a caste of Jats. Jats have been a significant caste for bringing in a new trend in the agrarian politics in countryside and have also been the front runners when India enters the age of modernity and global development especially in the context of agriculture.

There have been numerous ways to look at caste and, according to the functionalist perspective, caste was primarily a cultural and an ideological⁴⁰ system, a traditional way of life which was expected to lose its hold in the society as one proceeded towards modernity or development. It is not only modernity which has brought changes in the nature and form of caste but also that, being a dynamic social institution, caste has been evolving since the colonial period. To assess how caste has changed over the past few decades one needs to have an adequate amount of knowledge of its past (Fuller, 1996: 9). There have been number of anthropological studies by scholars such as Dumont (1970), Heesterman (1971), Marriot (1969, 1990) and

⁴⁰ See Jodhka, S.S. 2012. *Caste*. P 141. As an ideological system caste was about ritual status and social hierarchy. This hierarchy had ritual order backing it up, making it appear like a 'natural' system of hierarchy, which cannot be challenged unlike other forms of inequalities.

ethnographic accounts by Beteille (1965), Mayer (1960), Dirks (1992) of caste, which had tried to unfold the different ways through which caste has been studied in India (Fuller, 1996). Along with this, even the changes introduced by Britishers were very significant as they brought drastic transformations to the Indian caste system especially with regard to the formal categorisation they introduced to enumerate the population for better organisation. Even after independence, the caste order got altered both organisationally and ideologically. But the changes had their limitations⁴¹ and in some cases it was limited to only certain spheres. For instance, Vaid (2014) in her work⁴² reviewed the changes that caste had gone through in contemporary India and she noticed both transformations and persistence in the patterns of change. Vaid mentioned that the research on caste did allow some space for change but the change is limited to certain contexts only like economic domain, i.e. the contemporary labour market. Whereas caste endogamy is still prevalent which shows that caste is changing but only in limited ways (Vaid, 2014: 406). But beyond this, according to Jodhka, there was something else too which was happening to caste by the beginning of the 20th century different caste groups were organising themselves in the form of 'caste associations' (Jodhka, 2012: 145). With the emergence of these caste associations new basis for identity formation, new grounds for competition and new lines to mobilise also emerged. Though caste idioms still existed, caste was changing and the new groups acted as local pressure groups which were fighting for representation and equality (ibid: 146). It is these new forms in which caste articulates itself, giving rise to new hopes and desires. Jats have precisely organised themselves around these lines to manifest their aspirations which are highly visible in the contemporary context and which in the long run also contribute to the waves of social change.

Transformation in the Jat Society: Different Ways to Claim an Identity

There have been quite a few ethnographic studies that have tried to decode (directly and indirectly) the prominent ways through which Jat community has asserted their claim to

⁴¹ Ibid. P 147. It was limited in the sense that most of the movements were mostly urban centric and the rural class was left untouched. Moreover despite legal provisions not only the discrimination process continued but the development projects also remained largely 'caste-blind'.

⁴² See Vaid. D. (2014) for detailed discussion on changes in caste system. Through an extensive review of studies done in this field like Deshpande and Palshikar (2008), Kumar et al(2002), Jodhka(2010), Jodhka and Newman(2010) etc she assert that if one looks at the occupational structure/labour market than the transformation in caste is quiet visible.

a certain form of identity. This work reviewed the possible available ways to map out the past of Jats so that their claims in contemporary times and its repercussion on the society can be deciphered logically.

A. Glorifying the Past

Before getting into the details of their origin and the consequent claims to be the beholders of certain kind of identity, it is necessary to look at the debates around the question of community, as all the testimonies belong to a certain kind of group/category will be assessed in community terms only. Though the community has always been one of the unit ideas in Sociology, earlier connotations about it used to relegate this concept under the evolutionary perspective to the domain of tradition, non-western and pre-industrial agrarian settings. But according to Jodhka (2001), there is a re-emergence of this concept among the social science researchers, who are clubbed into antagonistic groups⁴³ depending upon the positions they take with regard to prevalence of this concept. And despite having different viewpoints, the assurance that there is emergence of the concept community in the contemporary theoretical discourse lies with both the blocks. Hence, it will be possible to explore all possible dimensions of this research within the broader framework that the concept of community provides.

If someone is to ask why particularly this community, then the answer would be that the Jats as community are important because of the specific place they have in agrarian settings since the colonial times (Dutta, 1999:8). It is this specific place that will enable us to unfold the changes not only in agrarian context but also in the larger society. Jats seem to have first appeared during seventh century in Sind, gradually residing in the Indo-Gangetic plains. Early historical accounts of Sind indicate that the term 'Jat' was popularly applied to a 'Low and Servile' creature tied to his Quam. Early 18th century accounts on the other hand describe them as people who dominated South and East Delhi as plunders and bandits. Around the same time, they were involved in colonising land around the banks of Yamuna River and gradually transformed themselves into a category of warrior- cultivator and semi pastoralist. When East India Company came to India, two important things happened with reference to this community: first, the settlement of Jats

⁴³ See Jodhka. S. S. (1998). *Community and Identity*. P 252. There were broadly two groups. One group holds negative views towards the development policies as it tend to dissolve the idea of community and the other group assigns positive values to the same for pushing the idea of community in the forefront.

on irrigated lands; two their intution into the Army. So the Britishers gradually came up with formal categorisation of Jats as ‘the agricultural tribe, the Zaildars and the soldiers to establish a system of imperial patronage’ (Dutta, 1999:10). Nonica Dutta in her work (1999) on Jats looks at the historical journey of their identity formation by using the neglected and unexplored vernaculars and according to her there are three major components in making of Jat identity, i.e. popular religious tradition (influence of Arya samaj), local political developments (influence of leaders like Chotu Ram) and the community narratives (quami narratives).

Though colonial institutions and ideologies have generally shaped the contours of this community’s identity (Dutta, 1999:8), with the onset of 20th century, the Jats began to rely much on their own local symbols and traditions which were built with the strong influence of Arya Samaj and teachings of Dayanand Saraswati. Since Jats had an ambiguous status in Hindu hierarchy and have been largely relegated to the bottom of the caste hierarchy, it is their encounter with Arya Samaj culture, which can be understood as the merging of western ideas and institutions with emerging Indian middle class (Dutta, 1999:52) that helped them carve out an exclusive place for themselves. Even Christophe Jaffrelot (2003) noted the importance of Arya smash among Jats as it provides them a way to express their hostility towards Brahmin superiority. According to him, Arya Samaj exerted sanskritization kind of effects on Jats by directing there behaviour and lifestyle (Jaffrelot,2003: 273).Arya Samaj also contributed in forming women’s domesticated identity which was an important aspect of Jat’s new male identity and in the larger context association with Arya Samaj gave them an opportunity to claim a warrior status. Bodies like Jat sabhas (The All India Jat Mahasabha) by the late 19th century also articulated their quest for a viable past and concern to assert the Kshatriya status (Dutta, 1999:166). It developed a discourse of being a twice-born Kshatriya caste and opposed Hindu orthodox prejudices (Jaffrelot, 2003:273).

Along with these specific religious concerns, there were certain local narratives as well, which are also important to look at when one talks about Jat identity, as they had a broader based agenda of Jat unity and Fraternity. One of the main concerns of these narratives is their emphasis on spread of education because for them it is education that can give them means to challenge educated elite thus they established Jat schools and colleges (Dutta, 1999:82). The stress on education as an important strategy to move up and claim a status of their own is also discussed later in the chapter.

Beside Brahmin opposition and sanskritization, Arya Samaj had affinities with the most specific characteristic of Jats i.e. their sense of industry. Arya Samaj displayed a spirit of enterprise for their self sufficiency (Jaffrelot, 2003: 273). This sense of enterprise was in well tune with Jats' industrious ethos. Many scholars have written about this industrious character of Jats which represented their archetypal working peasantry picture. The ideal Jat owns land and cultivates it with his nuclear family. Certain stereotypes about Jats have their roots in local proverbs (ibid: 274); for instance, Blunt (1969) called Jats to represent the caste system of Northern India. Some other local proverbs about Jats that directly or indirectly point towards their personality traits are:

“Jat mara tab maniye jab terahwin gujar jae” (never be sure that a Jat is dead till the days of mourning for him are over)

or

“The Jat baby has a plough-handle to play with” (ibid: 266, 488)

Along with all these characteristics, one of the defining features of this community, according to Gupta, is the presence of rivalry along with brotherhood (Gupta, 1997), i.e. irrespective of the commonality of the background and strong unity. Jats, unlike any other communities, are very critical of each other, which is explicitly visible in their face to face interactions. It is essential to highlight this feature about Jats, as in the long run it influences their orientation towards future. Even according to Dutta, though the Jat identity forged through cultural associations, collectively imagined past, traditional images, symbols and myths was created to serve political aspirations in the colonial context, the crystallisation of this identity, study of how they have been constituted, can serve (though only in limited ways) as an instrument to understand the concept of change in the society (Dutta, 1999:192).

B. Political Affiliations

Beside the claims based on their origin tales, inclination toward politics with a unique character was also one of the important ways to claim a Jat identity. Thus, the elements that went into the making of Jat identity also left their impression on popular politics and there was a creation of highly self-conscious and assertive leadership in 1920s and 1930s. As a result, with the presence of strong Jat leaders, the nature of rural agitations and mobilisations got altered, countryside rural unionism entered the supra-local politics, and there was visible permanency of the unions that went beyond the success or failure of any specific issue (Gupta, 1997). Gradually, political domain became one of the

explicit platforms through which Jats entered the mainstream society by asserting their own set of ethos via their political demands. Jat presence in rural agitations influenced not only the character of rural unionism but it also shed light on the division between two types of rural movements, one is the movement of poor peasants and agricultural labourers for higher wages and better working conditions. The second was Farmer's (not peasant's) movement where the capitalist agriculturalists were present themselves (Gupta, 1997:11).

But the movement that Jats initiated under the banner of Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) with their popular farmer's leader Mahender Singh Tikait guiding each step, was able to link the concept of peasants with that of farmers through the ways they organise their agitations, through their representation and through their articulation of demands. Their presence as main leaders representing the interest of Farming community gave a new character to rural movements. Majority of the cultivators in western U.P. which was the prominent place of these agitations are primarily Jats and are owner cultivators. Largely they are small cultivators with an average ownership of about three acres of land, produce cash crops, interact intensely with market and with modern political institution and yet retain in many ways a peasant outlook. Also, they depend largely on family labour and hire extra labour only in peak seasons. They take pride in their caste traditions but at the same time perceive a very progressive outlook towards future especially in regard to their embracement to the Green Revolution-induced modern farming techniques (Gupta, 1997:26). Hence, the agriculturalists of western U.P. have both the dimensions, i.e. the economic role bearing image of a farmer and the social and culturally formed image of a peasant.

Though there was great stress on equality and in fact the main benchmark of BKU was its representation of almost all agrarian classes, there were still certain occasions where the difference between several castes became obvious. Through competing tales of bravery and heroism, the always existing difference between different castes became more evident. Almost similar kind of differentiated behavioural pattern of Jats was visible with regard to the way they treated their women. While a woman is expected to help her husband out in the fields during peak seasons, she is at the same time expected to wear a veil whenever she will step out of the household and is also supposed to behave modestly. Also, the punishments for transgressing the Khap exogamy marriage rules were more severe for women as compared to men (Gupta, 1997:57).

If one traces the roots for this political affiliation, then Chotu Ram was often called the architect of Kisan politics as he was not only the first Jat peasant who became part of the intelligentsia but also joined politics and represented the rights of Jats and peasants at large. He was also important as, for the first time, he introduced in Indian politics the distinction between rural and urban India. Therefore, with Chotu Ram, Jats invented a new idiom of politics, Kisan politics, which emphasised socio-economic cleavages (Jaffrelot, 2003: 274). After independence, the momentum was taken ahead by another Jat leader Charan Singh who was taken as the principle spokesperson representing middle peasantry in India and was also known to represent “aspirations” of the so called backward Jat peasant castes with an intermediate social status between elite castes and lower castes (Brass, 1993). This lineage of political leadership was finally taken forward by Mahender Singh Tikait who represented farmers’ movement in western U.P. and given a new colour to agrarian politics.

But beyond this, what Jats are also known for is their dominance in Khap Panchayats, which are largely an informal social institution but have remained a subject of enquiry because of the influence they assert, the changes they bring in traditional village structure and the controversial judgements they pass in local contexts. They are located mostly in Jat dominated areas and have often remained a toll in the hands of big, rich local landlords (Kumar, 2012). Panchayats are often called modern day avatar of traditional social assemblies but Khap panchayats are known to ensure an adherence to customs. They are very old and their origin can be traced to tribal times and since the 14 or 15th century they have been a well-established social institution in the Jat-dominated area. They are of different types⁴⁴ but broadly they comprised of number of villages organised into counsels (ibid: 59).

The functioning of Khaps gave them a strong social standing in the villages and in the rural contexts. But Khaps were blind to women and lower castes participation (ibid: 60). Though after independence when democratic order prevailed with secular principles and rightful means of justice, Khaps should have dissolved but their presence to an extent shows not only how partial and asymmetric the development projects have

⁴⁴ See Kumar A. (2012). *Khap Panchayats*. P 59. In one talk about the types then the territory of some Khaps was dominated by a single Gotra (clan) of a particular caste that had control over most of the agrarian land. People of other caste and gotra also live in villages but had less land. Other Khaps on the other hand consist of entire villages dominated by single caste. Yet there were other which were multi-caste and multi-gotra.

been but it also shows that Jats have had their unique ways to stay visible in mainstream politics.

C. Capitalist Farmers

Another major categorisation of Jats is their status as capitalist farmers. Jats have always been proud in calling themselves owner cultivators, who often employed their family labour during peak seasons. Terry Marsden (1984) in his work on capitalist farming in Britain talked about farms, family and capitalist way of farming in North Humberside region of Great Britain. His study is quite useful to understand the farming situation even in Indian context as the same set of processes occurred in post-Green Revolution phase in Northern India. He points that there was a close connection between family and farm in rural studies as it was through kinship networks and the continuity of farms along family lines of descent that farms used to sustain themselves. But gradually by late 1960s, study of farm and family got restricted largely to rural monographs, where the major aim was analysis of social relations in a given locale (Marsden, 1984: 206). With the increasing influence of modernity, not only the farming practices got altered, in fact the whole concern of researchers got shifted away to capitalist farming as against the importance of farm and family. But the emergence of capitalist farming practices do not mean that farm family connection got dissolved. Large farm businesses, whether owner occupied or tenanted from institutional landowners, were controlled by family businesses and were maintained over generations (ibid: 209). More or less similar transformations occurred not even among the Jats in western U.P. but also among the farmers in coastal Andhra Pradesh which witnessed green revolution in the late 70s. High productivity and returns from agriculture have given support to further capitalist tendencies in agriculture which led to the emergence of a business class from the class of capitalist farmers who invested the profits from agriculture in even more profitable avenues. This investment included investment in education, migration, increasing political mobilization, etc., which according to Carol Upadhyya (1988) who conducted field work in villages in coastal Andhra led to the emergence of 'rural elites' who were turning into business class due to capitalist farming practices (Upadhyya, 1988: 1376). She observed the same wave of change across India in those regions which were engaged in capitalist farming. Through these changes the monopoly of traditional merchant communities- Vaishya Group was shaken slowly as castes like Kammas of Andhra Pradesh, Patidars in Gujarat,

Grounders in Tamil Nadu diversified from the class of capitalist farmers to new business class (Upadhya, 2009: 21).

Jat Aspirations and Middle Class Dynamics in India

Jats, despite being located in rural settings and enjoying a dominant status, are known for being a forward-looking caste in their outlook. Their wish whether to move out, or climb up or to plan new things within the same circumstance, have always revealed their desire, their urge to aspire to be more prosperous and to be in more advantageous positions. There has been ample literature (discussed below) that had talked about the strategies that have employed to turn their aspirations into reality. But whatever the strategies were/are, they largely point towards the modernity⁴⁵ India is experiencing. It also points towards the dynamics on development and middle class that are rampantly appearing in India. Since every one aspires to be better and developed, these aspirations somewhere down the line meets the middle class discourse in India as it stands for both being developed and the attainable place in social order. Middle class have been one of the explicit parameter to show that India is shining bright in the race towards development with its unique features intact.

According to Aakar Patel (2011), India is certainly making its mark in the global world, and there is growth of urban middle class due to the availability of different avenues of education and employment. It is through these avenues and few others that Jats make their manoeuvre to be a part of this rising urban middle class. Fernandes and Heller tried to define middle class in their analysis of Indian democracy; according to them, this class in India derives its power from cultural and educational capital and is constantly engaged in reproducing social distinctions. If one goes by their analysis, then the middle class has broadly three fractions, the dominant fraction, the petty bourgeoisie middle class and the lower subordinated middle class. The petty bourgeoisie are a middle category and they have little independence of wealth but they mostly aspire to be like the dominant fraction and to attain their status they are mostly engaged in emulating their

⁴⁵ See Giddens. A. (1990). *Consequences of Modernity*. P. 2. In this work, Giddens do an institutional analysis of modernity with cultural and epistemological overtones. According to him modernity means a mode of life or organisation that emerged in Europe from about the 17th century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence. This associates modernity with time period and geographical location. He goes further to explain the changes with the turn of century, where society seem to enter new social system such as information society, consumer society or many have called it post modern phase, more popularly known as post modernity.

practices. For Fernandes and Heller, the hegemonic aspirations of this middle class in India have taken the form of politics of reaction, blending market liberalism and social and political illiberalism” (Fernandes and Heller: 2006: 496) and despite availability of substantive material that can help one to identify broad features of this class there is some amount of ambiguity that always exists. But if one observes closely, then there is a productive significance of this ambiguity too, because it is this ambiguity that makes it a place of destination, a class that is mostly aspired. It is this ambiguity that enables middle class to become the bearer of ethos of opportunity to be mobile and to be able to aspire for other higher social segments of society even if it involves the recreation of subtle hierarchies and exclusions to anchor their class positions.

Since the mid-eighties, when liberalised policies began to define the new India, this new middle class embodied “a self image as the primary agent of the globalising city and nation”(Fernandes,2007:2). According to Fernandes this emergent new middle class in india especially since post liberalisation period is very different than what one had encountered during the Nehru period. That time the dynamic and youthful middle class professional were socialist in their approach but now they are more consumerist. This newness which is evident in the consumerist turn that this class took, is not just about rising numbers or emergence of new structures but this new middle class Fernandes stated also bears a unique combination of employable strategies that entail a mutually interdependent combination of state and market led mechanisms(Fernandes, 2007:1). There were certain ideological and cultural shifts that took place to give this class a distinct social and political identity.

But to consider them a unified, homogeneous category is probably a mistake because for Fernandes it is this conflict between new middle class and general criteria of social differentiation that let the new middle class embody the aspirant horizons of the liberalising India. These fluid criteria around middle class makes it a desirable destination for the community of Jats too, who are locally dominant agrarian caste but due to liberalisation and globalisation are losing their dominance. As a result they are looking for all those alternatives that can hold back the status that they initially had and middle class in these scenarios became the apt destination to launch these aspirations.

Even Jodhka and Prakash (2011) explore the Indian middle class with its emerging culture of politics and economics in India. Middle class have been an important historical and sociological category in modern India as it has been one of the markers of modernisation and development. The Indian middle class have been a

significant category also for giving new colour to Indian economic and political dynamics. By being front runners of the nationalist movement, they have provided new identity to these movements. Economically, too, they have set new limits and marked new achievements and dimensions in the global level. It is largely because of the growing significance of this class that it has become an aspiring class for almost all classes. In terms of their evolution, middle class in India grew at the intersection of colonialism, democratic state and capitalist development (Jodhka and Prakash, 2011: 45). The impetus for this class lies down among the Britishers with the introduction of industrial economy, secular education and new administrative framework. Along with modern education this new class was also influenced by ideas of liberalism and democracy. They even initiated the social reforms and freedom movements in colonial India. The second phase started soon after independence, when they typically represented a salaried and professional class. They called them “short on money but long on institutional perks” (ibid: 46). The third phase began in 1980s with the decline of the Nehruvian state and rise of new social movements. This middle class fought for identity and rights and thus was called the new middle class with its unique consumption pattern and a broad social base for market-led capitalist economy. According to them, an important feature of the Indian middle class is its internal diversity of income, occupation, caste, community and region (ibid: 55) and though Indian middle class adore almost all features of western middle class but it still lacks proper autonomy as it stays dependent on patronage for its growth.

This middle class is also a very risky place to be at as it entails both anxieties and pleasure of being in the middle cadre. Sara Dickey (2011) in her work on middle class in urban South India talked about the pleasures and anxieties which also shows the local understanding of this term and position beyond the literary understanding. According to Dickey, while being in the middle was the source of pride and pleasure but simultaneously it is a source of control because of the critical scrutiny of the onlookers. So, the positive aspect of being secure and stable is also accompanied by the negative aspect of being a potential bearer of instability and precariousness (Dickey, 2011:559). She conducted a research⁴⁶ in Madurai, a city in Tamil Nadu, where middle class is a

⁴⁶ See S. Dickey (2011). *The Pleasure and Anxiety of Being in the Middle*. P 561. She started her research post-1985, initially on class relations especially the relation between a class and film watching. And at that time there was no one, neither in the upper strata nor in the lower strata that recognised a class called

desirable place to be but its along with a place of social visibility and worth is also a place of uneasiness and instability. She explained it as a class which is not deterministic but is constantly produced by the interaction among the social, economic and cultural capital (ibid: 562). Even Leela Fernandes (2004), through her field work in Mumbai, talked about the economic, cultural and political aspect of India's new middle class. For her the newness of this middle class is not only in the sphere of economy and culture, highlighted by a new lifestyle and consumerist culture flourishing in Indian markets after Neo-liberalism (Fernandes, 2004: 2415) but it is also in the sphere of politics.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is this complex yet unique nature of the middle class that attracts the rising aspirations from those classes and castes that look forward to be developed and modern.

Strategies: An Attempt to Turn Aspirations into Reality

There have been a number of detailed studies on the Jats of western Uttar Pradesh in this context, and which have closely observed the changes that this community is going through due to increasing modernisation. These studies sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly talk about all those strategies that they have employed to retain the dominance they had when they were totally dependent on agriculture. For instance, there was a study by Kumar (2014) that talked about the rural transformation and occupational diversification in western U.P, but while talking about the major political processes that preceded the idea of change, he also mentioned how Jats who are considered a dominant caste in western U.P. were also planning out their strategies within the U.P's political, social and economic developments. He stated that initially the Green Revolution techniques benefited the richer section of farmers but gradually with the influx of neoliberal policies and reduction in farm subsidy and public sector jobs, the dominant position of rich farmers got threatened. As a result, Jats re-worked their strategies and tried their luck in politics and off-farm employments to hold back to their prosperous past positions (Kumar, 2014: 21). Similarly, a study done by Singh (2001) on the Politics of U.P. known as Harit Pradesh talked about the political strategies of Jats in the sense

middle class. Several years later in 1991-92 when she went back to the same city to study domestic service relationship, she encountered few people who acknowledged existence of middle class. And it was only in 1990s that this class became popular and was identified by a whole range of people. Hence the middle class is much more widely recognised class category than what it used to be and it's only in the 1990s (post-liberalism phase) that 'middle classness' became socially more significant.

⁴⁷ See L. Fernandes (2004). *The Politics of Forgetting*.

that their political involvement within U.P. can be understood as their strategy to maintain their dominant position especially in the post Charan Singh era where other peasant castes especially Yadavs were attaining political ascendancy (Singh, 2011: 2961).

Jats occupy a dominant position in western U.P. as they hold control over landownership and access to local (state) political powers. The rise of Jats can be traced back to the 1850s (Stokes 1986), where initially due to colonial projects to raise agricultural production Jats gained some sort of progress in their statuses. Also with their recruitment in army and to the post of local administration their stake in public sphere grew automatically. But according to Jeffery (2001) and Singh (1992) their real up-gradation started soon after independence with the introduction of modern technology in agriculture as these communities were predominantly into agriculture (Jeffrey, 2010: 469). Following this was access and availability of formal English medium language, and their growing involvement in politics further consolidated their position as locally dominant class in western U.P. But with the exposure to liberalisation policies and the rise of lower caste and class in politics, their dominance was threatened. As a result, they formulated a number of strategies to not only gain mobility further but also to retain the dominance they had since the colonial times. These strategies reflected⁴⁸ not only the aspirations of these communities but also brought certain new research areas into limelight, for instance the concept of time; the idea of waiting, i.e. middleliness, youth as representing new desires and project of development.

In one of such research papers⁴⁹ Jeffrey (2001) argued that though caste as a religiously sanctioned system is in decline, caste organisations and caste-based identity are important forms of social or symbolic capital for rural elites which is clearly visible in the case of rich Jats who have been able to reproduce their economic and political privileges through seeking more middle class white collar employment (Jeffrey, 2001). Borrowing from Srinivas's concept of dominant caste, he found that Jats are the dominant community in western U.P. and they derive power from their dominance in

⁴⁸ See *Lokniti Survey Report on 'Farmers Condition in India'*. 2014. P 28. Here when the researchers asked Indian Farmers about their outlook and perspectives towards future then the farmers don't want their children to continue farming as there is low income, low productivity due to irregular weather cycle and low support from the government. More than half farmers want their children to settle in cities, have jobs there and be in better places than their own.

⁴⁹ See Jeffrey. C, *A fist is stronger than five fingers*, 2001.

agriculture and local politics which are the sources of economic and political power respectively. Though Green revolution did impact their life style in progressive sense but gradual loss due to liberalising policies pressed them to look for alternatives outside agriculture. As a result, to realise this dream their utmost priority was investment in education⁵⁰ and collective political mobilisation and a clear combination of both these strategies is visible in his work on youth of western U.P, who are educated but still unemployed. They are “waiting” (Jeffrey, 2010) together beyond the divisions of caste and religion at least at the surface, for the government to take appropriate actions so that their aspirations, their dreams can turn into reality. The aspirations that the youth have are formulated partly by the kind of education they received and partly by the globalising and the modern world of which they were part.

Waiting, as pointed out by Jeffrey, is also one of the key dimensions of modernity. Apart from the sense of waiting that we experience in our day to day business, there is another form of waiting too, which entails waiting for sometimes whole generation as a result of inability to realise certain goals. And for the youth in Meerut, where his study was based, their waiting stands close to the latter sense. For the youth, it is their way to stage a protest against the state for its inability to provide sufficient amount of employment to its educated youth. These young men often consider themselves as a part of lower middle class group and are engaged in a collective waiting to fulfil their aspirations and goals. For them this waiting is not a passive activity, in fact it is a new way of asserting one’s demand and creating a culture that cut across the lines of caste, class and religion at least in its initial stages. They believe that by fetching a stable government employment for themselves they will be able to gain some mobility and will be able to be a part of that urban middle class that they always have aspired for.

Generally the literature analysing state society relationship has recognised a dichotomous relation between the two but Jeffrey and Lerch in their work⁵¹ on state and politics in Uttar Pradesh pointed out some flaws in this approach as it tend to take society

⁵⁰ See Jeffrey et al (eds). 2004. The cultural production of Education and Young Men’s struggle for respect. Here they talked about importance of education among a class of Dalits and Muslim youth for mobility and to assert an identity with a dignified living standard. To them education is regarded as one of the main sources to move up, i.e. to formulate strategies for upward mobility. Education has provided them a platform from where they can voice their concerns, from where they can stand against the age old system of repression and can also construct a local definition of what development (vikas) means.

⁵¹ See Jeffrey, C and Lerche, J. *Stating the difference: State, discourse and class reproduction in western U.P.* 2000.

as a homogenous category. They state that the way the state interacts with the society is in fact an important denominator in reproducing the existing class and caste inequalities in the Indian countryside. The way certain social groups negotiate their access to state which is closely intact with the ability to mobilise the material resources have not only reaffirmed the class and caste differences but it has also encouraged the rise of 'populist low class party' (Jeffrey and Lerche,2000).

With intensive fieldwork, they were able to point out that to reproduce and sustain their economic advantages and privileged positions rich/elite Jat farmers were seeking off farm employments and were trying to establish close contact with local state machinery. But operationalisation of these strategies revealed the class differences that existed amongst Jats because it was only the elite class who were able to had access to high ranked public sector employment and were able to influence the local state mechanisms (Jeffrey and Lerche, 2000: 865). This process of exclusion of low castes and low class Jats from securing a public sector job was further supported by growing corruption at different level of recruitment process and the rising market of brokers between the state and the aspiring social groups. Through these observations Jeffrey was able to point out that there are hidden nuances behind the smooth surface which makes one aware about all those intricacies that are involved in comprehending the desires of this community.

Along with education, political activism, off farm/public sector employment migration to the city is also considered a sure short strategy to move closer to the aspired goal. Richard Rhoda did a detailed study (1983) of rural to urban migration, where he highlighted that rural to urban migration⁵² is generally pushed due to three main reasons, i.e. agricultural development, availability of off-farm employment, provision of rural social services (Rhoda, 1983:35). He developed two broad models of migration that depending on the reason and mode of movement got categorised into a specific type of migration. But migrating to the city and settling there is not always perceived as a viable option. Jeffrey and Young (2012) in their study⁵³ showed that sometimes to make their

⁵² See Richard Rhoda (1983). Rural development and Urban Migration. P 36. According to Rhoda Rural Urban migration can be understood as permanent relocation from predominantly agricultural area to an area in which a majority of employment is non agricultural activities.

⁵³ This study is a result of series of field work they had conducted severalty and together for instance young (2010) conducted field work in A.P's expansion and commercialisation of micro finance programmes,

end meet, the youth have used their in betweenness (neither young nor old, neither rich nor poor, neither rural nor urban) as a virtue through which they have cultivated a strategy unique to them and have opened up new terrains that connect urban to the rural. This class of young men they interviewed through access to formal education and migrating experience to the cities has been able to adapt modern, urban ways of being according to their local needs. They have also learned ways to deploy that talent, those tools and the experience from urban locations in rural settings which has helped them in the long run to cultivate a particular kind of relations with the rural that no poor or upper class urbanite will be able to understand (Young and Jeffrey, 2012:47). Therefore migration and settling in the city was not always a way but utilising that experience to fit the local needs have also emerged as strategy.

Roger Jeffery and Patricia Jeffery (2011) also worked on Jat's social and economic reproductive strategies when they called them middle class living in countryside. They noted three major strategies, i.e. the way they diversify out of agriculture by establishing business or white colour job, the way to raise their status they are going away from direct cultivation and are investing in education, planning schooling of young generation and limiting their family size. Finally they are planning marriages, giving away large amount of dowries and establishing urban links and urban networks. They also noted the way they co-opted the local state machineries so that they can acquire the characteristics of urban middle class and can at the same time maintain their rural, rustic ways of being (Jeffrey et al, 2011: 163).

Hence, Jats through their diverse strategies and unique calculations want to be a part of the rapidly growing middle class which in itself is so diverse and complicated that a debate about explaining who actually middle class is, is still a part of academic debates. But despite this, middle class tend to be a desirable destination for almost all the classes as it adds an element of being modern of being progressive to one's identity.

Changes in the Jat community vis-à-vis the Broader Stream of Change

The aspirations and the consequent strategies that Jats formulated also shed light on the broader stream of change flowing in society for instance it highlighted the new forms of

Jeffrey's work in 2004-2005, 2007 on the unemployed youth and student politics in U.P., and 2012 research done by both in Meerut on Dalit youth politicians.

agrarianism leading to new rural-urban dynamics, new patterns of state society relationship and new vision towards electoral democracy.

In recent years, agrarian mobilisation has come to play an important role in politics, and by agrarian mobilisation one means mobilisation of agrarian classes into politics by political parties or individual leaders. However, they can be done for different issues, different purposes. Sudha Pai in her work (1993) on agrarian change and electoral politics traced the history of agrarian mobilisation and stated that initially landlord formed association and fought against colonial state to help poor peasants. After 1947, many changes were introduced, such as commercial farming, state-led subsidy to the poor, etc., which led to new forms of mobilisation to get structured around different issues.

Therefore, with new agrarian innovations like Green Revolution, there was not only change in the rural class structure as it led to emergence of a new class of capitalist farmers but there were substantial changes even in the nature of rural politics. These newly emerged and dominated sections of farmers' mobilised support for new agrarian politics which in the long run also paved way for new dynamics between rural and urban Contexts. Bental and Corbridge (1996) did an intensive research on rural urban relations in northwest India where they called this new form of agrarianism, a politics of countryside that pitched demands on behalf of rural Bharat against the exploitative urban India. They did a detailed study of Indian peasantry struggle and pointed out that Indian peasantry had a long history of resistance, which began with collective resistance of peasants against the exploitative landlords. In 1960s, i.e. in early phase of green revolution a section of poor and middle class peasantry fought against the oppressive local class of rich farmers which by the 1970s shifted towards the state which failed to provide them with sufficient subsidies leading to a phase where the subaltern perspective not only flourished but also joined hands with a new form of resistance spearheaded by the new class of capitalist farmers (Bental and Corbridge, 1996: 28). This last phase in agrarian struggle, according to them is best represented through BKU (Bhartiya Kisan Union) which was established in 1978 in Haryana under the leadership of Sukhvir Singh and was later transformed to its present form in 1987 by the leader Mahendra Singh Tikait. The main issue for which the BKU fought was government imposed hike in electricity tariff which made irrigation expensive that too in the environment where there was minimal government support to the farmers. Though initially the support base of BKU was among Jat farmers of western Uttar Pradesh but gradually it expanded its

vision and invited other agrarian castes too especially the Muslim minority in that region (ibid: 39). Their strategy to adapt to the local needs, while at the same time making an appeal to the larger political aims through their ideology, has turned out to be the success rule for them (Duncan, 1997:247). BKU also stands as a clear example to show the changed nexus between countryside and town as it maintained its distance from any political party yet in its approach it acted more than a mere local pressure group which impacted the way countryside connects to the urban (Gupta, 1988). Rural and urban continuum though otherwise too have been exposed to lot of changes since independence, when traditional values and institutions confronted changed contexts like re-consolidation of caste, urge of self governance etc. (ibid: 2688), but their effect on the broader political currents became visible only in late 1970s. Therefore, the trends of change, especially in U.P, rooted in its social movements, new political developments, regional identity based mobilisation with an interplay between caste, class and religion share strong relations with wider political and economic changes which becomes visible as soon as one step into its regional analysis but broader repercussions. Also, it is not just Jats in their rural locations that connect to larger structures of change but their aspired position, i.e. the middle class also has influences on economic, ideological and political structures. Leela Fernandes in her work (2004) on class politics, state power and restructuring of urban space talked about political repercussions of middle class. She stated that emergence of new middle class is not only in the sphere of economy or culture but in fact politics also visibly experience a new wave.⁵⁴ For instance, there is a process of forgetting, the dominant social actors attempt to naturalise the exclusionary politics by producing a middle class base definition of citizenship. In this new political movement middle class identity is linked to development of new urban aesthetics and engagement with a politics of “spatial purification”, where middle class claim over public spaces and stay engaged in constant movement to cleanse such spaces of the poor and working classes (Fernandes, 2004: 2416). All of this shows how certain regional processes tend to have effect on broader political tones. Gupta (1995) in his analysis of culture of politics in India argue for the similar thought and stress upon the importance of

⁵⁴ See Leela Fernandes (2004). *The Politics of Forgetting*. P 2416. There is a shift from older ideologies of socialism to new dynamism of middle lanes centered around middle class based culture of consumption where the new political culture of idle class increasingly depict and represent themselves as citizens of liberalised India.

public culture while scrutinising the discourse on state. He argued that an institution must be understood or conceptualised in more decentralised and disaggregated way by recognising the local, regional, national and transnational influences (Gupta, 1995: 392). While recognising these ways to construct a discursive picture of the state, he focuses on the discourse of corruption that turned out to be a key arena through which the state, citizen and other organisations are imagined in contemporary times. In fact, the 'Flawless State Vs Civil Society' dichotomy also becomes not only a frivolous category but also explains the imperialism of categories in our mindset which needs to be altered depending on the complexity of situations (ibid: 376). He points out that the way corruption has become the dominant way to relate to the state machinery which in the long run explains how even the state society dichotomy has given way to state versus class kind of dynamism. Jeffrey and Lerche (2003) analysed this state-class dimension in the political culture of U.P.⁵⁵, where they asserted that the access to the state has become a central way to reproduce class distinctions. Therefore the relation between local state and dominant rural class can be characterised as a balance of colonialism, co-option and opposition in different situations (Jeffrey and Lerche, 2003: 95). They quoted Akhil Gupta's study on western U.P. where he noted down that agrarian populism in countryside emerged as a tool to bridge class differences but if one observes the strategies of dominant caste, i.e. Jat farmers then they have been largely successful in reproducing their dominance by utilising their economic means to attain access to local state offices. They found that despite having no reservation, their access to public sector employment is reproduced through an informal market in government posts where they can easily influence the dynamics as corruption occurs at various stages within the process of recruitment. Hence through the brokers these rich class of Jats mediate their way through the course of corruption to public sector employment which in the long run highlighted the class- state dichotomy (ibid: 97).

Despite all these developments, unequal outcomes elections, voting, democracy is still able to hold people's faith. Mukulika Banerjee (2007) did a study on Indian

⁵⁵ See C Jeffrey and J Lerche (2003). *Social and Political Change in U.P.* P 95. Their research focussed on economic, political and social strategies of members of four Jat kinship groups in the township of Daurala and two more villages of Masuri and Khanpur. This shows how the class of rich Jat farmers reproduce themselves by relating themselves to state policies and local state machineries.

elections where she called them sacred elections⁵⁶ as the participants who do voting consider this as an act that enables them to express their worth and self-respect. For them, it is a source of power and dignity (Banerjee, 2007: 1561). Though she highlighted the major reasons behind why people especially those who bear the unequal returns, go for voting but in larger perspective it shows how political activism has turned out to be the major weapon of the people.

Contemporary Concerns

All these broader repercussions certainly point towards many debates which are still alive not only among the Jat community but also within the society, which highlights wider social crisis and moments of change. For instance, the recent incidences of farmers' suicides show how deeply the agrarian crises are rooted. Also, the recent demand by the Jat community to be included within the OBC fold is another example that highlights agrarian crisis in India with specific community based narratives which add specific nuances to it. Rajeshwari Deshpande (2014) looked into the OBC debate through the case of dominant castes in Karnataka and Maharashtra, which can also be used to assess the Jat claims to OBC in contemporary times. These claims to backwardness to fetch government benefits affects not only the patterns of how caste politics is done in India but these claims also shed light on how dominant castes are trying to reconstruct their dominance to in changing contexts (Deshpande, 2014). Scholars like Deshpande (2014) and Jodhka (2014) also discussed these claims to OBC status by certain dominate agrarian castes as incidences that show the bigger crisis that agriculture and agrarian communities are facing along with the larger waves of change in society. Jodhka stated that though the demand to be part of OBC block can easily be comprehended as another trick of the political parties to woo a community and win a secure vote bank, what is more perplexing is the fact that a demand of being recognised as a backward community is coming from a section which has been assured of their status to be superior. According to Jodhka, one of the possible reasons for this demand can be the "crisis in agriculture" in the post Green Revolution and neo-liberal period.

⁵⁶ See M. Banerjee (2007). *Sacred Elections*. P 1561. She differentiated the ritualistic approach to elections by using Wendy Jame's (2003) Perspective, where she differentiated rituals from religion. To Banerjee, elections can be considered as one big ritual serving a single function (whether affirmation or subversion) in respect to society. They are not actually religious but indeed possess a mixture of socio-cultural dances emerging out of habits and circumstances in day to day life.

Agriculture has been one of the main source of power for this community but seeing the kind of affect that this sector beard, the vulnerabilities it gave birth to propelled the urge to put forth a demand like this. Though the Backwardness that this status refers to is more like a legal status but it certainly has social repercussions too. Land in that region has economic, social and cultural value which got severely impacted due to the ill effects of green revolution. The land lost its fertility, and the social structure around it got disturbed due to its division into various small pieces. Also, along with this one of the possible reasons for making a demand like this is the relative deprivation they encounter in the urban cities when they compete with high caste, middle classes of the cities. This demand for a backward status can also be understood as a mean to realise their long standing urge, aspiration to not only be a part of the growing middle class of the urban India but also to solidify their lost rural status. Though its altogether another topic to debate or research that what this 'rural' stands for in theses changing scenario but largely whatever fragmented status this rural has, a demand of this sort is most probably a strategy of this community to not only create a niche for themselves in the developing journey of India by claiming a status of urban middle class but it is also to solidify their rural elite status that they had in past.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the past and present of the Jat community to understand the kind of aspirations they hold and the kind of change they seek. An analysis of their past was necessary to understand their present situation and details about their present is necessary to decipher the form of change they seek in future and the consequence it will have on larger society. Jats have been a dominant caste in western U.P. since they own most of the land, have been the front-runners during the Green Revolution and are also active in local politics. Jats recognise themselves and are recognised by others through three major ways: by referring back to their glorious past, by getting involved in local politics and by being the class of capitalist farmers who invest their profits back to the field. Since Jats are dominant caste in that region then the kind of aspiration and desires they hold, explain the major waves of change not only within that region but also in the larger society. To turn their desire into reality they formulate certain strategies which are manifest in the region in the form of the emergence of certain educational institutions, occupational choices, proliferation of certain marriage practices and growing migration

to the city. Their aspirations also intersect with middle class desires, which in the long run enable us to bring generality to the conclude findings.

Therefore, a critical analysis of this entire process, i.e. the birth of a desire or an aspiration among the dominant community in countryside, the formulation of strategies to realise it, and in the end the broader stream of change that accompany the implementation of these strategies, can open up new avenues of research and can possibly highlighting those areas which were neglected in mainstream social science researches.

CHAPTER FOUR
**ASPIRATIONAL MOBILITY: LOCATING
GENDER DYNAMICS**

Any form of mobility, whether upward or downward, economic, political or social in nature, is propelled through a certain kind of desire, an urge to be at some position. It is precisely this urge to move and the different patterns it establishes that will be discussed in this chapter along with the nuances that category of gender adds to it. Since the entire research is located within a specific context and community than its not only gender but an explicit intrusion of caste dimension along with class is also visible. Though gender as a category already has its own exclusive field of research within academia, when gender dimensions are applied to other full-fledged theories and research findings, then they certainly reveal some of those dynamics which otherwise remain hidden. Along with gender, even social mobility and aspirations have their specific sub-terrains where they have been profusely researched. But in this chapter, an attempt is made to find out a possible link between all these elements, i.e. if mobility patterns encouraged by certain kind of aspirations of a particular community are considered, then do they lead to some new kind of observations? When all of it is considered through gender perspective, then do they reveal some unique details about the entire process of change? When gender is further refined on the grounds of caste and class than does that enable us to locate presence of new power dynamics within society? It is questions like these and many others which have been attempted to answer throughout this chapter.

Hence, this chapter conveys the final arguments of this dissertation, i.e. when aspirations of a particular community settled within a particular context are reviewed collectively, then it conveys that there are various caste, class and gender dynamics attached to it which may in the long run enable us to unfold the idea of social change within agrarian context with a new perspective altogether. So, this chapter entails different subsections based on the review of some of those literature and field studies that have discussed social mobility within Indian context, processes and contexts within which the concept of aspirations was applied and women's presence within agriculture with a simultaneous interplay of caste, and class along. Like Jats even women's presence

within agriculture, within the community, i.e. within a specific caste group and within a specific location is essential to decipher the nuances within aspirations and within the mobility patterns that this community seek to adopt. Because it is the effect of caste, class and gender dimensions on aspirations which will explicate the possible ways in which current waves of change can be understood.

Women otherwise too have long been a concern of academicians for various reasons. Like caste or class, even gender exists as an intrinsic reality within the society and there have been literatures in abundance discussing the journey it undertook and the lacunae its presence has exposed in various social enquiries. Out of numerous factors, it was probably the politics around caste that has given air to the politics of gender as it put a question mark over the perceived commonality of female experiences and thus poses challenges and a threat to the assumed identity of 'Women'. It is the growing visibility and militancy around caste politics that has forced the recognition of women not only as a passive recipient but as an active agent in society. Probably one of the clear-cut examples which can explain the relationship between caste and gender is the debate around the reservation of women in parliament in the late 1990s. The critique to this development is not only patriarchal in nature but it also comes from a caste specific location which believes that such an overarching reservation will simply replace lower caste men by higher caste women (Menon, 2009:95). Such a critique not only keeps the caste factor alive but it also dissects the gender category with caste. This penetration of caste within gender becomes more evident in those critiques⁵⁷ of feminism which entail upper caste feminists, as in those situations the entire moment of criticism gets dissolved into caste dynamisms. Therefore, along with caste, it is essential to look at even the gender specific effects within this frame of enquiry to reach out to those nuanced observations which otherwise remain undiscovered. This chapter, therefore, has four subsections; out of which one entails the journey of gender as a sociological category essential to provide a specific location to the women in this chapter, then a section on women and agriculture

57 See N. Menon. 2009. *Sexuality, Caste and Governmentality* Pp 97. She quotes from a study by Anandhi et al (2002), Lakshmanan (2004). Anandhi et al state in their study of a Tamil village "that competing performances of masculinity by Dalit and upper caste men in the context of rapid socio-economic transformation place a disproportionate burden on women, both Dalit and non-Dalit. In a critical response to this C. Lakshmanan argued that the study and the very use of 'imported' category of masculinity 'reinforces hegemonic stereotype of the newly empowered aggressive, macho-hero sexual male', who can only be 'a violator of the female self'. His critique shifts the focus to the caste dimension by characterising the study as a manifestation of non-Brahmin/Dravidian discomfort with growing Dalit assertion".

which will talk about those possible terrains where the presence of women was either denied or was underestimated. Then there will be a section on the intersection of caste and gender within agrarian context and within the community discussed in previous chapters and finally a section on aspiring for mobility which will include how context, class, caste, gender and specific location influence not only the kind of aspirations one holds but also the consequent path one chooses to move ahead.

Contest over Gender as a Sociological Category

“A woman should never be independent. Her father has authority over her in childhood, her husband has authority over her in youth, and in old age her son has authority over her”

(Status of women, enunciated in the law of Manu, from Rohini Nayyar, 1987: 2207)

Though this quote explains the status of women in a particular religious sphere, i.e. Hinduism and talks about only an aspect⁵⁸ of larger dynamics of subordination around women, it certainly provides us the glimpse of historicity of the category that we are concerned with in this chapter. It shows that women have always been a part of concern, a terrain to exert power and authority, and a significant dimension to the study of society's rules and functioning. Nivedita Menon through her work (2009) talked about the journey of the category of gender in India especially post 1970s. According to her the public discussion on gender in India gained momentum in 1990s and took predominantly two different roads. The first road was taken by feminists who remained engaged in the politics of caste and sexuality to challenge the mainstream notion of gender, i.e. a notion that makes gender a synonymous term for women. They also challenge the assumed bipolarity that naturalised heterosexuality and pre-coded bodies and modes of behaviour. The other path was constructed by state that played a major role in advancing a homogenous and biased conception of gender i.e. it constructed a conception of gender that feminists challenge and criticise throughout their movement (Menon, 2009: 95). For Menon, this journey has generated two kinds of discourses one which was supported by feminists as it demands proliferation of the category of gender into different directions

⁵⁸ Ibid. In her work she has discussed different aspects of gender dynamics through women versus other forms of sexuality debate in India.

which will gradually de-stabilise the concept for further scope of exploration, whereas the other discourse was constructed and supported by state which demanded stabilisation of the concept so that a stipulated course of development can be followed. The discourse which was supported by feminists expanded the horizon of gender to include all those categories and issues which challenged the heterosexual norms of society, Menon called this moment a “Counter Heteronormative” (ibid: 98) move, which protested to repeal the section 377 of the Indian Penal Code as it criminalises sex “against the order of the nature”. Though such resistance was there for centuries in Indian history but it was around 1990s⁵⁹ that the movement gained self identity and became visible out open in the society. One of the explicit effects of this visibility was emergence of queer politics,⁶⁰ which highlighted the fluidity around the concept of sexuality and the consequent identities. As against this the discourse publicised by state aimed to stabilise the concept of gender. They relocated the idea of gender within the ‘vocabulary of good governance⁶¹’ and demanded a general acceptability of the word ‘gender’ which, according to many feminists, was equal to women, that too of women of a patriarchal society (ibid: 103). Menon argued that according to feminists, the government did popularise gender sensitivity but the kind of acknowledgement it gave to meaning of gender was quiet monotonous and outdated in its approach as if the criticality was bargained for the sake of development for instance woman was taken as demography, i.e. a mere figure in terms of sex ratio that the government need to maintain so that its path of progress did not get tempered with unnecessary critical scrutiny (ibid: 106). Therefore, the two discourses that Menon talked about, shows the levels and different paths of development that gender as a sociological category went through.

As a result of this public outrage and open discussion, gender has now become a central category in any discussion weather it is amongst the academician or the policy

59 Ibid. Pp 97. Late 1980s was known for growing awareness due to proliferation of knowledge about AIDS epidemic and increasing popularity of television sets that broadcasted private channels of entertainment making sexuality a part of public discourse.

60 Ibid. Pp 99. She talked about two main features of queer politics. One it engages with the question of biology critically, treating sexuality as a fluid, not a biological or genetic given. Second, it does not attempt to produce a new universe, within which all sexual identities will be submerged. Rather it sees “queer” as a political and in some ways unstable term, enabling continuous challenge to heteronormativity, whether through gay/lesbian/transgender, feminist or other identities.

61 Ibid. Pp 103. Good governance has been made popular by World Bank since 1992, which means that government is only one of the actors in governance and there will be flourishing of civil society organisations which will ensure availability of basic needs to the population.

makers. For instance the development model that India as a developing country chooses is also influenced by the category of gender. Amartya Sen's oeuvre of work on development model of India is known for not only bringing humanitarian approach to economic development but also making the development gender sensitive. His widely known capability approach stand as a primary category to measure progress and to proliferate a gender just notion of development. His capability approach was further critically analysed by feminist scholars like Martha Nussbawn and Ingrid Robeyns who claimed that Sen's approach was certainly beneficial in a complex setting like India but what they both demanded is a specific list⁶² of capabilities so that a stable background can be established upon which fundamental constitutional guarantees can be assured. For instance, Nussbawn points out that the theory of inequality looms large if someone takes a look at a Woman's biography (collective/individual) and preferences. A close scrutiny shows that the need and concerns of men and women are not only different but women's concerns have been treated partially. Hence, in these conditions freedom and power to women to exercise their agency should be considered two important goals that any government must take into account while setting up a list of capabilities (Nussbawn, 2004: 42). But to her not all kind of freedoms are good in a sense that some kind of freedom/liberties need to be curtailed in order to let other liberties flourish, for instance there are certain liberties that male consider to be their prerogative needs which needs to be curtailed in order to let women's liberties and scope for equal opportunities to flourish within society (ibid: 52). Hence whether it is feminist's way to deal with gender debates or that of academicians, the essentiality of gender as a significant category within society and within specific contexts like economy and development is quiet obvious. And it is precisely because of this reason that gender dynamics need to locate within the whole discussion on aspirations and agrarian change. Women have always been present in the field and it is their active participation in the agrarian processes that makes them a significant part of the entire process of change. But it is either the ignorance of their presence or the biased acknowledgement that highlights various issues within agriculture that otherwise remained under the carpet.

62 See. B. Agarwal et al (2004). P 48 and 79 for a detailed list of specific capabilities they think are essential to ensure women's equal stake in development.

Women and Agriculture

India is still characterised with high level of poverty and economic inequality because there is no appropriate coherence between its strategies and the population these policies cater too. There seems to be an imbalance between plans of growth and the distributional programmes, and within such conditions there is a need to take special notice of women (Agarwal, 1998). Although women have always been a part of social research, it only recently that their location-based studies have emerged as growing concerns among social scientists. Especially in India after the 1970s, there was an upsurge of such context specific researches. But despite overwhelming presence of women within the concerns of researchers there are still very few studies that have taken women into their considerations especially in agrarian context (Duvvury, 1989). The effects of various development schemes were analysed with an aggregated conclusion that some programmes have favoured the privileged sections and it is the under-privileged, the poor section of the population which has suffered the ill effects of their failure. But what they tend to miss within this under privileged section is the category of women who are far more vulnerable due to already existing patterns of gender inequality. Hence, it is this category of women which needs special concerns so that an egalitarian and socially sustained society can be maintained (Agarwal, 1998: 114). Nata Duvvury (1989) conducted a holistic review of Indian literature discussing women in agriculture and its various other sub fields like Women and land, women and mechanisation of production process, women and labour, women and migration, women and local political mobilisations etc which not only enable a systematic analysis of women within the overarching field of agriculture but it also helps in planning out future concerns that one must have within this field.

Women and Land

Land have always been an important element in agriculture not only because it is one of the basic component in conducting farming, or its one of the spheres where state's explicit indulgence appeared first in the form of land reforms but because in a place like India, land is a source of pride, it a source to which communities trace their identity, a source through which they claim a certain status, a source that can provide them a dominant position and possible means to mobilise. Hence not just at economic level but land also has social and political values attached to it and despite so much of importance its probably one of those spheres where women's existence was denied explicitly.

According to Agarwal (1994) if one talks about economic well being, social status and empowerment within the context of gender than ownership and control of property has been one of the significant concerns among most of the South Asian countries. But most of the policy makers have taken their presence for granted and have used gender as an “additive category” (Agarwal, 1994: 2) that just needs to be added to an already laid out plan of development. A significant change appeared in this field when individual property rights, i.e. a movement to claim and to grant personal possession to property⁶³ came to the front stage. According to Agarwal, in the eighth five-year plan, two major changes were introduced; one was availing her traditional inheritance rights and the second was to register the surplus land in her name and rest of the land jointly with her husband (ibid:3). Though there were some loopholes in their empirical implementation but it did mark a step towards change in concerns. In academia women and property rights have been a concern since the time Engels have been writing on private property. According to Engels it is the abolition of all property rights which will bring egalitarianism in society, Bina Agarwal on the contrary asked for individual ownership rights to women in South Asia to ensure the balanced development of society and welfare of women and children. She argued that if one looks at the contemporary property holding pattern than the ownership pattern not only derives its strength from already laid out gender biased ideologies but in return it reinforces the same. To her it is probably these unequal property rights that stand as one of the main reasons for India’s low human development index. There have been numerous arguments⁶⁴ that favoured independent land rights for women in South Asia and according to her it is only by assuring women their exclusive rights⁶⁵ to the field they work upon, one can expect some amount of improvement in India’s status on the development ranking ladder (Agarwal, 1994). As against this according to Bapuji who quotes Engels in his work (1996) on women and property rights, it is the freedom from domestic duties not just property rights which can ensure emancipation of Women.

63 See. B. Aggarwal. 1994. Though property can be of various types but in agricultural context it means arable land as it stands for not only livelihood or sustenance but it has deep socio-political value too. For instance ownership of land was a symbol of social status.

64 Ibid. She summarised the arguments favouring land rights for women into three categories. Welfare arguments, efficiency arguments, equality and welfare arguments.

65 Ibid. According to Agarwal rights in agricultural land needs to be defined as not only legally or socially recognised rights which are enforced by an external authority but there has to be number of conditions that one needs to take care of. For instance there has to be congruency between legal recognition and enforcement and social acceptance, rights not just to own but to control, to decide how it will be used etc.

“The emancipation of women becomes possible only when.... domestic duties require their attention only a minor degree” (Engels, 1884: 158)

Jayoti Gupta (2002) also looks at women and land issue through the case of West Bengal, where she states that women have been ignored in academic research on land reforms and the prominent reasons provided for not providing them with personal land rights is already a large amount of dowry and the distance from natal place after marriage which will make them unable to take care of it properly. However despite all these hurdles according to Gupta, women assert their rights and complain that either their importance in the field has not been acknowledged or their role was limited only to the area of family care and protection (Gupta, 2002: 1748). Hence they demand not only individual ownership rights in the family property, but strict abolition of dowry, a coherent balance between the state led laws and the community/ personal laws, family planning so that they can have choice even in the reproductive sphere and also some recognition of the contribution they do to the household (ibid), as it is only through a thorough revision of all these concerns that some amount of equality can be expected.

Women and Mechanisation of Work

The late 1960s is known as a period when India was at its threshold to enter a revolution which will alter its entire agricultural structure. After land reforms, green revolution stand as another state led initiatives through which state directly entered the agricultural domain to increase agrarian productivity. The Green Revolution had a number of positive and negative impacts on land, labour and the organisation of work but what concerns us here is the specific effect it had on women workers in the context mechanisation of the labour process. And it is probably the absence of gender analysis in the vast body of literature on the socio-economic implications of the new agricultural strategy that reflect uncritical acceptance of the assumption that benefits and burdens of technological change will be shared equally by all members (Agarwal, 1984). Agarwal through her study (1984) on the impact of HYV rice technology on rural women argued that though adoption of HYV rice increased the demand for casual labour but if one looks at the gendered implication than there were two polemic consequences that women faced; one is that despite working out along with men on the same platform their work did not get enough recognition and since they were the beholders of family's pride then their movement outside the house was moderated. Secondly by working outside their home their work load got built up as men did not share any household chores. So along

with piles of work at home they also had to work on the field. Along with this there were other issues as well for instance there were health issues due to the exposure to fertilisers required for new seeds to yield better results followed by negligence in home at the nutritious level which turned women's situation worse than what it used to be. (Agarwal, 1984: 50).

Along with this, according to Agarwal to have deeper analyses of the effects of mechanisation of work on women one needs to adopt a disaggregated approach in the sense that one need to dissect one field from the other. For instance, one needs to keep in mind the specificity of the crop, a specific region whenever one looks at the impact of mechanisation of work on labour especially with regard to women. Agarwal through her extensive study in punjab's wheat growing areas during green revolution argued that though mechanisation of work did impact entire labour force but a close scrutiny might reveal that female labourers were severely impacted (Agarwal,1981).

Women and Labour

Women have always contributed to the income and to the well being of the household through her labour inside and outside the home. But the issue which is raised here is that ignorance of women's contribution in the household and outside in the field was quiet explicitly visible. But what has been left unscrutinised was her engagement within off farm employment. With growing progress within the agriculture there was not only increase in agricultural production but the scope for even for off farm employments grew. Though women participated in many of the local industries but their participation was ignored. Rohini Nayyar in her research (1987) raises the issue of female participation in rural areas. She argued that women's participation in formal/informal employment is at least acknowledged in urban areas but within rural areas there is no proper accounting of women engaged in off farm employment. According to her research findings with rise in poverty and landlessness the probability of women participating in work outside agriculture is higher which becomes added burden for the women as her household chores get accumulated in her absence. Along with this there is also difference in the wages that they received for the same kind of work that they did along with their male counterpart. With either no recognition of their work or a differential pay scale, it seemed that the women working outside their households increased their own trouble. Saradmoni (1982) and Mohanty (1999) through their research in Kerala and Maharashtra also looked at the status and well being of women within the same context,

i.e. women and the form of labour within agriculture. Mohanty Pointed out that though modernisation of agriculture generated enough of growth in rural areas but in the long run it widened up the class differences which further impacted women adversely. According to Mohanty, it was only the rich peasant class who were able to bear high costs of modernity; low class peasantry suffered due to capital intensive form of agriculture. And the condition of women was even worse among these classes because their women had to work outside under compulsion so that extra income can be generated. Saradmoni on the other hand stated that, to think that only women from low classes were impacted due to change in the form of labour will be little superficial. According to him, technological development impacted even that class of women who traditionally had privileged rights. He researched among certain matrilineal communities in south India where women enjoyed a relatively better status. But found that gradually with coming in of technologically driven production process, competition grew and the traditional system got disturbed; as a result the privileged status that women enjoyed also got withered away. So, women have always had high participation rate in agricultural fields at least, but have been evaluated as low (Chowdhry, 1993). Hence, though women implicitly or explicitly have been present within the labour work force but either their status have been ignored or was under- rated even among academic enquiries.

Women and Migration

A discussion on migration is quiet essential in this context as the severity of women's status gets multiplied when migration occur in the family. Migration where either the woman moves out or its the male member of the family who migrates to the city or to a different rural area, leaving behind the responsibility of the family on the women's shoulder. Ben Rogaly (1998) looked at the extents, trends and causes of seasonal migration of workers and their impact on changing social relations in rural India especially in the context of women. He stated that whenever one talks about migration than one must pay attention to the socio-economic conditions that have propelled the move and the consequent effect of that move on the place which was left behind. He argued that though it was believed that migration will bring some amount of liberation to the women as she will be away from the cage of traditional norms and social relationships. But while migrating whether she will feel liberated or not depends on whom she travels with for instance a young woman travelling in a group of cousins will have greater control over her earnings than a similar woman migrating with elder males

(Rogaly, 1998: 25). According to Rogaly, there are number of problems that a woman face when she migrates as against men like possibilities of being sexually harassed, continuation of reproductive work if she migrates with a known group and sever effects on children and family due to moving away from them. But whatever the minute details stands for the larger picture that those details portray is when woman migrates especially a women in rural setting then her worries get manifold. Similarly when a male bread winner migrate than temporarily it might bring a sense of authority to the women but minute observations shows that neither the authority is absolute nor the work load get lighter. Any woman, no matter what class she may belong to, suffers due to migration.

Women and Political Mobilisation

Political mobilisation is yet another dimension within the agriculture that needs to be discussed, as political activism within agrarian domains contributes significantly to the political affairs of the state. Though women have been present as the dominant actors within political mobilisations since independence and even after that but even in this field their presence was never recognised as significant as that of male counterparts. When in 1980s India witnessed the confluence of academic researches around new social movements than for the first time women's struggle and their contribution to movement was recognised. They were considered to be an important part of all those mobilisations that demanded an equal society for all. Even after independence, they were considered an important component in the story of development and legal measures like 73rd constitutional amendment proves that their presence in the governance was maintained. But despite these efforts women's participation have always been bleak and biased. For instance, Brass in his work (1995) 'The politics of Gender, Nature and Nation in the Discourse of the New Farmer's Movement' noted down that though women power was recognised and certain village level projects were designed to empower and liberate them but deep down inside these projects⁶⁶ were there to hold back the women within the same shackles of orthodox traditional norms and values (Brass, 1995: 39). Even their presence in the panchayats was treated as a proxy members present and it was their menfolk who

66 See T. Brass. 1995. *New Farmer's Movement in India*. Pp 38-39. He discussed 'Laxmi-mukhti' (Liberation of house wife project). However the scope of this project was class specific as rural landless women were excluded from the project and even when land was only gifted to women by men than women were expected to cultivate them with traditional methods so that the rich heritage of the country can stay intact.

managed the entire work from the back seat (Baviskar, 2002:172). Along with this even if one looks at the constitutional structure of Khap panchayats which are an informal institutions present in north India, then the adverse sex ratio shows how far women are enabled to exercise their agency within the public domain (Kaur, 2010). Though Khaps have been considered as the beholders of the cultural tradition of all those communities who willingly let them rule, a close scrutiny of their functioning⁶⁷ will reveal that from their constitution to their ruling all have been biased towards women. It is woman and her body which is considered as an appropriate site of control for men and the larger society. In such a situation, there is a need to empower women so that they can abolish the gender biased discrimination against them and can also participate in policy and decision making structures (Misra, 2006). And it was only through a thorough reading of their history of experiences, of sufferings and of exclusion that any institutional measure can turn into a successful attempt to uplift women's status in the society in real terms.

Women and Ecology

Any public and explicit discussion around gender and women specifically shows that it shares a close relationship with the environment and ecology, not because women were considered close to nature but because women entered the public discourse around the same time when environmental debates were on the top list. Hence, lot of feminist took interest not only in gender issues but various environmental issues too as their main motive is to be the representative and voice for those communities and areas which were otherwise ignored. This turn of feminists is popularly known as Eco-feminism. Agarwal in her work (1992) 'Gender and Environmental Debates' talked about Ecofeminism and the lessons that one need to learn from the Indian specific situations. According to her Ecofeminism⁶⁸ embodies within it several strands of discourse, most of which reflect the different positions within the western feminist movement (Agarwal, 1992: 120). But instead of Ecofeminism, she called it "feminist environmentalism" (ibid: 126) which

67 See. R. Kaur. *Khap Panchayats, sex ratio and Female Agency*. 2010. For a detailed discussion of the kind of marriages forbidden and the way low sex ratio provides them justified grounds to hold back and control the agency of they daughters and sisters.

68 See B. Agarwal.1992. *Gender and Environmental Debates*. Pp 120. for further deeper analyses of ecofeminism,see the four features or common links she had discussed between Feminists and environmentalist's concern which has brought them together.

discusses the issues that relate women to environment. According to her environmental degradation affects not only nations but it also has gender specific effects especially on women in poor households. She gives example from rural Himachal and U.P where women played important role in the movement against deforestation by hugging the trees (Chipko Movement) and where environmental crisis is leading to suicide among women simply because they were probably the first and the closest category that got affected due to environmental degradation. In her another similar kind of work (1986) on wood-fuel crisis in India, she discussed that the wood-fuel crisis not only rings alarm regarding the degraded environmental state in India but it also shows the crises that all communities which used to stay entirely dependent on forest are going through. These communities suffer on various fronts like men will lose their livelihood, women will spent more hours in searching for fuel as they have to cook for the entire family which will gradually diminish their scope for employment opportunities beyond their immediate territory (Agarwal, 1986). Women and Environment have been closely associated even in the field of governance. Agarwal in her yet another work (2010) on gender and green governance talked about the importance of presence of women within the political economy as influential actors. To her, just like personal individual property rights, women's presence in government offices, decision-making processes have always been an issue of concern especially in the departments which were concerned with environment and specifically forestry. She explicitly pose certain questions against the sheer absence of women in the government offices and argued that though there have been enough literature that discusses women's presence within public domain but beyond this mere presence, the real question is about the potentiality, i.e. how effective women's presence can be within the public decision making forums⁶⁹. For her 'engagement with government', i.e. the extension of the web is one of the immediate things required in the contemporary times. To have a society where equality and proficiency prevails, one needs to prioritise the presence of women in government as it is the government that draft policies which affect them (Agarwal, 2010: 399).

69 See. B. Agarwal. 2010. *Gender and Green Governance*. P 11. She talked about five institutional impacts of women's presence in public decision making forum i.e. executive committee. They are appropriate representation and participation, forest conservation, balanced rule making mechanisms, empowerment and increased scope of welfare.

Women and Caste

Along with agriculture, caste has also been the field where the repercussions of any development within this field were felt more strongly by women. Among Jats, this phenomenon was manifested explicitly in their local customary practices, their institutions and in their demography. Prem Chowdhry wrote extensively on the state of women among Jats in Haryana, though her work is limited to a specific region but it is able to reflect the severity of state of women once they are located within a specific caste group. She called them 'veiled women' (Chowdhry, 1994) as they are still trapped within the cage of orthodox customs and related practices. Through her field work in Haryana she argued that despite economic property in Haryana, little has changed for women clearly visible in their adverse sex ratio, high female child mortality rate, the judgements that local informal institutions like caste panchayats pass, status of women's health, etc. To her, one of the sole reasons for this biased development is the patriarchal thinking of Jat community which has penetrated the society not only as an ideology but also as cultural system. For instance, she reflect upon the widow remarriage practice among Jats which from the surface might appear as a sign of being progressive but deep inside it is just another way to keep women's sexuality under control and also the economic assets that she is legally liable to receive once her husband dies. According to Chowdhry, in Haryana, as the society engages with new technology and capitalism, the adverse effect is visible even on masculinity. She argued that men in Haryana are going through crisis visible in their unemployed and unmarried status, the two main territories for them to assert their masculinity. All of this as a result leads to increasing cases of violence and discrimination against the subordinated categories like low castes, low classes and especially women⁷⁰. Chowdhry pointed out that women in North India have been the bearers of cultural codes (Chowdhry, 1997). Behind the veils of cultural norms, honour and tradition lies a society where violence is inflicted upon women without providing any necessary explanation for its occurrence. These shackles born out from caste become more tighter when the situation is further dissected along class lines. As even within a

⁷⁰ See P. Chowdhry. *Crisis of Masculinity in Haryana: The unmarried, the unemployed and the aged*. P 5196. She focus on the rulings of caste panchayats where to uphold societal norms, values and order repressive and biased judgements were passed by senior caste members. Also she mentions the "dubious marriage" arrangements in Haryana, where due to adverse sex ration, women are bought from other states and because a family has paid for the woman, they tend to have a legal license to inflict violence upon her.

specific caste it is the women from lower class that suffer more which in the long creates a vicious cycle for women who remain entangled due to their caste and class positions.

Bina Agarwal, along with various other scholars, discussed the concept of class and caste among women in Indian Context. To her it is the lower class, i.e. poor household that bear the maximum hazards of environmental degradation due to development of industries and technological farming practices. Nata Duvvury (1989) also while reviewing literature on women in agriculture found that a major gap in the existing literature lies because of the limited attention paid to the question of caste. According to him, while class considerations have been incorporated to some extent especially in analysing the effect of technology on the agrarian structure and relations, equal amount of attention is not paid to the significance of caste. For him, caste tends to have more importance given the long historical roots it had in Indian experience (Duvvury, 1989: WS108). There are many ethnography studies that deal with this inter-connectivity between class, caste and gender. Sudha Pai (1987) studied the class and gender specific consequences especially “Female Agricultural Labour (FAL)” of the agrarian change in Punjab due to HVY cultivation. According to her as feminists⁷¹ have also pointed out, technology has intensified the already inherent unequal gender relations and though class polarisation have been studied; gender still needs separate concern. Pai Stated that the dimensions of class and gender enables one to construct an identity which act like a “Composite whole” (Pai, 1987: 17) consisting of all those social and economic factors that constitute the environment in which women lives and work. But According to Karin Kapadia (1998) along with class, caste factor also needs to be kept along especially in those rural contexts where women are engaged in petty off farm employment.

For Kapadia, it is the class and caste position that help a rural women to mediate the meaning of market opportunities available to her. Kapadia focussed on three sets of women in rural south India: Pallar women who are scheduled caste and landless agricultural labourers, poor middle caste Soliya cellar women who work as bonded labourers in the Gem cutting industry and the low income middle-caste women beneficiaries in a major government led income generating programme (Kapadia, 1998).

71 See S.Pai. 1987. *Class, Gender and Agrarian Change*. Pp 17. Feminist writers have pointed out that the women’s oppression should be traced not merely to the rise of private property and capitalism but also to the patriarchal system proceeding capitalism.

Kapadia argued that access to employment outside home did elevate the status of women and that of the overall household, as additional source of income gets generated but a deep analysis will reveal that often it is not women who takes the decision, who control the resources or who gets to decide the spending pattern of her own individual earning which shows the unequal gender relations that exist in society. Hence, it is only through a constructive and thorough outlook of Women's position in the society within the framework of caste and class, that any kind of assistance and effort to bring autonomy to women will turn successful (ibid: 3333).

Therefore, whenever one discusses women's position in any academic enquiry than her specific location, i.e. within the sphere of caste, class, religion, region needs to be kept in mind so that a critical outlook towards the process of change can be maintained.

Aspiring for Mobility: aspirations, mobility and women

Aspirations exist in almost every society but the discourse on aspirations as a sociological category started only in 1990s. If one tries to define or explain what aspiration is, then it can be explained as a hope, a cherished desire or a manner of articulation by the marginalised and weaker section of the society to be like the dominant and stronger section. This desire to be like the dominant section demands mobility from the existing position to the desired destination. But both these processes are not that simple, there are a lot of nuances attached to them especially when they are located within caste, class and gender context.

The concept of aspiration has remained a significant concept in economic analyses for quite some time, and gradually it has been employed in numerous studies since it provides new approach to the existing problems that matter in formulating a development strategy for future. Along with this, if stretched further, then aspiration can also be a useful device in explicating the socio-political dynamics of a desire that any individual or any social group have. These socio-political dynamics hence enable one to understand the root cause and the possible effects of the transformations that these desires call for.

Arjun Appadurai's work (2004) is considered as one of the significant contribution in this field. His work "The capacity to aspire" gives new bend to economic analysis by incorporating the element of culture as an important factor in development studies. To him culture is as much a part of the future as it is of past (Appadurai, 2004:

59), and though a general definition of culture has various dimensions but it is the dimension which is “oriented towards future” that stand most useful. Hence according to his analysis it is useful to take culture into account whenever one talks about development strategies because it is this culture that provides an individual or a community the capacity to aspire which in the longer run propel development. Every community has a capacity to aspire which according to him is a cultural capacity and by strengthening this capacity to aspire especially among the poor, the logic of development can find a natural ally and poor can really alter their condition of poverty which for him is “inequality materialised”.

Appadurai borrows heavily from Amartya Sen’s ideas on the significance of the culture for economics, development and poverty and for him by building the cultural capacity of poor in their own local cultural context, which will be expressed in their actions and performances one can really empower the marginalised. Borrowing from Sen, capacity to aspire is one of the strongest features of the culturally built capacities which act as a navigational capacity too (Appadurai, 2004: 69). And it is the unequal distribution of this capacity that adds twist to the organisation of any society where the more privileged have better chances to share, explore and invest in different areas to built their capacities as compare to their poor and weaker counterparts. But by stating this logic he does not mean that poor can’t aspire, though poverty put limits to their aspirations but if one observe some social movements in past driven by poor than its easily visible that by building their capacities to aspire, significant changes can be expected. Apart from culture, aspirations are also related to capabilities, they are like two sides of the same coin. The capacity to aspire provides an ethical horizon within which more concrete capabilities can be given meaning, substance and sustainability.

With emergence of aspiration tilted approaches it was observed that aspirations have created new needs and though the capacity to aspire is dependent on existing capabilities but this capacity/ capability can be modified through conscious interventions in the shape of education, communication and better exposure to the outside world. It is this capability that provides new meaning to people’s life because changes in aspirations lead to changes in preferences. Aspiration also explains how people want to be in future and why and how they should use their existing capabilities differently from those situations where they did not have aspirations (Nathan, 2005:36).

But beyond all this, the most important aspect of aspiration is that they help us to understand what derive change in any society for instance education which was so

despised at one point in time is now highly prized by people across different sections in society simply because aspiration create new needs and introduce new ways of living due to which present mode of life get altered (Nathan, 2005:37). Thus, aspirations share a relationship with not only existing capabilities/ capacities but also with the possibility of accessing certain resources and it is the interplay between them, i.e. the capability set and the kind of aspirations one has that alter the behaviour of individuals and groups. But the alteration in present mode of behaviour can also occur due to influence of other available variables⁷² in any society. Thus the concept of aspiration is dependent on various dimensions which makes it complicated i.e. in empirical situation one must take into account the possible available dimensions, to understand what kind of aspirations an individual or a community have, how did they come to realise them and what kind of consequences it can have on society.

Also when aspirations are observed in empirical situations then, there are two different directions in which they tend to move. The first one shows continuity with the existing structural patterns and the other which shows moments of discontinuity. Jodhka's (2012) study shows that at one level, aspirations are grounded in the context in which one is located but when these aspirations strive to take an empirical form than there is tendency for the discontinuity between traditional structural rules and new set of aspirations which sometimes leads to consequences like suicide. His work is a reflection on certain incidences that are taking place in contemporary society, where victimisation of young aspiring youth shows discontinuity that exist in our structural patterns.

According to Jodhka, due to liberalisation, there is a social transformation happening which has altered India's image as a village republic and in this new order where India is competing at global platform, its cultural order also gets influenced. There is a creation of aspiration among communities for mobility which entails a new lifestyle and a wish to be part of the new urban middle class. These aspirations have also empowered women and other section of society in the sense that they are able to think of something for themselves and have been able to raise their scope and dimensions of mobility.

72 See R.A. Easterlin (1976) P 417. for instance it may not be due to aspirations for a certain kind of future or the unavailability of resources that a particular kind of family pattern will emerge. It can be a direct consequence of the state led policy of population control that compel a society to have that pattern so that new kind of aspirations can take birth.

Along with these debates and discussions, there have been a number of studies that have talked about how aspirations are formed, what are the major dimensions that have influenced their formation and implementation. Often, expectations are used along with aspirations as a closest synonym in various social science researches. Stephen Morgan in his work (2006) talked about aspirations and expectations. He stated that expectations and aspirations are those orientations around which not only one's future but urgent behavioural conditions are also dependent. They are central mediating variables in status attainment researches. Expectations are often different from aspirations for being realistic rather than idealistic (Morgan, 2006: 1528). He also talked about the specific processes of aspiration formation borrowing from social psychological findings of Archibald Haller (1982) who stated that aspirations get formulated as a result of three different processes : imitation, Self reflection and adoption (ibid: 1530). According to Morgan almost all sociological studies whether mapping educational aspiration or occupational aspirations takes into account the social contexts as it enables them to formulate a future plan. Teachman and Paash (1998) talked about the influence that family has on formation of educational aspirations. According to them the capacity and variation to aspiration resides in the family. They had used data set of siblings to note sibling resemblance in formulating aspirations and its consequent results in which family's environment, parent's education and income stand as the most influencing factors (Teachman and Paash, 1998). For Teachman and Paash educational aspirations are hardly studied as a matter of interest, from Blau and Duncan (1967) to Swell and Hauser (1980) most of the literature highlighted family as the supreme agent that not only guide one's aspiration but also have a say in educational attainment (ibid: 704). The reasons for the importance of family in formulating educational aspirations are: Families are source genetically determined academic potential and this potential can be used to measure intellectual capacity, families represent micro- Social environment that affects, shape how children experience the larger social world. For instance parent's encouragement, provision of reading material affect not only their educational achievement but also their further future achievement, families also affect their larger social environment by choosing the kind of choices they will have , like the kind of schools they go to, the kind of neighbourhood they reside in, etc. And finally, the socio-economic status of the family directly has an impact on educational aspirations (ibid: 705).

Apart from family even school environment have a great say in formulating aspirations. Jonathan Plucker (1998) researched among the secondary school students in England and stated that student's aspirations have two components: inspirations and ambitions. Where inspirations represent becoming involved in an activity for its intrinsic value and enjoyment, ambitions stand for a sense of goal orientation which can be expressed as a goal for future (Plucker, 1998: 240). And both the components are dependent on the school climate conditions but despite being within the same environment there are discrepancies among the students from different classes and students belonging to different ethnic origins. Kao and Tienda (1998) looked at Asian and Hispanic minority youth's aspirations to highlight that race, ethnic and sex variations have serious implications when one assess educational aspirations which are nothing more than a state of mind that motivate one to strive for academic success. To, them where on the one hand aspirations are influenced by expectations of significant others like parents, school, teachers, peers, etc. On the other hand it is an essentially a rational assessment of the costs and benefits of possible actions (Kao and Tienda, 1998: 352). It is precisely at this juncture that the theoretical debate⁷³ between Bourdieu's habitus and Simon's bounded rationality comes handy. Bourdieu's concept of habitus enables one to understand how aspirations are formed, i.e. it is the habitus on which agents rely to resound to contemporary situations and it is most probably their historically and socially structure set of principles that guide their way out. But this approach is critiqued by Herbert Simon's theory of action which is based on habit/intuition Vs intellectual thought dichotomy. According to this approach agents are bounded with rationality, they rely heavily on memory to recognise situations and find appropriate strategies. Though Simon was also criticised later by scholars like Camic (1986) as his approach was psychological in nature and leave little room to understand unconscious action, which cannot be reduced to memory (Francois, 2009: 421). But in short debates like these open the scope for theoretical exploration in this area. Time and again there have been attempts to establish a new approach towards aspiration and one such attempt was taken by Rodman et al (1974) who borrowing from Stouffer's (1949) suggestions that "social norms be regarded as range rather than a single point" claimed that even aspiration be

73 See Collet Francois (2009) for a comparative Review of Bourdieu's and habitus and Simon's bounded rationality debate for in-depth knowledge of the debate.

understood as having a range rather than being settled at a single level. According to them most of the sociological and psychological studies on aspirations have taken the assumption that there is one level of aspirations within reach of very individual and sometimes it is the research methodology that stay incapable of capturing people's mixed responses, hopes and emotions (Rodman et al, 1974: 184). What they try to assert is the view that aspirations should also be considered as an individual goal, a personal desire not merely an explication of what is socially desirable because inclusion of such concerns shows that there exist a range⁷⁴ of aspirations (ibid: 185). Borrowing from Rodman's theory⁷⁵ of lower class value stretch they pointed out that lower class possess a wider range of aspiration (ibid: 187). What differentiates their research is the approach rather than specific results as by developing the range of aspirations, they gave not only a new direction to the study along with uniqueness in data analysis but they also opened new avenues for further research possibilities.

Hence, there are number of studies that discuss different aspects of aspirations like how they are formulated, what they mean, how different they are from other associated categories. A review of these studies reflect the diverse dimensions which were explored by employing this tool of aspiration for instance it has been used for conducting status attainment studies, stratification studies⁷⁶, identity formation studies⁷⁷, policy discourse⁷⁸, middle class formation studies⁷⁹ and many others.

But a subtle nuance hidden behind these studies is the gendered connotation, i.e. to say that if one adds gender perspective to these enquires about status attainment, identity formation, policy formation, etc., than it is quite clear how mere presence of separate concerns for men and women can highlight so many new reflections.

74 See H. Rodman, P. Voydanoff and A.E. Lovejoy. 1974. The range of aspirations. Pp186. When they talked range of aspirations, they mentioned number of studies that discussed occupational range of aspirations. for instance a study by Miller and Haller(1964) talked about occupational aspiration scale that ranged an individual's level of aspiration as falling between what is "realistically probable" and "idealistically desirable". Hence they asked the questions accordingly i.e. realistic questions and idealistic questions.

75 Ibid. Pp 187. This theory states that member of lower class share the dominant values of society but they tend to stretch it downwards because they don't have enough resources that can enable them to achieve things in accordance with what society value. So lower class doesn't abandon the dominant values of society but they modify it, hence they have wider range of values and also a wider range of aspirations.

76 See Portes, McLeod and Parker.1978.Immigrant aspirations.

77 See Nonica Dutta.1999. *Forming an identity: A Social history of Jats*.

78 See Clair and Benjamin. 2011. Performing desires: the dilemma of aspirations and educational attainment.

79 See Fernandes and Heller. 2006. Hegemonic aspirations: new middle class politics and Indian democracy in comparative perspective.

Aspirations though within their intrinsic nature do not have specific class, caste, community or gendered connotations but when these aspirations meet social realities within complex social structures then there are number of phenomena which comes into play and alters the entire nature and construct of aspirations. In common parlance aspirations are understood as an inner desire to have an elevated status in terms of higher class, caste or any sort of positions recognised in a social system. When these aspirations are found within a specific social field and among the specific actors than they provide explanations to the broader waves of change that we encounter in society. Jodhka (2012) in his work “Her name is aspiration” precisely attempted to do the same i.e. he tried to provide an alternate view to the changes that we encounter around through growing aspirations of women. Jodhka stated that if one looks at the recently emerging incidences where young women are migrating to the metropolitan cities to turn their aspirations into realities and in return end up committing suicides then such incidences shows that their roots are much deeper than what they appear on the surface. There can be many sociological interpretations of an act like this for instance the very fact that these young women who predominantly belong to either rural villages or small towns are able to move out of their native place then India is certainly moving toward being modern and develop. There is abundance of opportunities available to work and to study which attracts rural population towards the city but when from that set of rural population, women move out then it actually explains the way liberalisation is positively impacting a developing country like India. As now there is enough space for them to aspire to dream and put efforts to turn their dreams into reality. Along with this for Jodhka such incidences also show that there is a deeper structural disturbance in the society especially when those (women) who were forbidden to think for themselves on their own stand up and come out for themselves. So there is always this possibility of crises placed silently below the aspirations of women which might get ignited if the social circumstances around have been stretched beyond a limit.

But things do not always end with such tragic ends; many a times possession of aspirations shows the availability of options within the purview of women which appear to bring them an opportunity to be mobile. Still there are chances that these aspirations may in return restrict them further within the age old mould of control by making them to choose within a bounded terrain. Kalpagam explains one such possibility through her work (2008) in Allahabad district in U.P. on the Marriage norms, choice and aspirations of rural Kurmi women, where she stated that marriage has emerged as a possible terrain

where young girls who had access to education tried to manifest their aspirations. According to Kalpagam within love and arrange marriages. Marriage by choice has emerged a new option feasible to both girl and her parents as the larger boundaries of restriction are not disturbed. Within this marriage pattern a girl perceive a space to exercise her desire and to her marrying and moving out is one of the possible ways to realise their aspirations to be free. So while choosing a guy from a restricted and already laid out selected pool, they make sure that along with strong rural roots the guy must have ample amount of education along with a job in urban city as by marrying such a guy they'll have an opportunity to move to the city. Therefore though aspirations in such contexts certainly explains that women are gaining freedom by getting chances to choose things for themselves but this might lead to further con-solidification of patriarchal rules. When Kalpagam interviewed women belonging to different classes within Kurmi caste and compared them with other castes like Guptas, Vishwakarma, Dalits and even with Muslim women narratives than she found that beyond the points of caste and class specific choices what binds all these women from different castes and religion together is the fact that they are women, who have a limited orbit of choice opened to them. Though all of them irrespective of their position has aspiration to move out to the city, to study and to work outside their household and have a dignified independent life but they were made to think about these possibilities only within the orbit of marriage, i.e that can turn their aspirations into reality but only by marrying a guy. Now even within the terrain of marriage they have limited choice. Marriages in India have always been defined along caste lines and increasingly there is rush to marry not only within the same or higher caste but also within the same or higher class. As a result these young women were again given a pre-selected pool to exercise their choice so that the broader structures of patriarchy, power, customs and traditions do not get disturbed. But the optimistic point that Kalpagam highlights despite so much restrictions is that still women are able to carve out a space for them. They despite all these boundaries are able to plan their own way in one sense out but in another sense within these broader dominating structures.

So, this inner desire to move up or beyond (within) one's present situation to have a bright future entails a strategic planned manoeuvrability which as a result attach aspirations to social mobility, i.e. whenever one talks about aspirations than one of the consequent effect is social mobility that a group attains as a result of an aspired goal.

Social mobility⁸⁰ though is a separate field of enquiry within sociology but many a times its been studied as an associated phenomena which explains the nuances otherwise hidden within various social categories. Here the connecting thread between social mobility and aspiration is not only the fact that possession of certain kinds of aspirations demands social mobility and here both the phenomena are scrutinised within rural setting among a settles groups but also the fact that both phenomena have some inner desire that propels its existence and occurrence. Arutiunian while measuring social mobility in the countryside stated that social mobility entails an inner urge /need to change, before the actual movement. Social mobility is important not only because it alters the position of the involved individual or group but also because it leads to changes in the social structure which at some points demands restructuring of various phenomena. Apart from its inner complexity, one needs to be aware even of the context in which mobility patterns are located. Jules Naudet (2008) interrogates mobility within Indian context and argues that one needs to stay alert when studying social and economic mobility within Indian context as there are various accompanying processes like identity transformation, acculturation or sanskritization which makes the process of movement more complex. For instance when Naudet looked at the subjective experience of social mobility among Dalits than for her one need to look beyond the formally laid out procedures, i.e. while measuring mobility one needs to choose the criteria carefully as the priority for a large Dalit population in that context is not the occupational prestige but what matters more to them is attaining a position from where they can resist the upper caste domination (Naudet, 2008: 435). So it is a complex process as they seek for identity transformation by attaining both economic and social mobility but an identity of a kind that can enable them, empower them to resist the domination from their original location rather than entering their locations or attaining ‘their’ place by replacing them. But the nuance does not end here, as sometimes aspiration and entire strategy to move up in one sphere might lead to downward movement in the other sphere. Sharma (1973) throw some light on downward mobility within Indian context which is obviously not a volitional choice of

80 See S. Rytina. 2008. Social Mobility. He explained social mobility as the movement of individuals, family or groups among stratified social positions. Mobility has loon been recognised as distinct area of concern, where terms like “class”, “standing” and “status” convey the notion that households are ranked or stratified from higher to lower as a consequences of economic roles. Mobility requires taking assessments of social ranks at two (more) points in time and a comparison between them. Those with the same rank are “immobile” whereas those with different ranks at different points are” mobile” and depending on the scheme of rank, they are called mobile but in different degrees.

that individual or group but it comes along as an added consequence of change in the current position. Sharma brought attention to a very significant aspect about mobility when he talked about downward social mobility i.e. the specific and generalised nature of mobility. For instance various low caste groups might bring rise in their social status by emulating the practices of upper castes and thus can claim socio-religious mobility i.e. a specific kind of mobility that they have acquired but if one sees the generalised effect of this movement then it will get reveal that there is no correspondence of this elevated social status with their economic and political statuses. Hence in their race to attain a higher social status by emulating practices of higher caste they may lose opportunities available on economic and political fronts causing overall/generalised decline in their status (Sharma, 1973: 59).

If one looks at the classical literature on social mobility like Sorokin (1964), Miller (1969) and various other than mobility is not a symmetrical phenomena. Also the patterns of mobility don't bear a definite character and there are different kinds of mobilities, which may make it difficult to relate the aspects with one another. So aspects regarding upward economic mobility may not correspond or may not relate to downward social mobility in social sphere. For instance, with industrialisation the agrarian labour may become a skilled, non manual worker in the city. Same trajectory go for big farmers who may also encounter number of opportunities to complement their already high status like their sons might get high salary employment in the city but they lack same amount of social prestige that their fathers had back in the village (ibid:61). Therefore the change whether upward or downward, specific or generalised leads to restructuration of the society. This restructuration/change is not always preferred or enjoyed as some of the social groups whose positions are at stake always resist mobility leading to circumstances of social conflict. Ram (1977) in his ethnographic study in rural Uttar Pradesh talked about social mobility and the consequent social conflict.

Ram (1977) stated that sometimes the desire to change results into forms of resistance from both the sides, i.e. those who seek to move up and those who are already in those higher places threatened of losing the status due to entrance of new communities. Studies on social conflict in India have been vast and different scholars have adopted different perspective. For instance some scholars like Bealgsiegel (1967) and Beteille (1972) have studied social conflict as a result of disturbance in the structural boundaries, where contradiction is between the normative and the essential orders. Along with this there are others (Singh 1967) who defined social conflict as merely a conflict to

dominate, to absorb sources of power to gain control on economic resources (Ram, 1977: 114). Therefore when he analysed the situation in rural U.P then he concluded that the social conflict perpetuated via mobility is largely around structural issues and there are other issue too but severity of conflicts appear only where caste boundaries are blurred. These Conflicts cannot be resolved by external forces but can be repaired only when change emerged from within at the functional and the institutional level (ibid: 121).

Hence, a discussion on aspirations implicitly also demands a discussion on the complex nature of social mobility enabled via certain strategies. As it its the actual movement of the people involved that avail us an empirical view (gendered in this context) of aspirations which otherwise stays majorly as a mental construct, an inner perseverance of a desire.

CONCLUSION

This chapter makes a significant contribution to the entire analysis by bringing into the picture the aspect of gender. Though there is an existence of a separate branch within Sociology (Sociology of gender) that deals with the questions around gender but in general if the gender perspective is applied to any social phenomena or problem, than there are certain new aspects that tend to emerge. Hence following the similar line of thought even this chapter tried to bring in the gender dynamics within. Gender as a sociological concept already have a dynamic journey with debates around sexuality joining in but this chapter discusses certain other concerns that exist alongside i.e. if this contested category of gender specifically women are applied to other available fields of enquiry than what kind of expressions it will bring on the front stage. Therefore, when in an agrarian context and its associated processes the environment and caste-class debates and the idea of aspirations are perceived from a gender perspective, then they certainly add to the complex nature of change aimed to decipher within this enquiry.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

The title “*Aspiring for Mobility: Social Change in an Agrarian Context*” attempted to convey the interest behind an enquiry of this sort, which aims to study social change within society, change which is mediated through a particular sphere, i.e. agrarian context or rural countryside, change which is propelled by a particular tool, i.e. aspiration, and change which manifests itself through a particular measure, i.e. a systematic mobility pattern and change in positions. The study tried to extrapolate an understanding of change through the specific placement of the entire enquiry within a confined setting. The change in society is tightly woven around the dimensions of caste, class and gender as these factors not only provide a platform to stratify the society but also add complexities to any phenomena that flows within the society. Therefore, when aspirations of Jats in western Uttar Pradesh are observed, then the discourse on caste, class they belong to and the class they aspire for also becomes visible. Along with this, even the gendered nature of this whole process, i.e. formation of aspirations, the enactment of strategies to realise the aspirations also comes along and complicates the observations further.

Though as a complete project this study aims to highlight the broad spectrum of change in society, the route it has taken makes it dwell into different terrains which provide space for different chapters to take some shape. And the larger goal that this study aimed to achieve is not only to acquaint one with the procession of change from a confined setting of western U.P. to the broader society but to try and lay down grounds from where concerns can be spelled to develop aspirations as a full-fledged conceptual category. Therefore, it aims to generate further scope for future sociological enquiries. Alexander Pope says in *An Essay on Man*,

“*Hope springs eternal in the human breast.*”

Quoted by Jonathan A. Plucker (1998)

This quote shows that desire or hope is omnipresent in society. But when this hope aims to achieve practical grounds, then it tends to follow a stipulated path, which means that to turn any desire into reality one needs to bring change into his/her empirical world. Hence, any form of change in any sphere of the society will accumulate to

become a larger wave of change. But while decoding all these steps, perhaps the greatest challenge for any social scientist will be to establish desires and hopes as a substantial, conceptual tool so that it can be applied in different contexts across time. As a result the present enquiry through a specific trajectory tries to establish aspirations as a conceptual tool for further sociological studies.

Aspirations can be called hope, wants, calculations, preferences, choices, desires and dreams. They exist in almost all societies and they are never individual instead they are always formulated in the interaction or in the thick of social life. There have been numerous studies that have attempted to study aspirations but most of them have too narrowly focused on very simplistic notions about it, leaving the hidden operations of power, privilege, and social exclusion unattended.

Though there are a number of studies available today, which take into account different dimensions that have played their part in formulating certain kind of aspirations in different contexts, these studies have not critically examined those dimensions that tend to give aspirations a specific character. For instance, there are studies on mapping the kind of aspirations that poor men and women bearing different social roles, or different social institutions in a society have without drawing any link between the process of their formulation and the consequent social change that they might propel. The present study therefore tried to encompass not only different approaches employed and the different dimensions explored so far to understand the idea of change in agrarian context due emergence of certain desires and demands by a dominant section of farmers (Jats) but it has tried to do the same through the tool of aspirations. This study through the journey of a community, the changes that they experience from “been to becoming” tried to unfold few layers of rural transformations that are giving way to broader streams of change in our society. There are four chapters other than the conclusion that deals with separate issues to reach up to this conclusion.

The first chapter, titled ‘Introduction’, explored sociological theories used to understand the research problem and the major theoretical debates in the field of agriculture. Methodologically, the perspective used to conduct this enquiry is influenced by Bourdieu’s theory of Habitus and Giddens’s theory of structuration. Both the theories talk about how social surroundings, habitus guide one’s action, and how analysis of both structure and agency is essential in any social enquiry. Then it talked about different sociological debates in this context, i.e. in the field of agrarian change, which is grouped largely into Marxist and non-Marxist camps from the Russian countryside to India

settings. Following this was a discussion on how under the banner of Rural Sociology, agrarian studies had evolved from peasant studies. All of this was then discussed in the context of the Indian experience. In India, rural studies were initially centred on village studies which gradually gave way to critical analysis of land reforms and phases like the Green Revolution. All of this background discussion points toward the new trends that have emerged in post green revolution phase within the agrarian context like environment concerns, gender nuances, political mobilisation, grassroots governance, etc. Therefore, the introduction starting from the sociological inception of the study to the history of researches in the field of agrarian studies, tried to give a systematic head start to the entire project.

The second chapter, titled 'Social change in Western U.P', acquaint one with major processes of change within this context so that not only the complexity of the specific location becomes visible but also the trajectory of change that this research tried to point at also stood out clearly. Therefore, starting with a general note about what is the state of Sociology in contemporary times, the chapter moved towards the politico-economic profile of the state. Since the enquiry was limited to only the western region of the state, it was essential to look at the holistic profile of the state so that the history and the specific details about western part of the region become understandable. There are broadly three kinds of transformation that have been discussed in the chapter with respect to the required concern: the agrarian transformation, the political transformation, and the socio-economic changes. The very nature of this region is that its soil is fertile and thus it is appropriate for farming and as a result it is dominated by agricultural practices which are the main source of livelihood for a large portion of population. It is this agriculture only that gave birth to number of classes that reside in this region depending upon the kind of work one does. The Agricultural system in this state has experienced series of changes starting from land revenue collection system to land reforms, from being the front runner of green revolution to post green revolution effects. All this changes have not only altered the agrarian setting but have also changed the nature of classes associated with this system. Then comes the political sphere which too has experienced changes especially after the stress on the grassroots level governance and revival of caste in politics. U.P. is generally called a micro image to explain the political dynamism of the entire country because of its diversity. Therefore, especially after the Dalit uprising and the revival of farmers' movement, the political sphere experienced number of changes. At the socio-economic level too, U.P. has experienced

number of changes largely as a latent effect of changes in the agricultural and the political spheres. For instance change in class structure due to introduction of capitalist farming system, changes in social composition and mode of organisation of low castes in public spheres under the protection of reservations, death and revival of certain local industries and various other processes mark the changes at socio- economic level. Though this study was based within a specified setting, it aim was to bring some amount of generality as a result it shares and compare the experience of change in land holding patterns, changed agrarian relations, changes in the forms of labour and changes in its political sphere with other states like Haryana, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha, so that the larger theme of change can be maintained with adequate amount of generality.

Like the geographical location, history of the main actors should also be discussed as the details about their past and present ways of being will explain the kind aspirations they hold and the kind of change they seek. It is on the basis of their goals that they formulate certain strategies which at the broader level substantiate the reason for certain forms of change within this region and in the wider society. A discussion on Jats also explains how important the issue of caste is in Indian context. The third chapter, titled 'Jats' Past and Present' explored the major ways through which Jats recognise themselves and are recognised by others i.e. connections to a glorious past, involvement in certain kind of political mobilisation to their image of being capitalist farmers. Then came a section that discussed the kind of aspiration they hold and the place they seek to move up to, i.e. the growing middle classness among them which in itself entails lot of complications. All of this gives way to the kind of strategies Jats formulated ranging from certain type of marriage patterns, to investment in education, from getting into certain type of employment to migrating to different cities. The chapter ended with their current set of priorities and concerns which in the long term explain their contemporary concerns and the contribution they make to larger wave of change in society.

Finally, the last chapter, titled 'Aspirational mobility', dealt with reviewing the different ways through which aspirations and the inflicted mobility have been studied academically by also highlighting the gender dimension within it. So, along with caste and class there are gendered connotations too attached to social change. Though there is already a vast amount of literature around the questions of 'gender' within Sociology as it highlights all those lacunae that are tend to be present in almost every social enquiry. But what differentiate this study from the existing others is an attempt to highlight

women's concerns and presence in agriculture and among Jats to understand gendered aspect within aspirations. Despite the existence of a separate branch within Sociology (Sociology of gender) that deals with the questions around gender if in general too gender perspective is applied to any social phenomena or problem, than it certainly tend to contribute to the richness of any enquiry. Therefore there is a critical placement of gender question in different fields within agriculture. Thus, the chapter 'Gender and Social Change' revolves largely around all those studies that discussed different aspects related to gender within the rural context. This chapter begins with the very emergence of gender as an analytical concept in Sociology which also entails how this idea has been contested within Indian Context around the discourse on development and the much talked about Amartya Sen's capability approach. Following this is a section that explores women and agriculture especially with reference to the severity of the effects of mechanisation of labour in agriculture, effects of migration, impact of land reforms, consequences of grassroots level political mobilizations, etc. Also, whenever one talks about gender within agrarian context then the questions of rights and privileges which can guarantee them (women) some amount of power is always relevant. Thus, there is a discussion around property rights tracing it back to the Engel's notion of Private property, women's participation in public sphere, in political affairs and their trajectory to empowerment within the rural context. The discussion becomes more complicated when the dimension of gender gets entangled with caste and class elements and all of this gradually leads the core point of the research that how aspirations, the desire to move up or move beyond have gendered connotations attached which is manifested through the choices that women make in the fields of occupation, educational, marriage preferences and many more. Therefore, the chapter ended on a note that yes gender dimension is indeed an important dimension in any sociological study, which has been explored time and again as it brings out all those nuances which otherwise remain unattended.

Hence, as the title suggests there are two important points in this research: Aspirations to move up and beyond (be mobile) and the social change in agrarian context. The movement is there, change is visible seeing the past trajectory of movements of this community but what intrigues the reader is the question that what propels this change, this movement. For instance, the propelling force for political assertions got generated around the questions of land to the tiller goal in mind which led to further mobilisations around the questions of fair price for the agricultural product, assertion for an exclusive identity for the kisan. Similarly, in contemporary scenarios the

protest around reservation (fight to claim OBC status) can be seen as an effect of the urge to maintain the dominant positions of the past even in contemporary context. Therefore the whole journey of change that this enquiry tries to capture whether political, social or demographic in nature, the journey from “been to becoming” is propelled by certain kind of aspirations. Aspiration to become ‘something’, to attain a position, be visible, to be part of the changing dynamics of the society, implicitly contributes to the larger forms of transformation of the society.

But despite so much of clarity and systematic progression, this enquiry tended to have certain lacunae as it was majorly based on review of secondary sources. Also, the kind of studies it took into account were planned and conducted within their specific spheres, with a specific goal in mind. So to put them all along in a new story line might leave some scope for criticisms.

However, the larger goal of this enquiry was still to leave the grounds open for further research, so that new areas to think upon can be found, so that further refinement of thinking can be attained, so that far more possible research questions can be raised. For instance, questions such as: “Can it be defined beyond being a propelling force? Can we develop a theory around this category? Can it be developed as a conceptual tool in Sociology to be applied to number of social enquiries located in different contexts? How are aspirations formed not just shaped by the context at the very first place? Can aspirations be developed as an emotive category? What propels aspirations, rationality or the motivational need? If one talks about collective aspirations then can they be converted into substantive law, i.e. to say if one speaks about their normative character, Will there be any change in their nature within the legal frameworks? What kind of impact will they have in society when certain legal connotations are embodied within it? Once required efforts are applied to turn these aspirations into possible realities what are the possible structural changes that they bring along?” are simply because the relevance of any social enquiry becomes visible only if it can be applied to other allied areas, if its findings can promote further progress of knowledge.

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