

**AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL MOBILISATION:
A CASE STUDY OF POST-INDEPENDENCE BIHAR**

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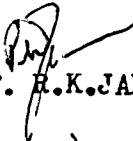
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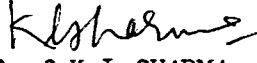
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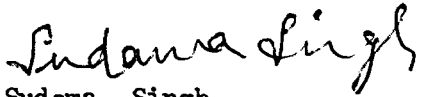

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- Sudama Singh

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INTRODUCTION

CONCEPTUALISING PEASANTRY

Political economy of the agrarian society in India has been a major concern for sociologists, particularly after independence. It has emerged as a distinct field of sociological and anthropological investigation for both the Marxist and the non-Marxist scholars. The nature of agrarian economy and its reflection on polity in Bihar, however, assumes a special significance. It is not only one of the most backward States but also a State whose maximum population still depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Apart from caste rigidities and economic disparities it has long historical tradition of political mobilisation.

However, before embarking upon the structure of agrarian economy and its consequences on the dynamics of political mobilization in contemporary Bihar, an analysis of the sociological categories such as agrarian structure, peasantry and political mobilization becomes necessary. Agrarian social structure is constituted of those section of people who perform various functions in the organisation of agricultural production. It also indicates towards the differential share of various sections of people in the agrarian system. To be more clear, agrarian structure refers to the composition of society in terms of ownership possession

and use of land.¹

Peasants are different from both the landlords and the poor agricultural workers. Despite the fact that peasants are also comparatively poor section of rural society, they are better than the agricultural labourers.

According to Robert Redfield peasants are those who possess small land holdings and cultivate it themselves. He mentions that peasants are economically independent and the labour is simplified by their unpaid family wage labour.² T.Samin mentions the following four basic characteristics of peasantry:

1. The peasant family forms the basic unit of a multi-dimensional social organisation.
2. Land husbandry is the main source of livelihood.
3. There is domination of peasantry.
4. The peasant possesses the culture of small communities.³

Apart from the fact that peasants are different from agricultural labourers and landlords, they live in an altogether different social environment. Thus the peasant society is essentially different from tribal society. According to Redfield peasants stand

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1. Beteille, Andre, Study in agrarian social structure(Oxford University Press, 1974),
 2. Redfield, Robert, Peasant Society and Culture, An Anthropological Approach to Civilization(Chicago: 1956)
 3. Samin, T., (ed.), Peasants and Peasant Society - Selected Readings (Penguin, 1971).

between tribal peoples and urban peoples.⁴ F.G.Bailey presents tribes and castes in terms of two models, namely, the 'segmentary' and the 'organic' respectively.⁵

However, Andre Beteille argues that the definition of a tribal society as a segmentary system will not be of much practical use in a country like India.⁶ On the basis of Redfield's analysis, Surjit Sinha observes that the best way of conceptualising the peasantry is to think of a continuum ranged between these polar types.⁷

Similarly, in the opinion of Jay Edward tribal and peasant villages are different as the former are more primitive or 'folk-like'.⁸ Furthermore, Engels describes that peasants are different from tribals as well as industrial workers. It is the agricultural proletariat and the farm labourers who are very close to the industrial workers of the towns.⁹

4. Redfield, Robert, op cit.

Samin, T. op cit.

Majumdar, D.N., A Tribe in Transition - A Study in Cultural Pattern, - (London: 1937).

Bailey, F.G., 'Tribe and Caste in India', Contribution to Indian Sociology, Vol.7-19.

5. Redfield, Robert, 'Tribe, Peasant and City' quoted in Das, N.K., Tribe Peasant Question in East India, in Karna, M.N (ed.), Peasantry in Rural Protest (Shillong: Department of Sociology, North East Hill University).

Bailey, F.G., Tribe, Caste and Nation (Manchester University Press).

6. Beteille, Andre, Six Essays in Comparative Sociology (Delhi: Oxford University Press,

7. Sinha, S.C, 'Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continuum in Central India', Man in India, 45: 57-83, 1965.

8. Jay, Edward, 'A Comparison of Tribal and Peasant Villages in India', Journal of the Indian Anthropological Society, 9: 39-70, 1974.

9. Engels, Frederick, The Peasant War in Germany (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), p.16.

DIFFERENTIATION OF PEASANTRY

Peasants do not constitute a homogeneous category largely because of its class character. For example, Dalip, S. Swami, on the basis of various criteria, differentiate peasantry into poor, middle and well-to-do categories.¹⁰ Aswani Saith and Ajay Tankha in their study of a western U.P village have arranged the peasantry into rich, middle and poor peasants.¹¹

The differentiation of peasantry into middle peasants, wage labourers and poor peasants has been suggested by P. Bardhan. He rejects the view of Asok Rudra who considers peasants as one class.¹² Utsa Patnaik also differs from Asok Rudra. She differentiates peasantry into three broad categories, namely, rich, middle and poor peasants. According to Patnaik rich peasants are economically dominant, middle peasants are self-sufficient and poor peasants are wage labourers.¹³

John Harris classified peasantry as follows:

1. Rich peasants, 2. independent middle peasants and
3. poor peasants.

10. Swamy, Dalip, 'Differentiation of Peasantry', Economic and Political Weekly(EPW), Vol.XI, No.50, Dec 1, 1976.

11. Saith, Aswani and Tankha, Ajay, 'Agrarian Tension and Differentiation of Peasantry - A Study of Western U.P.', EPW, Vol.VII, No.14, April 1972.

12. Bardhan, P., 'On Class Relations in India', EPW, Vol.XIV, No.19, 1979.

13. Patnaik, Utsa, 'Class Differentiation Within Peasantry: An Approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture', EPW, Vol.XI, No.39, 1976. Review of Agriculture.

According to Harris rich peasants are those who employ labourers but depend to a greater extent on family labour. The middle peasants are those who depend on others and also go for wages. The poor peasants are fully dependent on wage labour.¹⁴ Nirmal Kumar Chandra¹⁵ has taken the population as basic unit to identify agrarian classes and peasantry.

Joan Mencher differentiates peasantry in the categories of (1) the landless poor peasants, (2) middle peasants, (3) rich peasants, and (4) intermediary class of large landlords. Poor and middle peasants, according to Mencher, constitute the class of peasants.¹⁶

However, Beteille advocates that in India hierarchy and social stratification has been formed on the basis of caste and, therefore, status determines the kind of work one does. The caste system sharpened the distinction between those who worked and those for whom others worked. On the basis of ownership, control and use of land, Beteille arranges Indian agricultural population into three basic categories as follows:

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14. Harris, Joan, 'Why People Remain in Rural South India', Social Scientist, Vol. VIII, 1979, pp.20-47.
 15. Chandra, Nirmal Kumar, 'Agrarian Transition in India', Frontier, Vol.VII, 29, 1975-76.
 16. Mencher, Joan, P., 'Problems in Analysing Rural Class Structure', EPW, Vol. IX, No.35, 1974, pp.1495-1503.

1. Non-cultivating owners and tenure holders,
2. owner cultivators, and share croppers, and
3. agrarian labourers.

Beteille argues that the total population belonging to the class owner-cultivators in strict sense constitutes the Indian peasantry looking like a homogeneous category.¹⁷

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

The potential of political mobilization among the peasants has been a moot point both among scholars and political activists.

Marx considered peasantry, especially the French peasantry after the French Revolution of 1848, as devoid of proper organisation and communication.¹⁸ He thought that peasantry would join the industrial proletariat in the latter struggle against bourgeoisie. But after French Revolution he criticized the peasantry and named it petti bourgeoisie. He described peasantry as the representative of barbarism in the midst of civilization.¹⁹

This perception of Marx, which was partial, in the sense that it was formulated on the basis of the single case experience of

17. Beteille, Andre, Study in Agrarian Social Structure(Oxford Uni. Press, 1974), p.67 and pp.117-141.

18. Marx, Karl, 'Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,' Select-ed Works, Vol.1,(Moscow: 1977, Fourth Printing), pp.167-178.

19. Marx, Karl, The Class Struggle in France(1940-50),(London:1934), pp.33-131.

the French Revolution of 1848, was challenged by the latter developments. Active participation by the peasantry in the revolutionary activities in China and other third-world countries showed that peasants are a political force to reckon with.

Engels writes: "The agricultural proletariat, the farm labourers.....is also the class nearest to the industrial workers of the towns, which shares their living condition and is steeped even more in misery than they. To galvanise and draw into the movement this class.....is the immediate and most urgent task of German labour movement".²⁰

However, Barrington Moore, in his book, 'Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy' explains the various political roles played by the upper class and the peasantry in the transformation of society from agrarian societies to modern industrial ones. The first root through the great revolutions and civil wars, according to him, led to the combination of capitalism in western democracy. Eg. U.K., France, and America. In England, rural and industrial capitalism wiped out the peasants. According to him, peasantry lacked the revolutionary potential while in France a substantial contribution to the French Revolution was made by peasantry. In India neither a capitalist revolution from above or below nor a peasant revolution leading to communism has occurred.²¹

20. Engels, The Peasant War in Germany, (Moscow: Vth Printing, 1979), p.16.

21. Moor, Barrington, Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy: and Peasant Working of Modern World (Penguin, 1967).

D.N.Dhanagre rejects the view of Moore particularly in regard to Indian situation.²²

Lenin also distinguishes poor peasants from the middle peasants and describes that the internal differentiation within the peasantry is caused by the penetration of capitalism in agriculture. He expresses doubt about the middle peasantry as a revolutionary class.²³ According to Mao poor peasant (tenant peasant) is more revolutionary than the middle peasant.²⁴ Fanon observes that "In colonial countries, the peasants alone are revolutionary for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasants outside the class system is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence plays, for him there is no compromise".²⁵

THE MIDDLE PEASANT THESIS

Potentiality of peasantry for revolutionary political mobilization has also been interpreted by various scholars. Some

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22. Dhanagre, D.N, Peasant Movements in India, 1920-1950, (Delhi: Oxford Uni. Press, 1983), p.5.
 23. Lenin, V.I., 'The Development of Capitalism in Russia', Collected Works III (Moscow: 1960), pp.70-185.
 24. Mao Tse Tung, Selected Works, Vol. I, Second Printing, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1967), pp.14-20.
 25. Fanon, F.; The Socialist Register, 1969.

of them have argued that the middle peasants possess greater capability for political mobilization. This middle peasant thesis has been advocated by Hamza Alavi and Eric Wolf. Hamza Alavi observes that the middle peasant is independent from feudal bond and, therefore, he is quite able to lead revolution while the poor peasant is not able to lead revolution due to certain societal bonds.²⁶

However, the middle peasant thesis has been criticised by many scholars such as Arvind Narain Das, D.N.Dhanagre and Kathleen Gaugh. According to them self-sufficiency itself prevents the middle peasantry from leading a revolution as they remain isolated from other sections of peasantry.²⁷

Political mobilization has been witnessed during last many years in India in general and in Bihar in particular. It can be perceived in a meaningful way only if we consider it in the light of the long established structure of inequality. In this work an attempt has been made to assess the nature of changes in agrarian social structure due to various factors such as Agrarian reforms, Green Revolutions and political mobilizations.

26. Alvi, Hamza, 'Peasants and Revolution' in Miliband, R. (ed.) The Socialist Register, 1965, (London), pp. 244-251.

Wolf, Eric, 'On Peasant Rebellions,' International Social Science Journal, Vol. 21, 1969.

27. Das, A.N., Agrarian Unrest and Socio-economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980, (N. Delhi: Manohar, 1983), p. 15.

Gough, Kathleen, 'Indian Peasant Uprising', in Desai, A.R. (ed.) Peasant Movements in India, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1978).

Bihar is one of the most backward States of India whose economy is predominantly agrarian. Despite the fact that it was the first State in India to enact land reform laws, it proved to be the area where the progressive steps towards land ~~to~~ to the tiller defeated most successfully. Although it has not been the pocket of green revolution, the countrysides of Bihar has been badly affected by the negative consequences of green revolution. Large scale rural violence which started taking place after 1960 largely because of the changes brought about in the production technology.

The flaming fields of Bihar is also a fertile land for political mobilization. It has the long historical tradition of peasant movements. Gandhi's Champaran movement, activity of Kisan Sabha and J.P.'s movement are few examples.

The present work is divided into four chapters dealing with different dimensions of agrarian society of India with special reference to Bihar.

In the first Chapter we shall discuss a brief summary of the agrarian relation in India during British period with special reference to Bihar. The main objective of three land settlements was to serve the economic and political interests of imperialist bourgeoisie and remove the time stagnancy in agricultural production prevailing since the Mughal period. To subjugate the peasantry to unbearable taxes and to squeeze and fleece them was found to be the main strategy of land tenure system during the Mughal and British

periods. In the second part of this chapter we will discuss agrarian classes in the post independence period.

In the second chapter we shall discuss various measures taken with a view to agrarian reforms in different States of India in general and in Bihar in particular. Apart from this an attempt should be made to analyse the role of Bhoodan, Gramdan and Sampatidan movements.

In the third Chapter we will discuss the social impacts of green revolution in terms of agricultural development and rural transformation.

The fourth Chapter will deal with a brief history of peasant movements, including its nature, causes and consequences.

Lastly, we will draw conclusions of our discussion. We will delimit our discussion by excluding tribal areas from our purview, because these areas are different from plains not only in topography and ecology but also in social relations.

This work is largely based upon secondary sources.

CHAPTER I

AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

THE COLONIAL PERIOD

We have analysed in this chapter the agrarian economy and its relation with political system during colonial period with special reference to Bihar. Before analysing the colonial land policy, it will be better to explain some of the main characteristics of the agrarian situation in the pre-British period.

The absence of a definite private ownership over land in the Mughal period can be distinguished from the classical feudalism of Europe and British India. The agrarian system during this period was not production oriented but it was tax-oriented. The peasantry was forced to meet the needs and demands of the ruling sovereign, the army and the landed aristocracy. Moreland says that the tax was paid by the peasantry for maintaining both the ruling sovereign and the army.¹ During this period cultivators were subjected to unbearable tax demands from an elaborately organised revenue administration. Mughals were squeezing the maximum surplus from them and thereby preventing the development of the productive forces.² The political system of this period

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1. Moreland, W.H., Agrarian System of Moslim India, (Delhi: 1968), p.xi.
 2. Jacob, T.G., India: Development and Deprivation - Neo Colonial Transformation of the Country in a Historical Perspective, (New Delhi: Mass Line Press, 1986), pp.22-28.

was marked by an incessant series of local wars, and the situation has been described by some scholars who characterise the Indian state as a "conquest state" or a "military feudalism".³

The Land Tenure Systems

The introduction of land revenue settlement by the British colonial state aimed at retaining the time-old stagnancy.⁴ Another purpose was to fleece and squeeze the peasantry. These were the common characteristics of the agrarian system under Mughal and British periods.

In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century three basic land revenue systems were introduced: the zamindari system known as permanent settlement, the ryotwari system and the mahalwari system. The main objective of the land settlement was to increase the Company's revenue, and secondly it was to increase agricultural production and bring about change in land relations among various classes.⁵

The mahalwari system, known as joint or common ownership of land, was introduced in the United Provinces except Oudh, Punjab, and Central Provinces(excluding Berar). This system vested proprietary rights over land with village communities and

3. *ibid*, p.22.

4. *ibid*.

5. Dhanagre, D.N., Peasant Movement in India 1920-1950, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).

land was cultivated on a co-sharing basis.' But R.Mukherjee observed that there was a trend towards individual assessment and in practice the co-proprietors were treated as individual proprietors.⁶ Baden Powell also confirms the landed spirit of individual in mahalwari system.⁷ Evaluating the mahalwari system Dhanagre writes: "in so far as agrarian relations and social organisation is concerned, the variety of tenure made very little or no difference since the classes of dominant substantial landlords and cultivating peasants had begun to appear on the scene in these regions as well."⁸

The ryotwari system was first introduced in Bombay, Madras, Berar and Assam. In this system right of tenure was conferred on individual basis in which each individual occupant held land directly from the government and there was no intermediary between the state and cultivator. The right to sell and gift the land was recognised.⁹ The ryot was treated as tenant and he was responsible for paying revenue directly to the state

6. Mukherjee, R., 'Land Problem in India', quoted in P.A and Merchant, K.J., Our Economic Problem, (Bombay: 1959), p.222.

7. See Dhanagre, D.N., op cit., p.34.

8. ibid.

9. Se, Bhowani, Evolution of Agrarian Relation in India, (New Delhi: P.P.H., 1962), p.66.

treasury. Unless he failed to pay his revenue he could not be evicted.¹⁰ But the rates of revenue was flexible and subject to revision periodically.

Socio-Economic Consequences of the British Policy of Land Tenure Systems

At every subsequent settlement or revision, assessment invariably went up by between 25 and 60 per cent on an average, depending upon factors such as soil quality, yield improvement made in land plots and so on. The peasant in the zamindari system did not enjoy the right to mortgage, sell or gift the land. Economic condition of the peasants was not better also in ryotwari system. Colonial set-up ruined them both economically and physically.¹¹ Analysing the consequences of the British rule in ryotwari area R.C.Dutt¹² writes: "Nature set a limit which the cultivators had not obtained from the moderation of their rulers. Population decreased in Bombay, and still more in the central provinces, miles of cultivated land became waste. Jungle drew on home steads, wheat lands and rice lands."

10. Cited in Dhanagre, D.N., op cit., p.33.

11. Sen, B., op cit, p.67.

12. Quoted in Sen, B. op cit.

Different categorisation of tenants such as 'protected', 'occupancy', 'ordinary', and 'share-croper' emerged in the ryotwari system. This exploded the myth of 'peasant proprietorship' under the ryotwari system¹³ as a viable alternative to the zamindari system. Auckland Colvin, in his Minutes of the Deccan Riots Enquiry Report, writes, "It promises not to be ryotwari but a mahalwari system and nobody wants that after having got rid of zamindari, the land should gradually pass into the hands of village Shylocks, greedy Baniyas and money lenders or accumulate in a few resourceful and cunning individuals."¹⁴

The permanent settlement introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793 in Bengal was the backdrop against which the agrarian system in Bihar remained in existence till 1950 when the Bihar land reform Act was enacted. This settlement confirmed proprietary rights over the land with zamindars who were only conscious of their own interests and hardly took any interest in improvement in agriculture.

The main purpose of the introduction of this settlement was to gear up the economy in the interest of imperialist bourgeoisie and to create a class of collaborators, i.e., the Indian

13. *ibid*, p.68. also see
Dharma Kumar, Land and Caste in South India, (Cambridge, 1965)
pp.21-33.

14. Quoted in Das, A.N., Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1988), p.201.

landlords to squeeze the maximum surplus from agriculture.¹⁵ The peasantry was exploited by the British in alliance with the Indian landlords in the form of eviction and exorbitant rent.¹⁶ This situation, marked by the absence of any legal limits on levy imposed upon peasantry caused immense misery for them. The traditional industries further increased the pressure on cultivable land with the result that there was no dearth of tenants willing to till the soil on any outrageous conditions. The landlord could change the tenants at will, because there was no adequate provision for safeguarding the interests of cultivators.¹⁷ After the enactment of settlement, millions of peasants were evicted within a very short period. On the plea that such laws were essential to meet economic and non economic demands of zamindars.¹⁸ In short, we can say that the whole structure shaped the feudal agrarian economy of Bihar.

State was considered as the supreme authority on land in both the systems. There was no much difference in the economic

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15. See, Se, B., op cit, And also see Mitra Manoshi, Agrarian Social Structure continuity and Change in Bihar 1786-1820(New Delhi: 1985), p.14.
 16. Guha, Ranjeet, A Rule of Private Property in Bengal, Paris, 1963, also see, T.G.Jacob, op cit, p.45.
 17. Ray, S.C., Land Revenue Administration in India, (Calcutta), pp.38 - 39.
 18. Jacob, T.G., op cit, p.45.

conditions of peasantry. In ryotwari system, it was the revenue authorities who enforced the collection of revenue at an exorbitant rate. The British government brought in three major changes in the existing land relations.¹⁹ Firstly, the decay of all the remnants of the old village communities has been found. The direct producers lost their traditional security without gaining any new one. Secondly, in emerging land relations, the old pre-British Asiatic system disappeared, while the essence of the new land system remained feudal. Thirdly, they transformed the land into a commodity. In colonial period, commercial crops were augmented by the Britishers at the cost of food crops. The farmers were compelled to cultivate commercial crops (like sesamum, linseed, groundnut, castor seed, other oil seeds, sugar cane, tea, coffee, tobacco, cotton, jute, indigo and opium). These crops were exported by the British traders either in raw or semi-processed form to make profits.²⁰ Following Marx's analysis, Rajni Palme Dutt, in India Today presents the picture of the stagnant Indian society which underwent a process of turbulence in the course of the imperial rule.²¹ These settlement did not lead to any break-

19. Sen, B., op cit, pp.77-79.

20. Jacob, T.G., op cit., p.49.

21. Quoted in Mohanty, M., 'Ideology and Strategy of the Communist Movement in India' (ed) Kenneth, K.D and Pantham, T., Political Thought in Modern India, (Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1986), p.239.

through in agriculture in British India. Between 1900 and 1940 the total area under all food crops registered an increase of 10.63% while the total area under all commercial crops increased by almost 36%. During the same period the value of product for all food crops decreased by 1% while the value of product for all food crops increased by 40%.²² Summing up the impact of land relation on agriculture, Daniel Thorner states: "This complex of legal, economic, and social relations uniquely typical of Indian countryside served to produce an effort which I should like to call that of a built-in 'depressor'. From the 1880's to the 1940's total output rose so slowly that it would not be too strong to speak of stagnation".²³

Various Legislations

Different Acts - Regulation III of 1794, Halftman Regulation VII of 1799, Regulation VIII of 1819, Regulation XII of 1817, Regulation I of 1819, Quanut Panjam Regulation V of 1812 and Regulation XI of 1822, introduced by the colonial state for dealing with tenant-landlords relationship, tilted in favour of zamindars or the class associated with the colonial state, against tenants and worsened the position of the tenants.²⁴ In fact all land legislations

22. Jacob, T.G., op cit, p.48.

23. Thorner, D., Agrarian Prospect in India (Delhi, 1956), pp.12-13.

24. Sinha, R.N., Bihar Tenantry (1783-1833), (Bombay: PPH, 1968), pp.104-121.

till 1841 was designed to serve the interests of the landlords,²⁵ and their main aim was to enable them to realize their interests to squeeze the peasantry.²⁶ The great majority of tenants, even after 50 years of legislation, remained quite as indigent and destitute as before.²⁷ Apart from them, the rent Act of 1859 and Act of 1885 was enacted by the colonial state to give some rights to Kisan. According to the Act of 1859, any tenant who had continuously held the same land for 12 years would be regarded as an occupancy tenant. But tenants faced dispossession because the landlords made the routine to change tenants within the stipulated time.²⁸ To consolidate position of tenants, the Act of 1885 declared the occupancy right as heritable, and accordingly the rule of succession was laid down. Without harming zamindars,²⁹ the Act hardly provide any relief to the tenant from the oppressive clutches of the landlords who suck the blood of their tenants through unjust demands.³⁰

25. Gupta, Rakesh, Peasant Struggles: A Case Study of Bihar, Ph.D Thesis, J.N.U., (New Delhi: 1978).

26. Ray, S.C., op. cit., p.43.

27. Sinha, R.N., op. cit., p.149.

28. Ojha, G., Land Problems and Land Reforms: A Study with Reference to Bihar, (New Delhi: Sultan Chand & Sons), p.35.

29. Gupta, R., op. cit., p.313.

30. Ojha, G., op. cit., p.35.

Based on the basic principles of the permanent settlement, the Act was the compulsory enforcement of the zamindars' obligations, new declarations of right and title, under such a declaratory legislation, an agrarian system developed in Bihar which was possessed of the worst elements of the permanent settlement and contained none of the redeeming features.³¹ The Act of 1859 was a feeble and half hearted measure and its weaknesses were exposed during the agrarian tensions.³²

The material basis for the differences in agrarian situation in proper Bihar and Bengal lies in the fact that the size of zamindar in Bihar was small in spite of the existence of mammoth estates like Darbhanga, Bettiah, Banaili, Dumraon. However, the presence of the small size of estates did not mean better management because they were inefficient, decadent, idlers, slothful, devoid of education and abilities and unable to play the role expected of them.³³

The Floud Commission³⁴ pointed out that between 1921 and 1931 there was 62% increase in the army of rent receivers. There was a wide gap between land revenue paid by actual tiller of the soil and the rent paid to the zamindar in Bengal. The pernicious

31. Das, A.N., op cit., p.24.

32. Chaudhury, R.B., The British Agrarian Policy in Eastern India, Bengal and Bihar (1859-80), (Patna: Janki Prakashan, 1980), p.12.

33. Das, A.N., op cit., p.26.

34. Quoted in Ojha, G., op cit., p.46.

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system of sub-infeudation - the patni system placed the army of intermediaries between the actual proprietor and the tenant in Bihar. Presenting data, G.Ojha³⁵ observes the presence of a large number of people as intermediaries who were living on income derived from landed property without making any productive effort. According to him, there were two classes of such intermediaries that held a grip on the economic and social status of the villages. One lived entirely on rent and may be called as pure renties. The other class was that of owner-cultivator who, owing to various reasons, leased out their land, or cultivated part of it through hired and family labour and part through sharecroppers.³⁶ This class had no traditional connections with the land.³⁷

Many of the zamindars marked by inability and incompetence, created a "highly ramified set of middlemen" for management of their estates, in turn, receiving from them proprietary share of profit. They did not involve themselves in the affairs of cultivation and confined themselves to the work of general inspection. The zamindar's participation in these affairs was regarded as highly derogatory on his rank. However, these middlemen or thikadars not only acquired degrees of rights on the land itself but also exploited poor peasantry leading to perennial sources of agrarian tension.³⁸

35. Ojha, G., op cit, p.47.

36. ibid.

37. Mitra, Manoshi., op cit., p.233.

38. Das, A.N., op cit., p.27.

The growing indebtedness of big zamindars such as the Rajah of Buxar, Bikram Jit Singh of Dumraon of Bhojpur, Darbhanga Raja and Raja Indernarain of Haveli Parnea to bankers and money lenders, resulted in alienation of their land.³⁹ However, such alienation of land occurred either through private transactions or through decrease of the Dwaani Adalat and continued till the abolition of zamindari. These zamindars were unable to extricate themselves from utter dependence on money lenders and bankers. Hence, evolution of land market and operation of usury capital became integral feature of zamindari in Bihar.⁴⁰

The sunset law was the result of the growing indebtedness of the zamindars and required that government revenue should be paid with unfailing punctuality by the fixed date before sunset. In Bihar, the Raja of Sheohar was victim of the sunset law.⁴¹ This phenomenon was examined by M.Mitra.⁴² The indebtedness of zamindars in Bihar was not due to insufficiency of their rental income in relation to revenue and cost of management, but was due to their extravagance on labour, dancing girls, ceremonies and entertainments. In case of Champaran, this has been examined

39. Mitra, Manoshi, op cit., pp.75-83 and for details see Report of Buchanan from various districts.

40. Das, A.N., op cit., pp.27-28.

41. Mishra, G., Agrarian Problems of Permanent Settlement: A Case Study of Champaran, (New Delhi: PPH, 1978), p.333.

42. Mitra, M., op cit., p.6.

by G.Mishra.⁴³

The settlement in Bihar did not lead to any break through in agriculture due to above mentioned facts. The agricultural sector as a whole remained stagnant,⁴⁴ and the expectations of the Britishers was frustrated. Apart from them, the tenants found little incentive to extend and develop cultivation due to lack of means and they found it senseless to produce for the parasitic landlord.

The phenomenon of land-market and also trends of deteriorating condition of large holdings have been observed in West Bengal⁴⁵ and Bihar⁴⁶ by scholars. Despite common⁴⁷ features such as increased population pressure on land, increased income from estates and favourable laws responsible for rising land price in Bihar and Bengal, three reasons⁴⁸ were responsible for the higher land price in Bihar as compared to Bengal. Firstly, the revenue demand in Bengal was higher than in Bihar. Secondly, through lease system, a 'legitimate' rich peasantry, i.e., Jotedar developed in Bengal whereas in Bihar such rich peasantry had come up owing to the economic process of commercia-

43. Mishra,G., op cit., p.6.

44. Mitra,M., op cit., p.45.
Mishra,G., op cit., p.305.

Ojha,G., op cit., p.45.

45. Bailey,F.G., Caste and the Economic Frontier(Manchester, 1957).

46. Mitra,M., op cit.

47. Chaudhury,B.B., 'Land Market in Eastern India ,1793-1940',
Indian Economic and Social History Review(IESHR), Vol.xi,
No. 1 and 2, New Delhi, 1975.

48. Das,A.N., op cit., p.34.

lisation remained, by and large, under tenants who had a very small degree of protection under the law of the permanent settlement. Thirdly, some canal system, in the southern districts, provided irrigation facilities that led to increase in agricultural output and income of zamindars. The improved irrigation facilities and improved commercialization of farming of this region provided material condition for Bhojpur peasant movement. The low level of political consciousness of peasantry in Bihar compared to Bengal and growing rate of population contributed to the value of landed property.⁴⁹

In brief, rent enhancement, unauthorised exactions, evictions and other kinds of oppression against the tenantry continued, more or less throughout the period.⁵⁰ The situation in 1930⁵¹ in Bihar was such that the relentless pressure of the zamindar and the zamindar's amla or agent defeated all efforts of the administration even to provide such limited relief as it thought fit to the oppressed tenantry. Patta regulations, Pargana, rates, institution of palwaris failed to produce any ameliorative effect on the conditions

49. *ibid*, p.35.

50. Sinha, R.N., *op cit.*, p.47.

51. Das, A.N., *op cit.*, pp.35-36.

of the tenantry,⁵² and this situation, marked by the absence of comprehensive records of tenants' right, in Champaran, resulted in reduction of ryots to the status of mere tenants at will.⁵³ This complete indifference to tenant's right resulted in agrarian tensions in rural Bihar.⁵⁴

Like any other State of Eastern India, the tenure system⁵⁵ in Bihar could be broadly classified into three categories: i) Tenures of permanent character. ii) Tenures created for a temporary period, and iii) Estates held directly by the Government. Tenures of permanent character was mainly confined to Tirhut, Patna, and Bhagalpur divisions and formed 99% of the total number of estates. Temporary settled estates and estates held by the government formed 0.5% and 0.6% of the total estates respectively. The owner's right in permanently settled estates was heritable and transferable with the right to sell, mortgage, gift and grant leases for the whole or any portion of it for a term of years or in perpetuity. Apart from them, the landlords possessed waste lands and the Gairmazarua aam such as Churgah, Tal (lands used by the village community.)⁵⁶ In short, the large number of areas were possessed

52. Gupta, R., op cit.

53. Mishra, G., op cit., p.158.

54. Chaudhury, R.B., op cit, p.175.

55. Ojha, G., op.cit., pp.36-38.

56. ibid, pp.38-39.

by the blood sucking and oppressive parasitic lot and in both the tenurial area, the position of tenant hardly improved.⁵⁷

Prior to the 1950s there had grown up in Bihar an intricately stratified system of relationship of people to land in the following way.⁵⁸

(i) The zamindar, legally a proprietor, but acting as an intermediary of the state in the collection of rent from tenants. The amount payable to the state was fixed in cash, in perpetuity and was supposed to represent 9/10th of what zamindars received in rent from the tenants.

(ii) The tenure holder - Primarily a person who has acquired from a proprietor or from another tenure holder a right to hold land for the purpose of collecting rents or bringing it under cultivation by establishing tenants on it,

(iii) The Occupancy Ryot: A rent paying, holder of land having the right of occupancy on the land held by him for the purpose of cultivating it by himself or by members of his family or by hired servants or with the aid of partners.

(iv) The non-occupancy ryots - A rent paying holder of land not having the right of occupancy on land temporarily in his possession.

57. Sinha, R.N., op cit., pp.79-103.

58. ibid.

(v) The under-ryot - A rent paying holder of land having temporary possession of a holding under ryot.

(vi) The Mazdoor - A wage labourer having no right on land.

The Bihar Tenantry Act of 1885 classified the tenants into three classes:

- (i) Occupancy ryots,
- (ii) Non-occupancy ryots, and
- (iii) under-ryots.

After all there are some special types of ryots such as Bhacli, Hai-hasila, Khurpas, Bargait and Sikmis were scattered throughout the districts of Bihar.⁵⁹

The sharing of agricultural surplus was the most important issue in the control over land vest by the settlement. The land revenue system as prevalent in Bihar was notable for its diversity in different districts. The mode of collection of rent⁶⁰ from the tenants differs from district to district and from time to time but peasants⁶¹ payment for the use of land remains the principal mode of maintenance, by the landlord, of this control over land. The landlords had benefited from extension of cultivation, shared income from fisheries, orchards and pastures.⁶²

59. See Ojha, G., op cit., pp.63-67.

60. ibid, p.41.

61. Das, A.N., op cit, p.36.

62. Mishra, G.N., (ed.) Land Reform in Bihar, (Patna, 1974), p.60.

B.Sen⁶³ has described three broad categories of rent in Bihar. 1. Labour rent 2. Produce rent 3. Money rent. The most vicious form of rent exaction through primary tenancy showed itself in produce rent or Bhaoli system. Payment in kind was the most significant form of transfer of surplus from the cultivator to the landlord. This system was mainly concentrated in South Bihar, while in Champaran and in northern Tirhut it was different from that of South Bihar.

Money rent did exist in almost all northern districts of Bihar, particularly in Purnea. It was supposed to have some flexibility compared to the produce rent system. In Purnea, the money rent prevailed but it was not indicative of any positive economic trends and consolidated rich peasants in a backward economy.⁶⁴ Buchanan and Cole Brook have mentioned that higher caste in Purnea paid lower rent than the lower ones.⁶⁵ The superior ryots, known as ashraf ryots in Bihar were dishonest, unscrupulous set of persons who exploited the general body of cultivators.⁶⁶

The agricultural surplus product can be classified in three different ways: (i) In the form of products, (ii) in the form of work (labour services), (iii) and in the form of money

63. Sen, B., Indian Land Systems and Land Reforms, (Delhi: 1955), p.79.

64. *ibid*, pp.213-219.

65. Ojha, G., *op cit.*, p.43.

66. Sinha, R.N., *op cit.*, p.146 and pp.77-98.

exchange value. The first two forms are found in pre-capitalist society while the last form is found in capitalist society. The transitional economy characterised by the semi-feudal or semi-capitalist mode of production possesses all the three forms. Such was the case found in Bihar during the zamindari period.⁶⁷

Through the tenancy Act of 1885, the tenant had to pay rent in cash, If they failed to pay the required rent, the tenants' land were taken away by landlord (known as Bakasht land). The poor peasantry as unregistered share-croppers cultivated their own land which had become the Bakshat lands. This caused a great source of agrarian tension in rural Bihar.⁶⁸ The Bakasht disputes, that caused peasant struggles in Bihar, were the result of deprivation of occupancy ryots by the landlords.⁶⁹

Thus, the above mentioned kind of uneven distribution of land, various kinds of payments in three forms of services and squeezing of the peasantry by an oppressive and blood sucking parasitic lot, deterioration in agricultural production and plundering of Bihar prepared the framework under which the agrarian relations and economy of Bihar developed till the abolition of the zamindari system and other measures adopted by the government of India after 1947.

67. Das, A.N., op cit., pp.42-43.

68. ibid, p.43.

69. Gupta, Rakesh, Peasant Struggle: A Case Study of Bihar, Ph.D Thesis, J.N.U., (New Delhi, 1978), p.312.

PEASANTRY AND AGRARIAN CLASSES IN THE
POST-INDEPENDENT INDIA

The analysis of agrarian social structure and the conceptualization of class includes a number of related theoretical and methodological issues which in turn arise from different theoretical and methodological and ideological frameworks.

This is evident from the fact that there is no unanimity among scholars as to the definition of class itself. The great divide exists not only between Marxists and non Marxists but also amongst themselves. The problem of identifying classes is doubly complex in India which exhibits a co-existence of more than one mode of production relation in her agrarian economy.

Taking some basic factors like income obtained from the soil, nature of rights in land and degree of participation in cultivation into account for the classification of agrarian class structure in India, Daniel Thorner classifies the agrarian class into proprietors, working peasants and agricultural labourers and gives them Indian names of Malik, Kisan and Mazdoor. The proprietors or Maliks are those whose main income is derived from the share in the produce of land in the form of rent. He further classifies Maliks into absentee landlords and small proprietors. The absentee landlords possess land in more than one village and do not personally participate in agricultural activities. The small proprietors reside where they possess the land. But both small proprietors and

absentee landlords want to increase the rent and narrow down the wages.⁷⁰

The labourers or the Mazdoor, according to Thorner, are those whose family earning is derived from wages by way of working on others' land. In fact the differences between the poorest croppers, tenants at will and Mazdoor is blurred because they all have to work on others' land for their earnings. Kisan or working peasants, according to Thorner comes in between the classes of Malik and Mazdoor. As far as their customary right in holding is concerned, they are inferior to Malik and Superior to Mazdoors.

Thorner says that Malik generally comes from the upper castes, the Kisan from peasant castes and Mazdoor from scheduled castes. They are differentiated in terms of life style and standard of living.

Andre Beteille advocated similar arguments regarding differentiation of the agrarian classes.⁷¹ D.N.Dhanagre proposes a five-fold classification of Indian agrarian classes and its subdivisions into different sub-classes.⁷² This classification is

70. Thorner, Daniel, The Agrarian Prospects in India, (Delhi:1956), pp.4-6.

71. Beteille, Andre, Studies in Agrarian Social Structure, op cit., pp.62-72.

72. Dhanagre, D.N., op cit., p.15.

as follows:

1. Land-lords: big landlords.
2. Rich peasants - (a) Rich landlords
(b) Rich Peasants

who possesses substantial holdings have secured occupancy rights and pay some rent to their landlords

3. Middle Peasants: (a) Self-sufficient land owners of medium size holdings. (b) This includes those tenants who have substantial holdings but less than what Dhanagre himself calls 'Rich Peasants', but pay high rent than the rich tenant.

4. Poor peasants: (a) Small land owners but not self-sufficient (b) who have small holdings with same tenurial security. (c) Tenants at will or share-croppers.

5. Landless labourers.

Apart from these two scholars, some others including Marxists and non Marxists in different parts of the country have made the classification of agrarian classes in their own ways.

These scholars are Joan Mencher, Nirmal Chandra, Utsa Patnaik, Ashok Rudra, Pranab Bardhan, Pradhan Prasad and John Harrish.

Joan Mencher⁷³ classifies agrarian classes into six categories.

73. Mencher, Joan, P. ; 'Problems in Analysing Rural Class Structure', EPW, IX, 1974, 35, pp.1495-1503.

1. The Indeterminate Class of Large Land Holders: Those who possess more than 30 acres of land. But it is difficult to say whether they are capitalist or feudal.
2. Rich Farmers, Capitalist Farmers and Traditional Landlords:

This class possess 15 to 30 acres of land. However, this class is further sub-divided into (a) Rich Farmers: those who give a very small holding to the share cropper and cultivate rest of their holdings through hired labour. These farmers, apart from doing work, personally participate in the actual cultivation.

(b) Capitalist Farmers: They do not participate in physical work of cultivation.

(c) Traditional Landlords: They generally rent out their all lands to various kinds of sharecroppers and only receive the share.

(d) Rich Farmers: Those who possess land holdings between 7.5 to 15 acres. These farmers are self-sufficient.
4. Middle Peasants: They are self-sufficient and do not depend on others for labour force. They generally have 2.5 acres of land.
5. Poor Peasants: They possess 1 to 2.5 acres of land and sometimes go for day labour.
6. The Landless: They are dependent on others for their livelihood and work on others' farms in various forms such as day labourer, attached labourer or share cropper.

On the basis of above classification of classes in agrarian society of India, we can say that Mencher has taken the size of land holdings and degree of physical work done in the

process of cultivation as the criteria for identifying social classes. Nirmal Chandra, on the other hand, takes the income, whether coming out of land or other sources, as the basis for identification of classes in the villages of Burdhan district of West Bengal. He classifies village population into two broad categories of those who give land on rent or hire wage workers, on the one hand, and the poor peasants and agricultural labourers, on the other.⁷⁴

The upper class families are not dependent on income comes out of agriculture. This class is divided into different sub-categories: the landlords, Jotedars, rich peasants and middle peasants. The landlords are dependent mainly on the income which they receive in the form of rent. One feature of Jotedar is that they function in the capitalist manner. The rich peasants sometimes do physical work (mainly managerial work) but generally depend on others for labour. The middle peasants are dependent on their family labour but sometimes they need the help of outsiders.

According to Utsa Patnaik, the size of landholding is not the sufficient criterion to determine the class position in rural society. According to her "labour exploitation criterion"

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

must be used for this purpose.⁷⁵

Utsa Patnaik subdivided the classes of landlords, rich peasants and poor peasants into two sub-categories:

Economic Class	Charecteristics
1) Landlords	
(a) Capitalist	Labour hiring greater than rent
(b) Feudal	Labour hiring almost as high as rent
2) Rich peasants	
(a) Proto bourgeois	Labour hiring greater than rent
(b) Proto Feudal	Labour hiring almost as high as rent
3) Poor peasants	
(a) Agricultural labourer holding land	Hiring out greater than rent payment
(b) Petty tenants	Hiring out almost as high as rent payment
4) Full time labourers	Hiring out only form, no rent payment.

Landlords: Includes capitalist and feudal. The members of this class do not do physical work. They may do managerial or superiory work.

75. Patnaik, Utsa, 'Class Differentiation within the Peasantry: An Approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture', EPW, XI 39, 1976, pp. 82-101.

The Rich Peasants : They are dependent on wage labour because their source from land compell them to be dependent on family and outside labour force.

The Middle Peasants: They are economically self-sufficient. They do not go to work for others.

The Poor Peasants: Although they possess small pieces of land, they work for others as labourers for their livelihood.

Full-time Labourers: They do not have any land and they go to work in the farms of others for their livelihood.

Ashok Rudra strongly negated the above characterisation of agrarian classes and he divides the Indian agricultural society into two broad categories, namely, the big landlords and agricultural labourers. The class of agricultural labourers include in itself the landed, the landless and the poor peasants who do not hire wage labourers.

Rudra negates the classification of agrarian classes on the basis of the degree of participation in the manual work. Because, he says, in some parts of the country even those who cannot be included in the category of landlords do not do manual work such as ploughing because of their attached prestige or social status. There are certain regions such as Punjab where even women do participate in manual work.

The class of big landlords, according to Rudra "ruling class in Indian agriculture"⁷⁶, is semi-feudal and semi-capitalist in character. He argues that those who falls outside of these categories do not form a class because although there are contradictions within themselves, there is a lack of class contradiction between any of the two classes: though there may be subsidiary contradictions.

Pranab Bardhan argues with Rudra on the level of contradiction. He feels that the real contradiction exists in between the big landlords and labourers. But at the same time he expresses his disagreement with Rudra primarily because he (Rudra) does not accept middle peasants as a separate class. Pranab Bardhan believes that the class of middle peasant is a distinct class for it neither needs wage labour nor goes for hiring of labour.⁷⁷

However, another classification of agrarian classes has been described by Pradhan.H.Prasad.⁷⁸ He divides the

76. Rudra, Ashok., 'Class Relation in Indian Agriculture', EPW, 1978, pp.998-1003.

77. Bardhan, P., 'On Class Relations in Indian Agriculture', EPW, XIV, 19, 1979, pp.857-860.

78. Pradhan Prasad, H., 'Caste and Class in Bihar', EPW, No.27, Feb 1979.

agrarian society of northern India into three broad categories:

1. Top Peasantry (Landlords and rich farmers)
2. Middle and Poor Peasants
3. Agricultural Labourers.

According to him top peasants consider it below their dignity to work physically even on their own farms. They supply only non-manual labour to agriculture. The men and women of middle and poor middle peasantry do manual work on their own farms, but consider it below their dignity to work for others as labourers. While the middle peasantry hire the agricultural labourers, the poor middle do not hire such labour. A sizeable number of agricultural labourers have small operational holdings. Pradhan further says that top peasantry comes from upper caste Hindus who enjoy a traditionally superior status among Hindu castes. The poor and middle peasantry are generally middle caste Hindus (backward castes). Agricultural labourers are drawn mostly from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

John Harris classifies agrarian society into four classes on the basis of his field study of Tamil Nadu. For the identification of classes, according to him the criteria should be based on the "size of production resources (including land) in relation to household requirements and labour

relations".⁷⁹ These classes are as follows:

1. Capitalist farmers: Those who possess capital four times more than their basic livelihood.
2. Rich Peasants: They employ permanent labourers, but partially depend on their own family members for labour force.
3. Independent Middle Peasant: Mainly dependent on family labour, but sometimes work for others.
4. Poor Peasants: Marginal farmers and agricultural workers comes in this class. They go for the wages on others' farms.

Summing up, we can say that the size of landholdings, the income which comes out of it and, the degree of participation in cultivation are the criteria for the identification of an agrarian class. Mainly three classes has been identified - class of landlords, of peasants and of agricultural workers. Each class is not a homogeneous whole. Various categories and sub-categories has been identified by many scholars within each of these classes. The independent existence of the middle peasantry cannot be challenged.

On the basis of the whole discussion, we can see that the formulation, 'a class', in the agrarian society of India can be

79. Harris, John, 'Why Poor People Remain Poor In Rural South India', Social Scientist, (Trivandrum), VIII, 1979, p.1,20, 47.

conceived as arising from the unequal relationship with the means of production and use of land. The relationship between the two classes is not necessarily antagonistic in nature because of the overlapping nature of the characteristics of each class and of existential structure of agrarian society.

It is true that the permanent settlement was permanently unsettled in Bihar. The zamindari system was abolished largely due to the efforts of K.B.Sahay, Swami, S.Saraswati and some peasant movements. But the effect of this measure was completely negative in the case of Bihar. Other measures such as 'Bhoodan' and 'Gramdan' and the 'green revolution' have also followed the same direction. Increased pauperization of big zamindars and the emergence of economically strong and powerful caste peasants are effects of these measures. But the position of lower caste agricultural workers has not improved significantly.

CHAPTER II

AGRARIAN REFORMS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Why land reforms?

Land reforms does not mean the principle of economic development only, they imply social change as well. Directed by these two objectives, land reforms in India were initially appeared to be one of the most revolutionary steps towards bridging the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' and also giving an impetus to temper of economic development.

The national movement leaders realized that the real cause of this unsatisfactory state of affairs in the field of agriculture was the presence of intermediaries, of their non cultivating nature, whose¹ main duty was to facilitate the siphoning off the maximum possible surplus into the coffers of the imperialist bourgeoisie mainly concentrated outside the country during colonial period. The intensity of anti-feudal struggle made the situation impossible for new rural to support the feudal elements.²

Various committees had been set up in the connection

1. Jacob, T.G; India- Development and Deprivation: Neocolonial Transformation of the country in a historical perspective, (New Delhi: Mass Line Press, 1986), p.92.

2. *ibid*, p.126.

of land reforms. Committee on agrarian reforms headed by Nehru in 1947 and another by T.C.Kumarpa in 1948 were set up by the government of India.³ The Committee recommended the abolition of zamindari and emphasised on the "land to the tiller". The economic sub-committee⁴ constituted by the Congress party in 1950, submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister and Pradesh Congress Committee in the same year. After 1950 almost all States made an attempt for laws regarding land reforms, laws and regulations. There are four kinds of proposals put forward by the committees.

1. Abolition of zamindari
2. Fixation of ceiling on the size of landholding
3. Tenancy reforms
4. Reorganization of agriculture.

The first phase of land reforms was concerned with the abolition of zamindari system. The main objective of this was to eliminate intermediaries' interests and to bring cultivators into direct contact with the state.

As we know, the land reforms was not a central subject, but a State subject. The clever and resourceful

3. Bettelheim, Charles; Indian Independence, translated from French by W.A.Coswol (London: 1968), p.180.
4. *ibid*, pp.181-82.

landlords and zamindars very effectively escaped by dividing their holdings on the paper among their relatives and family members. The powerful zamindars could not be affected because they forcibly evicted the tenants and brought their land under personal cultivation. They were provided a large amount of compensation. Even they retained all the good cultivating lands.⁵ According to the Planning Commission,⁶ the compensation to be paid for intermediaries amounted to about Rs.615 crores. Bihar, UP, West Bengal and Rajasthan accounted for 83 percent of total compensation.

The legislation passed by several State governments took some years to be implemented. In the case of Bihar it took 5 years and more or less the same thing happened in the case of Uttar Pradesh. During the time span between the enactment and enforcement, the zamindars managed to occupy their tenanted land. The big zamindars and landlords delayed the implementation through the court. In 1952 Zamindari Abolition Act was passed by Rajasthan legislature. The same thing happened in almost all States.⁷

5. Kctovsky; Agrarian Reforms in India, translated from Russian by K. Jhamkin, (Moscow, 1964), pp.46-50.

6. Quoted in Wadia, P.A. and Merchant, K.K., Our Economic Problems, (Bombay, 1949), pp.295-96.

7. Thorner, Daniel; Agrarian Prospects in India, (Delhi: 1956), pp.56-117.

The zamindari abolition legislation has permitted the zamindars to retain Sir and Khudakast land supposed to be under their personal cultivation though many of them had never touched a plough. Two millions of zamindars in Uttar Pradesh has taken the advantage of this provision. New landlords have replaced the former zamindars.⁸ Daniel Thorner also described that UP Zamindari Abolition Act has provided for a new hierarchy of tenure holders in the place of the old one, but the two are similar. The zamindars have disappeared, but the same persons have been recognised as landholders.⁹

In most of the land reform legislations, land under personal cultivation was exempted from the law.¹⁰ This loophole in the legislation enabled many of the former intermediaries to keep large areas of land under their control by just stating that it is under their personal cultivation. They began to rent out.¹¹ In State of U.P, according to Amir Khusro, owing to loose definition of personal cultivation and the virtual no existence of limits on resumption of lands, _____ were acquired by

8. Wadia, P.A. and, Merchant, K.T; op cit, pp.295-96.

9. Thorner, Daniel, op cit., pp.1-27.

10. Jacob.T.G; op cit., p.10.

11. Khusro, A.M; 'On Land Reforms', Desai A.R; (ed.) Rural Sociology in India (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1978), p.441.

zamindars who came to be called 'bhoomidars',¹² V.V.Kalhatkar and S.B.Mahabal, in their study of Baroda district, point out that most of the cases of the termination of tenancy in the years 1949-50 to 1953-57 arose out of the demand for the land by the landlords for personal cultivation.¹³

In ryotwari areas, these reformative measures already affected the peasantry because even in total area the money-lender clique emerged and achieved the same status of zamindars. The abolition of intermediaries was an unqualified success, but it did not result in any drastic change in the agricultural sector because the peasants were still subject to predatory exploitation with only a change in form.¹⁴

Tenancy Reforms

The main objective of the tenancy act was to serve the right of occupancy to the tenants and to prevent the eviction from their fixed plots and to fix maximum rates of rent payable. The legislation also provided the tenants rights under certain conditions to acquire ownership of their plots.¹⁵

12. Kalhatkar, V.V and Mahabal, S.B; 'Impact of Land Reforms in Baroda District', in Desai, A.R(ed.); op cit., p.428.

13. ibid.

14. Jacob, T.G; op cit., pp.10-11.

15. Kotovsky; op cit., p.128.

A non-official inquiry into the working of the Bombay Tenancy Act came to the conclusion that the Act did not exist.¹⁶ According to Kotovsky, a large number of sharecroppers were recognised (legally) as tenants. In some States, tenants could not get the permanent heritable occupancy right.¹⁷

These Acts, instead of giving occupancy right to the tenants, became sources of their eviction. A.M.Khusro¹⁸ says that 45.39 retained their protected status out of every 100 protected tenants existed in 1951, 22.14% of tenants were illegally evicted, 2.58% has been evicted under law and 17.83% of the originally existed protected tenants voluntarily surrendered their rights and handed them back. M.B.Desai, in his case studies of Gujarat, says that in 1951-54, 27% tenants and in 1952-55, 38% tenants were evicted due to failure to pay the rent. 13% of the tenants were not covered by the legislation.¹⁹ V.V.Kalhatkar and S.B.Mahabal, in their study of Baroda district, conclude that Act had been largely ineffective and landlords go on as easily as ever due to the very nature of socio-agricultural

16. Quoted in Khusro, A.M; op cit., p.442.

17. Kotovsky; op cit., pp.129-131.

18. Khusro, A.M; op cit, p.442.

19. Desai, E.M; Impact of Land Reforms in Gujarat', in Desai, A.R(ed.); op cit., p.440.

conditions. In nearly 30% of the cases, the tenants do not get any written receipts for payments made by way of rent.²⁰

One scholar in his field inquiry reveals that concealed tenancy was widespread in Gharkhed holdings all over Sourashtra and this defeated the spirit of tenancy legislation.²¹

In short we can say that the main objective of tenancy act, i.e., "to confer rights of ownership on tenants" was failed. Through the enactment of tenancy act tenants have lost more than they have acquired.²² Prof.Paut Wala observes that in ryotwari area tenancy legislation was resisted by landlords who see it as hostile to their own interests.²³

Fixation of Ceiling

In 1948, the Jammu and Kashmir became the first State to impose ceiling on land holdings even before the first Five Year Plan. By 1960-65, in almost all States, ceiling acts was enacted. Dandekar and Rath observes that ceiling act on land holding was advocated with "little conviction and less purpose" during the second and third five year plans.²⁴ The maximum holding

20. Kolhatkar.V.V and Mahabal.S.B; op cit., pp.427-429.

21. Sanghui.P; Critical Examination of Tenancy Policy of the Saurashtra Govt, op cit., pp.431-32.

22. Kotovsky; op cit., p.138.

23. Quoted in Wadia and Merchant; op cit., p.300.

24. Dandekar.V.M and Rath.N; op cit., pp.78-9.

was fixed as much as thrice the economic holding. It was actually fixed around 25 to 30 acres. The level of ceiling differed from State to State. The exemption of pastoral land, garden land and even sufficiently managed plot hardly put any pressure on the landlords to surrender their land for redistribution among landless. P.C.Joshi says that the wide latitude given to State governments (in defining family holdings, in determining the level of ceiling, in deciding whether ceiling should be applied to individual) was found to open the door for endless manipulations and manoeverings, pulls and pressures in a manner that the very objective of ceiling was likely to be put in jeopardy and defeated.²⁵

The individual as unit of land ceiling was one of the most important loopholes that consolidated the zamindar's position. H.D.Malviya has described that 90% of possible usefulness of a programme of ceiling upon land holding had been lost and land distribution had been a failure in our country.²⁶ The same policy was continued in second and third five year plans.

The overall consequences of the famine(63-67) and agrarian revolts compelled the government to review the whole policy in a different way. In 1969-70, the ceiling act was

25. Joshi.P.C; 'Land Reforms in India, Perspectives', Economic Review, No.2, December 1961, pp.34-35.

26. Quoted in Kotovsky; op cit., p.14.

revived and a number of modifications proposed. The family was taken as unit as against the existing unit of individual. The limit of the holding was almost halved over the previous one. But the zamindars again consolidated their position by transferring their land through 'benami transactions'. In Punjab the landlords kept land in the name of their dogs to avoid the ceiling and in Bengal horses served the purpose. Furthermore, the division of family on paper also defeated the whole plan.

Wariner clearly shows that all over the country the Congress party has failed to undertake land reforms for the sake of relieving poverty.²⁷ The Janata government has also failed because both the Janata and the Congress belong to the same genre.²⁸ One scholar observes that the efforts of the government of Assam to acquire and redistribute the surplus lands have been half hearted.²⁹ Commenting on the impacts of land reform measures, P.S.Appu observes that the implementation of the enacted law has been half hearted and unsatisfactory in large parts of the country.³⁰

27. Quoted in Kotovsky; op cit., p.14.

28. Quoted in Barnah, A.K; 'The Problem of land reforms with particular reference to land ceiling in Assam, the need for mobilization of the peasantry', in (ed.) National Seminar on Rural Development in Eastern and North-Eastern India, May 8-10, 1986,

29. Barnah, A.K and Pramod Kumar; 'Why do voters not vote', EPW, Vol.xiv, Nos. 51, 52. pp.2025-2026.

30. Das, A.N; op cit., p.184.

Land Reforms in Bihar

Political mobilization of peasants in different parts of Bihar compelled the State government to take agrarian reforms steps. It was started officially and unofficially in the forms of land reforms and Bhoodan and Gramdan movements.³¹ We will see in next chapter that the great peasant movements in different parts of India including Bihar made the situation impossible for new rulers to support wholeheartedly the feudal elements.

The communists in 1930, the socialists in 1934³² and Kisan Sabha in 1935 had pressed for the zamindari abolition. In 1937 the Congress, in its election manifesto, advocated moderate reforms in the system of land tenure and rent. But after election, the Congress, an instrument of landholding conservatives did not pursue any meaningful agrarian reforms³⁴ instead it negotiated an agreement with the zamindars. The Bihar Tenancy Act of 1937 and the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht lands and Arrears of Rent Act of 1938 were legislated on the basis of compromise with the zamindars under the guidance of Rajendra Prasad.³⁵ The peasants were not

31. Das.A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Changes in Bihar, p.184.

32. Jannuzi.F.T; Agrarian Crisis in India - The case of Bihar, (Poona: 1974), p.5.

33. Das.A.N; ; op cit., p.6.

34. Jannuzi.F.T; op cit., p.115

35. Gupta,Rakesh; Peasant Struggles: A Case Study of Bihar, Ph.D Thesis, JNU (New Delhi: 1978).

satisfied with remedial legislation like the Bakasht dispute Settlement Act of 1947 which was followed by the Bakasht movement of 1946-48 because the landlords had set the Bakasht land in the 'Benami' names of their own men to show that the lands have already been settled with tenants.³⁶

The government of Bihar made its first post-independence legislative attempt with the help of K.B.Sahay to abolish the zamindari system by passing the Bihar Abolition of Zamindari Bill in 1947. It was then amended and published as the Bihar abolition of zamindari Act, 1948 only to be repeated and replaced by the Bihar Land Reform Act, 1950, the validity of which was finally upheld by the Supreme Court in 1952.³⁷ The Attempt was made by the first State government with the help of K.B.Sahay, the then Revenue Minister and pro-abolition leader.³⁸ The zamindars opposed the act while some of them succeeded in acquiring tacit support from important Congress leaders like Rajendra Prasad and most conservatives among them joined the Janata Party launched by the Maharaja of Ramgarh who later rejoined the Congress. In 1947,

36. Das.A.N; op cit., p.189. 1

37. Jannuji.F.T., op cit., pp.12-13.

38. Das.A.N; op cit., pp.188-195.

one group of zamindars appealed to Rajendra Prasad telegraphically:
"HON BLE RAJENDRA PRASAD NEW IN HONOUR GANDHI JAYANTI APPEALING
PEACE KINDLY DROP ABOLITION ZAMINDARI SAVE COUNTRY CIVIL WAR".³⁹

Between 1950-51 and 1960-61, the land reforms act of 1950, The Tenancy Act of 1885, the Consolidation of Holding Act, the Fixation of Land Ceiling and Acquisition of Surplus Act, 1961, and the Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Act of 1948 were passed by the Bihar government.⁴⁰ Besides these, Bihar Tenancy Act, 1970, Bihar Land Reform (Fixation of ceiling area and acquisition of surplus land) (Amendment) Act 1974 (Bihar Act XIII of 1975), Bihar Land Reforms (Fixation of ceiling area and acquisition of surplus land) Act 1978 (Bihar Act VII of 1978) and land acquisition (Bihar Amendment) Act 1979 (Bihar Act II of 1980) were passed. The Amendment in tenancy Act was made to protect share-croppers from illegal eviction. Amendments were also introduced to provide protection against alienation of land by the members of SC/ST and backward classes and also for the restoration of such land.⁴¹

The land Reform Act of 1952 came into being only after eight years owing to the long legal battle fought by the

39. Jannuji.F.T; op cit., pp.16-17.

40. Ojha.G; Land Problems and Land Reforms: A Study with Reference to Bihar, (New Delhi: Sultan Chand and Sons, p.283)

41. Pande, Alakh Raj; 'Tenancy Reforms for the Share-Croppers and Homeless Tenants in Bihar', Social Science Probyn.

zamindars. The implementation of the Act of 1952 affected only 155 zamindars. In 1954 and 1959 the Act was amended to facilitate speedy implementation. Section 5,6 and 7 of the Bihar Land Reforms Act, 1950 specially provided for the retention of certain interests of intermediaries. But these sections have not been altered in amendments acts of 1954 and 1959.⁴²

During the time between the enactment and enforcement, the zamindars took advantage of delays to put through paper partition of their joint family properties and in the process they tampered with the village records for personal gains. The enforcement of the act was slow and ineffective. The act only regulated the relationship between an outgoing proprietor and the State government and not the proprietor and the third party. The out-going zamindars were permitted to keep their "Sir and Khudakhast" lands that prevented the process of breaking up land concentration in the agricultural sector.⁴³

Commenting on the Act, Sahajaman has rightly observed, "...The working and phraseology of the Bill is vague. The object as stated therein is to remove the intermediaries between the government and the ryots.....it is clear as to what will happen to those ryots

42. Jannuji.F.T; op cit., pp.20-31.

43. Ojha.G; op cit., p.284.

who are in possession of hundreds of acres of lands and get them cultivated through subtenants (share croppers)".⁴⁴ G.Ojha, in his study have pointed out the utter ineffectiveness of land reform legislations in Bihar till 1972-73. Further he says that the legislations appear to have been enacted in haste, without creating proper atmosphere, without studying the likely impacts of further implications and the manner in which the laws could be evaded. However, the Bihar Land Reform Act of 1950 failed to bring any change in socio-political and economic set up of the village.⁴⁵ Various evaluation reports, plan projects and documents have enumerated that the lack of political will have been the key factor behind ineffective implementation.⁴⁶ This is one of the root causes of agrarian tensions in Bihar.⁴⁷

To provide home sites to those neglected and deprived people "The Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act" was passed in 1947. The term privileged persons mean not proprietors, tenure holders, under-tenure holders but is one who holds homestead and holds other land not exceeding one acre.

44. Quoted in Das.A.N; op.cit., p.201.

45. Ojha.G; op cit., p.285.

46. Quoted in Das.A.N; op cit., pp.201-202.

47. Ojha.G; op cit., pp.285-288.

This definition of privileged person was not in tune with the objective for which the Act was made. The actual implementation gets blocked at several stages and the poor allottees have to abandon the idea of possessing a home on their own land. They continued as tenants under landlords on terms and conditions of the latter.⁴⁸ In between 1947 and 1963, no step was taken to implement the various provisions of the Act. Even no minimum area has been provided for homestead land as a result of which in most cases the tenants are left only with sleeping and cooking space.⁴⁹

The Tenancy Act of 1885 was amended in 1938, in 1955, and also in 1970. According to section 48(c) of the Act every person continuously holding a land for 12 years as under ryot is deemed to have acquired the right of occupancy on that land with certain exception. These 'certain exceptions' and also other exceptions granted to the landlords gave them a lot of scope to manoeuvre and manipulate and even to prevent under ryot to acquire the status of occupancy ryot.⁵⁰ The landlords enjoyed almost legal protection to evict a tenant under the provision of personal cultivation. The major defects of the Tenancy Act of 1955 was that it provided for the restoration of holdings to the

48. Pande.A.R; op cit.

49. Ojha.G; op cit; pp.289-290.

50. Pande.A.R; op cit., p.117.

under ryots but failed to prevent the threatened evictions. The Conciliation Boards, created by this Act, miserably failed in their efforts to bring settlements in majority of the cases mainly owing to the pro-landlord bias of its members.⁵¹ According to the records of the revenue department, 11,483 tenants were evicted till 1963, the majority of which belonged to the district of Purnea.⁵²

In section B of the Tenancy Act of 1955, provisions were made to put mandatory restrictions on imposition of rent-system known as Danabandi, Manhurda, Mankhop or Chauroha upon under ryot. Under the system of Danabandi, Manhurda, Mankhop or Chauroha, the ryot realizes a fix amount of paddy rice or other produce as payment of rent in kind, irrespective of whether anything is left for the under-ryots.⁵³ But the Act has failed to enforce restrictions on produce rent. Ladjensky in his field trip to Kosi area in Bihar in 1969, found that the condition imposed on share-croppers was probably the worst in the country.⁵⁴ In absence

51. Ojha.G; op cit., p.286.

52. ibid.

53. Pande.A.R; op cit., p.120.

54. Ladjensky; Agrarian Reform: An Unfinished Business(London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.454.

of security of tenure, bargaining power and money, the bataidars do not question the illegal demands of landlords and accepts terms and conditions of landlords. G.Ojha has pointed out that in spite of these legal provisions, 97.70% of the total tenants paid 50% of the gross produce and remaining 1.15% of the tenants only enjoyed the benefits of the fixed rent in kind. Thus, not a single tenant received the benefits of these legal provisions of the law.⁵⁵

The Act of 1955 was amended in 1955 to prevent actual evictions. But these legal changes could not deter the landlords from following an anti under ryot policy. This led to the Peasant Uprisings in Purnea and Musahari blocs of Mujaffarpur.⁵⁶ One may be surprised to note that in the Bihar Tenancy(Second Amendment) Act, 1955, even the section under which the Collector was to act was not correctly mentioned. Instead of section '48E' it was mentioned under '48D'. This mistake went unnoticed for several years. In this situation the under ryot hardly finds himself in a position to continue his fight for enforcement of his legal rights. Another factor that damages the rights and interests of Bataidars is that few Bataidars have been recorded during the survey settlement operation and special field Bujharat drive.⁵⁷

55. Ojha.G; op cit., p.288.

56. Pande.A.R; 'Tenancy Reforms for the Share Croppers and Homeless Tenants in Bihar', Social Science Probyn.

57. ibid.

The Working Group on Land Reforms of the National Commission on Agriculture notes: "The tenancy provisions are completely ineffective in practice.....The tenants were frequently changed to prevent them from acquiring rights in lands...In the field of Bujharat which has been done almost all over the State during past 10 years or more, only entries relating to owners were checked up but not of.....under Raiyats and Share-Croppers."⁵⁸

Ladjensky observes: "As share-croppers, their names, the names of the owners, the plots they lease from them and rent paid are not recorded in the Record of Rights. Not to be recorded is to have no legal standing in claiming occupancy or security of tenure rights in courts of law".⁵⁹ The landlords do not agree to prepare any documents or evidence of sublease. As Alakh Pandey concludes: ".....Besides legislative lapses and administrative apathy towards the conferment, enforcement and protection of these legitimate rights and interests, there are factors such as ignorance and economic handicaps of share-croppers which have stood in the way of the fulfilment of the objectives of the Act for the benefit of the share-croppers."⁶⁰

58. Bandopadhyay; 'Agrarian Relations in Two Districts of Bihar: A Field Study', Mainstream, Vol.XI, No.40, 2 June 1973.

59. Ladjensky; op cit., p.455.

60. Pandey.A.R; op cit.

Fixation of Ceiling

In Bihar the legislative measures to impose ceiling on land holdings was started in 1955. The strong opposition from landed elite and factionalism within the Congress party blocked the bill for 7 years. Subsequently a new bill, much more diluted and with sufficient loopholes, was enacted into law as the Bihar Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling Area and Acquisition of Surplus Land) Act in 1961.⁶¹ The landlords in the meantime hastened their steps to forestall the possible effect of ceiling. The ceiling of land holdings in Bihar originally varied between 20 acres of class I land to 60 acres of class V land. The ceiling applied to individual rather than to a family. The most surprising aspect was that it permitted every landowner to transfer within six months from the commencement of the Act, only land held by him to his son, daughter or any other person who might have enjoyed the right of inheritance.⁶²

Apart from them, the Act permitted a land holder to retain lands in excess of the ceiling provisions. For example, the land-holders having grade one land was allowed 20 acres plus 10 acres of land attached with homestead, plus 15 acres of land

61. Jannuji.F.T; The Agrarian Crisis in India: The Case of Bihar (Poona, 1974), pp.76-77.

62. Ojha.G; op cit., p.291.

used for orchards. The Act also stipulated that every person whose lands in excess of ceiling were acquired by the State would receive compensation in accordance with a schedule amended to the Act. It also permitted land-holders to retain land for personal cultivation.⁶³ The provisions of section 48(c) after Bihar Tenancy Act was superseded by the Ceiling Act. This adversely affected the interests of the under-ryots as a class of tenants.⁶⁴ In 1973, some of the ambiguities and weaknesses of the 1961 Act were removed through the Amendments in 1973. The unit of ceiling was changed from individual to family. The ceiling was further reduced. Despite this the programme of ceiling was largely diluted in implementation.⁶⁵

The Bihar Consolidation of Holdings and Prevention of Fragmentation Act of 1956 seeks to promote the consolidation of holdings in any area or region of the State and prevent fragmentation.⁶⁶ But the empirical findings of G.Ojha shows that small fragments, not exceeding one third of the acre, are widely prevalent in various size of groups.⁶⁷ What is more alarming

63. Jannuji.F.T; op cit., pp.78-81.

64. Pandey.A.R; op cit.

65. Ojha.G; op cit; p.292.

66. Jannuji.F.T; op cit., p.87.

67. Ojha.G; op cit., p.294.

is that the number of small holdings and fragments is increasing year after year owing to the increase in population and subdivisions of land under a law of succession which gives all heirs equal shares and lack of employment opportunity in non-agricultural sector.⁶⁸

Concealed Tenancy Act existed in different parts of Bihar. G.Ojha⁶⁹ have pointed out that in Bihar as a whole the percentage of hidden tenancy was 5.44% which shows a rise of more than 2% after zamindari abolition. He further shows that the conditions of small owners and tenants has further deteriorated. This fact is revealed by the increase in the percentage of mortgaging out land by small farmers, even after enforcement of ceiling legislation, both ownership and operational holdings form above the size of 100 acres continued to exist. This is clear from the data provided by Agricultural Census of 1970.⁷⁰

Apart from above mentioned Acts, the Minimum Wage Act, 1948, the Bihar SC/ST, Backward Class and Tribes Debt Relief Act, 1974 and the Bihar Money Lender Act, 1974 were legislated as agrarian laws. All these Acts have failed to bring changes in the agrarian set-up of Bihar. This is clear from the findings

68. 'Report on Bihar Tenancy Put in Cold Storage' The Hindustan Times, 11 Sept 1986.

69. Ojha.G; op cit., pp.297-299.

70. ibid.

of the Working Group on Land Reforms appointed by the government. The Working Group states: "By their abysmal failure to implement the laws, the authorities in Bihar have reduced the whole package of land reforms measure to a sour joke. This has emboldened the land owning class to treat the entire issue of agrarian reforms with utter contempt. Elsewhere in the country, the law evaders have a sneaking respect for the law enforcing authority. Their approach is furtive, their method clandestine. In Bihar, the land owners do not care a tuppence for the administration. They take it for granted. Their approach is defiant - their modus operandi open and insolent."⁷¹

Type of Tenancy

There are various forms of tenancy in Bihar:⁷²

Nagadi or Manibatai, Tehai and Chauthai. Under Nagadi or Manibatai the tenant has to pay a fixed amount of rent in cash or in grains irrespective of the total production. In Bhojpur districts, the prevalent rate is 16 mounds or Rs.700 per bigha and 22 mounds in the case of better irrigation facilities. Under Tehai system the landlord and the tenant equally share all expenditures, but the tenant gets only one third of the produce. In Chauthai, the total capital is provided by the landlord and the tenant gets one fourth.

71. Bandopadhyay,D; op cit.

72. Mishra.V; op cit., pp.49-50.

of the produce. In the study of three villages of Musahari Block of Mujaffarpur, V.N.Verma and P.R.Mishra pointed out that the pattern of tenantry, terms and conditions and lessor-lessee relation in traditional setting of North Bihar gives an impression that inspite of growth in agricultural production and to some extent technological change in Bihar, subsistence tenancy which is unfavourable to the tenants continues to be a prominent feature of the agrarian scene. He further pointed out that a large number of unrecorded tenancies exist.⁷³ The case of Musahari represents the typical phenomena in tenancy in Bihar.

Bhoodan Movement

Bhoodan, Gramdan and Sampattidan known as unofficial agrarian reforms was initiated by Vinoba Bhava and Jaiprakash Narain. Before analysing these movements in detail we should understand the socio-economic conditons of the country.

In 1946-51, adopting a Marxist Revolutionary strategy, CPI launched peasant movements based on guerilla warfare in Telengana, a region within the former princely state of Hyderabad(now in A.P). Its rallying cry was "land to the tiller". In the midst of this Communist dominated insurrection in Telengana in 1951, Vinoba Bhava launched his Bhoodan movements

73. Verma.B.N and Mishra.P.K; 'Subsistence Tenancy in a Backward Agrarian Setting: A Case Study of North Bihar', Social Scientist, Vol.12, 1959.

in 1951. Vinoba Bhave launched his Bhoodan movement by demonstrating that lands might be redistributed peacefully without resorting to class conflict.⁷⁴ According to Vinoba Bhave Bhoodan Yagna is an all comprehensive movement directed to the reform in all walks of life.⁷⁵ His main purpose was to create a 'kingdom of kindness' through fighting for social and economic justice by changing men's heart and building a new social order. Bhave suggested that the problem of landlessness can be solved not by violence, legislation and means of government schemes, but through the spirit of Bhoodan.⁷⁶

Talking about Shramdan, he says, "...the education that our children get now in schools, is devoid of any manual labour.....so Shramdan (labour gifts) is also to be initiated. This will bring an active change to the whole life of the country."⁷⁷ He wanted to establish "Samyayogi Society" in which an equality will exist in society. According to him Bhoodan aims at the moral regeneration of the whole nation.⁷⁸ The Sarvodayites envisage an ideal society without classes and the state. Criticising the

74. Jannuji.F.T; op cit., pp.93-95.

75. Bhave.V; 'Bhoodan Yagna', in Desai.A.R (ed.); Rural Sociology in India, op cit., p.634.

76. Quoted in Jannuji.F.T; op cit., p.94.

77. Bhave.V; op cit., p.632.

78. ibid, pp.629-631.

whole philosophy of Vinoba Bhave, B.T.Ranadive declared that creation of a stateless society without political struggle will not be possible. Ignoring class realities the Sarvodayites concentrate only on propaganda to achieve stateless society.⁷⁹

According to J.P.Narain, the Bhoodan and the Sampattidan movements, based on the theory of ethical transformation of the heart of those who own land and wealth, are important to bring an egalitarian society. Through this propertied class would voluntarily relinquish a substantial portion of their possession for the benefit of the poverty-stricken section of the population.⁸⁰

Bhoodan movement launched in different parts of India was a failure, because the donation of land made by big landlords was prompted not so much by any change of heart, but by the strategic motive of safeguarding by far the greater amount of land owned by them by conceding a small portion of it mostly fallow, barren and uneconomic.⁸¹

Almost on the heels of the zamindari abolition legislation came one of the most repressive phase in the history of the Bihar government. A Public Safety Act was

79. Ranadive.B.T; 'Sarvodaya', in Desai.A.R; (ed.) op cit., pp. 686-687.

80. Quoted in Shah.C.G; 'Sampattidan and Bhoodan Movements', in A.R.Desai (ed.) op cit., p.836.

81. *ibid.*

passed to stop all peasant uprisings that were occurring in Bihar.⁸² In this situation, Vinoba Bhave started his Bhoodan movement in Bihar in 1952 and vowed to remain in Bihar until the land problem was solved.⁸³ He had set up his camp in Gaya district, a long term centre of the communists. Vinoba Bhave and his followers declared that they would make Gaya district the Bardoli of Bhoodan, a moving reference to the former campaign of 1928 led by the late Vallabhbhai Patel among peasants of the Bardoli district.⁸⁴ To solve land problem in Bihar, Bhave estimated that he and his followers would need to collect 3,200,000 acres of land. After two years of Bhoodan movement, J.P.Narain disappointed in 1954 in following words: "I am ashamed. We Biharis took a vow of 3,200,000 acres in order to solve land problem of our province. We have kept (Baba) Bhave with us for eighteen months, but still this vow has not been fulfilled."⁸⁵ By August 1954, the Bhoodan workers claimed to have collected 21,02,000 acres by way of actual gift or promised donations, but the quantum was still much below the target even in 1956 when it was claimed that 21,47,842 acres have been collected.⁸⁶

82. Das.A.N; op cit., p.202.

83. Bhave, Vinoba; Bhoodan Yagna (Ahmedabad, 1953), p.114.

84. Thorner.D; 'Bhoodan- Its Evaluation', in Desai.A.R.(ed.); op cit., p.633.

85. Temyson, Hallam; India's Walking Saint, The Story of Vinoba Bhave, (New York: 1955), p.141.

86. Narayan.J.P; A Picture of Sarvodaya Social Order, (Tanjore: 1956), p.47.

After examining land reform and Bhoodan, Daniel Thorner observes that neither zamindari abolition nor Bhoodan movement has transformed rural Bihar.⁸⁷ He further remarks that land donated in Bihar was rocky, barren or otherwise agriculturally poor or was under dispute in current legislation.⁸⁸ More damaging to the image of Bhoodan as a successful movement is the fact that by March 1966, Bhoodan leaders could claim to have distributed only 3,11,037 acres (less than 10% of the target). In Purnea district the lands have been donated in 1954-55, in 1977 but most of the poor peasantry were still landless.

Bhave shifted the focus of his movement on Gramdan movement by emphasizing on "villagization" of land through gramdan. In the ideal gramdan, the community as a whole would receive title to all land. The produce from this land would be shared by the entire community in accordance with a formula designed by the village council.⁸⁹ According to Bhoodan statistics, there were 2,500 gramdans in India in 1957, the majority of which were located in tribal areas of Orissa and Bihar.

87. Thorner, Daniel; The Agrarian Prospects in India, op cit., p.35.

88. Thorner, Daniel; 'Bhoodan its Evaluation', op cit., pp.633-34.

89. Jammuji.F.T; op cit., pp.116-17.

The Naxalbari movement in 1967 was a forceful reminder that neither two decades of land reform legislations, nor the Sarvodaya movement have solved the basic problems.⁹⁰ Following the outbreak of Naxalite movement in north Bihar in 1970 and Ara in 1972, J.P went there to fight 'Naxalite menace' through non violent means. In Musahari, he stated that the Naxalite threat was an urgent call to demonstrate through positive actions how the challenge of violence could be used to speed up the process of non violent social change and reconstruction that Vinobaji had initiated through his gramdan Swaraj movement.⁹¹ With the objective of establishing Gram Sabha, setting up the Gram Kash, organising Gram Santi Sena, distributing undistributed Bhoodan lands, distributing homestead parcha to the privileged persons and removing the problem of gambling and alcoholism, J.P started the Sarvodaya movement in Musahari.⁹² The Sarvodaya workers attracted the attention of organisations like AVARD (Association for Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development).⁹³ PIREP (Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project), and JOEPP (Job Oriented Education Plan Project), IADP(Intensive Area Development Programme) - the development projects of the government - have been pumped into the area by the State government.⁹⁴

90. Ram, Mohan; 'The Sarvodaya Force', EPW, May 1975, Vol.X, No.18.

91. Narayan, J.P; Face to race, (New Delhi: 1971), p.7.

92. Sinha, Jai. B.P; 'The Social Psychology Perspective', in Sachidanand (ed.); Sarvodaya and Development, Multi Disciplinary Perspective, (Mushari, Patna), pp.60-61.

93. Ram, Mohan; op cit.

94. Das, A.N; op cit., p. 213

Evaluating all the programme, the working group on land reform observed "...We had definite evidence to indicate that at Musahari the bread had already gone to the rural rich."⁹⁵

At the request of Jay Praksh Narayan, a survey was conducted by Pradhan.H.Prasad, Jai,B.P.Sinha and Sachidanand from sociological, economic, and socio-psychological angles on this movement.⁹⁶ Their findings show that extreme poverty restricts the meaning of Sarvodaya or any other movement in this area. They also observed that the movement has fallen into the hands of those who are have's and are not disposed to make any radical change.⁹⁷

So, on the basis of whole discussion, we can say that land reforms in Bihar were complete failure in respect of official Acts and legislations and in respect of unofficial reforms. After a survey of post-land-reforms Bihar, Daniel Thorner remarked; "In short neither zamindari abolition nor Bhoodan persuasion (although Bihar has been the site of the most intensive Bhoodan efforts in the whole of India) has been able to transform rural Bihar. It remains a stronghold of large land holders and hierarchical property

95. Bandopadhyay,D; op cit.

96. 'Art of Authors' in Sachidanand(ed); Sarvodaya and Development, op cit.

97. Sinha,J.B.P; op cit., p.63.

rights; leasing, subleasing and eviction are all common."

CHAPTER III

GREEN REVOLUTION AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

There were two main objectives of the government with regard to agricultural development and rural transformation. Firstly, through technological devices agricultural production could be increased to meet the requirements of foodgrains and fodder. Secondly, by making people conscious about their social and political responsibilities, they could be mobilized for enhancement of agricultural growth and rural transformation. In this Chapter we would analyse the social implications of green revolution.

Peasant unrest and occurrence of famine during the sixties, and the unsatisfactory achievements of land reform measures, compelled the government to review its agrarian policy. Consequently, the green revolution as a major thrust of rural development strategy, was introduced by the government to increase agricultural production and to alleviate poverty. The measures of the green revolution included application of biochemical technology, fertilizers, irrigation schemes and programmes like IADP (Intensive Agricultural District Programme) and IAAP (Intensive Agricultural Area Programme). This package programme was launched in 1960-61 in 16 districts and extended to 150 districts by 1970¹¹ in Punjab, West UP, Haryana and

1. Goswami, A; 'India's Rural Development Programme with Special Reference to IRDP in Assam', in National Seminar on Rural Development in Eastern and North Eastern India.

and in some parts of Bihar and Bengal. In short the government the emphasis from institutional change to technological upgrading of agriculture.² It had a great impact on the production of wheat but no breakthrough was made in production of paddy which still accounts for the largest share of total agricultural output. The technology oriented policy of India was inspired by America.³ A Ford Foundation team introduced the idea of the IADP in 1965 and by 1966 the government of India had accepted this idea which laid emphasis on irrigation, high yielding seeds, fertilizers and modern implements. A lot of modern form machineries such as tractors, power tillers, harvesters, and threshers were introduced in several States.

Green revolution's long - term objective was to enable the poor people to have greater share in the fruits of development. Some controversies have arisen regarding the distribution of the gains of the green revolution.⁵ J.Byres observes that three opinions have been in force regarding the gains of the green revolution.⁶ Firstly, despite some

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2. Kar, Sitanshu Ranjan; 'Agrarian Policy and their Impact', Teaching Politics, Vol.VIII, No.1-2.
 3. Prasad, H.P; 'Institutional Reforms and Agricultural Growth', Social Scientist, Vol. 15, No.6, June 1980.
 4. Jacob, T.G; op cit., p.132.
 5. Narang, A.S; 'Punjab: Development and Politics', in Omvedt, Gail; op cit., p.124.
 6. Byres, J; 'The Dialectics of Indian Green Revolution', South Asian Review, Vol.5, No.20, Jan 1972.

problems, green revolution has successfully reached all sections of society in terms of percolation of its positive gains. Secondly, it is believed that green revolution has been a successful programme without any noticeable difficulties. Finally, it is said that it has benefitted the rich resulting into bourgeoisification of the economically well off and proletarianisation and pauperisation of the poor and depressed sections of society.

Dandekar and Rath observe that capitalist type of development in agriculture will result in a greater concentration of the means of agricultural production in a fewer hands.⁷ The green revolution has widened the gulf between the rich and the poor, and the developed and backward regions and has benefitted those who were already more favourably placed in the socio-economic hierarchy.⁸ Evaluating the impact of the green revolution on income distribution among cultivating households in Punjab, G.S. Bhalla and G.K.Chadha observed: "The gains of new technology have been distributed more or less in proportion to the initial land holding positions. Since the land holdings are

7. Dandekar, V.M and Nilakantha, Rath; Poverty in India, p.67.
8. Goswami, A; op cit.

distributed in a very skewed manner, the distribution of gains has also been quite inevitable".⁹ Further, they observe that it is indeed a disquieting feature of the Indian agrarian situation that even in the heartland of Green Revolution about one-third of the marginal farmers and about one-fourth of the small farmers are living below the poverty line.¹⁰

On the basis of the empirical evidence from the Ferozepur district of Punjab, P.N.Junankar suggests that an inevitable consequence of the green revolution has been the accentuated inequality in rural Punjab.¹¹ P.K.Bardhan and Byres have shown that it has not only led to accentuation of inequality, but also perpetuated poverty and destitution in Punjab.¹² K.S.Upadhyaya in his study of Andhra Pradesh and G.Parthasarathy in his study of the same province, both came to the same conclusions from different angles and approaches. For them¹³ development, to whatever measure it has taken place, has benefitted the rural rich and the poor have become poorer. Upadhyay stresses on regional variations. G.T.Kurien, in his

9. Bhalla, G.S and Chadha, G.K; 'Green Revolution and the Small Peasant: A Study of income distribution in Punjab agriculture, II', EPW, Vol.XVII, No.21, May 22, 1982.

10. ibid.

11. Junankar, P.N; 'Green Revolution and Inequality', EPW, Review of Agriculture, Vol.X, No.13, March 1975.

12. Bardhan, P.K; 'The Evidence of Rural Poverty in the Sixties', EPW, Feb 1973; Byres, J; op cit.

13. Cited in Sahabra, Budhey; 'Peasant Movement and Question of Development' in Karna, M.N(ed.); op cit.

s study of rural transformation in Tamil Nadu(1950-1975) clearly cited that the technology has been scale neutral but credit and market facilities favour the large farmers. A general decline in rural wages and benefits to large farmers is clearly perceivable.¹⁴

Subas observes¹⁵ that the percentage of landless labourers increased sharply in sultanpur of East U.P and the number of cultivating owners has decreased. He further mentions that through the process of 'proletarianization of peasantry, small farmers are being reduced to landless labourers and alienated from the land. Vimal Shah and C.H.Shah in Tatur resurve. pointed out the joining of small farmers into the ranks of landless agricultural labourers. This can be seen from the fact, he says, that the proportion of agricultural labourer was 14.8% in 1901, 17.2% in 1921 and 26% in 1961.¹⁶ He concludes that the number of cultivators and other workers has decreased while that of agricultural labourers has increased significantly in rural areas.¹⁷

Wages have increased where here have been peasant movements as in Kerala and where there is scarcity of labour as

14. *ibid.*

15. Ram, Subas; 'Dynamics of Agrarian Relation in Sultanpur, East U.P', Social Scientist, Vol.2, No.1, Jan 1984.

16. Cited in Vyas, V.S; 'Structural Change in Agriculture and the Small Farm Sector', EPW, Vol.XI, No.1 and 2, Jan 1976.

17. *ibid.*

in Punjab but in India as a whole there has been stagnation. Increment of wage labour in various parts of Punjab has been observed by many scholars,¹⁸ but wage has not increased compared to the general level of price.. The economic position of agricultural labourer did not show any sign of improvement.¹⁹ All over India their wages have remained stagnant.²⁰ P. Bardhan has remarked significant decline in living standard of rural people in every State. Due to peasant movement there is high wage in Kerala.²¹

The new technology has radically changed the ownership position of land among the various classes. In the case of economic resources other than land, a highly unequal situation exists among the peasantry. The landless labourers, who comprise 27% of the total rural households, own only 5% of the cattle, 3% of the buffaloes and 2% of ploughs. Poor peasants who comprise 55% of the total number of households cultivate only 10% of the total land, use only 15% of total irrigation facility, own 14% of cattle, 16% of buffaloes, 7% of iron ploughs and 2% of pumpsets. Between 1960-61 and 1976-77, the top 13% of the farmers(including all those own more more than 4 hectares) own

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

19. Latiere, R. K; 'Impact of Rural Labour Market', EPW, Sept 26, 1970.

20. Jacob, T. G; op cit., p. 126.

21. Bardhan, P; 'Green Revolution and the Agricultural Workers', EPW, Special No., Vol. 5, No. 29-31, July 1970.

57% of the total land and the poor peasants who come to 54.6% of the total number of total households own only 10.7% of the total area.²²

Analysing the impact of green revolution, Beteille observes that it has given birth to a new class which he calls the ambidexterous class. Due to agrarian reforms, there has been change from the cumulative to dispersed inequality.²³ One scholar has described it as a policy of 'betting on the strong'. Betting on the strong is bound to fail in the prevailing conditions of most countries of Asia. The policy to be pursued instead is one of betting on the many.²⁴

The rural poor were getting very less benefit from the green revolution, as compared to the rich people, in terms of loans from banks.²⁵

There has been debate among economists regarding comparison of productivity on small and big farms. M.B.Desai, in his study, shows that by and large, the per hectare yield of all crops is lower on small farms.²⁶ Supporting Matur resurvey

22. Jacob, T.G., op cit., p.121.

23. Beteille, A; Studies in Agrarian Social Structure(Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp.105-6. Also see p.72.

24. Wertheim, W.F; 'Betting on the Strong', in Desai, A.R(ed.); Rural Sociology in India, op cit., p.902.

25. Jacob, T.G; op cit., p.121.

26. Cited in Vyas, V.S; op cit.

studied by V.M.Shah and C.M.Shah, V.S.Vyas has shown that per hectare value of output is the lowest on the smaller farms.²⁷

K.N.Raj maintains that the growth rate of 2.5% in country whose population has been growing at the same rate means virtual stagnation of the country.²⁸ In a micro study of one village each in Nasik and Buldhana districts of Maharashtra, Sulbha Brahme concludes that the productivity has not increased, reasons being non-optional use of available land and water resources. For her, this all is due to poverty being fundamentally rooted in the highly skewed land distribution.²⁹ F.Frankel shows that in Ludhiana and Bihar, landholders owning less than 8 acres have experienced a serious relative deterioration in economic position for want of capital.³⁰

The green revolution has created a new class of farmers. In the area where productive forces have developed, the oppression of peasantry by landlords has been replaced by the contradiction between labour and agrarian capitalists. Apart from them, a new contradiction between the newly emerged rural bourgeoisie and the

27. *ibid.*

28. cited in Kar, Sitanshu Ranjan; *op cit.*

29. cited in Sahasrabudhey, S; 'Peasant Movement and the Question of Development', *op cit.*

30. cited in Kar, S.R; *op cit.*

Indian state has emerged. In Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Punjab the newly emerged rural bourgeoisie is leading agitations against the state for restructuring the market system itself. They say that the pricing system is discriminatory to them. The increasing price of manufactured goods more than the prices of agricultural products confirms this fact.³¹

Opening a Pandora box, it has produced a number of conflicts and problems manifesting in the forms of land grab movements, forceful seizure of harvested crops, unionised demands for higher wages and physical annihilation of big landowners.³²

Mencher³³ has exposed some of the contradictions and sources of conflict inherent in the green revolution in Tamil Nadu. She saw in the tensions in Chingalpet district (Tamil Nadu) the covert, rather than overt, nature of these contradictions and conflicts. T.K. Oommen concludes that "the green revolution as such does not lead to the welfare of the agrarian poor unless substantial alterations in the prevalent socio-economic and political structure are effected at grass roots."³⁴ In an analytical

31. Jacob, T.G; op cit., pp.134-36.

32. Kar, Sitanshu Ranjan, op it.

33. Mencher, Joan, P; 'Conflicts and Contradictions in the Green Revolution: The case of Tamil Nadu', EPW, Annual No. 1974, pp.309-23.

34. Oommen, T.K; 'Impact of Green Revolution on the Weaker Sections', in Parambhansa, V.R.K; Changing Agrarian Relations in India, (Hyderabad: National Institute of Community Development, 1975).

and detailed study of green revolution, J.K.Bajaj has shown that the agricultural strategy of the government has always been for higher marketable production not just for higher production. He has worked through NCAR volumes to show that the new agricultural strategy of the sixties was clearly meant to bring more food to the market.³⁵ Poor peasants and landless agricultural labourers have not been able to share profitably in the general prosperity which came in the wake of green revolution.³⁶

Various Developmental Programmes and Its Consequences in Bihar

Intensive Agricultural District Programme(IADP), Intensive Agricultural Area Programme(IAAP) were introduced in different parts of Bihar also(Ara, Patna, Rohtas, Gaya, Nalanda).³⁷ In addition to this, various special programmes such as Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP), Small Farmer Development Agency(SFDA), Drought Prone Area Programme(DRAP), Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Programme(MFAL) and Cash Scheme for Rural Employment(CSRE) received attention of the government.

35. Cited in Sahasrabudhey, Sunil; op cit.

36. See, Obiha,G; 'Small Farmers and HYV Programme', EPW, 4 April 1970, pp.603-05;

. Parthasarathy,G; Quoted in Sahasrabudhey,S., op cit;
Oommen,T.K; op cit;
Bardhan, Pranab; op cit.

37. Sinha, Arun; 'The Naxalite Movement: A Rising Political Force in Bihar', The Times of India, 27 October, 1986.

By 1973-74, 22.7% of total cropped area in Bihar was covered by HYVP (High Yielding Varieties Programme). 20 percent of the villages had been electrified and 1,04,000 pumpsets were energised. The percentage of net area irrigated to net area sown in 1970 was already 28.3 for the whole State and 18.3, 60.1 and 7.9 for North Bihar, South Bihar plains and the Chotanagpur regions, respectively. A.N.Das says that agricultural sector as a whole seemed to be on the way to prosperity.³⁸

From 1952-53 to 1969-70, in Bihar, the average growth rate of agricultural production was only 0.57 percent per annum as compared to 3.1 percent for the country as a whole. Judging in relation to population, between 1964-65 and 1969-70 agricultural production declined by 1.8% per annum against an increase of 1.4% for the country.³⁹

The green revolution did not make any significant result and all developmental programmes failed. The single most important factor responsible for low and uneven growth of agriculture was the existence of semi-feudal production relations.⁴⁰ Agricultural labourers as bonded labourers were under the clutches of money lenders in many States such as U.P, Bihar and Orissa.⁴¹ In such a set-up, the

38. Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, op cit., p.217.

39. J.P. ; 'Real Mission' EPW, Vol.X, No.12, March 22, 1975.

40. Pradhan, H.P; 'Institutional Reforms and Agricultural Growth', Social Scientist, op cit.

41. Jacob, T.G; op cit., p.121.

flow of funds into rural areas in the name of planning and development, rural electrification, irrigation work, land conservation schemes, afforestation, road construction and other infrastructural support, are usurped by the rural oligarchy in collusion with the State functionaries and the bureaucracy. This is widespread in Bihar, M.P, Orissa and Eastern U.P., where semi-feudal production relations are strong.⁴²

The government expected that the green revolution would trickle down to the rural poor, but, as government sources themselves had to admit, later, landlords with a holding of more than 24 acres had turned out to be the major beneficiaries of green revolution in Bihar. Ryots with holdings of five acres or less, ryots with insecure rights in land, share croppers under ryots, and agricultural labourers could simply derive no benefits worth the name.⁴³

The number of agricultural labourers increased from 23% in 1961 to 39% in 1971⁴⁴ due to declining of small farmers into the ranks of agricultural labourers. In Bihar the percentage share was highest in West Champaran(51.33) followed by Purnea(51.35)

42. Pradhan, H.P; op cit.

43. Mishra, V; op cit., pp.45-6.

44. Shah, G; Protest Movements in Two Indian States: A Study of Gujarat and Bihar Movements, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1977), p.69.

and Katihar (49.47)⁴⁵. In Bihar, new technology has not caused the increase in wages contrary to Punjab, Haryana and Kerala. The low level of wage rate in Bihar is due to contract and bond between the landlords and the direct producers on unequal terms. Collecting data from nine villages belonging to Saran, Siwan and Gopal Ganj, Harikhar Bhakta concludes that direct producers did not succeed in raising their wages in tune with productivity.⁴⁶ As G. Shah observes, "Agricultural labourers get their wage in kind in in cash at the rate of Rs 1 or Rs.1.50 per day..... During the stock season, when they are forced to live near starvation line, the landholder lend them money at high rates of interests and keep them under their subjugation."⁴⁷

Commenting on green revolution in Bihar, Ladjensky says that the existing institutional credit arrangements with their well known bias in favour of big landlords, the generally poor state of the co-operative credit societies, the predominant role of the money lenders providing loans at usurious interest rates and the lowly and insecure position of the tenantry preclude the participation of the vast majority of the cultivators. The green revolution introduced in Bihar is limited as compared to Haryana and Punjab. In Bihar, the green revolution adversely affected poor

45. Mishra, V; op cit.

46. Bhakta, H; 'Production Relations and Special Variations in Agricultural Wage Rates', Social Scientist, Vol.8, No.10, May 1980.

47. Shah, G; op cit., p.69.

peasants, share croppers and agricultural labourers.⁴⁸ One of the consequences of the green revolution was the e weakening still further of their already very tenuous hold on the land. "Wages have doubled in the past few years in Kosi area, but very little of it can be attributed to the new technology. The principal cause is the rise in the cost of living."⁴⁹ Taking into account the lack of alternative and supplementary occupations, the condition of a farm labourer in Bihar, Ladjensky argues, is comparable only with the very worst prevailing anywhere in the country.⁵⁰ The socio-economic conditions of Bihar depends upon its so-called representatives of the people. Bihar has been reduced to a den of corrupt officials, politicians and landlords-cum-money lenders.⁵¹ Comparing Bihar and Punjab, Ladjensky states that the economic polarisation between 'haves' and 'have not's in Punjab is sharper than in Kosi, but the overall level of living there of all classes of the peoples is higher than in Kosi.⁵² The primary cause of the accentuated imbalance in the countryside, according to him, is man-made institutional inequalities.⁵³

48. Ladjensky, Wolf; 'Green Revolution in Bihar, the Kosi Area: A Field Trip', EPW, Vol.IV, No.39, Sept27, 1969.

49. *ibid.*

50. *ibid.*

51. 'J.P.'s Real Mission', EPW, *op cit.*

52. Ladjensky, W; *op cit.*

53. *ibid.*

G.Ojha, after conducting his survey in 4 villages of Saran, concluded that "...In race for technological improvements the substantial farmers are making better gains and the gap between the big and the small is widening. This is the dark shadow of green revolution."⁵⁴ The new technology has only favoured the big landlords.⁵⁵ The disparity between the lower and the higher size group of farms was observed only in terms of resource before '60s, but after the introduction of the new technology, the disparity between them is reflected not only in terms of resources and their use but also in terms of net return. The poor peasant and landless labourer did not benefit from the new technology.⁵⁶

The well off sections of occupancy ryots have taken benefit of whole policy of the government in Bihar and have also consolidated themselves as middle and rich peasants. These occupancy ryots once constituted leading core of the old Kisan Sabha movements,⁵⁷ but now they are aggressive and inflicting damage to lower sections. This has been described by A.N.Das as 'backward caste phenomenon' in Bihar.⁵⁸ The newly emerged rich peasants

54. Ojha,G; op cit.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid.

57. Mishra,V; op cit., p.46.

58. Das,A.N; op cit.

behaved like a Kulak lobby in politics⁵⁹ and are entrenched in State politics after taking benefit of reservation policy introduced by the Janata government headed by Karpoori Thakur. By observing change in political economy of Bihar, Harry W. Blair states that the forward or 'twice born' caste groups that had been dominant in Bihar since independence as before are being replaced by the 'backward castes' as the dominant stratum in the State.

Even after 40 years of independence followed by various agrarian reforms including technology oriented reforms agrarian policy some landlords possess considerable amount of land. The trading class, contractors, and even doctors and lawyers have also become medium to big landholders. As M. Mishra and Vijayendra states "Sahu Parbatta is such a case in Purnea. He enticed tenants, engaged under-tenants...he is supposed to have some 30,000 acres."⁶⁰ The possession of 500, 700 and even 1000 acres land by the landowners has been mentioned by Daniel Thorner, in post-reform Bihar.⁶¹ The possession of less than 1,000 acres of land by 41 big landlords in Purnea is believed. Apart from them, detailed account of land possessions are: Bettiah

59. Mishra, V; op cit., p.46

60. Mitra, M and Vijayendra, 'Agricultural Labourer and Peasant Policies, Rural Proletarianisation in Purnea', in Das, A.N(ed.); Agrarian Movement in India: Studies in Twentieth Century Bihar' op cit., p.98.

61. Thorner, Daniel, op cit., p.34.

Raja: 20,000 acres; Faiyaz Alam: 15,000 acres; Baidya Nath Chauhan: 15,000 acres; Kapil Kumar: 10,000 acres; D.K. Sikarpur: 9,000 acres, Islam Seikh: 8,000 acres, J. Narayan Marwari: 6,000 acres, Durmania Estate: 6,000 acres. Besides this Mahanta of Bodh Gaya controls 10,000 acres of land of which nearly 5,000 acres are located in Bodh Gaya.⁶²

In short, the whole package of green revolution has gone into pockets of these big landlords and Kulak type farmers and all development programmes have been usurped by rural oligarchy in collaboration with bureaucracy because a happy fraternisation exists between the bureaucrats and the landlords in the State.⁶³

Thus, the green revolution was a complete failure in the case of Bihar. The improved mechanised farming helped only those who possessed land. The lot of agricultural labourers remained as same as ever before.

62. Mishra, V; op cit., pp.39-40.

63. Maharaj, R.N; Survey of Peasant Organisation: A Case Study of Kisan Sabha in Bihar, (Patna: A.N.S Institute of Social Studies, 1974).

CHAPTER IV

PEASANT MOVEMENTS

An attempt has been made in this chapter to present a brief account of various agrarian movements in terms of their causes, types and nature in India in general and with reference to Bihar in particular.

Peasant Movements: An Overview

The history of peasant movements in India can be traced back to the Mughal period. Right from this period, famines and revolts had occurred due to some serious reasons. Jat revolts of the Ganga-Jamuna region from the 1660s to 1690s and of the Satnami religious sect in Narnaul in 1672 were very prominent peasant uprisings directed against Mughals as Mughal bureaucracy became more oppressive and exacted harsher taxes, as commercial relations penetrated the countryside and as local rulers made increasing incursions into tribal hill territories.¹ As already we have seen, under both the Mughal as well as the British agrarian system, maximum possible surplus was taken by the rulers from their peasantry. Fleecing, squeezing and sucking of peasantry was the universal and common characteristics of both the social systems.

1. Gough, Kathleen; 'Indian Uprising', in Desai, A.R (ed); Peasant Struggle in India, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1978), p.8.

In British period, the forced commercialization of agriculture compelled the unwilling peasantry of Bengal and other parts to produce cash-crops. This led to disturbances and riots in 1860 and produced conditions for severe famine. Up to 1857, there was 12 severe famines. In 1896-98, 4.5 millions were killed by starvation and 97 million people were seriously affected.² The Oudh rebellion (1778-81), the Oudh, Banaras, Gorakhpur(1799), the Poligars rebellion in Tinnevely, North Arcot(1801-5), the Chuar rebellion of Midnapore(1799), Pazhassi Raja rebellion of Malabar (1796-1805), and the insurrection in Travancore-Cochin(1806) were main anti imperialist rebellions of these period. All these revolts were crushed by the British by butchering tens of thousands of peasants and their leaders.³ Apart from these, the Santhal insurrection(1855-56), Indigo cultivators' strike(1860), and Maratha uprising (1875) in Poona and Ahmedabad were also important peasant struggles against zamindari system and moneylenders in which militant peasantry actively participated and showed the path to struggle and battle. These uprisings were essentially dress-rehearsals of future struggles of the Indian peasantry.⁴ The peasant uprisings occurred not only in the zamindari areas but also in ryotwari areas in which all sections of peasantry and tribals participated.

2. Jacob, T.G; India: Development and Deprivation, op cit., p.49.

3. *ibid*, p.52.

4. Natarajan, L; 'The Santhal Insurrection, 1855-56' in Desai, A.R (ed.), op cit. Also see Natarajan, L; 'Indigo Cultivators Strike, 1860' and 'Maratha Uprising, 1876' in Desai, A.R(ed.); op cit., pp.137-173.

First war of independence was the biggest mass insurrection. Peasants, workers and all sections of Indian society joined the battle against economic, cultural and religious oppression of imperialists. This was the powerful anti-imperialist outburst born out of horrible famines, ruination of artisans and above all the racial arrogance freely displayed by the imperialists. But these movements were suppressed by the British government.⁵ Apart from the organised peasant movements, organised revolts of desperate group of peasantry was characterised by Hobsbawn as social bandity because group consisting large number of peasants, tribesmen, disinherited landlords and disbanded soldiers turned to banditry who were deprived of their livelihood and evicted from their home land.⁶

Peasant Movements Since 1920

Peasant movements since 1920 have been co-ordinated within the policies of oppositional political parties.⁷ Since the British period the peasant movements have been classified.⁸ The

5. Jacob, T.G; op cit., p.51.

6. Quoted in Gaugh, K; op cit., pp.103-104.

7. ibid, pp.112-113.

8. Mehta, Uday; 'Peasant Movements in India', in Desai, A.R (ed.) op cit., p.743.

peasant movements of 1857-1921 period were spontaneous and were not having proper leadership. The second phase (1923-1946) witnessed the emergence of class conscious peasant organisations in the struggle for national liberation. The post independence period was the period of uninterrupted and continuous peasant movements, due to the failure of ruling party, to resolve any of the basic problems of the toiling masses in rural India. Almost all the movements were led by left political parties such as CPI, PSP and SP through Kisan organisations.

But in 1921 all sections of society participated in the struggle. The Moplah rebellion is the witness of it. It lasted longer than all other peasant insurrections. In All India struggle towards independence, the Indian National Congress joined with Muslims of the Khilafat movement to boycott British instituted councils, law courts, titles and educational institutions. The boycott appealed to Hindu and Muslim middle class leaders, a few landlords, high ranking non cultivating tenants, a large number of poverty stricken cultivating tenants and landless labourers especially Moplahs who formed a majority of the population and participated in the movements.⁹ Dhanagre writes that it was essentially an expression of the age long agrarian conflict which was only

9. Gaugh, Kathleen; op cit., pp.110-11.

intensified by a primordial religio-ethnic identity of the Moplahs.¹⁰ According to Wood, the Moplah rebellions between 1800-1802 and 1821-22 were also ritual challenges to the British rule, on the other hand, Dale has argued that the complexities of the outbreaks, the interaction of personal, economic, social, and religious motives as cause of numerous outbreaks among the Moplahs during the nineteenth century.¹¹

Analysing it as economic phenomena, K. Gaugh have discussed that the Moplah rebellions sketch the fact that in India as else where agrarian classes usually have a partial isomorphism with major ethnic categories (Hindu and Muslims).¹²

In Oudh (a region of the twelve districts in Uttar Pradesh) agitations during 1920-22 and 1930-32, all sections of society participated. Dhanagre discussed that the poor peasantry were alienated because the Congress wanted to mobilize the peasantry for solely their own political ends, and reliefs to the marginal peasants, share croppers and landless labourers came only as secondary objectives. As Kelkar¹⁴ pointed out the Kisan became disillusioned

10. Quoted in Karna, M.N; 'Agrarian Relations and Peasant Protests in India: A Trend Analysis', in Karna, M.N; (ed), Peasantry in Rural Protest, (Shillong: North Eastern Hill Uni., 1984), p.3.

11. Quoted in, *ibid*, p.4.

12. Gaugh, K; *op cit.*, pp.110-11.

13. Quoted in Karna, M.N., *op cit.*, p.5.

14. Quoted in, *ibid*.

with Gandhian methods for achieving political and economic objectives. Commenting on the role played by INC and Gandhi, Hamza Alavi¹⁵ says, "Gandhi played vital role in mobilising the peasants to support for the National Congress but if he made the peasant speak for the Congress, he did little to make the Congress speak for the peasants."

He did nothing for lower castes and exploited classes except coining the elevated term of 'Harijan' for them.¹⁶ The Harijan lived in a state of abject poverty and destitution.

In Pratapgarh district, the Oudh peasants revolted during the same period on issue of Najrana and Bedkhali (ejections), as Siddiqui has pointed out.¹⁷ A similar Kisan Sabha movement was launched in the district of Unnao against the practice of rack-renting and exaction of Najrana which was subsequently revived in the form of Eka movement.¹⁸ Apart from them, a number of Satyagrahas such as Bardoli and Pedanandipadu in 1921, the land satyagraha in Bihar(1939), the anti-zamindari fight in Bengal and Andhra, canal duties' struggle of 1937-42, the rent exaction in UP and

15. Quoted in Singh, Rajendra; 'Caste Factor in Rural Revolt: A Study of Emerging Contradictions in UP', in Karna, M.N (ed.); Peasantry in Rural Protest, op cit., p.26.

16. ibid., p.15.

17. Siddiqui, M.H; 'The Peasant Movement in Pratapgarh, 1920', The Indian Economic and Social History Review, IX, 3, 1972, pp.306-26.

18. Pandey, S.M; 'The Emergence of Peasant Movements in India: An Area Study', Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 1971, 7, 1, pp. 59-104.

Bihar in 1921 and 1931, and the debt relief agitation of Bengal were launched against unjust laws and taxes.¹⁹ These peasant uprisings were guided by one or another India's communist parties.²⁰

Why Peasant Movements?

From the very beginning, the peasant movements were launched against unequitable structure around the various agrarian issues. K.Gaugh²¹ has discussed different causes and reasons that constituted structural background for the peasant uprisings during colonial and post-colonial period. The following reasons are given below:

1. Imposition of heavy tax burden on peasantry in colonial period as compared to Mughal period;
2. Draining of wealth through colonial war debt services and salaries;
3. Export-import activity of foreign imperialists in collaboration with oppressive landlords and money-lenders directed against the interest of peasantry;
4. Exploitation of tribals through governmental and non-governmental agents;

19. Ranga, N.G; 'Peasant Struggles and Achievements' in Desai, A.R (ed.), op cit., p.75.
20. Gaugh, K; 'Indian Peasant Uprising', in Desai, A.R (ed.), op cit., p.113.
21. ibid, pp.89-94.

5. De-industrialization of indigo industries by British imperialists, that affected rural poor involved in it;
6. Eviction of peasantry through permanent and other settlements;
7. Population burden on agriculture and poverty;
8. Communication facility between city and countryside;
9. The growth of absentee landlordism;
10. Recurrence of large-scale famines affecting rural people;
11. The failure of land reforms;
12. The introduction of Green Revolution with application of seeds, fertilizers and technology in certain selected areas.

Militancy in Peasant Movements

By 1946, militant movements were launched in rural India against zamindars and money lenders who acted as lackeys of British imperialists. The Tebhaga movement in the north of Bengal in 1946, the Telengana peasant war in former Hyderabad State (now in AP) in 1946-48, the strike of tenants and landless labourers in Eastern Thanjavoor for many weeks in 1948, and a series of short strikes followed by attacks on granaries and grain trucks in Kerala in 1946-48 were launched by revolutionary communist party of India.²² In Tebhaga movement, the demand was made for two thirds share of the crop by Bargadars

22. *ibid*, p.113.

against Jotedars. This demands was recommended by the land revenue commissions, 1940. The public meetings were addressed by the Kisan leaders, leaflets were distributed and slogans such as 'Inquilab zindabad', and 'Tebhaga Chai' (we want Tebhaga) were voiced. The enrolled volunteers, shouldering lathis, marched across the villages and shouted familiar slogans.²³ The poor peasants occupied the landlords' lands, burnt land deeds, and raided grain stores in some places. Besides the demand for a two thirds share of the harvest, the movement was aimed at the oppressive behaviour of the Jotedars who acted as oppressors of women and the oppressed castes.²⁴ Dhanagre²⁵ said that it was first consciously attempted revolt by the politicised peasantry in Indian history. The police in collaboration with Jotedars and local Congress organisation massacred the oppressed peasantry.²⁶

The main objective of the heroic Telengana peasant movement was to smash the feudal money lender nexus. In Telengana peasants campaigned for debt relief, abolition of bonded labour and the demands were made for abolishing illegal extractions by local landlords (Deshmukhs) and nawabs.²⁷ According to Sundarayya,

23. Sen, Sunil; 'Tebhaga Chai' in Desai, A.R; op cit., pp.443-45.

24. Sen, Sunil; Agrarian Struggles in Bengal, 1945-1947 (New Delhi: PPH, 1972).

25. Dhanagre, D.N; 'Peasant Protests and Politics: The Tebhaga Movement in Bengal, 1946-47', Journal of Peasant Studies, 3(3), 1976.

26. Sen, Sunil, Agrarian Struggles in Bengal, 1935-1947, op cit.

27. Gaugh, K; op cit., p.114.

4,000 communist and militant peasants were killed, more than 10,000 communist cadres and fighters were thrown into detention camps and jails, 5,000 peoples were dragged into police and military camps²⁸ by Nehru's army to hoist the feudals back into power. The communists had liberated nearly 16,000 square miles covering about three million people in 3,000 villages. Analysing the success and failure of the Telengana movement, Dhanagre²⁹ observes: "If the seizure of power and sustaining it for a considerable period of time is taken as the touchstone of success, then, perhaps, no other peasant revolt or movement in India was more successful than the one in Telengana. If, however, a lasting dent in the agrarian structure and change in the condition of its principal participants were viewed as the criterion then perhaps the Telengana insurrection was not more successful than other peasant resistance movements in India".

In Thanjavoor, the demands were for having the rents paid by cultivating tenants and doubling the wages of landless labourers.³⁰

28. Sundarayya, P; 'Telengana' in Desai, A.R; op cit., pp.532-533. Also see Sundarayya, P; Telengana Peoples Struggle and its Lessons (Calcutta: CPI(M) Publication, 1972)

29. Dhanagre, D.N; 'Social Origins of the Peasant Insurrection in Telengana, 1946-51', Contribution to Indian Sociology, 8, 1974, pp.109-134.

30. Gaugh, K; op cit., pp.112-13.

The late sixties and early seventies witnessed historic militant peasant struggles in different parts of rural India. The most important among them include the prolonged peasant struggle involving land claims and harvest share in 1966-71 led by Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee, the Uprising in Naxalbari in West Bengal in 1967, and the annihilation campaign of the CPI(ML) against landlords, moneylenders, police and a variety of political enemies of the party in Sri-Kakulam, Mussori, Debra Gopivallabpur³¹, Purnea³² and Bhojpur³³. It should be pointed out that the communist sponsored uprisings were different from the movements that was launched in earlier period.³⁴

The land grab movement of 1970 in Uttar Pradesh was championed by the left oriented opposition parties such as SSP, CPI, CPM and Naxalites. Rajendra Singh described the historical background of the movement, and reconstructs the historicity of the Harijans' deprivation which continues to persist in the countryside.³⁵

31. *ibid*, p.113.

32. Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio-economic Change in Bihar, op cit., p.230.

33. Mukherjee, K and Yadav, Rajendra Singh; 'For Reasons of State Oppression and Resistance: A Study of Bhojpur Peasantry' in Das, A.N (ed.) Agrarian Movements in India, Studies on 20th Century Bihar, (Great Britain, Frankcass, 1982), p.140.

34. Gaugh, K; op cit., p.113.

35. Singh, Rajendra; op cit., p.21.

In Warrangal, Khammam and Karimnagar districts of AP, in 1969, the union of peasants began their armed struggle by occupying lands which had been taken from them by the landlords. In West Bengal, the land Acts provided for the distribution of land among the landless, but the proprietors refused to surrender it. Having driven out the landlords, the peasant unions went on to distribute all the land among peasants. By mid 70s, Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee claimed a liberated area of 7,000 to 8,000 square miles.³⁶ By consolidating secret squads recruited from the oppressed group of poor peasants and landless labourers, CPI(ML) adopted the policy of annihilation of landlords, police, moneylenders and oppressive bureaucrats. The police with the help of landlords and moneylenders massacred peasants and arrested Naxalites.³⁷

A new dimension has been acquired in rural politics of Maharashtra during last few years with the emergence of Shethkari Sangatana. Established six years ago to champion the farmers' cause, for securing remunerative prices for their produce, the Sangatana under the leadership of Sharad Joshi has now formed a women's front to tackle the problems confronting them in the countryside. In a limited period of time the Sangatana has succeeded in securing higher prices for agricultural produce in certain cases. As far as women farm labourers are concerned, this remained a distant dream. Sharad Joshi was disheartened, for his credo was that the new peasant movement has a historical

36. Gaugh, K; op cit., pp.114-15.

37. ibid.

responsibility in pronouncing itself on women's problems.³⁸ As far as the main goal of peasant movement is concerned, the Shetkari Sanghatana differs from the peasant movements launched by the communist party in various States of India. Maintaining distance from Marxist theories, the Shetkari Sanghatana mainly concentrate their attention on women's problems. During its recent Convention at Chandwad, the Sanghatana has decided to capture power in local areas in Maharashtra by fielding women candidates for abolishing the political basis of "the goonda (male) elements who have captured the rural power since independence."³⁹

Peasant Movements in Bihar: The Case of Champaran Satyagraha

Different historical struggles and movements of Bihar peasantry has occurred from time to time from the very beginning. Santhal insurrection of 1855-56, Munda uprising of 1899-1901 and indigo riots of 1867, 1877 and 1907 are few of them. However, these were isolated instances of peasant uprisings⁴⁰ with leadership being provided by the local peasants themselves and without any national perspective and modern idea.⁴¹

38. Purandare, B.M; 'Women Give Boost to Peasant Movements', The Times of India, 4 December 1986.

39. ibid.

40. Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, op cit., p.57.

41. Mishra, Vinod; Report from the Flaming Fields of Bihar, (CPI(ML) Documents, August 1986), p.15.

The peasant struggles of twentieth century took more sustained and protracted form as compared to the earlier peasant struggles. These movements are qualitatively different from earlier movements,⁴² and also marked by outside intervention right from the time of the Champaran Satyagraha of 1917 when Gandhiji first experimented with the peasantry.

Champaran Satyagraha was an agrarian agitation long drawn throughout the nineteenth century and first half of twentieth century, which generated a series of new agrarian movements in Bihar by drawing traditional peasantry in the vortex of contemporary agitation.⁴³ The movement enjoyed popular support of entire population of the district because the entire population was against the planters for one reason or other.⁴⁴ Agricultural labourers were not satisfied because they did not get wages at prevailing rates and they were forced to do unpaid labour. Tenants were against the planters for tinkathia obligation, Cobblers were hit hard because of an attack on their right to hides and, small share-croppers were aggrieved because they were restricted in their operation and subjected to illegal taxes. Money lenders and traders also found the planters in the way of expansion of their business as indigo cultivation had its

42. Mishra, G; op cit., p.317.

43. Das, A.N; 'Peasant and Peasant Organization', in Das, A.N (ed.), op cit., p.46.

44. Mishra, G; op cit., p.296.

own system of advance of cash.⁴⁵

Characterising local leadership, Jacques Pouchepa-dass says, "This oligarchy consists, for the greater part, of high caste peasants, Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumi-hars, Kayasthas, Muslims, Muslim Sikhs etc. Most of these leaders were well off or rich peasants..... Many of these men, like Raj Kumar Shukla himself, were moneylenders. Khendar Rai even had money lending of more than one lakhs of Rupees."⁴⁶ In short the movements were supported by a large number of factory owners, money lenders, businessmen and landholders who found their interests restricted by planters and some teachers and local lawyers who had a link with political organisations and the press outside the district.⁴⁷

G. Mishra divided the agrarian agitations into three categories, which had their roots in the tenurial relations arising from the permanent settlement. The nature of the leadership placed limitations on the movement. It remained directed against the European planters and did not attack the local exploitative elements.⁴⁹ The rich section of rurals were rivals of planters over the employment of agricultural

45. Mishra, V; op cit., p.14.

46. Quoted in Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio Economic Change in Bihar, op cit., p.58.

47. Mishra, B.B; (ed) Selected Documents on Mahatma Gandhi's Movement in Champaran, 1917-18, (Patna, 1963), p.18.

48. Mishra, G; op cit., p.318.

49. Das, A.N; 'Peasant and Peasant Organization', op cit., p.46.

labourers and this rivalry erupted in the movement.⁵⁰

It was Rajkumar Shukla who brought Gandhi to Champaran.⁵¹ His image among the rural masses and his pro usury stand and the harmless form of Satyagraha agitation made him easily acceptable to local leadership. Most of the big zamindars sided with planters on two grounds.⁵² Firstly, the success of peasant movement in Champaran might embolden the ryots in their own villages and so start similar movements against eviction, abwab and begar. Secondly, indigo planters had tremendous influence on governmental administration.

According to Jaque Pancheapadass, Gandhi and a small team of intellectuals played the leading role in the Champaran movement which was a non political peasant movement.⁵³ In subsequent anti British movements, the peasants of Bihar did always raise the banner of anti-landlordism despite Gandhi's disapproval. In 1921, he advocated stopping of tax payment to the government, the peasants extended it to a no rent campaign as well. Gandhi's Satyagraha in Champaran was no more than a fifty six day wander.⁵⁴ In Champaran, the indigo cultivation was replaced by

50. *ibid*, p.47

51. Mishra,G; *op cit.*, p.287.

52. *ibid*, p.292.

53. Quoted in Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar *op cit.*, p.59.

54. Mishra,V; *op cit.*, p.16.

a cash-crop - Sugar cane cultivation, which was more profitable.

On the consequences of peasant movements, G. Mishra writes: "As a result of agrarian agitation, most of the local leaders amassed land at the expense of the actual cultivators... To give only two examples, this happened in Sathi (Bettiah Raj) and Churiharwa (Rammagar Raj)."⁵⁶ The Gandhian agrarian movements whether in Champaran, Kheda and Bardoli or those in U.P. in 1921 and latter in 1930-32, belonged to liberal reformist agitations, mentioned by Dhanagre.

Role of Peasant Organisations

After Champaran movement, Bihar witnessed militant peasant struggles led by the peasant organisations like Kisan Sabha. As A.N. Das cited, "Bihar, one of the backward States in India, has been the scene of almost continuous agrarian unrest since the beginning of the twentieth century. Its issues have been many and diverse at different points of time and in different geographical areas of the State. The nature and form of the peasant protests, too, were different at different times.... But the 1930s saw the emergence in Bihar of a massive peasant organisation, the Kisan Sabha."⁵⁷ The agrarian tensions that occurred in Bihar

56. Mishra, G; op cit., p.319.

57. Das, A.N; 'Peasant and Peasant Organization', in Das, A.N; op cit., p.40.

in twentieth century were due to various reasons. By the 1930s, an organised and widespread movement was led by the Kisan Sabha, under the charismatic and dynamic leadership of Sahajanand Saraswati.⁵⁸ Begar (forced labour), Abwab (illegal exaction), mixture of produce rent into cash rent, disputes over diara land, right to forest produce, grazing land and Bakasht land were the issues that gave rise to peasant struggles against landlords.⁵⁹

Rajputs, Bhumihars, Kurmis and Yadavas together with some other lower castes were fighting for a higher social status. The movement owed its origin to governmental policy⁶⁰ and quickly developed into economic conflicts between upper caste zamindars and lower caste peasants followed by sporadic unrests.⁶¹ The census of 1901 had recorded the Bhumihars and Kayasthas as vaishyas making them socially lower than the Rajputs and Brahmins and equal to the Kurmis, Yadavas, Mauhas, etc. This the Kayasthas and Bhumihars resented for it was not in keeping with their economic status whatever may have their earlier status. A fertile

58. Sen Gupta, Nirmal; 'Agrarian Movement in Bihar', in Das, A.N (ed.) op cit., p.15.

59. Mishra, V; op cit., p.17.

60. Sen Gupta, N; op cit., p.20.

61. Jha, Metkar; 'Lower Caste Peasants and Upper Caste Zamindars in Bihar (1921-25): Analysis of Sanskriti and Contradictions Between the Two Groups', The Indian Economic Social History Review, Vol. XIV, No. 4.

ground for peasant struggles was created by the cumulative effect of all these issues. It was on this basis Kisan Sabha first established in western parts of Patna district in 1927.⁶²

The most important purpose behind the formation of the Kisan Sabha was not peasant struggle but to prevent the tension in the rural areas. As Sahajanand Saraswati himself wrote: "My sole object in doing so (setting up Kisan Sabha) was not to get grievances of the Kisans redressed by mere agitation and propaganda and thus to eliminate all chances of clashes between the Kisans and the zamindars which seemed imminent and thus threatened to destroy the allround national unity so necessary to achieve freedom. Thus I began the organised Kisan Sabha as a staunch class collaborators"⁶³

But he gradually shifted to the radical direction. The Bakasht issue was laying unresolved in 1929. The government proposed to introduce a bill to amend the Tenancy Act which, if passed, would have adversely affected the interests of the tenants. tenants.⁶⁴ At this stage, Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha(B.P.K.S) was formed at the annual gathering of peasants during the Sonapur fair

62. Sahajanand, S; Mera Jeevan Sangharsa, (Patna: (Hindi)(Posthumous), 1952), pp.321-22.

63. Quoted in Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, op cit., p.90.

64. Mishra, V; op cit., p.19.

in 1929.⁶⁵ Jamuna Karjee, Jadunandan Sharma, Karyanand Sharma, Dhanraj Sharma, Kishore Prasad Singh, Indradeep Sinha, Bhogendra were important activists of this organisation. After a few years, the organisation was joined by famous intellectuals like Rahul Sankrityayan and Nagarjuna and socialist leaders like J.P.Narayan, Ram Briksh Benipuri and Ganga Sharan Sinha.⁶⁶

The main objective of B.F.K.S's formation was marked by dropping the proposed tenancy reform. The Kisan Sabha grew from strength to strength on the crest of these waves of stirring political and economic events: civil disobedience movement, great Depression, provincial autonomy and second world war.⁶⁷ The Kisan Sabha has waged the important struggle against the tenancy bill in 1933, the Rewara struggles in Gaya in 1933 and again in 1938 and the Bakasht movements in Barahiya Tal, Rewara Majawara and Amwari during 1936-38 etc.⁶⁸

Peasant movements were also started in Sahabad, Saran, Darbhanga, Patna, Champaran and Bhagalpur districts from time to time. The most legendary peasant struggle in Bihar under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha was the Bakasht movements in

65. Das, A.N; op cit., p.91.

66. ibid.

67. Mishra, V; op cit., p.19

68. Das, A.N; op cit., p.130.

Barahiya Tal which not only continued for many years but led to great victory of the tenants and laid a strong foundation of the communist party in India.⁶⁹

On the basis of the study of Bakasht struggle in Monghyr, Rakesh Gupta observes that peasant struggles in its ideology, consciousness, organisation and mobilization and form of struggle progressively moved towards mass politics assuming communist consciousness.⁷⁰ The Bihar Tenancy Amendment Act of 1937 and the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht land and Areas of Rent Act, 1938 were legislated on the basis of compromises with the zamindars under the guidance of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. In his study, R. Gupta argues that Rajendra Prasad's award in the Bakasht land dispute was pro-landlord.⁷¹ The landlords set up certain bogus organisations claiming to represent the agricultural labourers, for weakening Kisan Sabha.⁷² They were entrenched inside the Congress high command in Bihar.⁷³ In a reaction to emerging strength of Kisan Sabha, the Bihar Provincial Khet Mazdoor Sabha was set up in 1937 by Jag Jivan Ram.⁷⁴

69. *ibid.* p.131.

70. Gupta, Rakesh; *op cit.*, p.326.

71. *ibid.*, pp.313-15.

72. Das, A.N; *op cit.*, p.138.

73. Gupta, Rakesh, *op cit.*, p.316.

74. Das, A.N; *op cit.*, p.139.

Peasant Movements in the Post-Independent Bihar

After independence, the socialists set up splitist organisations like the Hindu Kisan Panchayat and Kisan Sabha activists joined the Forward Bloc. S.Sahajanand set up a separate All India United Kisan Sabha whose main objective and demand was nationalization of land.⁷⁵

By 1941, internal differentiation within the peasantry had come up. As Sahajanand said, "The Kisan Sabha belongs to those exploited and suffering masses whose lot is connected with cultivation and (who) live with it. The more they are oppressed and distressed the nearer they are to the Kisan Sabha and the nearer it is to them."⁷⁶ "The rural proletariat is becoming aware of its rights, duties and responsibilities... When it becomes fully aware, there will be final dance of destruction and the present iniquitous agrarian system will start crumbling."⁷⁷

The peasant struggles of 1950s and 1960s, may be observed as Second Awakening of peasant movements, were the result of the process of the distribution of luaves.⁷⁸ And was developed on the questions of bataidar's rights, famine

75. *ibid*, p.141.

76. Quoted in Das, A.N; *op cit.*, p.137.

77. Quoted in Mishra, V; *op cit.*, p.22.

78. Das, A.N; *op cit.*, p.222.

relief measures, taqui loans, canal rent in irrigated areas and sugar cane prices.⁷⁹ In these recent movements the poor section of the people firmly stood against the new rich peasants whose emergence was the product of the abolition of zamindari system.⁸⁰

In 1950s a major struggle started by the bataidars. In Kosi areas the zamindars were in the hope of getting tracts of diara land reclaimed by tenants brought in from various adjoining districts and then evicting these tenants at higher rents. Since 1939 the adivasi bataidars had resisted eviction attempts. In 1950s this struggle under the leadership of the legendary Nakshtra Malakar reached such a peak that the government was forced to undertake a fresh survey and settlement operations in Purnea in 1952. At least half of the total bataidar families came to be recorded as occupancy tenants. In a number of places the bataidars were also in pushing the rent down to one fourth or even stopped paying it altogether.⁸¹

After the death of Sahajanand, his close associate Karyanand Sharma led the movement. He had led the Barahiya

79. Mishra,V; op cit., p.23.

80. Omvedt, Gail(ed.): Land, Caste and Policy in Indian States, (Delhi, 1982), pp.1-36.

81. Sen Gupta, Nirmal; 'Agrarian Movement in Bihar', in Das, A.N., op cit., p.29.

Bakasht struggle of 1937-39.⁸² The establishment of the Khet Mazdoor unions by the CPI under the veteran leadership of Pt.Karyanand Sharma produced a fillip in the agricultural labourers' struggles. By 1957, the struggle had spread throughout Gaya district against social oppression by employers for increasing wage in accordance with the minimum fixed by the government. In a few places, the agricultural labourers began to receive higher wages. After the death of Karyanand Sharma the movement lasted for a short time since drought conditions had set in by about 1965.⁸³

The Sathi Farm Struggle

This movement was started after independence in Champaran district of Bihar. The root of the movement can be traced to pre-independence period of the first Congress ministry.

The Congress government appointed B.B.Verma, an important Congress leader and landholder of Champaran, to be the first Indian manager of the British Raj after assumption by the courts of wards.⁸⁴ By 1950, Verma settled a large amount of gairmazama Malik lands with his relatives, important Congress

82. Gupta, Rakesh; op cit., pp.318-20.

83. Sen gupta, N; op cit., p.30.

84. Mishra, G; op cit., 297.

leaders and influential outsiders like Birla and Nepaul. This was in contravention with one of the important principles of settlement of such lands by the wards of encumbered estate.⁸⁵

The local peasant leaders resisted the occupation of the land by Ramnaresh Shahi and his brother who were outsiders and their agitation took a serious turn. Gandhi condemned the settlement. On the intervention of Congress leaders, Prajapati Mishra was appointed to act as arbitrator between the peasants and Shahis. However, the peasants rejected the award and highlighted the fact that arbitrator himself had the Rajland.⁸⁶ The peasants expressed negatively to the settlements. The government of Bihar passed Sathi Land Restoration Act, 1950 for the cancellation of the settlement with Shahi. But the legislation failed.⁸⁷ The agitation continued.⁸⁸ The entire period of 50s and 60s the movement remained the sole flame of aorganised peasant resistance in Bihar and also become a symbol of inspiration for peasant movements in other parts of Bihar. The lead in struggle sometimes passed on from the socialists to the communists and sometimes vice versa.⁸⁹

85. Das, A.N; Agrarian Unrest and Socio Economic Change in Bihar, op cit., p.223.

86. Mishra, G; op cit., pp.297-98.

87. Das, A.N; op cit., p.225

88. Mishra, G; op cit., p.299.

89. Das, A.N; op cit., p.225.

The agitation against the Ramnagar Raj and the movement for the settlement of the Bettiah Raj's land with local people and actual cultivators was supported by the socialist party and the communist party.⁹⁰

Kisan Sabha in Champaran

The CPI(M) held a parallel Kisan Sabha in Turkulia Block of the East Champaran which began to offer passive resistance to the local tyrant in the late '60s.

The movement assumed an active shape on issues of minimum wages, security of tenure and social oppression.⁹¹ R.N. Maharaj, in his case studies, pointed out that this Sabha is different from the earlier organisation and can be said to have started only in the late '60s.⁹²

The Kisan Sabha, under the leadership of Ramashray Singh, mobilized poor peasants. They avoided show of traditional respect to the landlords. They invited severe repression by the landlords and the state. A number of cases were lodged against the Sabha's activists⁹³ and many poor peasants were implicated in false cases because the oppressive and blood sucking landlords had sons in high positions in the bureaucracy and spokesmen in the legislature.⁹⁴ But the

90. Mishra,G; op cit., p.299.

91. Mishra,V; op cit., p.24.

92. Quoted in Das,A.N; op cit., p.226.

93. ibid, pp.227-228.

94. Sinha,Arun; 'Class War in Bhojpur', EPW, Vol .XIII, No.1,1978.

strength of the Sabha grew from time to time. In 1977, CPI(M) leaders compromised and switched over almost exclusively to electoral politics.⁹⁵

The late 1960s and early 1970s is regarded as the period of important peasant struggles throughout the country, including Bihar. This is the period when the new technological revolution took place in rural India, that is popularly known as green revolution. In political terms, green revolution first gave birth to strong regional parties like Shethkari Sangatana, BKU and numerous militant organisations.⁹⁶ The persistence of widening gap between 'haves' and 'have not's' accentuated social tensions.⁹⁷ In Bihar, the poor peasants, share-croppers and agricultural labourers, Harijan adivasis and also other sections of the society had actively participated in the struggles manifesting militancy⁹⁹. Under the leadership of one faction or the other of the CPI(ML), in Musahari, Purnea,¹⁰⁰ Bhojpur¹⁰¹ and Patna¹⁰², the militant peasant struggles erupted out.

95. Das, A.N; op cit., p.229.

96. Chaudhary, P.K; 'Peasant Movement in Patna District, 1960-84', Teaching Politics, Vol.XII, No.1, 1986.

97. Das, A.N; op cit., pp.222-223.

98. Joshi, R.S; 'Dark World of Harijans and Adivasis', Link, 5 June 1977.

99. Chaudhary, P.K: op cit.

100. Das, A.N; op cit., p.230

101. Mukherjee, K and Yadav, Rajendra Singh, 'Four Reasons of State Oppression and Resistance - A Study of Bhojpur Peasantry', in Das, A.N; op cit., p.120.

102. Chaudhary, P.K; op cit.

Peasant Uprising in Bhojpur

Right from the beginning of 1857 upto contemporary period Bhojpur peasants have had showed the revolutionary potential to fight against social injustice, economic inequality and political domination. It has historical background of peasant movements and struggles.

Canal system and commercialization of agriculture provided material conditions for the widespread peasant movements in Bhojpur.¹⁰³ The migration of rural people for subsistence and conscription of villages into defence forces have left in the hearts of population a saying, "Arrah zilla Ghar ba, Kis Baat Ka Dar Ba".¹⁰⁴ High Canal rates, lack of technology and I.A.D.F scheme known as package programme have put agricultural labourers and marginal labourers under the subjugation of the 1.5% of rich peasants. The implementation of land reforms remained only on papers.¹⁰⁵

Ekwari: - A village situated in Bhojpur district of Bihar was a prominent place of Naxalite movement. There was a school teacher, Jagdish Mahto, called founding father of Naxalite movement in Bhojpur district.¹⁰⁶ Supporting Ramnaresh Ram (CPI) backed by the

103. Mukherjee, Kalyan; 'Bhojpur: The Long War', Mainstream (New Delhi) Vol. XVI, No. 45, 46, July 8 and 15, 1978.

104. Mukherjee, K and Kala Manju, 'Bhojpur: The Long Struggle' in Das, A.N and Nilakant, V (ed.) Agrarian Relations in India, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1979), p.215.

105. *ibid*, p.216-217.

106. Sinha, Arun; 'Class War in Bhojpur', EPW, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Jan 7, 1978.

lower caste peasants and labourers, he resisted election rigging by the biggest landlord of the village, Nathuni Singh, who supported Raj Deo Ram(P.S.P) sponsored by the upper caste landlords. Simultaneously, he and other teachers and mofussil intellectuals formed the Kisan Mazdoor Sangram Samiti which included the demand of Harijanistan in its programme. The organisation got interwoven with specific Marxist-Leninist ideology and attracted poor peasants and agricultural labourers.¹⁰⁷ In 1972, Jagdish Mahto with his friend Ramnaresh Ahir, killed a Rajput landlord known as Saheb. Jagdish Mahto was killed in an encounter between two factions of Naxalites.¹⁰⁸ Before the mobilization of peasants in the district of Bhojpur and the formation of Kisan Mazdoor Sangram Samiti, several events took place. Under the leadership of Satyanarayan Sinha, crop seizure took place in the Baxur diara. Charu Mazumdar, (CPI(ML) leader, visited rural areas of Bhojpur and convened the first Bihar State Conference of the CPI(ML) in Nathpur village of Rohtas district.¹⁰⁹

In Sahar, the peasants captured plots of land ranging from 30 to 125 bighas which are being collectively used for housing and cultivation purpose. In 1978, peasantry started the movement by waging mass movement and developing mass organisations. An important

107. Mukherjee, K and Kala Manju, op cit, pp.220-221.

108. Sinha, Arun; 'Class War in Bhojpur', op cit.

109. Das, A.N; op cit., p.249.

development in this regard was the demonstration of 3,000 people at Ara demanding the release of Girja Ram, a member of an armed unit. This was first ever mass demonstration led by the CPI(ML) in Bhojpur district. In 1979, Jan Kalyan Samiti was formed by CPI(ML) of Vinod Mishra.

The political mobilization can be seen in the incident of Chenri, Pullam Chak, Agiaon, Berath and Baruhi lower strata of the people fought with landlords and police, for the wage demands under the banner of some radical organisations.

The Land Grab Movement

Following the failure of the various agrarian reforms measures such as land reforms, Bhoodan and Gramdan movements, Land Grab movement came into force in the four districts; Purnea, Mujaffarpur, Patna, Arrah, and Monghyr. With the help of this movement, the poor peasants (evicted tenants) started to capture more and more evicted and surplus lands. J.P.Narayan and various political parties could not check the movement. The following reasons are supposed to be responsible for this movement: (1) Inspiration from the land grab movement of Bengal, (2) the expectation of poor peasants from newly formed joint front ministry in 1967, (3) Commitment of this new government; (4) the government decision to implement land reform and ceiling.¹¹⁰

110. Das, A.N; op cit., pp.232-239.

This movement, launched jointly by the socialists and the CPI in the sowing season of 1970, was ultimately turned into a symbolic, instead of real, attack on the iniquities of land structure of the Bihar.¹¹¹

During 1981-85, struggles for capturing vested land, shares, river banks, ponds, and orchards were launched in a number of villages of Patna district by peasants of CPI(ML).¹¹²

Masaurhi of Patna district witnessed peasant uprising in 1970-75. The government decided to settle Harijans on cleared lands in Modhuban village of Dhanaruo Block. Yadav rich peasants captured it and started terrorising the Harijan labourers. When Musahars resisted those vicious atrocities of the landowners in Nema village, they were declared as Naxalites.¹¹³ The trouble soon snowballed into organised armed revolt. The spearhead was against the feudal mode of exploitation and aimed at overthrowing the system through armed struggle.¹¹⁴ Wage movement was also launched in 38 villages of Bikram bloc under the direct leadership of the Kisan Sabha. In another 11 villages it broke out spontaneously and remaining 18 villages landlords increased wage without any direct movement.¹¹⁵

111. Sinha, Indradeep; 'Land Liberation Movement in Bihar', Mainstream, 10 October 1970.

112. Chaudhary, P.K; op cit.

113. Das, A.N; op cit., pp.239-241.

114. Chaudhary, P.K; op cit.

115. Mishra, V; op cit., p.132.

The Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha(B.P.K.S) was formed by the militant peasants of Bihar when they came out of their villages and staged an armed demonstration on the streets of the State capital. The main slogans were (1) fight against social injustice; (2) fight against social inequality; (3) proper implementation of land reforms; (4) cultural consciousness. The B.P.K.S organized meetings, processions, gheraos, strikes and efforts to deal with problems of villages through a kind of collective mechanism known as Chaupal meetins. The B.P.K.S organized its first State Conference in March 1984. The following demands of the B.P.K.S were made: Seizure of crops of land illegally held by landlords, and grains hoarded by landlords, to feed the starving peasantry. To fight for the abolition of bonded labour system and for increasing the wages, seizure of surplus land above the ceiling, seizure of benami land, to fight for reduction of rent, supporting the peasant struggles against merchants, bureaucratic capitalists, to fight for various government relief measures, and to develop organisation of the people as "village self defence corps", volunteer forces, to enable them to defend themselves from the attack of oppressors. The remarkable features of this struggle was that peasants succeeded by binging the landless away from the caste barriers and uniting them with Harijans.¹¹⁶

116. Quoted in Chaudhary,P.K; op cit.

In Bihar, caste armies has been organised by the landlords to suppress the increasing organizing strength of the poor. There is Bhumi Sena of the Kurmi landlords, the Brahmaarshi Sena of the Bhumihaar landlords, the Kumar Singh Sena of the Rajput landlords and the Lorik Sena of Yadav landlords. These Senas are getting the support of the State government. These Senas are mainly localised in the central districts of Bihar - Patna, Nalanda, Gaya, Aurangabad and Bhojpur - and these districts are better off economically than the Adivasi belt in South Bihar and the over populated areas of North Bihar.¹¹⁷ The hostile attitude of the State is obvious from the fact that 'Operation Black Panther' and 'Task Force' in Gaya has been launched by the State government to flush out the militant peasant's organisations.¹¹⁸ The armed clashes between Senas of the landlords and the peasants, severe suppression of the peasant movements, cold-blooded murder of revolutionaries, killings of notorious landlords, strikes of the poor people and police firings on processions and mass meetings are regular features of Bihar.

The unequal distribution of land, and the exploitation of the poor gave birth to peasant movements in Bihar. In most of

117. Mojundar, Modhumita; 'Bihar's Bloody Trail', The Hindustan Times, Friday, 3 October, 1986.

118. Dutt, Nilanjan; 'Arwal Massacre, Part of Government Part', EPW, Vol. XXI, No.27, 1986.

these movements the poor peasants who were the worst sufferers had always participated, under the leadership of rich peasant leaders. It was during 1970-'80, these movements had their own leaders, but they were also guided by the ideologies of the upper class. Even the leaders of the Naxalite movement were drawn from upper classes.



C O N C L U S I O N

The main objective of the land tenure system introduced by the British was to extract maximum possible surplus from agricultural sector for promoting industry in their home country. The rulers adopted a policy of de-industrialization of India. The siphoning of the maximum possible surplus was done by them with the help of landlords. However, subjugating, squeezing and fleecing of the peasantry was not a characteristic feature in Bihar alone, it was in the whole of rural India during the colonial period. All the agrarian Acts passed by the colonial state only served the interests of the landlords. There was a connivance between the British rulers and the indigenous landlords. The latter in fact were British agents rather than the representatives of their own people. The colonial peasantry including the one in Bihar was exploited by the colonial state with the help of landlords in the form of eviction and exorbitant rent.

Apart from the legal means, extra-legal and illegal lesses, Salami money and vicious system of Corvee were imposed by the ruling classes on the poor peasantry. Throughout the colonial period, cash crops were augmented at the cost of food-crops. The increment of agricultural production in rural India, as was the aim of the Britishers, was not realized to an effective length.

Simultaneously, poor peasants and agricultural labourers have waged relentless struggles against the system. From 1930s to 1950s, Kisan Sabha, the most powerful and fairly widespread organisation, launched heroic peasant struggles in Bihar around various agrarian questions. In the colonial period, the character of the movement was anti-imperialist and anti-zamindari. The Champaran satyagraha did not question the ubiquitous nature of the system, although all sections of the society participated in the struggle. B.P.K.S. was outside the orbit of liberal political party.

After Independence the permanent settlement has been permanently unsettled in Bihar. The zamindari system was abolished as a result of India's independence, peasant movements, and the role of leaders such as S.Saraswati and K.B.Sahay. Land reforms including Bhoodan, Gramdan and Sampatidan movements were started in response to the demands realized through various peasant movements in different parts of India. All the agrarian reform measures, other than the abolition of zamindari system, taken by the State governments in India, have not been quite effective. As far as its implementation is concerned, U.P, Bihar, and Rajasthan have been the least effected States. The position of the weaker section has not improved much in rural India. Oral lease is still prevalent in different parts of India and in Bihar. The eviction of tenants is a common phenomenon. Tenancy Act has not been quite effective in Bihar.

During 1950s and 1960s, several agrarian movements were initiated in Bihar. The green revolution was also introduced. It was expected that this would trickle down to the rural poor. Some parts of rural India such as Punjab and Haryana have shown decisively the positive gains of green revolution. Partly it was due to ryotwari system in these areas and partly it was due to efforts of the State governments. It has, however, widened the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. In Kerala, wage has increased due to peasant movements. In Punjab, wage has also increased due to scarcity of labour. In other parts of India wages have not changed much due to either absence of green revolution or abundance of wage labourers or due to the lack of peasant mobilisation. All the three or a combination of any two or due to one of the three factors wages remained relatively unchanged. Certainly production has also not changed partly due to the same factors.

Accentuation of inequality and concentration of the means of production in a fewer hands have increased the number of agricultural labourers, the polarisation of small farmers into the ranks of agricultural labourers and, the gap between the rich and the poor. Perhaps, the technology-oriented agrarian policy of the government has also added to the gravity of inequality.

In Bihar, there are 20 landlords who possess more than 1000 acres of land. Class polarisation could be seen in Bihar in terms of landlords comprising erstwhile zamindars,

naibs, moneylenders on the one hand, and bataidars, poor peasants and agricultural labourers on the other. The middle and rich peasants have emerged from the class of well-off occupancy ryots. They have emerged as a Kulak-lobby, and are generally aggressive against peasants and agricultural labourers.

As a result of the green revolution, militant struggles of the peasantry under the leadership of CPI(ML) occurred in which agricultural labourers and poor peasantry have been participating since middle of 1960s. The Bhojpur movement in Bihar is largely an offshoot of the Naxalbari movement of West Bengal.

The socio-economic condition of the rural poor in Bihar has not considerably increased. Some of their main demands have been articulated effectively through peasant movements. The rich and the well-entrenched sections in Bihar have been on a warpath against the poor. The State has also not been able to do much to tackle the menace of the landlord-moneylender combine. Killing of both landlords and peasant leaders and armed clashes between the private armies of both the landlords and the peasants have been a common phenomenon in Bihar.

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