

**PEASANT MOVEMENT IN CENTRAL BIHAR: 1980-90**  
**A SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled "PEASANT MOVEMENT IN CENTRAL BIHAR: 1980-90 A SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDY", submitted by Vinay Ranjan in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University, has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other University. This is his own work.

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

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VINAY RANJAN

## INTRODUCTION

17th March 1994, at least 7 poor peasants and labourers were gunned down by the Police in the Narhi Village of Bhojpur district while they were preparing to participate in the CPI(M-L) Liberation's rally for social transformation in Patna the next day.<sup>1</sup>

The year 1992, eight left parties and groups led by Communist Party of India (CPI) and Indian People's Front (IPF) launched a campaign to "liberate" surplus land from the clutches of feudal landlords and distribute it among the landless.... By the mid August the CPI claimed to have liberated over 40,000 acres of land, while the IPF's tally was 14,000 acres. It is, rather, a different story that most of this land either belonged to the Government, religious *mutts* or those plots for which the landless were already given *parchas* (deeds) but not physical possession....<sup>2</sup>

In continuation of the above move, in order to give not just mere *parchas*, the IPF forcibly settled 100-odd families by cornering near five acres of government land near Dahibhatta village in Patna district....<sup>3</sup>

...12th February 1992, Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) massacred 36 people of a particular upper caste in Bara Village of Gaya district in retaliation to Meen-Barsimha

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1. The Times of India (Patna, March 18, 1994).
  2. F. Ahmed, "Land Movement is Back in Bihar" in India Today (New Delhi, Sept. 15, 1992).
  3. Ibid.

massacre in which Savarn Liberation Front (a private army) had killed 10 people on 23.12.91, they were supporters of MCC.<sup>4</sup>

...21st September 1991, Savarna Liberation Front killed 7 people, including 6 harijans, in Savanbiga of Jehanabad district. The killed were supporters of Majdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti.<sup>5</sup>

22nd June 1991, Deochand-Sahiyara villages in Bhojpur district, 14 supporters of CPI(M-L) Liberation were killed by Kisan Sangh (a private army).<sup>6</sup>

...19th February 1991, 14 poor peasant/labourer supporters of IPF-BPKS<sup>7</sup> were massacred by the Kisan Sangh at Tiskhora, Patna.<sup>8</sup>

...1st March 1991, in the night of Holi Festival goonda men of notorious landlord Jwala Singh of Danwar Bihata village in Bhojpur district, gang-raped several women in the village. In the same village in November 1989, when harijans dared to practise their franchise, gang of Jwala Singh

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4. Ye Fasal Umidon Ki Hamdan, Madhya Bihar mein Jan Sanhar aur Kisan Sangharsh - A Report by PUDR (Delhi, Dec. 1992), p.29.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha.

8. Ye Fasal Umidon ki Hamdam, ... - A Report by PUDR, op. cit., p.29.

had massacred 15 of them.<sup>9</sup> At last, one morning in January 1994 Jwala Singh was killed by armed men, suspected to be members of armed squad of CPI(M-L) Liberation, while he was heading towards Patna in private motor car.

...19th April 1986, Arwal Kasba in Jehanabad district, MKSS men and supporters were holding a mass meeting in the complex of a library adjacent to the Police Station. Suddenly, the police opened fire on unarmed people and gunned down at least 21.<sup>10</sup>

The list is endless....

Does the central Bihar, a 'simmering cauldron' focus the sharp contradiction of the contemporary Bihar? Altogether 52 blocks in the 14 districts covering 30 police stations have been identified as "extremist affected" areas of the central Bihar. Roughly speaking, this covers a population of about 1.8 crore, about 25% of Bihar's total population. Out of this, 41 blocks are located in the seven contiguous districts, namely, Patna, Nalanda, Bhojpur<sup>11</sup> and Rohtas<sup>12</sup> of Patna division and Gaya, Jehanabad and Auranga-

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9. Vishnu Rajgarhiya, Bihar, Yahan Kabra hai Loktantra ki: Jan Andolano par daman ki ek report (Patna, Dec. 1991), pp.37-38.

10. Vishnu Rajgarhiya, Barbar Police Raj mein Badalta Bihar: Nagarik Adhikaron evam Kisan Andolan par daman ki ek report (Patna, Nov. 1992), p.15.

11. Now Buxar and Bhabhua districts have been carved out of Bhojpur and Rohtas respectively.

12. Ibid.



bad of Magadh division.<sup>13</sup> Central Bihar, here, is identified as an area between south of Ganga and north of plateau region of Bihar. The districts of central Bihar consists of Patna, Gaya, Nalanda, Aurangabad, Nawadah, Rohtas, Bhojpur, South Monghyr and South Bhagalpur.

The central Bihar districts have high density of population, next only to the north Bihar. The central Bihar districts have high proportion of scheduled caste population. The literacy percentage is also high in these districts. As against 38% for Bihar as a whole, the literacy percentage in these districts ranges between 39% to 49%. Agriculture in these districts are relatively better as indicated by the proportion of area irrigated per acre fertiliser consumption, and the area under HYV. (Shown in tables 3, 4, 5 in Chapter II)

However, in spite of the relatively better agriculture, the industrialisation in the area is very low other than few agro-based industries. Nevertheless, the overall analysis of social-economic characteristics of central Bihar indicates that these districts are much better placed than other districts of the state. And yet central Bihar instead of experiencing relative social tranquility, is frequently convulsed with agrarian struggle inspired by 'extremist' ideology for social and economic emancipation.

The peasant movement in central Bihar is not only intensive but prolonged too. So, one has to ponder over

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13. A report of the committee of a Central Govt. Team led by Sri J.S. Baizal, Secretary, Planning Commission, during their visit in Bihar - 14th-16th July, 1985 (Report confidential, unpublished).

some of the facets of the movement of central Bihar. In this connection, there is need to understand whether the agrarian movement in central Bihar is a fallout of a capitalist transformation in agriculture? Or the peasant movement is directed to take the state out of the quagmire of stagnation due to poverty, exploitation and low wages? Apart from the above political-economic parameters of enquiry, some others give importance to the problem of social oppressions, maintaining that more than economic exploitation and injustice, it is the social oppression which was proved to the rural poor to be the proverbial 'last straw on the camel's back'.

The present study is focussed on central Bihar because this is the region, primarily, which experienced first the flames of the present phase of peasant movement with its genesis in the heroic struggles of Bhojpur and Patna between 1972 and 1979, the third milestone after Telangana in 1946-49 and the Naxalbari in 1967-71, and is still the torch bearer of the struggles. Yet, the study will be incomplete if the central Bihar is studied in isolation, not only because the flames have spread over to other regions as well but also because other regions, too, have history of peasant movement. So, other regions will also be referred to whenever need is felt.

The time period chosen is 1981-90, as movement during this period can be identified as a distinct phase. The spurt of 1970s in Bhojpur and Patna entered a new phase in the early 80s with the emergence of mass and peasant organisations and became somewhat stagnant at the end of 80s completing the phase. Now a new phase of the movement has

begun, the real shape of which will be clear in the time to come. But, it will be historically wrong to study the phase of 1980s in isolation, it can be seen and understood in a continu-um only.

Development of social phenomenon does not necessarily follow unlinear track. The peasant movement in the central Bihar may be combination of all the above mentioned facts. In reality, the relation between inequality and social conflict is not as simple. Whereas one might expect conflict to be particularly common where inequalities are sharp and visible, they sometimes appear in their most acute forms where inequalities are actually declining. In all such cases, one has to consider inequalities not only as they exist but also as they are perceived. Under conditions of social and political change a real decline in inequality may be accompanied by a heightened comprehension of the differences which persist. The central Bihar has emerged as an important chapter in the history of peasant movements in India and it will be quite relevant to take the history into account in explaining and understanding the present phase. For the historical enquiry, I have chosen to confine it to the period of late 1920s to the late 1970s. This has been done in the first chapter.

Bihar was the first state to enact the laws for the abolition of the Zamindari as early as in 1950s, as a step towards total land reforms. Yet, interestingly, Bihar is the state where land reforms has been done the least. The next chapter deals with the story of land reforms. It also takes up the present situation of land distribution and the development and reform programmes launched by the

government, which have important bearings at the present situation and movement.

The third chapter deals with the peasant movement in 1980s. It explains the class and caste structures and the overlap between the two in the rural Bihar, it then explains the type of production relationship, in the theoretical background, and its impact on accumulation and development of agriculture. With this background, the movement and its central issues are explained. Then, the forces concerned with the movement, organisations leading the movement and the counter and reactionary forces like private and caste armies, are briefly introduced.

In the last and fourth chapter a general sketch of the methods of functioning of the organisations, through which the movement evolved and developed, has been given. At the same time, the problems that the organisations are facing and which are to be resolved to carry forward the movement, on ideological, theoretical, political, strategical and organisational fronts have also been briefly discussed.

The present study has its own limitations. It does not touch the geographical, ecological, and cultural aspects and factors of the movement. Geographical factors do play important role in the development and nature of agriculture and so do the ecological factors. So, these two might also have bearings on the movement. But, as the study has been restricted to social and economic enquiries in the movement, the other factors have not been taken up. But, then, cultural aspect, which is an integral part of society, too, has not been touched upon.

CHAPTER I  
HISTORICAL SETTING

The fields of Bihar, besides being agriculturally fertile, have been fertile for peasants movements also. Not only in the plains but in the plateaus also, the peasants have risen in revolts against the exploiters, be it the East India Company or British Empire or the *zamindars* or for that matter the local lords. The glorious history of militant peasant movements goes back to 1855-56, to the days of Santhal-Hool,<sup>1</sup> when the people of Santhal region rose with arms in hand against the British rulers and their pillars, i.e., the *zamindars* and the traders-cum-moneylenders. According to the historian E.J. Mann following were the reasons of the revolt:<sup>2</sup>

1. Traders' habitual tendency to 'loot' and exploit the local people.
2. Indebtedness of the people, eventually resulting in bonded labour from generation to generation.
3. Extreme oppression by corrupt bureaucracy and police, and their collusion with traders.

But more than these, the truth, behind the revolt, according to Santhal Pargana Gazetteer, lies in "the aspirations of the people to regain their monopoly on the land with no external interference added with irresistible wish for independence" and thus they raised the slogan "Let's

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1. Santhal-revolt.
  2. 'Santhal-Hool ki Gourav-Gatha' in Navyug (Patna, Feb. 1986), pp.6-7.

establish independent Santhal State under our own leadership".<sup>3</sup> Inhuman oppressions under *Istamarari* Settlement, introduced in 1793, added fuel to the flames of aspirations of the Santhal people. Other illustrious struggles of this series were the Munda revolt of 1899-1901 and Indigo revolt of the late 19th century. The common feature of these struggles has been that all such struggles were independently led and organised by local leaders devoid of any national perspective and modern thoughts. It was only with the Champaran Satyagraha in 1917 that any peasant struggle was not only influenced by a national perspective and modern thought but, at the same time, was organised and led by a leader - an outsider - and he was none but Gandhi.<sup>4</sup> Though almost entire population of region, for various reasons, participated in the Satyagraha, however, the leadership remained in the hands of moneylenders and users, rich contractors, small *zamindars*, ex-employees of the indigo factory and teachers. Agitation did not last long and was confined to a limited agenda, it did not address the serious issues like land relations. Indigo plantation came to an end not because of Satyagraha but because of invention of artificial and cheap colour.<sup>5</sup>

With the Champaran Satyagraha Bihar emerged on the national map of peasants' struggles but the 'real' history of peasant movements in Bihar begins with the formation of Kisan Sabha in the western part of Patna district in 1927.

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3. Ibid.

4. Bihar ke Dhadhakate khet-khalihano ki Dastan - A CPI(M-L) Document (Gorakhpur, 1986), p.15.

5. Ibid.

And it is this history that I will concentrate upon in this chapter. The history of peasant movement up to 1978-79 can be divided into three phases:

- (i) Swami Sahaja Nanda and Kisan Sabha,
- (ii) From Independence up to Naxalbari,
- (iii) Naxalbari revolt.

**(i) Swami Sahaja Nanda and Kisan Sabha:**

During 1920-30 nowhere else in India, the agricultural situations were as bad as it were in Bihar.<sup>6</sup> The whole Bihar was under Permanent Settlement. The peasants were forced deprived of their traditional rights. They were denied the rightful use of grazing fields and forest land, fishing, *basgit* land, canals for irrigation and protection from unreasonable hike in rent. Apart from these the peasants were subjected to *begar*,<sup>7</sup> *Abwabs*,<sup>8</sup> conversion of *bhaoli*<sup>9</sup> land to *Nagadi* land and disputes for ownership on *diara*<sup>10</sup> land. What the *zamindars* had to pay as land revenue was more or less fixed but what was not limited and fixed was their 'right' to extortion through thousands of *abwabs* and several types of *begars*. Under the Permanent Settlement, thus, a series of intermediaries has emerged which

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6. Walter Hausser, "Samaj ki Khetigat Sthiti" in Chandra Bhushan, ed., Sahajnanda se Charu aur Ab, Varanasi.

7. *begar* - labour rent (extra-economic coercion), corvee.

8. *abwab* - illegal payments (cesses).

9. *bhaoli* - system of levying rent as share of produce rather than in cash.

10. *diara* - river bed and river bank lands.

lived on the blood of the peasant, in fact they had turned into criminals, touts and dacoits. For the payment of extortions they did not hesitate in selling the daughters of peasants, canning and encroaching the modesty of women was very common to which no *zamindar* was an exception.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in Bihar in 1920's we witness *zamindars*, *Naibs*, *Absentee zamindars* and other intermediaries (beside *karindas*<sup>12</sup>) - a series of intermediaries and this multiplied faster than in geometrical proportion. In 1793 Lord Cornwallis had given *zamindaris*, in Bengal-Bihar, to 46,000 people only. But by the end of 1939 this number jumped to 80,00,000.<sup>13</sup> At national level, during 1901-1921, the increase in rent-collectors was more than 250 per cent, and no doubt, the situation in Bihar was worst. The more the number of revenue collectors increased, the more the peasants were imburdened. These *zamindars* and uppermost strata of Bihar, were the social base of British-rule and thus the most noted enemy of the people in general and the peasant community in particular.

While at the time of Permanent Settlement about 90 per cent of the total cultivated area in Bihar was under produce rent, but by 1812 it diminished to 75 per cent and by 1910 it further shrank to about 20 per cent in the whole Bihar. But this decrease in the practice of produce rent was far

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11. Ashok Kumar, "Sahajananda Saraswati Ki Virasat" in Nayug (Patna, March 1990), pp.26-27.
  12. Messenger employed by *zamindars* for nominal payments and who, basically and primarily, lived on loot of peasants.
  13. Ashok Kumar, op. cit., 1990, p.27.



less in the districts of central Bihar plains.

**Table 1: Percentage of the Area and under Produce Rent to the Total Cultivated Area held by Settled Occupancy Ryots in Different Districts of Bihar (by about the 1910s)**

Districts North of the Ganga	Percentage of Area under produce Rent	South of the Ganga Districts	Percentage of Area under produce Rent
Champaran	4	South Bhagalpur	16
Saran	7	South Munger	32
Muzaffarpur	8	Patna	44
Darbhanga	8	Sahabad	21
North Munger	6	Gaya	66
North Bhagalpur	9		

Source: Movement of Rent in Eastern India, 1793, 1930, Binay Bhushan Choudhary, *The Indian Historical Review*, Indian Council of Historical Research, January, 1977, Vol.III, No.2.

The *bhaoli* system could be more acceptable in central Bihar because the maintenance of indigenous irrigation system was less expensive. In contrast, organising irrigation facilities in north Bihar entailed massive investment for flood control, which was beyond the capacity of the local zamindar.

The ideal rule of the *bhaoli* system was that the produce should be divided 50-50 between the landlords and the tenants. But as a matter of fact such division was very rare and the landlord and his staff took 9/16th, often 10/16th of the produce.<sup>14</sup> The system of the produce rent was further made draconian by the '*danabandi*'<sup>15</sup> system. Even the official reports referred to such produce rent as

14. B.B. Chaudhary, 'Movement of Rent in Eastern India - 1793-1930' in *The Indian Historical Review*, ICHR (New Delhi: Jan. 1977), Vol.III, No.2.

15. The system in which the quantity of the produce was estimated and its value was assessed before cut.

'relic of barbarism'. But, the conversion of *bhaoli* into *Nagadi* rent made the conditions of the peasants still worse. Swami Sahaja Nanda presented a study of villages of Jehanabad, Gaya region and showed that with this conversion the rents went up by almost 2 times.<sup>16</sup> The peasants of Manjhiyanwa had to pay Rs.30,000 as rent and *Nazarana*<sup>17</sup> in the very first year and within 4 years they were emburdened of Rs.1,30,000 debt due to state and money-lenders. Though peasants were in favour of *Nagadi* as *bhaoli* had broken their backbone. But, following the conversion, exorbitant rents fixed by *zamindars* and falling prices of foodgrains had put the peasnts in a fix. Now they were trapped in the vicious circle of indebtedness and the traders-money lenders-*zamin-dars* nexus started sucking their blood.

For long *Nagadi* rent was prevalent in the north Bihar - in north Bihar 95% and in central Bihar only 10% land of total cultivated area was under *Nagadi* rent - so this conversion made no difference to north Bihar.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the realities of central Bihar were different. Chhotanagpur region was hilly, densely forested and famous for mines and so the economy was entirely different, whereas the north Bihar was famous for its much fertile plains, surplus production *sans* irrigation, and cash crops, like jute, sugarcane, tobacco, spices and turmeric etc. Out of total 31 sugar mills in Bihar 26 were in north Bihar. Contrary to this central Bihar was dependent on foodgrains primarily,

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16. Ashok Kumar, *op. cit.* (Patna, March 1990), p.27.

17. A kind of forced gift.

18. Ashok Kumar, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.27.

even irrigation facility was not upto mark. The peasants had no source for cash income, thus they had to fall prey to the trap of indebtedness. This is one of the reasons that the peasant movement was most intense in the central Bihar. Sharecropping was, and still is, yet another serious problem.<sup>19</sup> Land under such system was called *bakasht* land. The increase in the land values and increasing population pressure on land, motivated the zamindars to evict tenants from their occupancy holdings on some pretext or other and settle these with other tenants at higher rents, *Salamis*<sup>20</sup>. The reluctance of the zamindars to spend anything on the upkeep of indigenous irrigation works, once the produce rent was commuted to fixed rents, led to large scale decay of irrigation system and the tenants of central Bihar, unable to produce sufficient so as to meet the rent, lost large parts of their holdings in rent decree sales. The Great Depression and the consequent failure of the large majority of tenants to pay rent led to a widespread eviction in the 1930's and gave rise to yet another peasant movement in the area, viz., *bakasht*<sup>21</sup> movement.<sup>22</sup>

The global great depression of late 1920's led to the

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19. Incidence of sharecropping increased by more than 2800% leading to the eviction of tenants a really serious problem. Ashok Kumar, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.27.
  20. Fee paid by tenants to landlord or granting permission for sale or transfer of holding.
  21. Land 'resumed' by landlords from tenants for the latter's failure to pay rent; subsequently supposedly directly cultivated by the owner, i.e., landlord.
  22. J.P. Narayan, "Bakasht ki Samasya", in *Janata*, Sept. 3, 1939.

reunation of the peasants. Where before 1925 one quintal paddy was sold for Rs.6.25-7.50, now the same quantity could be sold for just Rs.2.50-3.25 only. The conditions of the peasants were unbearable.<sup>23</sup>

Above all, all these were being given legal garb by enacting new laws or by amending the existing laws. These historical factors not only ignited the then peasant movement, but have also conditioned the long record of the peasant movement in central Bihar.

After a long history of spontaneous movements for the first time Swami Sahaja Nand and his associates initiated the formation of a peasant organisation in 1927. On 4th of March 1928 the formation of Kisan Sabha in western part of Patna district was formally announced.<sup>24</sup> By the second half of 1927, Swami Sahaja Nand had fairly well established the Sri Sitaram Ashram at Bihta in the west Patna district and the Ashram had become a focal point of Congress activities in the region. It was from this base that the Kisan Sabha grew up.

Along with above mentioned economic exploitation based on the system of rent, the *zamindars* perpetrated many types of extra-economic coercion and social oppression also. While these economic exploitations were longstanding causes of agrarian tension; movements were sparked off by incidents of oppressions which were getting particularly harsh as *zamindars* progressively got alienated from the village structure. For instance, the *zamindars* of Rewra in Gaya

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23. Ashok Kr., op. cit., 1990, p.28.

24. Ibid., p.28.

district were so brazen that, faced with shortage of cow's milk, they sent their retainers to milk lactating tenant women.<sup>25</sup> While this type of brutality was practised generally on the lower caste Hindus, "Sale of daughters became a major source of livelihood of tenants belonging to the higher castes."<sup>26</sup>

While on the economic and social scales, therefore, the tenants were pushed down to a very low position, those among them who belonged to the relatively more affluent castes longed for higher ritual status in consonance with their growing wealth. The major castes which were affected by this desire were the Yadavas, Kurmis, Koeris and Bhumi-hars. In the early part of 1920's stirrings began among the Yadavas and social movements started among them. To begin with, these movements were merely aimed at preventing social oppression but soon economic issues were also taken up and sporadic unrest followed. In spite of the attempts of the caste leaders, organisation did not develop among the Yadavas, though the movement continued for a long time and in fact have reached their culmination only in the 1970's.<sup>27</sup>

The Bhumi-hars are also a caste of agriculturalists but there is greater differentiation within the caste itself than among the Yadavas. While there were some fairly big *zamindars* belonging to this caste, the majority of the

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25. Rahul Sankrityayan, Naye Bharat Ke Naye Neta, Vol.1, Allahabad, 1977, p.140.

26. Ibid.

27. A.N. Das, "Partiality of a Total Revolution", Mainstream, Annual No., New Delhi, 1977.

Bhumihars constituted the substantial tenantry which, in economic terms, would constitute a section of the upper middle and rich peasants. In the social scale, although the Bhumihars are known to be Brahmins, they were not given the ritual status of Brahmins because they were cultivators. They were denied the rights of performing sacrifices to the gods. With the betterment of their economic condition in the early part of the 20th century, there was a move among the Bhumihars, initially led by big landlords like Sir G.D. Singh, to get for themselves the rights of Brahmins. It was in this course of developments that Bhumihar Brahmin Mahasabha was formed and it was this Mahasabha through which Swamijee started his public career.<sup>28</sup> In the beginning his aim was to regain the Brahmin's ritual status for Bhumihar, but later he inspired the Bhumihar youths to participate in non-cooperation movement too. Swami's Ashram at Bihata was the attraction of not only landlords of Bhumihar caste but of other castes too. In fact Bhumihars and other such people had helped him established the Ashram there to promote their cause, Swamijee had created mass base through Tilak Swaraj fund too.<sup>29</sup> But soon Swamijee started taking interest in local agricultural issues concerning the peasants, seeing the deviations in him the Bhumihar landlords stopped co-operating him through donations etc.<sup>30</sup> Thus Swamijee got convinced that:

Donations in the name of caste and religion make

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28. A.N. Das, Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change in Bihar, 1900-1980 (New Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp.74-76

29. Ashok Kr., op. cit., 1990, p.26.

30. A.N. Das, op. cit., 1983, p.77.

the Sabhas the tools of rich people. They donate not out of good wishes and for the betterment of masses but just to perpetuate their zamindari, trade and domination.<sup>31</sup>

It was at this point of time that he separated himself from the caste based movement and politics. Still he had to take a long journey. The long journey of development of Swami's thoughts very well gets reflected in the changing direction of peasants' struggles and the radicalisation of Kisan Sabha. In fact his initiation into peasant movement was the product of Gandhian Nationalism. In his own words: "Behind the formation of Kisan Sabha, my sole aim was to ease the tension between zamindar and the peasants... by getting concessions to the peasants through reconciliations and compromises... lest it would disrupt the unity of people in the freedom struggle.... I believed in compromises."<sup>32</sup> But soon he got disillusioned with Congress policies, the true colour of Gandhians and Gandhijee's attitude towards peasants' problems. Meanwhile Swamiji launched various agitations on different issues. Before that the Kisan Sabha expanded its roots throughout Bihar and by 1929 the Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha came into existence. *Bakasht* issue was yet unresolved that Government initiated the Tenancy amendments against the interests of tenants. Birth of BPKS was, thus, marked by successful agitation against the proposed tenancy amendments which was dropped due to popular resistance.

By the end of 1920, tenants among the peasantry in

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31. Sahajananda Sarasti, Kisanon ko Phansaane Ki Taiyarian, Bihta: Patna.

32. A.N. Das, op. cit., 1983, pp.89-90.

Bihar were not only getting more and more aware of their right on land but were also increasingly getting involved in the broad national anti-colonial struggle. It was under the banner of BPKS only that peasant movement got intertwined with the nation's freedom struggle but Swamijee never shied away from the real concern of peasants and gave call for actions against *zamindari* oppressions.

Inspired and encouraged by the debut victory in 1929 BPKS launched various struggles, (illustrious ones are: Rewra (Gaya) in 1933 and 1938, Bakasht movement in Baraihiyatal, Rewra, Majhiyanwa and Amwari (1936-38), Peasants-Workers' united action against Dalmia's sugar mill at Bihta in 1938-39 and then Bargaon and Darigaon in Shahabad, Bel-darichak and Jalpura in Patna, Chhitauli and Parsadi in Saran, Raghapur and Dekuli in Darbhanga, Champaran and Bhagalpur etc. In some of them, like Baraihiyatal and Bihta, peasants got significant victories.<sup>33</sup>

Whenever peasant movement was launched, Swamijee found that he had to fight against Congress. In 1935 assembly elections Congress's anti-peasant attitude proved to be point of no-return for him. By the time he got attracted towards Congress Socialist Party formed in 1934. Very soon he found that Socialist are more loyal to Congress than to Socialism. Leaders like Jaya Prakash Narayan wanted the Kisan Sabha to follow the line of freedom struggle, even surrendering to *zamindars* was acceptable to him. Meanwhile, during 2nd World War, in jails, he came close to the Communists but always maintained the distance. Though he never

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33. A.N. Das, op. cit., 1983, pp.130-35.



became a member of CPI, however, later on, development in his thought process was much influenced by communist ideology. He goes against 'August Kranti' naming it ceremony of Babus<sup>34</sup> and declared the World War to be mass-uprising. According to Walter Housser it was the reflection of CPI's influence and due to this the militancy of Kisan Sabha faded away. In 1940s though the membership of the Sabha multiplied, however, the movement was, in general, slow. In 1947 transfer of power to Congress gave another blow to the movement. Swamijee's last efforts and contributions were All India United Kisan Sabha, United Socialist Sabha of India and United Leftist Front. Though all these could not take off, yet, these were significant efforts towards united movement.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout this period we also witness an organic development in the ideologies and programmes of Swamiji and Kisan Sabha. In fact the experiences of the various struggles taught the leaders of the Kisan Sabha a lot. There was even confusion about the definition of 'peasants' which underwent many changes with experiences and maturity. In 1936 Sahajanand wrote: A peasant is known as a *grishas-tha*, a person who earns his livelihood by cultivation and agriculture, be he a petty landlord, *ryot* or the labourer working for wages for ploughing fields. The Kisan Sabha does not desire that by creating a separate organisation of agricultural labourers, any strife should be let loose

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34. According to Swami Sahajanand Congress was the party of Babus (officials).

35. Ashok Kumar. op. cit., 1991, pp.28-30.

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between them and the ryots, nor should the latter oppress agricultural labourers... only a handful of princes, big feudal chiefs and wealthy individuals are landlords.<sup>36</sup>

In 1941, he stated that the agrarian problem could not be solved without solving the problems of agricultural labourers: The Kisan Sabha belongs to those exploited and suffering masses whose lot is connected with cultivation and (who) live by it. The more they are oppressed and distressed the nearer they are to the Kisan Sabha and the nearer it is to them.<sup>37</sup>

Again in 1944, he stated: "...It is they, the semi-proletariat or the agricultural labourers who have very little or no at all, and the petty cultivators, who anyhow squeeze a most meagre living out of the land they cultivate and eke out their existence, who are the *kisans* of our thinking... and who make and must constitute the Kisan Sabha ultimately."<sup>38</sup>

(ii) From Independence upto Naxalbari:

Although by the time Independence came the organised peasant movement in Bihar had split itself into so many factions that it had lost much of its vigour, the sentiments it had generated and ideas it had aroused compelled the state to try and reform the agrarian structure, lest peasant fury should become uncontrollable. Apart from Government's

36. BPKS, Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha Ka Ghoshna Patra aur Kisanon Ki Mangen, Bihta, n.d.

37. Ibid.

38. Sahajanand, Presidential Address, 8th Session of AIKS, Bezwada.

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official moves toward Land Reforms and other steps for "Agrarian Reform from the Top", which I will discuss in the next chapter, there were three more distinguishing streams addressing the problems of peasantry.

**Communist Stream:**

After the death of Sahajanand his close associate, Karyanand Sharma tried to take forward the movement. Disillusioned with Congress, Karyanand joined CPI. Under his leadership CPI launched certain significant land struggles, the most illustrious one is Sathi farm struggle of Champaran, in 1950's. On the question of wages, he also tried to organise independent struggles workers. agricultural workers. Other issues on which he mobilised struggles are: right of sharecroppers, *bakasht* land, famine relief, payment of *Takabi* loan, irrigation, price for sugarcane.<sup>39</sup> Through the 1950's and 1960's the Sathi Farms struggle remained almost the sole flame of organised peasant resistance in Bihar.<sup>40</sup> At points of time, the lead in the struggle passed from the Socialist Party to the communist and vice-versa. However, in the late 1960's the struggle spread from Sathi to the lands held by other big estates like Shikarpur and the Sathi struggle, although relegated to the background, became a symbol of inspiration for peasant movements in other parts of Bihar. On account of failure of implementation of ceiling laws, by the middle of 1970s CPI and Socialists called for 'land grab' movement but the call and the movement remained superficial. After the split in

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39. Bihar ke.... ki Dasntan, pp.22-25

40. A.N. Das, op. cit., 1983, p.225.

Communist Party, CPM [Communist Party of India (M)] formed a parallel Kisan Sabha but soon got trapped in mere electoral politics, could not carry forward.<sup>41</sup> On the whole the Communist parties not only failed to recognise the contradictions within the peasant community but also failed to integrate the issue of social oppression with the question of land reforms. They in Bihar or in fact in the Hindi Heartland, remained unaware of the problem of social questions. They have been fighting against social oppressions in their sphere of influence in an isolated way. But 'social-cultural' movement as a part of political agenda was never taken up.<sup>42</sup>

#### **Socialist Stream:**

Socialist Party established in 1934 had given a new fervour and vigour to peasant movement. After Independence, subsequently in Bihar, it was the Socialist movement which took up the cause of the social oppression, combining it with anti-feudal struggle.<sup>43</sup> Socialist movement became the principal spokesman of the backward socio-cultural aspiration. Sizeable section of the rank and file of the Triveni Sangh went over to the Socialist party, giving them dividend in the electoral realm. In 1952 general election, they achieved notable success in the central Bihar plains. Subsequently they got enmeshed in the parliamentary politics

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41. Bihar ke...ki Dastaan, p.23.

42. Shaibal Gupta, 'Socio-Economic Roots of Peasant Movement in Central Bihar', A Seminar paper, Patna, 1989.

43. Paul R. Brass, "Radical Parties of the Left in Bihar: A Comparison of SSP and CPI" in P.R. Brass and Marcus F. Franda, eds., Radical Politics in South Asia

only. Their agenda of social emancipation ended after their eclipse from the political field by mid seventies.

#### **The New Thunder-Naxalbari:**

Immediately after independence, 'permanent settlement' was permanently unsettled. At the fag end of Swami Sahajanand's eventful political career he realised that the main support base of the kisan movement was "really middle and big cultivators". The interest of the poor cultivators and agrarian labourers were sidelined during the momentous battle for agrarian change. In view of the preponderance of feudalism, in the 30's and 40's, the *zamindar* tenant contradiction predominated in the agrarian scene. In the perspective of anti-*zamindari* struggle the whole of the tenant, the rich, the middle and the poor all alike appeared to political activities as united peasantry, and the internal contradiction of the peasantry received politically no attention. Only later, when the downtrodden became more conscious and vocal and the peasantry became further differentiated and finally with the coalition of *zamindar* class, the internal contradiction within the peasantry gained prominence.

Thus the internal contradiction around which, in fact, the present peasant movement in central Bihar has been in existence for nearly 50 years. Unfortunately, the Kisan Sabha lost its vigour for various reasons, during the period. On the other hand Congress, though was aware of the contradictions, was more interested in utilising it for electoral purposes rather than resolving. Surprisingly the CPI and its Kisan Sabha had either failed or refused to

identify the new class of agricultural labourers hoping for a broader alliance of all sections of rural people against feudal forces. By the time, late 60s and early 70s, CPI and CPM had thought of this class, it was too late leaving ample scope for the emergence of those militant forces.

Inspired by the Naxalbari revolt, a new wave of peasant movement started. Leading forces was the CPI (ML),<sup>44</sup> which tried to translate Marxism to the tune of objective conditions of Bihar. It was the Mushahari block of Muzaffarpur district where the first torch of revolt in Bihar was lit but it collapsed soon under the oppressive measures by landlords, police and anti-extremist stance of Sarvodayis led by Jay Prakash Narayan. But soon Bhojpur and Patna districts shown the way and it was the heroic struggles of Bhojpur and Patna during 1972-79 in which lies the genesis of the peasant movement of 1980's.<sup>45</sup>

A new genre of leadership emerged and changed the whole scenario. This leadership was deeply rooted to the realities of land relations and social relations. Their leadership tried to translate the deep rooted discontent into popular movements and courses of action. The leading leader Jagdish 'Master' and other teachers and mofussil intellectuals organised mass meetings, demonstrations and rallies to protest against oppressions of *harijans* in Bhojpur district. Through these forums, a demand for a separate Harijanistan was also raised and thus, the discontent of the Harijans got interwoven with a specific Marxist-Leninist-

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44. Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist).

45. Documents of CPI(M-L), 4th Congress, 1988, p.1.4.1.

Maoist ideology.<sup>46</sup> Guerrilla actions were taken against the feudal landlords to seize land, crops and arms. For this, militant committees were set up to mobilise and revolutionise the masses. This was the phase of complete underground and illegal activities. The increasing momentum of the movement was matched by equally increasing repression by police and administration. By 1976, for various reasons, the movement lost the momentum and became stagnant but this phase of stagnation was temporary and as we will see, by 1980 the movement emerged even stronger.

During late 1970s Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini tried to give a 'peaceful and non-violent' model of struggle as an alternative to the Naxalism by launching the struggle against the landlord Mahant of Bodh Gaya.<sup>47</sup> Though initially, looking successful, the movement disintegrated within few years in the face of repressions by landlord-politicians-police nexus. Differences among leaders on the question of violence and other ideological issues weakened the movement. However, this movement was a significant experiment.

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46. Bihar Ke... Ki Dastaan, 1986, p.24.

47. Urmilesh, Bihar ka Sach (New Delhi: Prakashan Sansthan, 1991), p.144.

**CHAPTER II**  
**LAND REFORMS AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**IN BIHAR: THE REALITY**

In total four decades have elapsed since the Bihar Land Reforms Act (popularly known as the Zamindari Abolition Act) 1950 came into effect. Yet, it is a commonly accepted fact that not much has really changed in Bihar. Despite being a predominantly agricultural province, Bihar has always been a deficit state in matters of foodgrains production. Even in 1986-87 and 1988-89, the per capita income in the agricultural sector in Bihar was an abysmal Rs.456, less than even one-third of the national average of Rs.1,564 and just almost one-tenth of the Punjab-level average of Rs.4,208.<sup>1</sup> Economic backwardness apart, the caste-based social structure of Bihar suffers from what can be called social injustice at its most obnoxious. To be sure, this injustice is rooted in the agrarian structure of Bihar and the corresponding system of economic distribution. Recently, hardly in any other state has the issue of land reforms emerged as so pressing and immediate an agenda. And no wonder, Bihar remains the most fertile land for the development of revolutionary struggles.

Land Reforms in Bihar can be divided into three phases:

**Phase I: Zamindari Abolition**

The touchstone of the Land Reforms was to bring the actual tillers in direct relation with the State. Indian

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1. Vinod Mishra, "Land Reforms in Bihar: Myth and Reality" in People's Front (New Delhi: IPF, Sept.-Oct. 1992), p.3.



ruling classes and the Congress, in particular, have always pursued the strategy of combining progressive proclamations with retrograde, reformist and loose method of implementation. So, as promised in the manifesto, the state in the name of acquiring *Raiyati* land doled out huge compensation to the landlords and other intermediaries. The amount distributed till 1969-70 was as much as Rs.38.4 crore.<sup>2</sup> Under the Bihar Land Reforms Act 1950, landlords were permitted to retain their *khas* land for so-called personal cultivation. At the time of *zamindari* abolition, there were a large number of non-settlement *gair-mazrua* landowners who had given out their land for cultivation under lease or tenancy. Taking advantage of the permission to hold *khas* land, landlords went on to claim large chunks of land belonging to *gair-mazrua* owners as their own *khas* land. According to one estimate, landlords were able to retain 14% of their old estates or about 15 lakh acres as land under *khas* ownership.<sup>3</sup> Another 91,000 acres are still caught in the web of litigations.<sup>4</sup> Thus barring a few exceptions here and there, the interests of the intermediaries as a class have remained intact. Major portions of their land are located outside the villages of their residence. The phenomenon of absentee landlords thus still remains an important aspect of the agrarian structure in Bihar. Yet it is also a fact that large-scale land reforms have indeed taken place in Bihar. Till 1983-84, the government had acquired

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2. Ibid.

3. Ye Fasal Umidon ki Hamdam: Madhya Bihar mein Jan Sanhar aur Kisan Sangharsh - A Report by PUDR (Delhi, Dec. 1992), p.8.

4. Ibid.

around 2,26,000 acres of which 1,67,000 acres were actually distributed.<sup>5</sup> This amounted to an acquisition of 1.26% of total agricultural land and distribution of about 73.14% of the acquired surplus.<sup>6</sup> This redistribution essentially meant no more than the handing over of ownership rights to the erstwhile raiyats, small landlords and tenure holders over raiyat land already under their occupation. This class of raiyats went on to utilise or attain better social conditions to grow into a privileged class. A section of these new landowners had come from traders, who diverted their wealth from trade to agriculture. Other routes - usurping government land, collective village land, direct and indirect purchases of land - were also there.

**Table 2: Acquisition and Distribution of Surplus land in certain Districts of Central Bihar: 1983-84**

District	Acquired land (acres)	Distributed land	Acquired land as %age of total arable land
Patna	2638	1780	0.52%
Nalanda	461	398	0.19%
Gaya	9167	6267	0.98%
Nawadah	2444	1733	0.72%
Aurangabad	2539	1339	0.49%
Bhojpur	4099	2424	0.50%
Rohtas	4738	2018	0.46%

On the whole, the first phase of land reforms proved to

5. Land Reforms in Bihar: A Case Study (Patna: A.N. Sinha Institute, 1986).
6. Ibid.
7. Source: Land Reforms in Bihar: A Case Study (A.N. Sinha Institute, Patna, 1986).
8. Including Jehanabad.

be little more than redistribution of land among the already dominant classes. There was definitely a clear decline in the status and landholding of old landlords and intermediaries, but their class interests remained intact and there arose the raiyats as a powerful section of new landowners.

## **Phase II: Land Ceiling Legislation**

The land ceiling law in Bihar had not come together with the *zamindari* abolition act. The 1961 Bihar Land Reforms Ordinance (Delimitation of Ceiling and Acquisition of Ceiling-Surplus Land), which received the President's assent in 1962, proved to be total non-starter. It was amended in 1973 and thereafter a series of amendments went on till 1982. And in 1992, again, fresh initiative of amendment was taken. Taking advantage of loopholes and delayed and half-hearted implementation of the law, the landowners had already transferred the surplus land to the safe hands of their relatives, friends and dependents and even among fictitious names through totally false paper-transfers. To get rid of major loopholes, some experts have suggested that the land in Bihar be classified in only three, and not six, categories - irrigated, unirrigated and low-productivity land and the ceilings for the respective classes be fixed at 15, 22.5 and 30 acres and that there should be no change in classification for privately irrigated land.

According to the findings of the 1953-54, 1961-62 and 1971-72 rounds of National Sample Survey, majority of rural families in Bihar own 2.5 acres of land or less while land ownership is concentrated in the 2.5-15 acres size-class.

Another 1982-83 multi-village study showed that while more land is concentrated in holdings in the size-class of 5 acres or more there are more families with a land-holding of 5 acres or less. In other words, the pattern of land-holdings displays the same old consistency.

According to official figures, a total of 9,64,239 acres were distributed among 4,78,852 families till 2 October 1989. The only revelation is that the amount of government land distributed was more than 3.59 times of ceiling surplus land distributed till September 1989.<sup>9</sup> Similarly more land has also been distributed under the Bhoodan Campaign than under land-ceiling laws. Identifying and acquiring the ceiling-surplus land and distributing it has never been a priority of any government. Due distribution of government land could have at least taken care of the bare housing needs of the numerous homeless families. Even where this land has been really distributed, it has not been able to create any economically viable unit in most cases. Also a good portion of land in Bihar remains under the control of various religious outfits, especially Hindu religious and charitable trusts. According to an estimate, religious trusts control as high as 40% of the total land in Bihar.<sup>10</sup> There are private trusts also, which have been formed exclusively to exploit the concessions granted under ceiling laws. And more often than not, it is the large landowners who resort to this trust technique. These trusts command large chunks of cultivable land and violation of all sorts of ceiling, tenancy and labour laws is most rampant on

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9. Mishra, n.1, p.6.

10. Ibid.

such land.

### **Phase III: Tenancy Reforms**

Tenancy reforms is perhaps the most significant of land reforms in the context of Bihar. In 1949, the Congress reform committee had suggested the transfer of ownership rights to such non-owning actual tillers of the land who have been tilling it for more than six successive years and that along with other definite conditions, actual tillers must fulfil the criterion of taking a minimum direct part in the tilling of their land.

Eviction of tenants remained a matter of regular concern for the entire plan period from the first plan to the fourth. The phenomenon of so-called 'Voluntary Surrender' of tenancy and landowners reacquiring land under the pretext of self-cultivation was going on unchecked. The task force of the Planning Commission confessed that in our socio-economic conditions it is not possible to enforce any law which may justifiably debar those not engaged in actual tilling from owning land. They therefore, shifted their emphasis to restricting the benefits of the clause of personal supervision only to non-tilling owners who at least stay in the same or neighbouring village so that the phenomenon of absentee landlordism could be kept in check.<sup>11</sup>

Sharecropping is practised on a large scale in Bihar, 10% of the total cultivable land would come under sharecropping, it is less in South Bihar. The majority of sharecropper belong to the ranks of poor and lower-middle peasants.

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11. Ibid.

Legally speaking, a sharecropper bearing the entire-cultivation expenses is entitled to 75% of the principal harvest and all the by-products, which in real life never goes above 50%. In Bihar, sharecropping is largely a hidden practice and naturally there is little legal security enjoyed by the sharecroppers. The main economic reason behind the large incidence of share-cropping lies in the great shortage of infrastructural facilities. Instead of incurring economic risk and sinking money in cultivation, landowners consider it safer and profitable to lease out land under sharecropping.

Absentee landlordism and involvement in other professions also encourage sharecropping. The hidden and insecure nature of tenancy restricts the level of investment in land and this is a major reason why foodgrains production has not grown significantly in Bihar. This has also contributed to relative agricultural retardation.

The text of the Bihar Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1986, has broadened the scope of self-cultivation to include personal and family labour as well as cultivation by contract and wage labour, wages being paid either in cash or in kind or both. Only farming based on crop-sharing has been excluded from the purview of personal cultivation.

Unequal holdings, absentee landlordism and hidden tenancy are the three principal characteristics of the land structure in Bihar. All laws made about the tenants have proved badly ineffective. A legal obstacle is the absence of any document certifying tenancy, but essentially this is not a legal but social and political problem and no

government in Bihar till date has displayed the necessary political will to correct the situation. In 1977-78, the Janata government under Karpoori Thakur had taken up a project to renew all land and tenancy records which was to have preceded all programmes of rural development. But very soon, this too turned into just yet another of these routine rural development schemes and was eventually given up. The argument generally advanced is that this would have amounted to a veritable land survey and with sharecroppers insisting on large-scale tenancy recording, agrarian peace would have come under great stresses and strains.

More recently, Janata Dal government's declarations of securing tenancy rights resulted in large-scale eviction of tenants and the government was left with no other option but to ask sharecroppers to produce their documents of tenancy which are just not there! Beating a retreat, the government has now modified the proposal, restricting it to the subject of tenancy rights on 'ceiling-surplus land' only. But ceiling laws have already proved a virtual failure in this state in the face of all sorts of legal manoeuvrings and fraudulence. If the issue of tenancy is really raised seriously, it will deal the heaviest blow on the interests of the landed gentry and this is precisely why it is being resisted.

In the words of District Magistrate Ashoke Bardhan, "Neither ceiling nor tenancy laws have been implemented in a way which might benefit the landless and the sharecroppers. The landowners have neatly saved all their ceiling-surplus lands in the form of so many additional units, while the tenants have not a piece of paper to substantiate their due

claims. The point always stressed is that confrontations must be avoided at all costs. But such an attitude can only indefinitely postpone any survey or documentation in favour of the tenants."<sup>12</sup>.

**Bhoodan & Sarvodaya:**

Almost on the heels of the *zamindari* abolition legislation came one of the most repressive phases in the history of the Bihar government. While the Bihar Legislative Assembly was debating the land reforms bill after Independence, a parallel struggle was also going on in the fields of Bihar. The lower orders of tenantry - under-tenants and sharecroppers - and the agricultural labourers were organising themselves and any such attempt was seen as a sign of the "Red Menace",<sup>13</sup> by the Bihar government. To counter this the government had unleashed a series of repressive measures. Such was the widespread nature of the repression that even the bourgeois paper, The Searchlight, registered a mild protest as the "issue involved...is one of the right and liberties of the people."<sup>14</sup> A Public Safety Act was passed, and its provisions were used to try to stop all mass movements of the peasantry, on the pretext of checking communal riots. As soon as the lower rungs of the peasant population started getting agitated, a hysterical anti-communist reaction set in. However, the more the repression was intensified the stronger became the resistance by the peasantry and, in places, even a Telangana type insurrection started

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12. Ibid., p.6.

13. The Indian Nation, Patna, 4 August 1949.

14. The Searchlight, Patna, 18 January 1947.



being planned out.

It was at that point of time that Vinoba Bhave who started his Bhoodan movement in Telangana intervened in Bihar also. In the beginning, his scheme of getting zamindars to voluntarily donate land for distribution among the landless seemed to have caught on. The peripatetic agrarian reformer attracted thousands wherever he decided to do his *padyatra* and later even Jaya Prakash Narayan was persuaded to give up active politics and do *jeewan-dan* in the cause of Bhoodan and Sarvodaya. It was believed that the movement would be able to bring about a peaceful revolution. To this end, Bhave resolved to remain in Bihar till the land problem was finally and completely solved. To solve the land problem in Bihar, Bhave estimated that they would need to collect 32,00,000 acres of land. After two years of intensive Bhoodan activity, in August 1954, the Bhoodan workers claimed to have collected 21,02,000 acres by way of actual gifts or promised donations... the quantum was still much below the target. Even in 1956 the quantum reached only 21,47,842 acres.<sup>15</sup> In June 1956, Vinoba Bhave left Bihar to carry his message of "peaceful revolution" elsewhere.

In the absence of Vinoba Bhave the movement gradually lost its momentum, however, Jaya Prakash Narayan occasionally came to Bihar to push it forward. In March 1966 the Bhoodan Yajna Committee admitted that, in fact, land collections had decreased from 21,47,842 acres in 1956 to 21,37,787 acres in 1966 and much of it was either waste

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15. Bihar ke Dhadhakte Khet-Khalihano Ki Dastan - A document of CPI(M-L) (Gorakhpur, Aug. 1986), p.25.

land or forest land or legally contested lands.<sup>16</sup> More damaging to the image of Bhoodan as a successful movement is the fact that by March 1966, Bhoodan leader could claim to have distributed only 3,11,037 acres,<sup>17</sup> that too, including waste land and the bottom of river. The result was by no means a "peaceful revolution", brought about by the *bhoodan* movement or the legislative measures which institutionalised the movement in Bihar. The movement only tended to arouse hopes for sometime, take a little bit of the edge from communist attacks on the agrarian system and create an illusion among the peasants that some landlords were indeed generous and magnanimous.

#### **Post Independent Policy of Rural and Agricultural Development:**

With the advent of independence, the agrarian scene appeared to be full of expectations. Faced with the turbulent rural Bihar, the state, in addition to enacting land reforms legislation, entered in a big way in promoting new agricultural technology and providing for institutions aimed at establishing and maintaining harmony in the rural community. At the official level, this activity took place through the Agricultural Extension and Community Development schemes and through special programmes and agencies like Intensive Area Development Programme (IADP), Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), ..., Tribal Development Plan and so on. Non-official movements and organisations that matched the ethos of community development were Sarvodaya and Bharat Sevak Samaj.

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16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

Fortunately, the capitalist strategy of transformation started paying some initial dividend.<sup>18</sup> The momentum generated by movements like Tebhaga and Telangana was slowed down because of high expectations from these programmes. But very soon the limitations of this strategy were revealed. It was implicitly assumed that individuals, groups and classes have common interest which are strong enough to bind them together, that such conflicts as existed were generally reconciliable and the strategy was based on "betting on the strong"<sup>19</sup> approach which presupposed the "trickle down" effect of uplifting the rural community. These assumptions were, of course, unrealistic. The better off section of the rural society became still better off... the disparity became even more visible and the benefits accruing to the rich had no "trickle down" effect.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Green Revolution:**

The new rural development strategy, which came to be known as 'Green Revolution', concentrated on the supply of modern inputs in agricultural sector. But, the agrarian development was successful only partially, and the harmony based strategy of development ironically enhanced the dis-

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18. Daniel Thorner, "The Emergence of Capitalist Agriculture in India" in Daniel Thorner's The Shaping of Modern India (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1980), pp.238-256.

19. Wertheim, W.F. in Rural Sociology in India, (ed.) A.R. Desai (Bombay, 1969), p.34.

20. A.N. Das, 'Guns and Plough-Shares in Rural Development as Counter-Insurgency' in Public Enterprise Centre for Continuing Education, New Delhi (Unpublished memo.)

parities.<sup>21</sup> 1960s saw the sharp polarisation among the rich and poor. To contain the revolt of the poor, the 'small farmer' development policy<sup>22</sup> aimed at the middle sections, was initiated. Much to the satisfaction of the rural rich, this strategy created a new bulwark to protect the bastions of rural power and fighting between middle sections and the poor ensued. Also, the development of 'small farmers' was aimed at the realisation of the objective of 5-6% growth in marketable surplus; a small farmer, defined as having up to two hectares of land, also had potential for marketable surplus. The objective of 5-6% growth per annum in marketable surplus was however sought to be achieved mainly by raising yield of food crops by modern inputs like fertiliser, improved seeds etc.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, not only SFDA, but many other programmes (like IADP, IRDP etc.) were aimed towards this purpose.

Surprisingly, the most benefitted region of these policies, the central Bihar, is also the prime region of militant peasant movements. In fact this is the only region, where, in true sense, attempt was made to bring in 'Green Revolution'.<sup>24</sup> Sahabad (now bifurcated into Bhojpur and Rohtas districts) was the first district in Bihar chosen

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21. Jones S. Griffith, 'The Alliance for Progress: An attempt at interpretation' in Development and Change, Vol.10, No.1, 1979, p.64.

22. Small Farmer Development Manual, FAO, (Bangkok, 1978), p.78.

23. Das, n.20, pp.10-18.

24. Shaibal Gupta, 'Socio-Economic Roots of Peasant Movement in Central Bihar' - A Seminar Paper (Patna: A.N. Sinha Institute, Aug. 1989), pp.6-7.

for the 'Package Programme' (IADP) in October 1960. Sahabad district already had better irrigation facilities, through the 'Sone-Canal',<sup>25</sup> this region had also undergone considerable commercialisation and junker model of 'capitalism' from above which led to the increasing differentiation in the peasantry and depeasantisation at the lowest level. Since the introduction of IADP, this irrigation potential has further been increased by substantial investment in tubewell and pumpsets.<sup>26</sup> Later on other districts of central Bihar were also brought under the IADP, subsequently the infrastructure and use of modern inputs improved considerably. Tables 3, 4 and 5 clearly show that as far as area under irrigation, area under HYV, and use of fertilisers are concerned the districts of central Bihar are far ahead of other districts. Owing to this capital intensive programme had three distinct effects in these districts: 1. Increase in productivity; 2. Higher marketable surplus; and 3. Sharpening polarisation as a result of increased wage-labour and landlessness. The 'extremist' crucible emerged in the most productive blocks of these districts. The agricultural population in the relatively less prosperous areas of the same districts were less responsive to 'extremist' politics.<sup>27</sup>

Rich peasants emerged as a formidable economic group

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25. A.N. Das, Agrarian Unrest and Socio-Economic Change (Delhi: Manohar, 1983), pp.245-246.

26. Manju Kala, R.N. Mahajan and Kalyan Mukherjee, "Peasant Unrest in Bhojpur: A Survey" in A.R. Desai, ed., Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.257.

27. Ibid., p.260.

aided by the IADP projects. Medium, small and marginal peasants form the buffer between rich peasants above and the landless peasants below. The ownership of land is mainly in the hands of the upper castes. Depending upon the initial castewise distribution of land, as well as pattern of land transfer in the post independence period, the agrarian tensions have taken different forms in different districts and the areas of the districts - forward versus backward or backward versus Harijans or forward versus Harijans. Thus the agrarian divide and the consequent peasant movement that has emerged in central Bihar is largely due to the fall out of capitalist transformation path of agricultural development.<sup>28</sup> Though other parts of central Bihar and regions of Bihar did not witness such capitalist development of agriculture, however, this does not imply absence of peasant movement there. In fact, on the issue of sharecropping

**Table 3: Percentage of Gross Area Irrigated - Bihar by Districts 1981-82**

Patna	61.31	West Champaran	52.16
Nalanda	75.23	Muzaffarpur	23.84
Gaya	74.19	Vaishali	23.86
Nawada	76.88	Sitamarhi	13.48
Aurangabad	68.28	Darbhanga	16.89
Bhojpur	68.35	Madhubani	11.98
Rohtas	73.72	Samastipur	26.72
Munger	38.75	Begusarai	31.47
Bhagalpur	41.49	S.P.	8.26
Saran	41.50	Saharsa	28.31
Siwan	42.96	Purnea	14.30
Gopalganj	45.18	Katihar	18.75
East Champaran	28.50	<b>Bihar</b>	<b>33.70</b>

Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Bihar, Patna, 1984.

massive struggles were launched, albeit of different character, on behalf of the *bataidars* by CPI and partly by SSP in

28. *Ibid.*, n.24, p.9.

the districts of Purnea, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Saharsa etc.  
- strongholds of semi-feudal relationship.

**Table 4: Statement showing the Area covered under  
HYV Crops, 1981-82<sup>29</sup>**  
(in thousand hecatres)

District	Rice	Wheat	Maize
Patna	59	33	2
Nalanda	60	36	2
Gaya	61	36	2
Nawada	21	18	-
Aurangabad	74	42	-
Bhojpur	153	86	-
Rohtas	217	138	-
Saran	32	72	22
Siwan	21	70	1
Gopalganj	16	63	17
East Champaran	36	57	13
West Champaran	54	46	5
Muzaffarpur	18	39	12
Vaishali	16	27	14
Sitamarhi	15	25	3
Darbhanga	12	25	3
Madhubani	18	25	2
Samastipur	23	33	23
Begusarai	6	46	25
Monghyr	40	43	13
Bhagalpur	35	22	10
Santhal Parganas	46	11	5
Saharsa	54	48	27
Purnea	55	51	20
Katihar	23	22	9
Hazaribagh	7	2	2
Giridih	7	2	1
Dhanbad	1	-	-
Ranchi	36	6	4
Palamau	5	4	2
Singhbhum	4	1	-
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Bihar	1225	1129	252

Note: 1) Total may not tally due to rounding off figure.  
2) - Negligible or less than 500 hectre.

29. Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Bihar, Patna, 1984.

**Table 5: Use of Fertilizer (N, P & K) per hectare of  
Gross Cropped Area in metric tonne  
(for the Triannual average 1984-87)**

District	N	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	K <sub>2</sub> O	Total
Patna	75.07	11.22	4.57	90.86
Nalanda	65.64	15.36	8.26	89.25
Gaya	41.55	8.46	3.33	53.33
Aurangabad	41.55	11.69	5.35	58.59
Nawada	49.77	13.84	7.22	70.83
Bhojpur	55.44	13.21	6.25	74.87
Rohtas	59.63	17.39	8.88	85.89
Munger	31.54	7.01	4.39	43.62
Bhagalpur	31.27	7.57	3.37	42.21
Saran	44.12	9.18	5.27	58.57
Siwan	31.88	9.48	2.74	44.10
Gopalganj	54.92	17.29	7.88	80.08
Eas Champaran	34.93	9.17	4.80	48.89
West Champaran	31.16	9.07	3.47	43.68
Muzaffarpur	30.64	11.18	4.55	46.37
Vaishali	32.77	11.72	3.52	48.00
Sitamarhi	22.91	3.84	1.83	28.58
Darbhangha	23.51	6.49	3.03	33.03
Madhubani	11.98	4.94	1.45	18.28
Samastipur	45.88	18.49	8.95	73.30
Saharsa	24.63	9.40	4.38	38.41
Purnea	23.07	9.45	4.64	37.15
Katihar	35.84	14.24	7.33	57.40
S.P.	7.84	2.53	0.72	11.08

Source: Directorate of Statistics and Evaluation, Bihar,  
Patna, 1989.



### CHAPTER III

#### MOVEMENT IN 1980s

After the end of the emergency, the black spot in the post-independence history of India, different classes and sections of the society witnessed a general awakening. During the same period, a re-awakening and great resurgence was also witnessed among the peasants of central Bihar which touched a new height, entered a new phase in the early 80s. The year 1981-82 saw a wave of peasant struggles which demonstrated, in a true sense, the immense strength that an organised peasantry can be endowed with. Thousands of peasants with their traditional arms joined the mass movements, mass protests, and protest struggles. They raised their demands and vowed to fight in a continuum. Processions and militant gheraos were day-to-day activities. Atrocious landlords and their criminal gangs were the prime target of the struggle. The resurgence which started in and around Patna and then spread over to other areas of central Bihar, was centred, primarily, upon following issues:<sup>1</sup>

- To oust the landlords from the public property of villages (like Ponds, common land etc.) and bring these under the control of the people.
- To seize the gairmazarua land under illegal occupation of the landlords.

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1. Bihar Ke Dhadhakate Khet-Khalihano Ki Dastan - A document of CPI(M-L) (Gorakhpur, 1986), p.59.

- Hike in wages.
- To eliminate the feud social oppressions.
- To check the social evils like theft and robbery.
- To check the oppressions on women, especially Harijan women.
- To liquidate the armed gangs of landlords.
- To resist police atrocities.

But before we go in for detailed study of the peasant movement of the 1980s, let us take stock of the class structure in rural Bihar in general and peasant community in particular.

The main objective of all land reforms and rural development programmes has been the expansion of agricultural production along capitalist line. Right from the days of 'Zamindari Abolition' to the so-called "Green Revolution", the stress has always remained on "betting the strong". Consequently, the rural society has undergone the process of increasing internal differentiation. Resultant is the emergence of a new section of landlords, which consists of ex-zamindars, Naibs, rent collector farmers, userers, traders, and a section of prosperous occupant raiyots;<sup>2</sup> on the one hand and bataidars - including poor and lower middle peasantry and agricultural labourers (in huge numbers) on the other hand.

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2. Ibid., pp.44-45.

### Detailed Classification and Class Analysis:<sup>3</sup>

#### Landlords and jotedars:

Those who own huge amount of land and means of production do not participate in labour, and live on the exploitation of peasants and 'agricultural labourers'. The landlords/jotedars are of two types:

(i) Old type:- Most of them are absentee landlords who lease out lands on exorbitant rents, employ bonded labour. Usury, hoarding, and feudal exploitations are part and parcel of their characteristics.

(ii) New type:- Such landlords own modern means of production, hire the labourers and take care of management themselves. They lease out certain part of land and exploit the hired labourers and bonded labourers on the rest of land. They also act as intermediaries in the distribution of inputs supplied by government, often pre-empt the loans meant for small/poor peasants and labourers and use the money in usury, hoarding, black marketing. Also, they give means of production to middle/poor peasants on rent. They are often called capitalist/managerial landlords.

The landlords dominate the village politically and

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3. Based on Raj Kishor, Varga Sangharsh mein Jhulas rahi hai Jatiya Avadharna (Patna: Lal Kiran Prakashan, Sept. 1992), pp.2-7; Dastawej, CPI(M-L)-Party Unity, 1987; Dastawej, M.K.S.S., 1987, pp.22-26; Bihar Ke...ki Dastaan, 1986, op. cit., pp.45-53.

otherwise too. They are reactionary. Usurers, big traders, contractors are part and parcel of the dominance of the landlords. They have close nexus with politicians, police and other officials. Prosperous raiyots of yester years and backbone of Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha have now turned into *Kulaks*. Politics has become caste based and casteist sentiments are often misused in favour of landlords. They also maintain caste armies.

*Mahajan*:<sup>4</sup> One whose primary source of income is usury. Mahajan's living condition is better than those of rich peasants and small landlords.

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**Rich Peasants:**

Rich peasants are those who possess good amount of land, either owned or leased in, and advanced/modern inputs; who, though, participation in labour works however, live on the exploitation of rented labour. They also resort to usury and various forms of feudal exploitation and also participate in trading.

Those rich peasants who have now become capitalist entrepreneur are called capitalist farmers. They cultivate intensively, use modern inputs, produce for market and exploit free labourers and feudal tendencies are much weaker. Previously, they were either (i) Zamindars or (ii)

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4. Money-lender, Sahukar.

Middle peasants.

**Middle Peasants:**

Peasants of this category possess holdings of small or intermediate size, either owned or leased in, and also possess means of production which are inferior to those possessed by rich peasants but superior to those of poor peasants. Generally they do not hire labour except in the busy seasons, they do not sell labour either. There are, broadly, three layers of middle peasantry.

1. Upper middle peasantry:- They do exploit labourers but earnings from this source do not exceed 50% of the total income. The prime source of their income is their own labour, sometimes they resort to usury also.

2. Intermediate middle peasants:- 75% of the total income come from their own labour, earnings from the exploitation of hired labour does not exceed 25%.

3. Lower middle peasantry:- They have leased in land on exorbitant rents. Earning is generally not enough for even average life and is often burdened with debt and interests on debt.

Middle peasantry wishes to use modern means and inputs of production. Their interests clash with those of landlords, rich peasants, and government officials on the issues of land, modern inputs etc., however, they are, in a way, dependent on small and middle landlords and rich peasants.

### Poor Peasants:

Poor peasants are those who possess neither land nor means of production or they possess somewhat meagre land and means of production of inferior quality or either of the two. They either work on their tiny plot or lease in small plots or work on the land of landlords and get small tract of land for that and are entitled to either total or part of the produce on homestead land. Still this is hardly enough for their six month living. For rest of the year they have to sell their labour elsewhere. They also earn from petty trades and other auxiliary production. They are always trapped in debt trap and are subjected to cruel oppressions by landlords and traders. They are also forced for 'distress sale' and 'distress purchase'.

### Rural Labourers:

They do neither own any land nor do they own any agricultural equipment nor do they have any homestead land. The only source of their earning is their labour power, they are rural proletariat. Their economic, social, and cultural life is worst and are subjected to worst kind of exploitation and oppressions. Types of labourers:

(i) Bonded Labour:- This type of labourers are not free to sell their labour at their will. They are bonded to their masters either for generations or for one-two years or for a season or two only. In return they get small tract of

land of which half of the produce is taken away by the landlords. Sometime they are also given wages at par with free labourers. Banihars, or Charawahas<sup>5</sup> are a type of bonded labour. Due to burden of debt they are tied to landlords which they are never able to pay back.

(ii) Free Labour:- They are free to sell their labour power at their will. Ujarati<sup>6</sup> labourer is a type of free labour.

Castewise distribution of rural/agricultural labourers in percentage is as follows: Upper castes 0.3, Intermediate castes 34.11, SCs 39.1, STs 12.4, Muslim 14.11.<sup>7</sup>

#### Craftsmen and Artisans:

They manufacture small agricultural equipments with their old and traditional means, e.g., blacksmith, carpenter etc. Their condition is very akin to that of poor peasants. There is a section of teachers, other professionals and small traders who is akin to middle peasantry.

In this backdrop of class analysis and classification of rural Bihar, it is of utmost necessity to implant this classification on the caste-structure of rural Bihar to get

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5. One who takes care of cattle.
  6. One who moves from place to place in the search of work.
  7. S.R. Bose and P.P. Ghosh, Agro-economic Survey of Bihar.

the real picture and dynamics of peasants' movement going on in Bihar in general and in central Bihar in particular. Caste factor has always been an important factor, be it overall politics or be it peasants' movements. Not only this, with increasing internal class differentiation within peasant community, caste polarisation, too, has increased.

Let us look at the caste-wise distribution of land holdings in the plains of Bihar:

#### LAND AND CASTE IN THE PLAINS OF BIHAR<sup>8</sup>

Table 1

Distribution of Size of Landholdings along Caste Groups (in %age)

Size of landholdings (in acres)	Caste Groups					All
	Upper*	Upper** Middle	Other*** Middle	SC	Muslim	
Landless	2.9	13.1	23.0	43.9	17.1	100 (43.1)
Less than 5	29.3	30.6	13.0	17.6	9.5	100 (47.0)
5 - 10	69.0	20.7	0.0	0.5	9.7	100 (4.1)
More than 10	77.4	11.6	6.0	0.0	4.9	100 (4.1)

Note: \*Brahmins, Rajputs, Bhumihars, Kayasthas.

\*\*Yadavas, Kurmis, Koeris.

\*\*\*All castes excluding Upper, Upper Middle, SCs.

8. Source: A Study by International Labour Office, Geneva, and A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Sciences, Patna, on 'Dynamics of Employment and Poverty' in Bihar in 1981. Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentage distribution with reference to row total.



**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Caste Groups along**  
**landholding Size (in %age)**

Caste Groups	Size of landholding (in acres)				
	Landless	Less than 5	5-10	10 and more	All
Upper	5.7	62.1	17.9	14.3	100(2.2)
Upper Middle	25.9	66.4	5.5	2.2	100(21.7)
Other Middle	60.9	37.6	0.0	1.5	100(16.3)
SC	69.5	30.4	0.1	0.0	100(27.2)
Muslim	58.6	35.4	4.4	1.6	100(12.6)

The tables clearly show that, reading Table 1, among rural families, 90% of them are either landless or own less than 5 acres of land. It is only 10% of the population which control the land and most of them, around 73%, come from upper castes. No doubt the upper caste people dominate the scene but the situation is not so simple and straight forward either. 18% of landlords and 21% of owners of 5-10 acres of land come from either upper middle castes or other middle castes. so, class analysis and classification along with caste groups is not that simplified because the social base of people dominating the class structure surpass the ambit of the upper caste. In no region we can find caste homogeneity within the dominating class. For example, while zamindars are primarily Kurmis in Punpun, Masaurhi, and Dhanarua blocks of Patna district, in the same district Naubatpur and Bikram blocks are dominated by Bhumihaar zamindars and Pali block is dominated by Yadav, Bhumihaar and Kurmi zamindars. Jehanabad is dominated by

Bhumihars and Kurmis whereas south of Gaya is dominated by Rajputs.<sup>9</sup>

Caste background of the people dominating the class structure might have surpassed the ambit of the upper castes, nonetheless, it is obvious from the horizontal and vertical reading of the tables that those who dominate the class (economic) structure are those who also dominate caste (social) structure and those who are deprived off economically are deprived off socially as well. Of recently, by mid 60s, upper middle castes have emerged as politically and economically stronger. In caste terms, the state-level ruling class is the upper castes and its traditional role is being challenged mainly by the upper middle castes. This is the caste character of the current political struggle and peasant struggle in Bihar which is essentially the phenomenon of class struggle. But people are mobilised on caste lines and not on class lines because class consciousness has yet to emerge in a social formation whereas caste identities have been deep-rooted for ages.

Now, after giving a brief description of class and caste structures, let us look into the production relations characterising the rural and agrarian society of Bihar and its impact on accumulation of capital and development of

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9. Ye Fasal Umido ki Hamdam: Madhya Bihar mein Jan Sanhar aur Kisan Sangharsh - A report by PUDR (Delhi, Dec. 1992), pp.5-6.

agriculture.<sup>10</sup>

In an agrarian economy the pace and pattern of accumulation continuously interact with the nature of class relations. Such interaction is a two-way or rather, a dialectical process: at any given time, the existing class configuration influences the process of accumulation which, in turn, affects the evolving relations among the classes. In order to understand and characterise the pattern and the overall pace of accumulation in a backward agrarian economy, the distinction between productive and unproductive investment activities is crucial. An investment is considered productive in agriculture when it raises the level of agricultural output whereas it is considered unproductive when it simply changes the distribution of output in favour of the investing class at a more or less constant (or even declining) level of output, so that the investors gain even though the overall agricultural output may not have increased.<sup>11</sup>

Broadly speaking, agrarian ruling classes can be classified into two distinct classes: a class of feudal landlords, merchants, and moneylenders primarily engaged in

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10. Amit Bhaduri, "Class Relations and the Pattern of Accumulation in an Agrarian Economy" in Cambridge Journal of Economics (Cambridge), 5, 1981, pp.33-46.

11. This classification of investment activities is analytical rather than descriptive, as many actual forms of agricultural investment combine raising output and changing its distribution simultaneously.

unproductive investment and second class of 'progressive' landlords who intend making productive investments. A backward agrarian economy usually has the particular feature that some part of its commercial activities have an abnormal and contrived character. This results in the involvement of the poor peasants in a set of peculiar exchange relations like their distress buying at the high lean-period price and distress selling at the low post-harvest price of grains. Also, eternal indebtedness of poor peasants and landless labourers is a common feature of backward agrarian economies. This leads to their surrendering of land or future labour services at low but agreed collateral prices for settling unpaid debt. The distress selling and distress buying are usually carried out under the compulsion of debt. It is in this sense that such unequal commercial exchanges assume an involuntary or forced character. It is the extreme poverty of the borrowing peasants that sustains such a structure of rural debt. Consequently, regular consumption loans taken by the poor peasants emerge as, perhaps, its most crucial component supporting this nexus of forced commerce. From the feudal landlords', merchants' and money-lenders' point of view, deployment of his savings in the form of fresh loans advanced for consumption and such other uses then becomes an avenue for profitable private investment. The debtors are never able to pay back the loan. Leave aside the loan, even the full payment of interest is beyond their means as the stipulated rates of interest on

these loans are very high, often as high as 100% per annum.<sup>12</sup> The creditor class, however, does not insist on full payment even in the long run. It often forces the debtors to sell their assets but rarely for complete discharge of the debt obligation. This indebtedness ensures them enormous economic benefits such as cheap and assured labour for its own cultivation and better terms for leasing out land. They, thus, appropriate almost the entire surplus value to themselves. This set-up of class relations may be called semi-feudal and the characteristic feature of it provides an indissoluble bond between the poor peasants and landless labourers and their overlords.<sup>13</sup> In the process, the enormous economic power gets concentrated in the hands of landlords, merchants and money lenders. *And it is this class which shuns rapid agricultural development* because it is likely to improve the economic conditions of poor peasants and landless labourers freeing them from the bondage. Thus they prefer to make unproductive investment perpetuating the set-up of semi-feudalism.

In contrast to this productive investment activities are carried out, predominantly, by the class of 'progressive' landlords and rich farmers. Depending on the nature of the agrarian class structure, such productive investment

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12. Pradhan H. Prasad, "Reactionary Role of Usurers' Capital in Rural India" in Economic and Political Weekly (New Delhi), Special No., Aug. 1974.

13. Amit Bhaduri, "A Study in Agricultural Backwardness under Semi-Feudalism", in Economic Journal, March 1973.

activities may be carried out by the feudal landlords, merchants and money lenders also but this will be an extreme and exceptional case.

Based on 'externalities'<sup>14</sup> between productive and unproductive investments, the relationships between 'progressive' landlords, rich farmers and feudal landlords, merchants, money lenders can be defined as follows:

(A) A relationship of strict complementarity:- This implies unproductive investment by the feudal landlords-merchants-moneylenders class help to augment profit in production, while at the same time productive investment by the 'progressive' landlords/rich farmers helps in tightening the grip of forced commerce. For example, cheap tying of labour services through loans makes the production profitable, while at the same time labour-displacing technological change pushes poor peasants farther into the grip of forced commerce.

(B) A relationship of strict competitiveness:- Under this relationship productive investment weakens the grip of forced commerce on the poor peasantry by offering them greater employment and income opportunities and thus, by enabling them to reduce their dependence on regular consump-

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14. In a wider and somewhat different sense, not restricted to interdependent production and consumption activities, which are embedded in the very nature of class relations in an agrarian economy.

tion loans. On the other hand through unproductive investments the 'non-progressive' class seize 'assets' of the poor peasants like their future labour service, land or administratively distributed fertilisers and offer them at black-market prices to the 'progressive' landlord/rich farmers reducing the profitability of production.

(C) Relationship in part complementary and in part competitive:

- (i) Unproductive investment may augment profitability on productive investment but productive investment reduces profitability on unproductive investment.
- (ii) Productive investment helps unproductive investment, while unproductive investment hampers productive investment.

In the case of complementary relationship an objective economic basis exists for the two ruling agrarian classes to collaborate fully, resulting in a stable pattern of accumulation but this does not necessarily imply any corresponding reduction in rural poverty and destitution. Contrariwise, in the case of strict competitiveness between the two types of investment, no economic basis exists for collaboration among the two agrarian ruling classes. Instead, we have conflict to the point of competitive extinction of the economic power of one class by the other. But, which class will ultimately dominate the other depends on the initial situation; which class is initially better placed. The

initially dominant class will tend to more or less completely eliminate or subjugate the other class economically. Clearly, no stable pattern of accumulation in agriculture is compatible with such a situation of utter conflict until the agrarian society undergoes its ultimate economic mutation.<sup>15</sup>

Other situation may exist characterised in part by conflict and in part by collaboration between the two ruling agrarian classes. In such case no certain pattern of accumulation and stable equilibrium may certainly exist. One thing is certain that if such a situation persists for long, one class (relatively weak) must be making economic concessions to the other class (better placed one) by restricting its own investment level in relation to that of the other.

In this theoretical background, if we look at the land reforms and other agrarian reforms done in Bihar, we find that a class of feudal landlords-merchants-moneylenders living on unproductive investment has emerged stronger, stronger than the class of 'progressive' landlords - rich farmers. The nature and pattern of emerging class configuration were affected by the partial implementation of agrarian legislations. The first major round of land reform in Bihar had its core in the abolition of large intermediaries that had been created by the system of 'permanent settle-

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15. Direction or pattern of accumulation may be changed with external intervention.



ment'. The abolition of these large intermediaries through financial compensation to be paid by the 'cultivators', led, in effect, to large-scale transfer of land ownership rights to a class of rural merchants, moneylenders who had both the financial means to pay such compensation and had, in many cases, already established 'inferior' tenurial rights on land below the zamindar, but above the actual tiller.<sup>16</sup> Large number of zamindars succeeded in maintaining their position and hold. This resulted in greater coincidence of forced commercial and landowning interests in many former zamindari areas leading to the strengthening of this class vis-a-vis the class of 'progressive' landlords - rich farmers. In other words this suggests a process of weak development of this latter class of 'progressive' landlords and rich farmers.

In post independence India, apart from 'self proclaimed' land reforms and other agrarian reforms, attempts were made, for agricultural development, on other fronts also. Package programmes for rural and agricultural development and then Green Revolution based on New Technology (HYV seeds-fertilizers-irrigation-mechanisation) were parts of these attempts and policies. As we have already seen in Chapter II, all these policies were based on the 'betting on the strong' strategy presuming that the 'trickle down' doctrine would work. Above all, the essence of all such

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16. Amit Bhaduri, op. cit., 1981, p.44.

programmes was the landlord-capitalist path of development.<sup>17</sup>

Attempts were made for the development of agriculture, huge investments were also made through successive 5-year plans but there has been no qualitative change in the scenario except few pockets and regions. Neither has changed the institutional set-up existing in the agricultural sector. Planning in India has been viewed mainly in terms of investment planning and ignoring the importance of the production relations aspects of economic dynamics which is, by and large, responsible for the Indian plans achieving so little. Even when it is clear that, for the little over four decades of planning, the rate of growth has been inadequate and that the major portion of the growth is explained in terms of technical progress in agriculture, the emphasis continues to be on investment planning. What has been lost sight of in the process of constructing planning models in this country is that the different regions of the country find themselves at different historical stages of "production relations". It implies assuming implicitly that regions do not differ so far as "production relations" are concerned. It is this implicit assumption which is responsible for so little emphasis on institutional changes like share-cropping and usury. Under such institutional set-up,

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17. Raghu, "Indian Agriculture: Crisis of the Landlord Path of Development" in Liberation, Vol.20, No.1, 1986, pp.22-25.

the feudal landlords-merchants-moneylenders approach the whole process of production and distribution with a view to strengthening their control over land and their hold on the rural masses who are subjected to not only economic exploitation but extra-economic coercion and social and gender oppressions also. Thus mass poverty and low productivity of land and labour (disguised unemployment), under-utilisation of resources and almost negligible investment in the agricultural sector persist.<sup>18</sup>

Then comes the New Technology leading to Green Revolution; it was an import intensive, energy intensive and capital-intensive technology imposed on a capital and energy deficit country. Under this technology, relied on big landlords and rich peasants, the class which was the target of the land reforms was named "progressive farmers". At the cost of small farmers a collaboration emerged among capitalism styled managerial landlords, imperialism and bureaucracy. Though, later, a minute section of small peasants also started using this technology, but, on the whole differentiation and disparities increased between big and small landlords, and between landlords and labourers. This new rural ruling class of managerial landlords has rooted itself firmly using the powerful economic, political and social positions. It has not only collaborated with old type of

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18. Pradhan H. Prasad, "Production Relations: Achilles' Heel of Indian Planning" in Economic and Political Weekly, May 12, 1973, pp.869-72.

landlords, moneylenders, merchants, mahanthas etc. but it also poses the middle peasants and labourers against each other and uses the caste division by arousing such sentiments in its own favour. This class does all these with the help of imperialist and bureaucrat capitalists just to perpetuate the existing semi-feudal institutional set-up in rural economy.<sup>19</sup>

It should be noted here that in Bihar the central Bihar was the region which got maximum attention under package programme based policy of rural and agricultural development and it is the central Bihar alone where attempt was made to bring Green Revolution (refer to Ch.II), still it is the region which has been, till the date, the witness to the continuing militant movement of peasants. Why? Answer lies, to a great extent, in the nature and after effects of these policies which resulted in the increasing differentiation and sharp polarisation within peasant community, and rising consciousness among the small/poor peasants - landless labourers leading to their emergence, across caste lines, as the class for itself. The process of land reforms and rural agricultural development in Bihar, especially in the central region of the state, has resulted in the following situation - whereas, on the one hand a new section of landlords has emerged consisting of former landlords, naibs,

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19. "Agrarian Programme", Documents, CPI(M-L)-Liberation, adopted at 3rd, 4th and 5th Congress in 1983, 1988, 1992.

revenue collector farmers, moneylenders, merchants and a section of prosperous occupant *raiya*s, at the same time there has been massive increase in the number of *bataidars* (including poor and lower middle peasants) and landless labourers on the other hand. A large section of occupant *raiya*s who used to be the leading force of old Kisan Sabha, has established itself as rich and middle peasants. A large section of such rich peasants has emerged as kulak lobby in the politics and state power in Bihar.

Castewise, though landlords generally come from the upper castes, however, in certain regions backward/middle castes like kurmis and yadavas do also dominate as landlords. Rich peasants, too, come from upper castes and upper layer of certain backward/middle castes. Middle peasants come from upper castes, upper layer of middle/backward castes and in a few cases they do also come from scheduled castes and tribes. But so far as poor/small peasants and labourers are concerned they consist of the majority of backward castes and almost the total population of scheduled castes and tribes.

#### **THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN 1980s**

As if Swami Sahajanand Saraswati had very rightly foreseen the sharp polarisation within peasant community in 1949, that he prophetically stated that "the rural proletariat... is becoming aware of its rights, duties and responsibilities.... when it becomes fully aware, there will

be the final dance of destruction and then the present inequitous agrarian system will start crumbling."<sup>20</sup>

The phase of 80s of peasant struggles in Bihar with its genesis in the heroic struggles of Bhojpur and Patna between 1972 and 1979 has become a milestone in the history of peasant movements and it inherits the spirit of Naxalbari movement and draws inspirations from it. This phase of peasant struggle, after a brief period of stagnation in the late 70s, began in the rural areas of Patna in early 80s and soon spread over to Nalanda, Jehanabad. A new awakening took place in Bhojpur, Rohtas, Aurangabad and Gaya. Later the influence of the movement spilled over to other areas also, like Giridih, Hazaribagh, Palamau, Nawada, Madhubani, Siwan, West Champaran, Gopalganj, Darbhanga while in other areas, too, the movement is catching on gradually. The government replied with massive police actions, sometimes termed as Operation Task force, assisting the armed gangs of landlords (better known as private armies), undertaking certain administrative and economic reforms, mobilising the support of different political parties, particularly the Communist Party of India and Sarvodaya groups as well as of the news media - the government made multipronged attempts to suppress the movement.<sup>21</sup> The movement continued unabated with certain setbacks here and there, but the setbacks

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20. Sahajanand, Maharulra Ka Mahatandav (in Hindi), Bihta, Patna, 1948?.

21. Bihar ke...ki Dastaan, 1986, pp.59-60.

were soon overcome by the struggling forces and the militant peasants.

Lahasuna-Sikanderpur (Masaurhi police station), Narahi-Pirahi (Bikram Police station) in Patna district, Mathila (Dumaraon block), Sahar in Bhojpur district - these are the villages and blocks where the present phase of movement started. Later on all the seven blocks of Jehanabad district, parts of Gaya district, Obara-Daudnagar-Hasapura blocks of Aurangabad, Bhabhua<sup>22</sup> subdivision in Rohtas, Hilsa block of Nalanda district were aflame with the militant peasant movement. Initially, in all these areas different forms of initiatives were taken - Kisan Sangh at local levels, Sangharsh Samiti, Jan Kalyan Samiti (Public Welfare Committee) and other similar mass organisations were formed in these rural areas during 1979-81.<sup>23</sup> Under the leadership of these organisations, peasants started raising their immediate demands shelved for a long time. Public meetings, processions, demonstrations in front of Block development office and District Magistrate were being organised. By the time the struggling forces/groups had overcome the causes of stagnation in the late 70s. CPI(M-L)-Liberation<sup>24</sup> group emerged as the strongest force and now has grown into a

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22. Now itself a district.

23. Bihar ke...ki Dastan, 1986, pp.59-60.

24. It is also the largest surviving faction of CPI(M-L) which led the Naxalbari movement.

formidable force. CPI(M-L) Party unity, another faction of CPI (M-L), also made its presence felt in the area by the name of Central Organizing Committee of the CPI (M-L) Party Unity. These two have minor ideological differences<sup>25</sup> with each other still they retain their separate identities. They also have mass organisations, the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) and the Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti (MKSS) are the two very important ones.

MKSS was set up, with the involvement of Party Unity cadres on the one side and radical Sarvodaya workers on the other, first at local levels in 1979 and then at the state level in 1980. BPKS was formed in 1981 (23 February) at the initiative of CPI(M-L) Liberation by bringing together all the local level mass organisations. These mass organisations gave a new momentum to the expanding peasant movement. They formalised their programmes and started coordinating activities in different regions and between local and higher level units. The Kisan Sabha started mobilising peasants for general democratic movements also. Year 1981-82 witnessed the waves of militant peasants struggles which made the rural poor realise their organised strength. They participated in the struggles in a determined and militant way. A series of local and village committees were formed, local armed squads were also established to resist the attack by armed gangs of landlords and if inevitable to

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25. Mainly on the question of armed struggle.



attack the landlords. Throughout the peasants shown unparalleled unity, militancy and determination. This upheaval was centred mainly in Patna, Jehanabad,<sup>26</sup> and in certain parts of Gaya, Nalanda and Aurangabad districts and issues involved were the same as mentioned in the beginning of the chapter.

Though the degree and nature of issues differed from region to region depending on the specificities of the class and caste structure of the regions, in essence, the struggles revolve around three issues:<sup>27</sup>

1. For an increase in the wages of agrarian labourers, who account for thirty to forty per cent of the rural population in these areas. A considerable section of landowners does not engage in field labour because of feudal traditions as well as availability of cheap labour. Obviously, in an area marked by acute exploitation of agricultural labourers, this struggle both became quite large and provided scope to landed elements for caste-based mobilisation and the formation of private armies. The form of struggle usually resorted to is strike, which often develops into armed confrontations. However, the organisations stand for boldly expanding strike struggles over large areas, if possible, including several blocks of a district, because,

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26. Then Jehanabad was a part of Gaya district.

27. Documents, CPI(M-L)-Liberation, 4th Congress, Jan. 1988; Dastawej, COC CPI(M-L)-Party Unity, 2nd Congress, April 1987.

they feel, it is essential for the development of caste-consciousness and class solidarity among agrarian labourers. In contrary to the liberal mode of thinking which prefers to avoid this struggle for the sake of so-called broad peasant unity, these organisations are convinced that, in actual practice, organising the struggle over a large area alone can break the reactionary alliance of landowners, and facilitate reaching a *modus vivendi* with the middle sections.

2. For the seizure of surplus, vested and homestead land in occupation of landlords, mahants, and rich peasants; and its distribution among landless and poor peasants. In this struggle the target-range is narrowed down. Generally, the middle sections having occupied vested lands, albeit illegally, are spared and the course of persuasion and exerting pressure is adopted in the case of rich peasants. In the distribution of land, attempts are made to involve and unify the people. The seizure of lands, crops, ponds, fishing rights in canals or rivers etc. often lead to armed confrontations.

In the whole process of seizure and distribution of land, the acquisition of pattas (records of right), organising the production, and finally in preventing usurpation of the gains by vested interests, the struggle generally tends to get blocked at one stage or another. There are, perhaps, more instances of failure than success.

3. For the social dignity of dalits and backward

castes. As it strikes at the root of feudal authority, this struggle tends to become quite intense and the entire range of upper castes of *babusahebs* (Rajputs), *babhans* (Bhumihars), and *babajis* (Brahmins) becomes the target. On the other hand, such struggles draw support from almost all the classes of backward castes. There are always some exceptions though, from both the sides. Generally, in all the villages a small section of progressive people from upper castes join hands with reactionaries from upper castes. Under the impact of struggle over all these years, certain sections of upper castes in several areas have begun to change their traditional attitudes.

The movement has been given the name of '*Ladai for Zamin, Majuri aur Ijat*'.<sup>28</sup> Though the distribution of land in central Bihar is not as skewed as it is in north Bihar still it is inequitable enough to agitate the rural proletariat to raise the issue of land reforms for the just distribution of land.<sup>29</sup> In the case of failure of government to address the issue seriously, the organisations have initiatives in their own hands and launch the 'land grab' movement from time to time. Apart from surplus land (in

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28. Struggle for land, wage, and dignity.

29. M.N. Karna, "Agrarian Tension and Violence - An Explanatory Analysis (A case study of Madhubani district)", in Journal of Social and Economic Studies, March 1975, pp.21-36.

excess of ceiling), vested land, *bakashta* land and *benami*<sup>30</sup> land, issue of *gairmazarua*<sup>31</sup> land has become a central point. *Gairmazarua* land used to be under direct control of government even before the abolition of zamindari. Such land were meant for public and community uses, like, for grazing, cremation, *haats* etc. But gradually zamindar captured these lands by force and in records such land were named *gairmazarua* '*khas*' and the rest of *gairmazarua* land were called *gairmazarua* '*aam*'. Later on zamindars started leasing out *gairmazarua* '*khas*' land. Till the abolition of zamindari, zamindars' right on such land was not challenged. After the abolition of zamindari their right on these lands was over. According to Bihar government's policy these land are to be transferred to landless from scheduled castes and tribes. Legally government could have brought such land under its control at the same time according to the existing laws the people who had leased in the land, too, were legal occupant and could not have been evacuated as they had the receipt of return filed by the zamindars as proof. Even in the case of absence of such receipts of return, nothing have been done due to inefficiency of government and the court of law. While, on the other hand organisations leading the movements are capturing, by force, such land to distribute among landless people. On the other hand the landlords with the help of private armies, are bent upon crushing such

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30. Land held in fictitious name.

31. Public common land.

moves and the movement. In Narayanpur (Jehanabad district) MKSS launched a struggle and seized 3.5 acres of gairmazarua land, but, in retaliation Savarn Liberation Front attacked Savanbigha village and killed three dalits. The land is still disputed.<sup>32</sup>

Incidence of sharecropping is very few in the central region of Bihar but it is a serious problem in north Bihar where these organisations are not powerful enough to launch movements similar to those in central Bihar. Still attempts are being made.

Problems of agricultural labourers are two dimensional: (i) Problem of bonded labourers, (ii) Very low wage, violation of even minimum wages fixed by the government.

For bonding the labourers, the landlords use traditional and modern methods. While, on the one hand the banihars are bonded, for years to come, by usury. These days the labourers are bonded for a season or year only which is renewed every year. Such seasonwise/yearly bonding gradually eliminates the need of paternal nature of relationships between landlords and labourers. On the other hand the daily wage labourers are exploited by paying very low wages. Whereas in most of the areas debt of Rs.500 is more than enough to bind a labourer for the whole season, on the other hand the daily wage labourers earn in the range of 2.00 kg-

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32. Ye Fasal....., PUDR, 1992, p.8.

2.50 kg. of coarse grains per day. Banihars get even less than this meagre quantity. The areas where movement is strong the labourers get higher wages on the scale of 3.50 kg.-4.00 kg. per day.<sup>33</sup> The scenario of exploitation is still worse in the case of female labourers. Female labourers are generally paid less than what is paid to male labourers because of their mass economic and social vulnerability.

Many successful movements have been launched by the organisations where wages were eventually increased but not to the level fixed by the government. The two parties generally compromise for the wage rate somewhere in between the minimum wage level and the then prevalent wage rate. But before that the landlords spare no effort to crush the struggle. On the issue of wages, the organisations generally tend to avoid the clash with middle peasants. It has been seen that in the case of less clash with middle peasants, the movements achieve greater success. It has also been seen that in the following conditions movements have greater chance of success<sup>34</sup>:-

- (i) Where landlords/rich peasants are unorganised and number of labourers are relatively small.
- (ii) Labourers are well organised and have close integration with middle peasantry.

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33. Ibid., p.5.

34. Bihar ke...ki Dastaan, 1986, pp.87-88.

(iii) People of surrounding areas support actively and joint movement is launched.

(iv) Mass boycott of landlords by all sections of labourers like blacksmith, carpenter, washerman etc.

Refusing the dialogue/compromise and attempt to settle the issue on the point of arms generally prove to be harmful for the movement.

The issue of *Ijjat* has been on the forefront of the present phase of movement. It is open fact, how much the agricultural labourers and petty peasants are subjected to the widespread social oppressions. In fact some people maintain that these social oppressions are far more relevant in explaining the ongoing peasant struggle in the region than other factors. While strict ordering of the relative importance of different factors is not possible, it is obvious that the role of social oppression is extremely important. In fact, all the militant organisations like CPI(M-L) - liberation/JPF CPI(M-L) - Party Unity/MKSS, MCC<sup>35</sup> etc. alongwith reformist organisations like *Chhatra-Yuva Sangharsha Vahini* could get foot hold among the masses of central Bihar, principally, on the question of social exploitation. The problem of social exploitation has been so preponderant in central Bihar, especially in Bhojpur, that the tenant cultivator of backward castes, Yadavas, Kurmis

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35. Maoist Co-ordination Centre.

and Koeris had to float their umbrella organisation, 'Triveni Sangh' in 1930's for retaliating upper caste tyranny like rape and social ostracism. Later on the Sangh spread in other parts of central Bihar. Interestingly, the bulk of this tenant cultivator from 'backward castes' also formed the ranks of *Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha*. This indicates that the movement against social oppression was not subsumed in the Kisan Sabha otherwise. Since caste system was built up and supported by the old production relations, one could reasonably expect its gradual dissolutions by the new and incoming production systems. As, even after the abolition of Zamindari, the 'Zamindari' has not gone and the caste system is still pervasive, the system and degree of social oppressions, too, has not changed qualitatively, though, it might have changed quantitatively. It is interesting to note that all the active militant organisations in central Bihar treat the question of social emancipation with utmost importance and it will be matter of interest to see how they combine social movement, which is necessarily a multi caste movement, alongwith the class struggle.<sup>36</sup>

Also, to effect a greater polarisation among people on class lines and to unite broad sections of rural population, the organisations are trying to take up many other related issues as well, like recording of tenancy rights and mobi-

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36. Shaibal Gupta, "Socio-Economic Roots of Peasant Movement in Central Bihar" - A Seminar Paper (ANS Institute, Patna, Aug. 1989), pp.6-7.



lising people against the corruption of block and other officials. The question of corruption is linked with agrarian development as the lion's share of benefits is usurped by these officials in collusion with local reactionaries. Besides, action against dacoit gangs, certain village development works, relief measures etc. are also taken up to unite the broad masses of rural population. The organisations hold that only an integrated programme of struggles and activities on all such issues can insure broad peasant unity under the leadership of agrarian labourers and poor peasants and it is also necessary to develop class consciousness and class solidarity among them.<sup>37</sup> Though it cannot be claimed that the movement has altered the class and caste balance in its favour, but it is gradually heading towards building this unity on a new basis, as, in certain areas, middle peasants and middle sections of upper castes are also being mobilized.

**Organisations:** - The organisations involved in the present phase of movement in Bihar are not only leading the peasant movement but they are also trying to bring out the society, polity and economy of the state from the morass. The present episode of this continuing struggle is qualitatively different from the earlier ones in as much as it combines both the elements of long drawn day-to-day resistance to oppression at the village level and spontaneous combustion

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37. Agrarian Programme, op. cit., 1983, 1988, 1992.

of the overall polity, exemplified in the creation of a new democratic consciousness. Demonstrations in Patna, intervening in the process of changing the grand structure of the prevailing politics, have, as their point of departure, the flaming fields of Bihar where the fire has spread far and wide.<sup>38</sup>

Leading organisations involved in the movement are CPI(M-L)- Liberation and its mass organisations like BPKS and IPF, COC of CPI (M-L)-party unity and its mass organisation like MKKS, and MCC. Political parties like Janata Dal, Congress (I), though are not involved in the movement directly, however, they do interfere from above siding with land lords/rich peasants and try to maintain their hold by arousing the caste sentiments. Recently, BJP has also started attempting to make inroads in to the peasant mass base. These political parties are generally interested in electoral base and they have no concern with the problems and the movement of the masses of the peasantry. There is methodological difference also between the two groups/types of forces. While the first group of forces is an internal element to the rural poor masses, work with them, establish their leadership and then interfere in the broad and mainstream politics to affect and change it, on the other hand the latter group of forces interfere in the peasant movement, in collusion with landlords/rich peasants, as an

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38. A.N. Das, The Republic of Bihar (New Delhi: Penguin, 1992), pp.106-7.

external agent just to perpetuate the existing structure of the prevailing politics.

Besides these two streams, there are few socialist groups, like *Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini*, *Samata Sangathan*,<sup>39</sup> also which strictly adhere to the ideology of non-violence. Though they work among the masses in the rural area, however, they have not been able to establish themselves as forces to reckon with.

**CPI(M-L)-Liberation** - After the collapse of the Naxalbari movement, the CPI (M-L) disintegrated, into large number of factions, beyond recognition,. CPI(M-L)-liberation is one of them. Formed in 1974, it is the largest surviving faction and the strongest one, too. Liberation started its movement from Bhojpur district. It believed in the strategies of armed struggle, annihilation of the enemy, parallel government, and in beseizing the cities by villages. The armed struggle by liberation group can be divided in three phases: In the first phase the revolutionaries themselves carried out the guerrilla attack on class enemies, the peasants were not active, as, till then, peasant struggles were not integrated with the class struggle. In the second phase the revolutionaries succeeded in integrating the two struggles; in villages the guerrilla squads were formed and peasants,

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39. Ishwari Prasad, "Kisan Andolan Ka Itihas" in Ishwari Prasad, ed., Bharat Ka Kisan Andolan (Delhi: Gramin Sahitya Mala, 1993), pp.33-35.

too, started joining the squads. Then, the third phase started with the formation of armed units which used to carry out armed action. Since then there has been remarkable changes in its ideology and strategies. From underground movement, now, it has entered the mainstream politics by opening up the party in December 1992. The group has always gone into new experiments to take the movement to a higher stage, formation of BPKS and IPF are two of them.<sup>40</sup>

**Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha:** BPKS was formed on 23rd February 1981 by bringing together the mass organisations at local levels. No one noticed then, but soon its presence felt in the State. Today it is the biggest peasant organisation and inherits the spirit of the Swami Sahajanand's Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha.<sup>41</sup> It launched a series of struggles on the issues already mentioned earlier. Its target is the eradication of feudal system of economic and social exploitation and equitable distribution of land, proper wages and dignity to the peasant mass. It not only launched 'land grab' movements, movements for just and equitable wages to male and female labourers, and struggles for *Ijrat*, but it tries to make them class conscious and

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40. Bihar Ke...Ki Dastaan, 1986, pp.75-76, 91-96; A.K. Dubey, Kranti Ka Atma Sangharsha (Delhi: Vinay Prakashan, 1991), pp.201, 222-24.

41. Navendu, "BPKS: Karavan Badhata Rahega" in Navyug (Patna, March 1986), pp.3-6.

prepares and educates them for co-operative farming also.<sup>42</sup> The Kisan Sabha does not see the issue of land distribution in isolation, rather, it believes that radical land distribution and agricultural revolution will ultimately lead to not only agricultural development but to industrial development, employment generation and radical democratisation and transformation of the society also.<sup>43</sup> Gradually, the Kisan Sabha has expanded its organisation in most of the districts from central Bihar.

Deep rooted caste consciousness, caste struggle and easy mobilisation on caste line, these are the biggest obstacles in the development and expansion of the Kisan Sabha.

**IPF:** After the come-back of Mrs. Gandhi in 1980 and disintegration of opposition, to develop a national opposition, to develop a joint front for broad unity of masses, to mobilise the masses in its favour Liberation group initiated the move to form a national level joint front.<sup>44</sup> In April 1982 IPF was formed at Delhi. The objective of IPF was to develop and lead different sorts of progressive social and democratic movements, it also inter-

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42. Dastawej - BPKS, adopted at 3rd State Conference, Aug. 1990.

43. Rameshwar Prasad, "B.P.K.S. - Zamin, Maryada aur Janwad Ke Liye" in Samkaleen Janmat (Patna, Oct. 8-15, 1990), p.13.

44. A.K. Dubey, op. cit., 1991, pp.229-30.

vened in the electoral politics. Participating in the elections was not aimed for electoral victory but merely to provide opportunity for participation of the people in the actualisation of universal adult suffrage. In fact people from weaker sections, dalits, etc. have been denied the opportunity to vote by upper caste landlords. IPF set up the Matdata Suraksha Samiti (Voters' Protection Committees) to function during elections, in order to prevent booth capturing, as a part of the process of actualising democracy at the grass roots. When IPF started participating in elections, it was felt that Liberation has given up the belief in armed struggle but actions taken by the group, in successive years, proved it wrong. IPF took the peasant movement to its new height by integrating it with the broader mass movement. In October 1990 the IPF made its presence felt at national level through a major rally in New Delhi by lakhs of the poor of Bihar. It was this rally rather than the stray electoral victories that placed the IPF firmly on the stage of national politics.<sup>45</sup>

**Party Unity - MKSS:** Party unity has been active in armed struggles in Jehanabad and Patna regions since mid 70s and later expanded itself in the regions of Gaya, Rohtas, Aurangabad, Palamau. In Jehanabad, Gaya, Aurangabad and Palamau it is still a strong force.<sup>46</sup>

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45. A.N. Das, op. cit., 1992, pp.108-110, 116.

46. A.K. Dubey, op. cit., 1991, pp.224-25.

In 1980, Party unity, too, entered the open peasant movement with the formation of MKSS. MKSS helped the expansion of the Party. In the beginning, MKSS took up the issues of feudal repressions, theft, dacoity (robberty) and loot of crops by arm men of landlords. After 1982 it started the movement for land distribution and minimum wages. Later it also took up the issues of corruption and started constructive public welfare work also. During 1980-86 the organisation became stronger and stronger.<sup>47</sup> In 1986, after Arwal massacre, in which 21 MKSS men were killed by police, MKSS was banned.<sup>48</sup> Attempts were made to launch new cover organisation but not much has been achieved and towards the end of 1980s the organisation stagnated.

**MCC:** Completely underground, MCC is active mainly in Aurangabad and parts of Gaya districts which are forts of feudal dominance and thus paved the way for MCC. It does not believe in open organisations and does not hesitate in mobilising and instigating caste wars to take revenge of feudal oppressions. Land to the tiller is not the direct agenda of MCC. MCC started working in small pockets, it is still there but could not expand in other regions.<sup>49</sup>

Though there is just minor ideological and strategic

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47. Dastaweji, MKSS, 1987, pp.22-26.

48. A.K. Dubey, op. cit., 1991, pp.251-52.

49. Ibid., p.253.

differences between the above three groups, however, no understanding has been reached among them. Though, there is some understanding between MCC and Party Unity which works. Sometimes they even get trapped in armed fights against each other, as if, they are fighting for the survival or dominance. This is more frequent in the case of CPI (M-L) liberation and MCC. Attempts are made for united front but these do not succeed. Each one of them accuse others of being ideologically wrong. MCC, party-unity call CPI(M-L) Liberation a revisionist and official naxalite as it has started participating in electoral politics, while the latter call the former duo dogmatic, anarchists for not learning from practice, instigating caste war and mindless violence. Though all the three do believe in armed struggle, they differ on the importance, strategy, tactics and use of arms.

#### Peasant movement and centrist political parties

The two major centrist parties are Congress(I) and Janata Dal, the two always have status-quoist attitude towards the ongoing peasant movement. In actual practice they are no way concerned with the problems of struggling mass. But these are differences between the two parties also.

Adhering to its historical role, Congress(I) always sides with the landlords. In fact, number of its leaders are themselves landlords who perpetrate atrocities on rural



poor of 'backward castes'. It never took the question of land reforms seriously and initiated the implementation half heartedly. Now it sees the ongoing movement merely as a law and order problem.

Peasants of certain 'backward castes' (Yadavas, Kurmis, Koeris) which used to form the mass base of Swami Sahajanand's Kisan Sabha and fought against Zamindari and feudal oppression, subsequently became the rich peasants and even landlords in certain areas in the 1960s, have now emerged as Kulaks, form the backbone of Janata Dal. These people, now, also perpetrate the same atrocities against which they had fought and formed 'Triveni Sangh' in 1930s and 1940s. Janata Dal had promised proper land reforms, but after coming to the power it failed (deliberately ?) to do anything even after repeated announcement to do it. It remained busy in incashing the Mandal issue. Land reforms do not suit the Kulak lobby of 'backward castes'. This is the limitation of Janata Dal.

Dalits and other backward castes who went behind Janata Dal on the Mandal issue, are now returning to fold of revolutionary left after realising the limitations of Janata Dal and Mandal. This has frustrated the Janata Dal government which is trying all sorts to eliminate CPI(M-L)-Liberation. It is instigating caste wars, using police encounters against Liberation's ranks, and even posing organisations (Liberation, MCC, PU) against each other.

CPI-CPI(M) and the Peasant movement: CPI which used to be the leading force and main propagator of the peasant movement in Bihar till mid 60s and even to some extent in 70s from the waning days of Bihar Prantiya Kisan Sabha, has now been marginalised. Though, it still maintains its hold in certain pockets, but it is on the verge of extinction in central Bihar. CPI-CPM does not approve the use of arms and violence, so rules out united front with the Naxalite organisations, like CPI(M-L)-Liberation. They differ with these organisations on other issues also. They accuse the revolutionary left of disrupting the broad peasant unity and of pitting agrarian labourers against peasants. But the revolutionary left holds that, by sacrificing the interests of agrarian labourers and poor peasants and by refusing to mobilise them in mass struggles, their class consciousness and class solidarity cannot be developed, nor can their leadership be established over the peasant movement and, in fact, the so called broad peasant unity simply boils down to unity under the leadership of rich peasants.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, the mass base of CPI is similar to that of Janata Dal and leadership is in the hands of old styled upper caste people, especially Bhumihars. Good number of members and leaders of CPI, too, are landlords and rich peasants. Due to its ideological-political bankruptcy, inactivity, and tailist (behind Janta Dal) policy, its rank

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50. Kisan Andolan Ki Mouzuda Sthiti - Report by the State Secretary, CPI(M-L) Liberation, Sept. 1989.

and file and mass base are drifting towards either revolutionary left or Janata Dal.

Private armies, Police suppressions, operations and the Peasant movement:<sup>51</sup> In the late 70s and beginning of 80s, when the peasant movement caught momentum and the poor peasants and agricultural labourer started challenging the economic and social exploitation (armed struggle was resorted to when needed), the landlords got panicked. The landlords started organised violence against these poor peasants and landless labourers to suppress the movement and terrorise the masses. Criminal gangs, robberies, loot of small/poor peasants have been common features and effective tool to perpetuate the exploitative relations. Different private armies were formed to prevent any change in the exploitative system. There is a number of private armies in the central Bihar. Each private army belongs to landlords of a particular caste and recruitment to the army is done by mobilising and arousing the caste consciousness.

Bhumi Sena: It is the army of Kurmi landlords based primarily in the Patna, Gaya, Jehanabad, and Nalanda districts of south-central Bihar. It was formed to counter the emerging Naxal forces, to suppress the movement of poor peasant-landless labourers by force, to terrorise the rural

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51. Bihar ke...ki Dastaan, 1986, pp.67-76; Urmilesh, Bihar Ka Sach (Delhi: Prakashan Sansthan, 1991), pp.132-43; Ye Fasal..., PUDR, 1992, pp.11, 15-22.

poor and to kill the militant leaders. The army even resorted to massacres. In 1979 the Kurmi landlords of Patna and Gaya formed 'Kisan Suraksha Samiti' which was later named Bhumi Sena. In collusion with the police it spread terror in more than 111 villages of the region and killed many dalits and labourers. After the 'Belachhi massacre' Bhumi Sena became the notorious name throughout the country. To make the Sena broad based and to hide its criminal character, 'Bhumi Sena' used to raise the issues concerning the middle and rich peasants of the Kurmi caste, this way it used to exploit the caste sentiments. Later poor peasants-labourers and their armed units started annihilating the members of Bhumi Sena and in the process the Sena got weakened.

**Brahmarshi Sena:** It belongs to the landlords of Bhumi-har caste centred in the Jehanabad, Gaya, Nalanda and Patna's rural area. Though it is a large Sena, but it should not be mistaken that it is organised like a squad or army. It gets organised only at the time of actions. This Sena gets patronage of big Congress leaders. During the chief ministership of Bindeshwari Dubey (1985-1988), Brahmarshi Sena became much more influential. It used to control the transfers of police and other officials. Army squads of CPI (M-L) Liberation and Party Unity killed many influential commanders and bosses of this Sena in the encounters, in the process the Sena was reduced merely to a weak group.

**Kunwar Sena:** Named after Babu Kunwar Singh, the Sena

was established by the Rajput landlords of Bhojpur-Rohtas districts. Name of the hero of the first independence struggle, 1857, was used to encash the sentiments of Rajputs and the public in general. Soon, its true colour was disclosed. Armed squads of CPI(M-L) and Kisan Sabha never allowed the Sena to root its foot in the area and thus it remained restricted to towns and *kasba*. The gang of Vir Bahadur Singh, an independent MLA, was much more influential. After his murder by a fellow landlord of the same caste, the gang is nothing more than a disintegrated group.

**Lorik Sena**: This Sena was formed by Yadavas of Nalanda district in 1984-85 to counter the menace of CPI(M-L) Liberation, MKSS, IPF. Like Rajputs, they also used the name of historic great warrior of Yadav community, Lorik. This Sena, too, gets patronage of the leaders of Congress I and even CPI. At present it is also disintegrated, however, from time to time it does come into action.

The reasons behind the disintegration and weakening of the Senas are: (i) Consistent and prolonged attack by the armed units of CPI(M-L) groups.

(ii) Intra-caste conflict and clash of interest among landlords.

But after the advent of Janata Dal in power, once again the process of formation of Sena has started with full support of top leaders of Janata Dal and a new series of massa-

eres has also begun.

Kisan Sangh has been formed, jointly by Yadavas, Bhumi-hars and Rajputs. It later carried out massacres, like, Tiskhora (Patna), Karkatbigha (Patna) and Deoghar, Sahiyur in Bhojpur.

On the line of Kisan Sangh, the people of Brahmarshi Sena reorganised themselves under the banner of Savarn Liberation Front and it was inaugurated by a Congress (I) leader and Rajya Sabha member. The Front is a well organised and strong one.

Sunlight Sena is another Sena in the series. It is active in Palamau district with the active support of BJP and JD leaders.

**Red Army:** All three important Naxal organisations - CPI(M-L) Liberation, CPI(M-L) Party Unity and MCC - have their own armed units. Central Bihar is the region where these armed units are most active. They possess good number of arms ranging from traditional to modern ones and have liquidated many notorious landlords and commanders of private armies. Of the three, MCC carries out maximum armed actions, it is, rather their principled stand. Regarding 'armed struggle' and 'annihilation of the individual', stands and opinions of MCC and Party Unity are almost the same. They still adhere to the old line of Naxalbari movement. Though CPI(M-L) Liberation has given up the line of 'annihilation of individual or class enemy' long ago, but they do

not rule out the use of violence, if needed, in the process of struggle. It states unequivocally, 'first of all, we do not subscribe to any theory of "executive violence" and still less to "individual assassination". On the issue of violence, its position is conditioned by the prevailing situation, 'Everywhere in Bihar, it is the landlords who are armed, they derive a sadistic pleasure by beating and killing poor peasants, burning their houses and raping their women. Secondly, by any human logic whatsoever, the rural poor cannot be denied their right to organise their own resistance forces to counter the attacks of landlord armies. Thirdly, if peasant struggle takes violent forms in Bihar, the root must be sought in the forms of oppressions.'<sup>52</sup>

Usually, these units stay amidst masses, share happy and sad moments with them, participate in the production activities, organise meetings, educate people through speeches, songs and stories, help them countering and resisting the attacks by enemy.

**Operations:**<sup>53</sup> Till the date no government has taken the movement seriously in its true sense. They consider or at

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52. A.N. Das, op. cit., p.108.

53. Urmilesh, op. cit., 1991, pp.79-116, 196-98; Ye Fasal..., PUDR, 1992, pp.12, 23, 25, 27; 'Bihar Daman aur Pratirodh ka Silsila' - a report in Samkaleen Janmat, Patna, Feb. 26-March 11, 1989, pp.14-15; Dipankar Bhattacharya, "Fighting Punjabisation of Bihar" in Voice of Alternative, New Delhi, Dec. 15 1988-Jan. 15, 1989, pp.3-7.

least project it as merely law and order problem. Whenever the landlords are in real trouble the state government comes to the rescue through 'operations' in the name of maintaining 'law and order' and reforms. Between 1982 and 1987 the state government launched several 'operations', 'Operation Black Panther', 'Operation two', 'Operation Task force', 'Operation Special Task Force' etc. During such operations, while they target the Naxal organisations and their armed units on the one hand, on the other hand they offer certain superficial reforms and development programmes to win away the mass base of the Naxal organisations. They announce the package programmes on the line of 20 points programme and request the people for co-operation against Naxals. More than often they terrorise them too. These reform and development programmes, apart from its limitations, either remain on the paper or implemented partially (thanks to the corrupt officials!). Though government, sometimes, does succeed in the mission and suppressing the armed units of Naxal organisation, however, these prove to be temporary. In fact, the Naxal organisations go slow on armed actions as a part of their strategy, rather, they intensify the mass mobilisation and campaign against police atrocities. They do succeed in such campaigns because of their strong mass base. In the series of 'operations' the two more, 'Operation Rakshak' and 'Operation Siddharth', were started on the behest of central home ministry, in 1988-89. Centred in central Bihar, especially Palamau, Aurangabad, Gaya, Jehanabad area, the 'operation', in spite of its multi-crore projects does not



look different from the earlier ones. After coming to the power, the present government launched 'operation Agnidut' and 'operation Flash' in succession but both failed to give any result. In continuation of his policy to eliminate, the Naxal organisations, recently he started the 'operation clean' in December 1993 and it has completed its first round. The only difference between this and the earlier ones is that this time harrassment of rural public is being avoided and operation is focussed only on activists, active supporters, armed units of the revolutionary organisations.

## CHAPTER IV

### EVOLUTION OF THE MOVEMENT AND THE PROBLEMS

Peasant movement of central Bihar in 1980s was born out of the womb of the Naxalbari movement of 1967-71 and represents the organic development of the spirit of the same. Whereas, on the one hand, the movement inherits and cherish the spirit of the Naxalbari movement, on the other, it does not shy away from accepting the faults and limits of the Naxalbari upsurge and yearn to learn accordingly.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting and remarkable to see how the movement has travelled so long, through time and space, to reach the present stage.

The initial stage/phase of the movement was aimed at creating mass bases in the rural areas of central Bihar, establishing the leadership of agricultural labourers/poor peasants and to develop an organised peasant movement to alter the prevalent political paradigms. The processes and methods in the building of organisations and developing the movement, are of following types:<sup>2</sup>

#### (1) Organising and mobilising the Peasant community into Kisan Sabhas

As we have already seen, in the very beginning of 1980s MKSS and BPKS were formed. They took up a number of issues

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1. CPI(M-L) Liberation, Firm Defender of the Revolutionary Legacy of Indian Communists, published by Shankar Mitra, New Delhi, 1991, pp.4, 13-14.
  2. Bihar ke...ki Dastaan, pp.81-110; Dastawej, MKSS, 1987, pp.29-44; Dastawej, Party Unity, 1987, pp.25-39.

and demands and started mobilising and organising the peasants. Initially, the leadership was constituted by:<sup>3</sup>

- (a) Already active (formerly or at present) peasant leaders/activists in various peasant struggles.
- (b) Freedom fighters turned communist leaders/activists.
- (c) A section of the leading force of the 1974 movement.
- (d) Disenchanted leaders/cadres of parties like, CPI, CPI(M), Lok Dal, Samajwadi Party and Janata Party.
- (e) Leaders/activists of various Harijan organisations and Shoshit Samaj Dal.

Leaders/activists came and joined from each stratum of the peasantry and all the castes, among them intellectuals and young people were in good number. In the beginning, some opportunist elements had also sneaked inside and taken over the leadership. They used to advocate 'self-reliant and supportive rural community' and campaign for utopian ideas like avoiding the use of modern inputs (machinery, fertilisers etc.). For them urban-rural contradiction was the ultimate one. They had no vision of revolutionary democratic society based on radical land reforms and labourers-peasants unity. In the name of peasant unity, they refused the class differentiation and struggles for wages. They failed to differentiate between private armies and red army. Above all, they even shied away from local level struggles, on the pretext that it will harm the development of organisation, but, they were all out for constructive

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3. Bihar ke...ki Dastan, 1986, p.81.

works.

While fighting against such elements, these organisations not only got political maturity but strengthened their hold over movement also.<sup>4</sup> These organisations have, apart from state level council and executive committees, committees at district, regional, Panchayat, local and village levels also. Lower level units are autonomous enough to take their own initiatives when needed. There is no place for rigidity and dogmatism as it will hamper their ability to adapt to the changing situation, thus they will lose the initiatives leading, ultimately, to their collapse.

## 2. Attack on Feudal dominance and Economic strikes against the Landlords

Agricultural labourers/poor peasants made sustained attacks on the feudal dominance, subsequently, many forms of feudal brutality are the things of past now. They resort to all forms of protest and attack when and wherever it is needed, like, public meetings, processions to expose the landlords, to give warning, gherao, demonstration and dharnas. They even go for armed attack and resistance against the terror of landlords. The concerned committees also pass judgements and punishments on landlords depending on the nature and degree of crimes.<sup>5</sup> The forms of punishment are:

**Gherao:** After the gherao, words from landlords are

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4. Ibid., p.82.

5. Ibid., p.83.

taken that in future they won't repeat such crimes.

**Collective raid:** Through such raids foodgrains and arms of landlords are seized.

**Levy:** Sometimes levy is fixed and charged on landlords which is either distributed equally or a part of it is kept for future and unforeseen expenses. A part is spent on arms and another on organisation.

**Fine:** Fine is stronger punishment than levy.

**Exile:** It is a kind of self-imposed punishment as the landlords flee away to escape the attack of peasants.

**Death:** It is an extreme form of punishment for the landlords who refuse to correct their ways, instead try to terrorise the people.

Economic strikes on landlords have been going on in the forms of land movement, seizing of ponds/canals from the control of landlords, seizing of crops and wage movements.

**(3) Establishing peasants' total control through village committees:** Village committees are tools through which peasant community exercise total control and run almost parallel government.<sup>6</sup> These committees not only unite the peasants but also mobilise them against attacks by enemies. Village committees take up following responsibilities:

(i) Control over all public properties and public

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6. Ibid., p.89.

issues

(ii) To fix the share of share croppers and wages, sometimes it also decides the would-be-sharecroppers.

(iii) To fix levy and fine

(iv) To check the theft and punish the guilty.

(v) To take up and conduct reform and developmental programmes.

(vi) To sort out the feuds among peasants, which led to reduction in litigations in courts.

(vii) To supervise block officers, village heads, and sarpanch.

(viii) To mobilise the mass in struggles against landlords and police.

(ix) to execute all the programmes prepared by the organisations.

**4. Sustaining and developing the armed forces of peasants, and taking the reactionary gangs head on:** Armed resistance against landlords and police has been one of the most important and integrated aspects of this phase of peasant movement in Bihar. Emergence of class consciousness through sustained struggles has given a sense of unity across castes among labourers and poor peasants. Gohar<sup>7</sup> has emerged as a new phenomenon in the peasant struggles.<sup>8</sup> Armed or unarmed, the peasants/labourers (male, female, children) come out in

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7. Armed gathering and mobilisation for encounters. Earlier, it was used by landlords, on caste lines, when in trouble, to attack or to face attacks.

8. Bihar ke...ki Dastaan, 1986, p.91.

large numbers (sometimes, the whole village) to meet the challenge of attacks or to make attacks. This process of attacks and counter-attacks has given rise to three types of armed forces:

(i) *Gram Atma Raksha Dal* (Village level self-defence unit):- Such units are constituted by 10-15 people from 1-3 villages which is always prepared to face any attack. They bear mainly traditional arms. They guard leaders and activists of the movements, participate in production process during day and guard the village during night time.

(ii) *Sthaniya Sashastra Dasta* (Local armed Squad):- 5-7 militant youths (belonging to Gram Atma Raksha Dal) selected from 2-3 villages constitute such armed squads. They move around in nearby villages to propagate the revolutionary message and make people conscious. They co-ordinate two or more Gram Atma Raksha Dals. They often go on the mission of seizing the arms. Organisational work is their prime task. These squads also work as links between Gram Atma Raksha Dal and regular armed units.

(iii) Regular Armed Units: Small, well organised, and mobile regular armed units are the main force of all the armed forces. The revolutionaries who have left their home for the cause of revolution constitute such units. Their area of activities is always fixed which is divided into two parts:- Interior and Exterior. Whereas in the interiors they carry out intense political work, the exterior, they use, for guerrilla warfare. Unit-in-Charge is the head for all political and armed activities. These units work under

strict control and discipline of the organisations. Often these units are divided into smaller armed campaign units which go for political campaign in certain areas.

5. Mobilising the peasants in the struggles for democratic rights: The peasants are not only struggling against feudal forces, bureaucracy, and police, but, they are mobilised in the struggles against repressive laws and for the democratic rights, be it the repressive Bihar Press Bill or suppression of any small nationality and minority. Recently, when IPF contested elections, the peasants participated in the campaign for free and fair elections.

6. Massive political campaign to unite the peasants: Attempts are made to unite the peasants, irrespective of their party affiliations, in the struggle against the enemy. This, however, does not mean that the differences with different parties are hidden from the peasants, instead, the differences are politically explained. Going for joint activities with like-minded revolutionary/progressive forces is encouraged and emphasised. In order to unite the peasants and to revolutionise even the most backward sections of peasantry, massive political campaign is carried on seriously. Peasants are involved in the discussions on current national/international issues, ideological and political debates. Regular study circle/party classes are also arranged. Generally, peasants enthusiastically participate in all these activities.



**7. Encouraging women's participation at par with men:**

Through out the movement, the women have been on the fore front. Be it public meeting, or procession or gherao or struggle for wages or some secret/underground activities, women have been participating with militancy. They have not only disarmed the police in Kaitharkala (Bhojpur) but they have also attacked the police stations (Bikram police station, 1981) to free the comrades.

The movement has freed women, to a great extent, from sexual exploitation. Women have become vocal not only against sexual harrasment by landlords but against patriarchal dominance within family also.<sup>9</sup> Separate cell for women and some women fronts have also emerged.

**(8) Translating caste based clashes into class struggle:** As we have already noticed how caste based social structure has extra-ordinarily complicated the problems of the agricultural sector. Deep rooted caste consciousness has led to the emergence of caste leaders who not only exploit people's caste sentiments but they work as contractors of caste votes also, thus political mobilisation on caste line becomes the prime task of political parties.

To tackle such situations, the organisations leading the movement intensified the economic struggles which helped to sharpen the class polarisations. Not only this, they even intervened in the caste organisations to give them progressive direction. Above all, they have to stand as a force

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9. Ibid., p.101.

which can ensure the protection of weakest castes. Apart from these, dialogue with caste groups are always maintained to win over progressive and conscious people.

9. **Fight against communalism:** The areas where the movement is strong, are generally free from communal raze and violence. Muslims, mainly from lower and lower middle strata have also been drawn into the movement and they feel secured there. Sometimes, some elements with vested interests try to raise communal frenzy. These attempts are foiled successfully by initiating following steps:<sup>10</sup>

(i) Such elements and vested interests are exposed publicly through pamphlets, campaign etc.

(ii) Intellectuals and influential people from both the community are contacted to take initiatives to foil such conspiracies.

(iii) Joint meetings of the two communities are organised.

(iv) Rallies for peace and joint public meetings are organised.

(v) Near-by villages are cautioned.

(vi) Notorious elements of both the communities are warned.

10. **Raising socio-cultural consciousness of the masses:** Campaign against social and cultural evils has been an integrated part of the movement, subsequently, in the areas

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10. Ibid., pp.105-6..

of struggle, incidence of theft, gambling, eve-teasing has been greatly reduced. Campaign against blind-faith, un-touchability is also launched, especially, among youths. Revolutionary songs and plays helped a lot in raising consciousness of the masses. Under the influence of the movement many amongst peasants and labourers have emerged as revolutionary poet and play writer who incorporate the bravery and sacrifice of revolutionaries in their poems, prose and plays.

**11. Nurturing the sense of co-operation among peasants and the masses in general:** In order to fulfill the mission of revolution, the organisations have been nurturing the sense of co-operation in the following directions;<sup>11</sup>

In Agricultural field:

(i) Collective ownership:- to cultivate the piece of land collectively and distribute the crops cultivated.

(ii) Collective fund:- collective fund of money, seeds and machineries are developed. The members are provided with loans of cash and seeds to be repaid after the harvest. On nominal costs machineries are also made available.

(iii) Collective granary:- Foodgrains collected in the form of levy and donation are put in the granary. Store house is constructed on the seized land by collective labour. Peasants in trouble get foodgrains in the form of loan to be returned after harvest, in certain cases loans are turned into grants.

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11. Ibid., pp.109-110.

(iv) Volunteer Collective Labour:- For construction and repair of ponds, canals, wells, bandhs, peasants offer collective labour voluntarily.

Such collective efforts help the execution of projects without delay and benefit the poor peasants immensely.

Apart from the above-mentioned forms of co-operations, other forms of co-operations are also nurtured such as, labour exchange or mutual exchange of oxen, ploughs and other inputs. Construction of houses and settlements are also done by collective labour. Sona Tola (Sahar, Bhojpur), Madhuban (Masaurhi, Patna). Shraavan Nagar (Kako, Jehanabad) are some of the bastis (settlements) made by collective labour.<sup>12</sup>

These are the broad outlines of the methods/process (and at the same time achievements in itself) through which the movement developed and reached a stage where the aims of the movement, to a great extent, were fulfilled. It created huge mass base in 7-8 districts of central Bihar and posed a big challenge to feudal dominance, police atrocities, and government's superficial reformist policies. It united the poor peasants/labourers on class line. Started as anti-feudal struggle, the movement acquired more and more political stance as it turned, gradually, anti-government too.<sup>13</sup> But, any policy, strategy, and method has its own limita-

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12. Ibid., p.110.

13. Pawan Sharma, "Bihar ke Kisan Andolan Ki Nai Visheshatayen" in Parivartan (Patna, Sept.-Nov. 1988), p.19.

tions which gets exhausted after a point of time. The movement, too, after realising the potentials of its policies, strategies and methods was trapped in stagnancy during the late 80's. All the organisations/forces of the movement are searching, in their own ways, for policies, strategies, and methods to get out of this trap. Here, we should note that all the organisations are not equally efficient and flexible in their attitude. Certain organisations like MCC, have become, in a way, victims of their own dogmatic approach and rigidity. At this juncture CPI (M-L)-liberation scores points over other two major contending forces, i.e. CPI (M-L)-party unity and MCC.

Comrade Vinod Mishra<sup>14</sup> says, "People used to think that even after re-establishing the party, in the changed scenario, we are bound to repeat the old mistakes and in the process we will get alienated from the mass and, thus, we'll get uprooted. But, we proved this notion wrong. Our party has developed its line on the basis of objective conditions of Indian realities and has shown how to go ahead even in extreme difficult situations".<sup>15</sup>

Though all the forces are trying to mobilise newer forces at much more larger scale and searching for alternative development programme for agriculture which has become increasingly complex due to government's inappropriate policies, to take the movement to a greater height, however,

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14. General Secretary, CPI (M-L)-liberation.

15. Samkaleen Lokyhudha - Central Hindi Organ of CPI (M-L), Patna, May 15, 1994, p.1.

it is CPI (M-L)-liberation only which seems like breaking the ice due to its attitude to learn from history, experiences, and struggles. MCC, victim of its own dogmatic approach and rigid attitude, has failed to expand its influence beyond a small area.<sup>16</sup> It has not been able to garner the moral and political support of wider public. And now desperate to sustain its movement and retain the hold over mass base (which is becoming increasingly influenced by other expanding forces) it often indulges in mindless violence (often against CPI (M-L)-liberation, too), anarchic activities, and unnecessary caste war.<sup>17</sup>

COC-CPI (M-L)-party unity, though less dogmatic and rigid and more receptive than MCC, too, has not succeeded in moving ahead from the point of stagnancy. Comrade Arjun Singh,<sup>18</sup> the General Secretary of CPI (M-L)-party unity accepts that after the Arwal massacre there was temporary spurt in the struggle, however, after the ban was imposed on MKSS the movement suffered in the long run and they are yet to recover and move out of stagnancy. Still, they have been able to sustain and hold the mass base to a great extent.<sup>19</sup>

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16. In certain parts of Aurangabad, Jehanabad and in few pockets of Gaya, Palamau districts. A.K. Dubey, op. cit., 1991, p.254.

17. An observer, "The Politics of Massacre and the Indian Brand of Anarchism" in Liberation, New Series, Vol.1, No.11, New Delhi, 1994, pp.19-20.

18. Activist, Party Unity, Patna District.

19. In an interview done by the research scholar.

On the other hand, CPI (M-L)-Liberation is slowly coming out of the trap of stagnancy and equipping itself to march ahead taking the movement to a newer heights. In fact, it is its ability to evolve and adopt new strategies, new forms of struggle, new methods to mobilise the even wider section of public, new policies to better its ideological and theoretical stands, and sustained political campaign, which makes it capable of taking new strides in spite of ups and downs and set backs from time to time. From underground armed activities, it had expanded its activities in other spheres also. Now it is practising, underground-open, legal-illegal, parliamentary and non-parliamentary, armed and non-violent, all forms of struggle.<sup>20</sup> It has coordinated different forms of struggle and organisation at different points of time and space to convert caste struggles into class struggles. Depending on the issues and circumstances the direction of the struggles has been shifting from anti-feudal to anti-government and the nature of the movement from spontaneity to well planned and organised struggles. On style of functioning, it centered on fight against superficial, formal, spontaneous and roving styles. On organisational front, it initiated the efforts to remove the lacunas in the formation of village committees and Gram Atma Raksha Dal. In the formation of village committees, now, instead of banking upon few active elements, attempts are made to make it broad based by involving 60% of the population and making some village level cadres, campaigns

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20. Pawan Sharma, op. cit., 1988, pp.20-21.

are also launched in near by villages; elections are done democratically and it is represented by all sections of the population. Earlier Gram Atma Raksha Dal was formed by 5-10 youths after one or two formal meetings. Now, first, leadership of 4-6 youths is developed to make it nucleus and commanding group. Then the Dal is formed by involving 11-30 people.<sup>21</sup> For better results autonomy and required freedom of experimentation is given in the formation of committees. For example in certain villages in Bhojpur, the local cadres were going about the formation of village committees in a way different from the formal one practised by the BPKS. The village was a local centre of struggle and while forming the village committee a new dynamic concept was introduced there. They vowed to turn the formation of the village committee into a 'festival of the masses', and, step-by-step, mobilised them in democratically electing their own committee. The organisation had seen in its past experience that during the upsurge in the movement people built up their own committees as the centre of all activities. In contrast, the formation of village committees by the Kisan Sabha as its lowest unit appeared to be too stereotyped, too formal an affair. In many a case, the village committee simply turned into a village development body, devoid of struggle and detached from the Kisan Sabha.<sup>22</sup>

Taking the cue from the Bhojpur experiment, the party

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21. Kisan Andolan Ki Mauzuda Sthiti - A report by State Secretary, CPI(M-L), Aug. 1989.

22. A.N. Das, op. cit., 1992, p.118.



subsequently improved upon the concept of village committee. The village committees came to be emphasized as the key to releasing the people's initiative at the grass root level, as a living mechanism for enhancing their democratic consciousness, integrating into their subjective consciousness the concept of revolutionary democracy, so that the masses could differentiate in concrete terms between one type of democracy and another. The goal is to ensure the people's active and conscious participation in the movement and village committees are the medium to realise it.

To fight the roving style of work of organisers and to strengthen the organization at the grass roots, the concept of pockets was introduced. Every organiser is assigned a pocket of 10-15 villages by the committee concerned and is instructed to develop a unit, and with it, an entire network of organisations. This concept has lent more direction to the work of the organisers, increased the involvement of many activists who were earlier on the periphery of the organisation and also helped them plan and organise their work better. The number of pockets and of organisers making serious and successful efforts is increasing and in certain pockets strong units have already developed.<sup>23</sup>

Earlier due to lack of party's control on armed forces, the armed activities used to harm the movement. Now the leadership of the party has established its control over armed forces which helps in co-ordinating armed actions,

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23. Ibid., pp.118-119.

when and where needed, with the movement. Armed forces in central Bihar are not the product of ambitions of the organisations working their, rather, they are product of the needs of the movement there, it has developed in accordance with the dynamics of the movement, and, still, they are actively involved in the movement.<sup>24</sup>

Above all, to give the movement a new dimension, to take it to an even higher scale and to make it more and more political, the Liberation group has tried to mobilise the middle peasants and certain sections of even rich peasantry. For this it has started taking up issues concerning these sections, like, irrigation, famine, fertiliser - seeds - and other inputs and, above all, corruption. It has also taken up the issue of registration of share croppers. Now before and during the movement and struggles dialogue is established with these sections and attempts are made to take them into confidence. In order to make it more and more political direction of the movement is increasingly shifting from anti-feudal to anti-government and anti-bureaucratic capital stance. All such attempts have met with mixed results. While on the one hand, in many areas, middle and a section of rich peasants readily agreed to increase the wages, on the other hand, those sections of middle rich peasantry which had got alienated from the party and had joined the enemy camp, some of them are, now, gradually changing their attitudes.<sup>25</sup>

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24. Pawan Sharma, op. cit., 1988, p.21.

25. Ibid., pp.19-20.

In spite of all these efforts, the leadership is very much clear that this wider unity of peasants should not be achieved at the cost of poor peasants/agricultural labourers rather such unity has to be achieved under their leadership, for it is this leadership which can guarantee the revolutionary movement and transformation of agriculture, society, economy, and polity.<sup>26</sup>

Notwithstanding the efforts being made by the organisations to march ahead in the fields and polity of Bihar, the peasants' movement in central Bihar, at present, is facing a complex situation. Whereas, on the one hand the governments (both central and state) are trying to eliminate these 'extremist' forces by launching 'operation' after 'operation' and all the major political parties (including CPI and CPM) are trying to isolate them, on the other hand these organisations, themselves, are interlocked in continuous armed 'discourse'. Since the coming of Janata Dal in power, in Bihar, not only number of 'operations', massacres of poor peasants/labourers/cadres/activists of the movement have risen, but, the incidence of inter organisational (between MCC and CPI (M-L)-liberation, especially) has also gone up. Amidst such fluid situations the leadership of CPI(M-L) Liberation looks confident and say "we have passed through such situation a number of times, this time, too, we will pass through and will emerge stronger. It's our brave comrades, our ideological-theoretical understanding that we

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26. Ibid., p.22.

have reached this stage".<sup>27</sup>

It's upto time to prove whether they are right, however, at present these organisations will have to sort out the problems that they are facing on all fronts of the movement. This is necessary not only for further development of the movement, rather, it will also take them out from unfortunate inter-organisational war.

The aspects and situations that have emerged on the scene, are in primary stages only. The problem to develop and consolidate is still there. These problems are on, ideological, political, theoretical, organisational, strategic, tactical, and style of functioning fronts.

The major problems are related to the issues of wider unity of peasants and emergence of bureaucratic capital giving rise to new contradictions and collaborations.

History is witness to the fact that no peasant revolution has succeeded and that elimination of feudalism is not possible without wider unity with middle peasants, making a section of rich peasants friendly, and at the same time neutralising the other sections of rich peasantry.<sup>28</sup> So, in order to sharpen the class polarisation and to make the movement even more political, the forces of the movement should strive hard for this wider unity. But, at this point

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27. Samakaleen Lokyudh, May 15, 1994, p.10.

28. BPKS Convention - a report, in Samkaleen Lokyudh, Patna, June 30, 1992, p.13.

there is explicit confusion within and among organisations. Some of them see kulaks as rich peasants and rich peasants as middle peasants while others do just the reverse. Both the approaches harm the movement. While the first type of mistake is committed in the hastiness to widen the area of influence of the movement, the other group is the victim of narrow mindedness.<sup>29</sup> It is true that through agricultural reforms and development, the ruling class has expanded its social base and this should be kept in mind while expanding one's mass base. Added dimension to this problem is, how to achieve wider unity without sacrificing the interests of poor peasants/labourers. After the abolition of zamindari the government has taken up the role of rent collector and, with this, ended the exploitation of middle peasants by zamindars. The abolition also helped middle and small rich peasants become the owner peasants. They did not have to struggle against zamindars and feudalism for this. Slowly, their anti-feudalism consciousness faded away as the zamindari abolition abated the contradiction between zamindar and middle-small rich peasants.<sup>30</sup> Now, on the issue of wages and land reforms, landlords easily mobilise them on their side. On the other hand the Green Revolution has increased the poor and middle peasants' dependency on landlords and rich peasants, especially, for various inputs and equipments. Green Revolution paved the way for imperialist and bureaucratic capital which apart from benefitting middle peasants

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29. Ajit, "Kisan Andolan: Samasyayen aur Samadhan" in Samkaleen Lokyudh, Patna, Jan. 31, 1992, p.14.

30. Ajit, op. cit., Jan. 31, 1992, pp.13-14.

partially, led to the emergence of capitalist landlords and rich peasants in the permanently irrigated area. Slowly increase in prices of inputs, their irregular supply, and corruption resulted in rise in cost of production, and on the other hand the market and remunerative prices have gone down.<sup>31</sup> Under this situation, on the sole issue of profitable and remunerative prices farmers' movement has come up. Sharad Joshi led 'Shetkari Sanghatana', Taikait's 'Bhartiya Kisan Union' and Nazunda Swami's 'Raiyot Sangh' are the movements of this nature. These movements naturally, flourished in the areas most benefitted by Green Revolution. Such movements, too, to some extent, go against the imperialist-bureaucratic capital's interest. So, taking up or supporting the movement for remunerative prices alongwith struggles for wages and land reforms may will result in middle peasants alienation from landlords, to an extent. But, while the leading forces of the movement in central Bihar, inspite of their efforts in this direction and limited success here and there, have not been able to break new grounds. On the other hand parties like CPI-CPM (leading force of 50's and 60's) avoid the complexity of the problem and wholeheartedly support the demand for remunerative prices. They are against the movements for wages and land reforms for the sake of wider peasants unity.

Other major problem is related to the bureaucratic capital in agriculture sector, giving rise to complex sce-

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31. Chanakya, "City Vs. Countryside or Industry Vs. Agriculture in India", in Liberation, July 1984.

nario of new contradictions and new collaborations. Since independence, in spite of strengthening of centralised economy in the country, decentralised economy is still predominant in agriculture. Due to abolition of zamindari and peasants' direct relations with the government, old contradictions receded and new ones have emerged. So, aspects of anti-government struggles have increased. At the same time due to bureaucratic capital, various policies and reforms by government, new landlords, kulaks, middlemen, contractors and lumpens have emerged and expanded. Mafia culture has also developed in certain regions, nexus and collaborations of these elements with officials and corrupt politicians are also common which reflect both, legal and illegal aspects of ruling classes. Politicisation of crimes is also a part of this process. Now, the problem is how to co-ordinate and integrate the anti-feudal and anti-government struggles? In fact, now, the two are not independent and separate from each other in the present situation. Also, such nexus and collaborations assume, from time to time, parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms. So, the struggles against them may also be legal, illegal, parliamentary and non-parliamentary. Overlooking one aspect and sole emphasis on other may hamper the movement. This is the point from where there is all possibility of leftist, rightist, anarchist, and revisionist deviations. In fact, many of the forces have become victims of such deviations. For the forces going for parliamentary struggle, too, like CPI(M-L) Liberation, it is of utmost necessity to link and integrate politically both, the parliamentary and non-par-

liamentary struggles. So, there is need to resolve the issue and make activists, ranks and file, and the people politically conscious of the complexity and nature of these realities.<sup>32</sup>

Other problems equally relevant for the further development of the movement, are:

Autonomy to lower units of the organisations: Lower units of the organisations should be given autonomy to take initiatives. It is leadership's responsibility to equip them with party's policies and ideology, so that they, on their own, can take initiatives and build movement. Faults, here and there, during the movement, are part of the development process. Upper leadership should not intervene too much in the functioning of lower units unless the deviations are not serious.<sup>33</sup>

Organisational reforms: As we saw above, how complex the realities and the problems are. To meet the challenges posed by the realities and problems, organisational set up needs to be updated. The organisations will have to evolve better set up and framework in light of their experience and upcoming problems. It is necessary to build well planned and organised movement also.<sup>34</sup>

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32. Ajit, op. cit., 1992, pp.13-15.

33. Ibid.

34. Shiv Sagar Sharma, "Kisan Andolan Ki Gatiruddhata" in Samkaleen Lokyudh, Patna, Feb. 15, 1992, pp.26-27.



Atma Raksha Dal, Prachar Dusta, underground organisations etc. seem to be indispensable parts of the peasants' struggles, especially in the central Bihar, in the very natural process of its development. So, these bodies should also be integrated and represented in the peasants' organisations. At the same time, strategy regarding armed activities should be clear and well formulated and armed forces should be under control and checks.<sup>35</sup>

There has been cases of lack of consolidation of the impact generated during the struggles, which is harmful for the further development of the movement. Unless each and every impact is consolidated, it will be difficult to carry forward the movement. So, the organisations should be geared up for this task.

Lack of different class or sectional organisations: In the rural area people from different sections and professions should also be organised on their own issues. This will not only generate different support bases but it will also help in achieving wider unity.

Lack of human and citizens' right organisations. In Bihar the civil and human rights' movement is almost non-existent. Poor peasants/ labourers and people from other weaker sections - lower strata are, in general, direct victims of suppressions of such rights. All sorts of repressions are unleashed on them and this increases with the rise in the movement. So, there is need to build up a

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35. Ibid.

parallel movement for civil and human rights.

Last but not the least, there is lack of strong socio-cultural movement along with the peasant movement. For the consolidation and further development of the movement, a parallel and strong socio-cultural movement is necessary, the ground for which has to be prepared by the peasant movement itself.

## CONCLUSION

With the arrival of capital and colonialist British Raj, trade and commerce expanded in Bihar, the state also saw growth of some modern manufacturing and of an urban 'middle class' and rural urban working class, on the other hand, it was also plunged into a new type of backwardness and underdevelopment. Growth in trade, commerce and modern manufacturing did not have any healthy aspects of development, being cancerous growth fostered and reaped off according to the interests of external agencies. Trades in opium, indigo and saltpetre were very profitable, but benefits accruing to Bihar or even to India out of such huge profits were very little. If any benefits accrued from it to India, they went largely to non-Biharis, like, Parsi traders. Otherwise, these profitable trades only helped in further consolidation of the British Raj.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the Permanent Settlement not only consolidated a class of parasitic landowners, but it also integrated rural Bihar into the commodity and money circuits. This parasitic class was least interested in the development of agriculture, rather they were indulged in astounding levels of conspicuous consumption out of exorbitant rents. Thus, the system prevented the 'classical' capitalist shift from rent to profit as the main form of

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1. A.N. Das, The Republic of Bihar (New Delhi, 1992), pp.138-39.

surplus accumulation.<sup>2</sup> However, with the encouragement to cash crops and investment in irrigation schemes money did flow in the rural Bihar and this, gradually, led to the development of junkers and kulaks.

After independence when Zamindari was abolished and agrarian reforms were carried out, it seemed that the Permanent Settlement has been 'permanently unsettled'. However, over the decades, after zamindari abolition, the agrarian policy and reforms have promoted a relatively 'conservative path of junker-style capitalism'. Effective land monopoly has been preserved either because of loopholes in the laws or because of faulty legislation (intentional or otherwise!).

Swami Sahajnanda realised, at the end of his career that the main support base of the kisan movement was "really middle and big cultivators" and that the interest of the poor cultivators and labourers were sidelined. With zamindari abolition while much land was retained by the landlords through all possible malpractices, the relatively weak among the uppermost layers of the agrarian order failed to maintain control over their entire domains. They were replaced by the substantial tenantry, the middle and rich peasants who had fought against zamindari. In caste terms, Bhumihars and certain middle castes, like, Yadavas, Kurmis and Koeris,

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2. Ibid.

constituted the majority of this upcoming landlords. In a caste-ridden society this was to shape political dynamics of future. Nothing changed for the people at the bottom of the agricultural and social hierarchy - mainly Harijans and Adivasis. As the new rich peasantry consolidated itself, conflicts between them and the rural poor came to the fore. Thus, the internal contradiction of the peasantry which remained unattended during 1930s and 1940s, gained prominence and shaped the direction of future peasant movements.

In the stagnating agriculture of Bihar, Central Bihar is small pocket of reasonably high growth. Attempts were made to make it 'Green'. Better irrigation system, wider use of fertiliser, HYV seeds were introduced to raise the production without proper land reforms. This led to wider use of wage labour and marketisation of agriculture. These elements indicate the emergence of capitalist relations in agriculture. With substantial investments in pumpsets, power tillers, land improvement etc. have also strengthened the capital base of agriculture. To be precise, these characteristics have led to the landlord path of capitalist development. All these have obvious impacts on the increasing differentiation of the peasantry in general and emergence of a large group of agricultural labourers, who are becoming increasingly conscious of their legitimate rights. This lower strata of the peasantry does not perceive their own problems merely in terms of economic deprivation but also in terms of social oppressions. That is why almost all

the militant organisations make the problem of social oppressions their one of the prime agenda and an integral part of the movement.

Increasing differentiation within peasantry along with large scale intervention by the state, national and foreign financial institutions and a number of non-governmental voluntary organisations, has complicated the land relations in Bihar. The dynamics and parameters of the agrarian scene have changed and the scenario is still unfolding in the rural Bihar. The state's response to the problems and movement of the toiling peasants in Central Bihar has not been appropriate. Its understanding of the problem is devoid most of its dimensions reflected by the objective conditions in the fields of Central Bihar. The state has been trying to solve the problem through 'law and order'. More than this, the agencies of the state, officials and the political parties, generally, collaborate with landlords to suppress the movement and maintain the status quo. This scenario faced with militancy of peasants has constructed militant, aggressive and violent peasant movement.

The great peasant upsurge in the 1980s started somewhat stagnating during late 1980s. To get out of this stagnancy and for the reawakening of peasants, the organisations and the peasants will have to tune themselves to the changing dynamics and parameters of polity, society and economy (agrarian economy in particular). They should take the actual social barriers to the movement into account. To

learn from the defeats and struggle again lend dynamic to the movements, under new conditions which often emerge from the defeats. The class consolidation and the growth of the market in correlation with existing rural/agrarian differentiation and with village traditions that reflect this differentiation, create the objective conditions which determine and shape the peasant movements. The motivation for peasant political activities often emerges from the immediate experience of social and traditional elements of village life and its contradictions. So, in order to build up an effective peasant movement, proper analysis of the differentiated reality of rural society is necessary. That is what the peasant organisations need to do - the major task before them - for the second upsurge of peasants in Central Bihar.

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2. Com. Rameshwar Prasad - Gen. Secy, BPKS.
3. Com. Suraj Prasad - Gen. Sec., CPI, Bihar State.

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