

KANNUR UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION



SELF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL ON

SDE 3B08 SIO

AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

GRARIN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Module I

Peasant society

1.1. Peasants and Primitives

Peasants:-

The term peasant is identified in different way. In social science literature they have been depicted on the one hand as **reactionary**, **conservative**, **awkward**, **homologous**, incomplete-part society and dependent, on the other as revolutionary, progressive, self-conscious, heterogeneous and self-sufficient social category with the potential for autonomous collective action. However, notwithstanding such paradoxes, social scientists have broadly underlined the subordinated, marginalized and underdog position of the peasantry in human society. In the sociological and the anthropological literature peasants have widely been described as *culturally* ‘unsystematic, concrete tradition of many, unreflective, unsophisticated and the non-literati constituting the mosaic of the “little tradition” (Redfield 1956), ‘incomplete’ and a ‘part society with part cultures’ (Kroeber 1948). *Politically* they are found to occupy an ‘underdog position and are subjected to the domination by outsiders (Shanin 1984), unorganized and deprived of the knowledge required for organized collective action (Wolf 1984: 264–65). In the *economic term*, they are identified to be the small producers for their own consumption (Redfield 1956), subsistence cultivators (Firth 1946) who produces predominantly for the need of the family rather than to make a profit (Chayanov 1966). *Historically*, peasants have always borne the brunt of the extreme forms of subordination and oppression in society. However the specific socio-economic conditions of their existence have largely shaped the roles of the peasantry in social change and transformation.

In the context of the 18th century peasantry in France Karl Marx highlighted that their mode of production had isolated them from one another. To him, ‘they are formed by simple addition of homologous magnitude, such as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes’ (Marx 1974:231). To Lenin, however, the peasantry in late 19th- and early 20th-century

Russia was differentiated by the unequal patterns of landholding, income and by their contact with the market as well. To him, there was a striking difference between the working peasant and the peasant profiteers. While the former was a faithful ally of the working class, the later was an ally of the capitalist (Lenin, 1919rpt, 1972:497-498). On the other hand Kautsky has highlighted the process of the dissolution of self-sufficient peasant households in the wake of penetration of capitalist urban industry, increasing rural and urban divide and the growing indebtedness and landlessness of the peasantry in Russia (Kautsky 1899 rpt.1988). Antonio Gramsci has seen the peasantry in the context of Italy as a part of a larger sociopolitical order and not a discrete entity. Having understood the nature of Peasantry's subordination, Gramsci highlighted that their subordination could be broken through the alliance of workers and peasants and through the development of class-consciousness among the peasants (cf. Arnold 1984: 161– 62). Frantz Fanon while studying the peasantry in the context of Algeria, points out that in colonial countries they play a revolutionary role in bringing about change in the social and political order of society. To him, peasants are posited to a situation where 'they have nothing to lose and everything to gain' by way of their participation in the change (Fanon 1971: 47). Alavi highlights the crucial roles played by the middle peasantry in the Russian and Chinese revolutions (Alavi 1965). However in his observation on the peasantry in South Asia, he points out that peasant 'finally and irrevocably takes the road to revolution only when he is shown in practice that the power of his master can be irrevocably broken; then the alternative mode of existence becomes real to him (Alavi 1973). Barrington Moore while recognizing the revolutionary role of the peasantry in the radical movements, points out those roles are dependent on the structure of power and the class alignments within a society. Turning to India, he mentions that because of the passive character of the Indian peasantry and the specific structural features of Indian society, which is dominated by caste, religion and ethnic considerations, peasantry has not been able to play any revolutionary role in the country (1966).

The term peasant is defined in different way. The exact dictionary meaning of the word peasant is;

1. A member of the class constituted by small farmers and tenants, sharecroppers, and laborers on the land where they form the main labor force in agriculture.

2. A country person; a rustic.

Anthropologists and Sociologists also defined peasants in accordance with their theoretical assumptions. Robert Redfield, the Pioneer among Anthropologists defined a peasant as a man who is in effective control of land to which he was long been attached with ties of tradition and sentiments". The land and he one part of one thing, one old-established body of relationship. Redfield specified two major aspects of peasants. First their mode of livelihood and second their relationship to other strata of society. He would like to confine the term peasants to those small agriculturists who produce for the consumption and defined farmers those who produce for market.

Raymond Firth describes peasants or those small producers who make a living have a way of life through cultivation of the land. Another Anthropologist Kroeber defined "peasants are definitely rural yet live in relation to market towns; they form a class segment of a large population which usually contains urban centers, sometimes metropolitan capitals. They constitute Part-societies with Part-Culture.

Theodor Shanin made more comprehensive view; Shanin describes peasant societies in terms of four basic factors. First one is the family, the second land husbandry, third one is specific traditional culture and Fourth one is the undergo position; the domination of peasantry by outsiders.

The significance of the peasant family as a unit of both consumption and production has been noted by many thinkers. In Sociologists like Le Play and Tonnies would agree that the character of the family in work and leisure is what differentiates the peasant way of life from the industrial.

Incorporating the spirit of above definition the following are the major characteristics of peasants.

Major Characteristic of peasant communities:

a) Peasants are attached to the land; he not only lives on the land but by his labour he makes the land bear fruit.

- b) The Peasants, be an owner or tenant, in all cases he earns his livelihood by labour on land
- c) Peasants are viewed as occupying a low position in society.
- d) Peasants are viewed as rural people, who are unlettered
- e) Peasants are small scale producers.
- f) Non-mechanised agriculture
- g) Small scale of production.
- h) Economic and social relationship with a general and more powerful culture and tradition.
- i) Often isolated from the mainstream.
- j) Status of women is usually low, perhaps because peasant women typically work in the domestic sphere rather than outside it. WARD GAILEY suggests that economics based on money may encourage status differences based on sex. Women's value devalued cause they don't make the money.

Primitives:

Primitives may be defined as follows:

- 1) A person belonging to a preliterate, nonindustrial society or culture
- 2) A person belonging to a nonindustrial, often tribal society, especially a society characterized by a low level of economic complexity.
- 3) An unsophisticated person.
- 4) One that is at a low or early stage of development.

Anthropological studies among primitive communities pointed out that each community developed a system of elements in relationship to one another. Each could be understood as parts working together within a whole.

Anthropologists have seen the primitive isolated community as several of complete and self-contained systems. It can be seen as of customs and institutions. It is sometimes seen as the fundamental ideas of good and bad which guide a people's life. In studying a primitive society as a social structure, the anthropologists look at the kinds of roles, with attendant statuses, the tradition recognizes in that community. These roles and statuses persist while the particular individuals who fill them enter them and leave them.

Village and Peasantry

In the official writings of the early British administrators on the Indian rural society the village communities are identified on the social foundation of the peasant economy in India. The village community is characterised as a closed corporate foundation depending on small scale production to meet its own requirements. According to the British official writings India was a land of little village republics and the people of India lived under this simple form of municipal government or small republics. Sir Charles Metcalfe describes the character of the village community as little republics almost independent of any foreign relations and unchanging in character. He also believed in the interdependent community character of the various classes of inhabitants living in the village. James Mill confirmed his belief in the village community as a corporation. Sir Henry Maine found the Indian Communities as an organized self-acting group of families exercising a common proprietorship over a definite tract of land. According to him there were two types of village communities 1) in which the village authority was lodged with the village panchayat and 2) in which the authority was in the hands of village headman. Baden Powell assumed that the concept of Village community was associated with the land revenue system and that the Village community was not invariably the simple survival of a primitive age. He did not agree that the Indian Village was inherently democratic or republican in its constitution. He viewed the village essentially as a community of separate cultivating land holders and other village functionaries organized as a small monarchy or oligarchy. He identified two types of

villages raiyati or non-zamindari and zamindari village. All these formulations need critical examination in the context of the complexity of the structure and functioning of the village community during the pre-colonial period. The view of the village community as democratic or primitively democratic institutions seems questionable. In all populist accounts of the village community the starting point is to postulate the village community on a more or less universal basis of social organisation with specific features such as political autonomy, economic anarchy, social homogeneity and the unchanging character of this closed collectivity.

The village was viewed as a territorial concept as well as a fiscal unit. It was also viewed in the sense of a social collective represented by the headman. He made representation to the higher authorities on behalf of the entire village on a variety of issues common to the whole cultivating community. To start with the village never was an isolated self regulating unit. The question is how such a concept could be reconciled with the obligation to pay land revenue to the state by and large in cash. The assumption that the village headman acted as the representative of the collective interest and that he was subject to the control of the peasant community is equally dubious. He was also as much under the control of the imperial administration. The assumption that the peasant economy had a communal and autarchic foundation

1.2. Peasant land lords and state oppressors and oppressed.

The patterns of land ownership profoundly affect both production and distribution of food. They also affect the quality of food, the fertility of the soil and age sustainability. The concentration of ownership in so few hands is the basis of ruling class's wealth. Centuries of accumulating wealth, so great it's beyond comprehension. Their unlimited greed, corruption has led to poverty also beyond comprehension. So any change to this situation must take this info into consideration. Changes must reorganize this mess into a more fair distribution and relationship.

Based on people's relationship to the land and each other, they fall into five major classes:

LANDLORDS. They do not work the land themselves, but sometimes supervise the work. Instead they hire labor or let the land to sharecroppers.

RICH PEASANTS. They work in the fields but have more land than they can cultivate alone. They gain most of their income from land they cultivate with hired labor or sharecroppers.

MIDDLE PEASANTS. The classic self-sufficient small farmer. They earn their livings mainly by working their own land, though at times they may work for others or hire others to work for them.

POOR PEASANTS. They own a little land, but not enough to support themselves. They earn their livings mainly by working as sharecroppers or wage earners.

LANDLESS LABORERS. They do not own any land except sometimes their house site. Lacking tools, equipment or livestock, they seldom can work as sharecroppers and must depend upon wages for their livelihoods.

British economic policy favored the rise of a new landlordism, as the high revenue demands forced traditional landowners to sell their land. Rich money-lenders and others bought this land and there was a spread of growth of subinfeudation or intermediaries. These intermediaries exploited the tenants who were little better than slaves. A harmful consequence of the rise and growth of zamindars and landlords was seen in the political arena during India's freedom struggle. They, along with the princes of protected areas, became the main supporters of foreign rule and opposed the rising national movement.

1.3. Major problems of peasants:

The major problems confronting Indian peasants and agriculture are those of population pressure, small holdings, depleted soils, lack of modern technology and poor facilities for storage.

(a) Population Pressure:

India has a huge population of over one billion and it is increasing at a very fast rate. According to 2001 census figures the overall density of population is 324 persons per sq.

km. This is likely to increase further in future. This has created great demand for land. Every bit of land has been brought under the plough. Even the hill slopes have been cut into terraces for cultivation.

(b) Small and Fragmented Land Holdings:

The pressure of increasing population and the practice of dividing land equally among the heirs has caused excessive sub divisions of farm holdings. Consequently, the holdings are small and fragmented. The small size of holdings makes farming activity uneconomical and leads to social tension, violence and discontentment.

(c) Inadequate Irrigation Facilities:

By and large the irrigation facilities available in India are far from adequate. So for half of the total area under food crops has been brought under irrigation and the remaining half is left to the mercy of monsoon rains which are erratic in time and space.

(d) Depleted Soils:

Indian soils have been used for growing crops for thousands of years which have resulted in the depletion of soil fertility. With deforestation the sources of maintaining natural fertility of soil has been drying out. Lack of material resources and ignorance of scientific knowledge have further depleted the soils of the natural fertility. Earlier only animal waste was enough to maintain soil fertility.

(e) Storage of food grains:

Storage of food grains is a big problem. Nearly 10 per cent of our harvest goes waste every year in the absence of proper storage facilities. This colossal wastage can be avoided by developing scientific ware-housing facilities. The government has taken several steps to provide storage facilities.

(f) Farm Implements:

Although some mechanization of farming has taken place in some parts of the country, most of the farmers are poor and do not have enough resources to purchase modern farm implements and tools. This hampers the development of agriculture.

Importance of the study of peasant society.

The study of peasant communities or peasantry in the broad sense, is of major interest to sociologists and social anthropologists. The systematic study of peasantry is originated in central and eastern Europe. Because in those societies rapidly westernizing and academicians was faced by the large peasantry, the poorest, most backward and numerically the largest section of their nation.

Anthropologists in generally considered the peasantry as a homogeneous category with respect to its structure and stratification. They try to identify various classes with in the peasant came from Korber. He treated peasants as a homogeneous class category and said peasants constitute part society with part cultures. They are definitely rural yet like in relation to market towns. They form a class segment of a large population. They lack the isolation, the political autonomy the self sufficiency of tribal populations, but their local units retain much of their identity, integration and attachment to soil. European peasantry was the basis of Krober's findings.

Raymond Firth finds that the term peasant has primarily an economic reference and says that the primary means of livelihood of peasant is cultivation of the soil. He also include other small scale producers such as fisherman and craftsmen as peasants and points out that they are one of the same social class as the agriculturists and often members of the same families.

Redfield Speaks of grant and little traditions to him there were no peasants before the first city. The large society, of which peasants are a part, is: Urban society. Foster described the peasant society as a half society a part of larger social unit which is vertically and horizontally structured. He was the first anthropologist who recognized the horizontal and vertical divisions of peasant's society.

Chaynov advanced the conception of Anthropologists that the peasantry forms a class in terms of homogeneity of their class interest. He contributed a theory of peasant behaviour at the level of the individual family farm and later justified at the national level, its economy ought to be treated as an economic system in its own right.

Much closer to Chaynov, Teodor Shanin takes a more or less similar stand on the peasant family farm. In his view the peasantry consists of small agricultural producers who with the help of simple equipment and labour of their families. Produce mainly for their own consumption and fulfill obligations of the holders of political and economic power, Shanin claims, the family farmers the basic unit of peasant ownership, production, consumption and social life.

Marx talks of the peasantry as the small holding peasants that form a vast mass, whose members live in a similar condition without entering into main social relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from rest of society. The main reasons for such isolation are bad communication. The small holding do not admit division of labour in its cultivation, do not apply science and therefore no diversity of development, no variety of talent, no wealth of social relationship.

According to Marx, who live under similar economic conditions of existence separate their mode of life, their interests, their culture form a class with class consciousness. But in case peasants there is merely a local inter connection among these small holding peasants, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. So they are incapable to enforce their class interest in their own name. They cannot represent themselves. At the same time their representative appears as their masters as an authority over them.

Lenin identified six different agrarian classes. They are, first, the agricultural proletariat, wage labours who obtain their livelihood by working for hire at capitalist agricultural enterprises. Second the semi proletarians or peasants who till tiny plots of land, i.e. those who obtain their livelihood partly by working their own or rented plots of land. Third, the small peasantry; the small scale tillers who either as owners or as tenants, hold small plots of land which enable them to satisfy the needs of their families and their farms, and do not hire, outside labour.

Fourth, middle peasants are those small farmers who hold plots of land which are also small but one sufficient under capitalism either as owners or tenants. The farm not only provides a meager subsistence for the family but the bare minimum needed to maintain itself

and certain surplus in good years for investment. Fifth, the big peasants or capitalist entrepreneurs in agriculture who as a rural employ with several lined labours and are connected with the peasantry only in their low cultural level, habits of life and the manual labour they themselves perform on their farms. Sixth, the big land owners directly or through their tenant farmers, systematically exploit wage labour and the small peasantry. They perform no manual labour for themselves and are largely the descendants of the feudal lords. Lenin describes this category of people as exploiters and parasites.

Mao differentiates the Peasantry in terms of ownership by means of production and exploitation in the form of wage labour using rent and market forces. He talks of five different agrarian classes and they are the landlords, the rich peasant, the middle peasant, the poor peasant and the workers.

Lenin and Mao's classifications of classes in terms of production and exploitation serve for a theoretical formulation to identify the real class of peasantry within the peasantry. Several scholars, Eric Wolf, Moore, Lusberger, and Utra Patnaik used this model on the theoretical frame work for identify the classes with in the Peasantry. Daniel Thorner, Utra Patnaik, Dalip S. Swamy, Ashok Khdia and many more have studied the views of Chaynov, Shanin, Lenin and Mao and examined its applicability in the Indian context. Using the general conception advanced by Marxists and non-Marxist on peasantry, either directly or indirectly they tried to identify the agrarian classes in Indian agriculture at the empirical level.

Module II

Land Relations and Modes of Production

In Agricultural society.

2.1 Agriculture-features of agricultural Society:

Agriculture

Concise Encyclopedia defined agriculture as the active production of useful plants or animals in ecosystems that have been created by people. Agriculture may include cultivating the soil, growing and harvesting crops, and raising livestock. Agriculture was independently developed in many places, including the Middle East, East Asia, South Asia, and the Americas. The earliest evidence for agriculture has been found in the Middle East. Early cultivars include wild barley (Middle East), millet (China), and squash (the Americas). The domestication of many animals now considered to be livestock occurred during roughly the same period, although dogs were domesticated considerably earlier. Slash-and-burn land-clearing methods and crop rotation were early agricultural techniques.

Features of Agricultural society:

Cultivation of land through the plough as this invention enabled the people to make a great leap forward in food production. It increased the productivity of land through the use of animals and bringing to the surface the nutrients of the soil. Combining irrigation techniques with the use of the plough increased the productivity and the crop yield. It also brought fallow land under cultivation. The size of the agricultural societies increased as it lessened the burden of large number of people who engaged themselves in other activities. Agricultural societies lead to the establishment of more elaborate political institutions like formalized government bureaucracy assisted by the legal system. It also leads to the

evolution of distinct social classes -those who own the land and those who work on the other's land. Land is the major source of wealth and is individually owned. This creates major difference between the social strata.

Agricultural societies provide the basis for the establishment of economic institutions. Trade becomes more elaborate and money is medium of exchange. It also demands the maintenance of records of transaction, crop harvest, taxation, governmental rules and regulations. Religion becomes separate institution with elaborate rituals and traditions. The agricultural societies support the emergence of arts and cultural artifacts due to surplus food production people tend to divert their attention to other recreational activities. There is far more complex social structure. According to Ian Robertson the number of statuses multiplies, population size increases, cities appear, new institutions emerge, social classes arise, political and economic inequality becomes inbuilt into the social structure and culture becomes much more diversified and heterogeneous. Following are the major features of Indian agricultural society.

(a) The economy of this society is based on agriculture and the society is divided into a number of classes based on the feudal system. For example, the zamindars, the peasants and the bonded laborers.

(b) The system of production is based on the use of manual power.

(c) Means of transport and communication are underdeveloped.

(d) A system of joint family prevails, since a number of hands are required on the fields.

2.2 Production and Mode of Production:

Production

People need food, clothing, shelter and other necessities of life in order to survive. They cannot get all these things ready-made from nature. To survive, they produce material goods from objects found in nature. Material production has always been and still is the basis of human existence. For Karl Marx, the history of human societies is the story of how people relate to one another in their efforts to make a living. He said, "The first historical act is...the production of material life. a fundamental condition of all history" (Bottomore 1964: 60).

According to Marx, economic production or production of material life is the starting point from which society as an inter-related whole is structured. He speaks of reciprocity between economic factors and other aspects of historical development of mankind. The factor of economic production is all the same a key concept in explaining the changes that occur in society. He considers that forces of production along with relations of production form the basis of economic and social history of every society.

Mode of production

A mode of production means simply "the distinctive way of producing," which could be defined in terms of how it is socially organised and what kinds of technologies and tools are used.

This concept is developed by Karl Marx to explain the structure and dynamics of any society. Particularly the transition from one to another. According to Marx, economic production or production of Material life is the starting point from which society created as an inter-related whole is structured. To him production at once both a general and historical category. In 'CAPITAL', he had made use of term production as a general category to highlight the specific forms of production in capitalist societies. On the other hand, speaking about production with definite social and historical characteristics he discusses the concept of mode of production. In the simplest expression of this concept, the preface to 'A Critique of political Economy' (1859 Marx argues that the mode of production of material life conditions is the base of social, political and intellectual life process in general. A mode of production is defined by the manner in which production is organized, specifically in terms of the relationship between the direct producers and the exploiting class. This relationship refers to the manner in which the surplus product is extracted from the class of producer by the class of exploiters.

The central element in defining a mode of production is the social relations of production which link producer to exploiter. Marx's work was primarily concerned with identifying capitalist relations of production and Feudal relations of production, with most emphasis on the capitalist mode of production. According to him, in order to produce, people enter in to definite relations with one another. Only within these social relations does production take place. Any mode of production is an integral unity between the forces of production and the relations of production. These forces of production shape the relations of production and the two together define the mode of production.

Marx provided a working definition of mode of production in his capital "The specific economic forms, in which unpaid surplus labour is pumped out of direct.

According to Bottomore "the crucial element in defining mode of production is the way in which the surplus is produced and its use controlled". The surplus means the amount that remains when we use or need satisfied.

Each mode of production has its specific relations of production. These are not developed by chance or by accident. They are deliberately ordered because they help the property owning class extract the surplus from working people. It would also be noted that neither the forces of production nor the relations of production are fixed and static. Even within a given mode of production the forces of production may change. In any society, we may find that over the years greater production follows improvements in technology. This change in the productive forces has resulted in changes in the relations of production. Marx summarised social development as passing through five modes of production in the following chronological order. Primitive communism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and communism.

FOUR MODES OF PRODUCTION

More than one mode of production may exist within any particular society at a given point in time. But in all forms of society there is one determinate kind of production which assigns rank and influence to all the others. Here we shall discuss each of the four modes of production, identified by Marx during his studies of human societies.

1 Asiatic Mode of Production

The concept of Asiatic mode of production refers to a specific original mode of production. This is distinct from the ancient slave mode of production or the feudal mode of production. The Asiatic mode of production is characteristic of primitive communities in which ownership of land is communal. These communities are still partly organised on the basis of kinship relations. State power, which expresses the real or imaginary unity of these communities, controls the use of essential Forces, Relations and Mode of Production economic resources, and directly appropriates part of the labour and production of the community. This mode of production constitutes one of the possible forms of transition from classless to class societies; it is also perhaps the most ancient form of this transition. It contains the contradiction of this transition, i.e. the combination of communal relations of production with emerging forms of the exploiting classes and of the State. Marx did not leave behind any systematic presentation of the history of India. He set down his observations on certain current Indian questions which attracted public attention, or drew materials from India's past and present conditions to illustrate parts of his more general arguments. The concept of Asiatic mode of production is therefore inadequate for an understanding of Indian history and society.

2 Ancient Mode of Production

Ancient Mode of Production refers to the forms which precede capitalist production. In some of these terms slavery is seen as the foundation of the productive system. The relation of masters to slaves is considered as the very essence of slavery. In this system of production the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of the slave's labour. The slave is not allowed to reproduce. If we restrict ourselves to agricultural slavery (see box 7.3), exploitation operates according to the following modalities: the slaves work the master's land and receive their subsistence in return. The master's profit is constituted by the difference between what the slaves produce and what they consume. But what is usually forgotten is that beyond this, the slaves are deprived of their own means of reproduction. The reproduction of slavery depends on the capacity of the society to acquire new slaves, that is, on an apparatus which is not directly linked to the capacities of

demographic reproduction of the enslaving population. The rate of accumulation depends on the number of slaves acquired, and not directly on their productivity. Slaves are different from the other members of the community in that they are rightfully deprived of offspring. Their status as 'foreigners' is permanent. A profit is made out of the 'foreigner'. Hence, if one wants the system to have a certain continuity and to become organic, then one must not allow the slave to have dependents. In each generation one must provide the means of introducing foreigners as replacements for worn-out slaves. We find an intimate and necessary liaison between these two levels of exploitation: a relation through pilfering between one population and another and a relation of exploitation between the class of slaves and the class of masters. Karl Marx In slavery, the growth of the labour force is independent of effective demographic forces. It rests not on the demographic growth which is due to natural increase, but on the means devoted to the capture (as in war) of foreign individuals. The possibility of accumulation comes about through the multiplication of slaves independently of growth in the productivity of labour.

3 Feudal Mode of Production

Marx and Engels were primarily interested in the definition of the capitalist mode of production. Their writing about feudalism tended to mirror that interest, as well as focusing on the transition between the feudal and the capitalist modes of production. They were concerned with the 'existence form' of labour and the manner in which the products of labour were appropriated by ruling classes. Just as capitalists exploited the workers or the 'proletariat', so did the feudal lords exploit their tenants or 'serfs'. Capitalists grabbed surplus value and feudal lords appropriated land rent from their serfs. Serfs, being legally unfree, were deprived of property rights, though they could use the lord's property. They were obliged to surrender their labour, or the product of their labour, over and above what was needed for family subsistence and the simple reproduction of the peasant household economy. Serfs or the producers were forced to fulfill the economic demands of an overlord. These demands could be in the form of services to be performed. These could also be in the form of dues to be paid in money or kind. The dues or taxes were levied on the family holdings of the peasants. Thus feudal rent whether in the form of services or taxes was an important component of the feudal mode of production. Forces, Relations and Mode of

Production force serfs on the basis of military strength. This power was also backed by the force of law. In this mode of production, serfdom implied a direct relation between rulers and servants. In feudal serfdom, the instruments of production were simple and inexpensive. Feudal society was seen by Marx and Engels as intermediate, i.e., between the slave society of the ancient world and capitalists and proletarians in the modern era. The evolution of the feudal system brought about the development of exchange of agricultural and manufactured products in regional markets. Special needs of the ruling class and high ranking Church officials gave an impetus to the growth of commodity production, including consumption goods such as silks, spices, fruits and wines. Around this activity developed international trade routes and mercantile centers. It laid the foundation for capitalist relations of production, which were to become the main contradiction of the system and cause its downfall. In the course of this transformation, many peasants were expropriated from their lands and forced to become wage-labourers.

4 Capitalist Mode of Production

Capitalism refers to a mode of production in which capital is the dominant means of production. Capital can be in various forms. It can take the form of money or credit for the purchase of labour power and materials of production. It can be money or credit for buying physical machinery. In capitalist mode of production, the private ownership of capital in its various forms is in the hands of a class of capitalists. The ownership by capitalists is to the exclusion of the mass of the population. You can take this to be a central feature of capitalism as a mode of production. As a mode of production, capitalism has the following characteristics

a) Goods are produced for sale rather than own use.

b) The capacity to do useful work or labour power is bought and sold in a market. For a period of time (time rate) or for a specified task (piece rate) labour power is exchanged for money wages. In ancient mode of production labourers were obliged or forced to surrender their labour. Contrarily, in capitalist mode of production labourers enter into a contract with employers.

- c) The use of money as a medium of exchange. This gives an important role to banks and financial intermediaries.
- d) The production process is controlled by the capitalists or their managers.
- e) Financial decisions are controlled by the capitalist entrepreneur.
- f) Individual capitalists compete for control over the labour and finance. As a mode of production, capitalism first emerged in Europe. The industrial revolution starting in England and spreading across different countries saw a rapid growth of technology and corresponding rise of capitalist economies. Marx viewed capitalism as a historical phase, to be eventually replaced by socialism.

Feudal, Semi-Feudal and capitalist relations of production.

Marx observed the development of society is the result of the continual productive interaction between men and nature. Every kind of production system extends a definite set of social relationships. In every form of society there exists a historically created relation of individuals to nature, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor.

The feudal mode of production was a mode of production dominated by the land and natural economy, in which neither labour nor the products of labour were commodities. The immediate producers are the peasants united by the means of production, the soil, by a specific social relationship. The Peasants who occupied the land were not its owners. Agrarian property was privately controlled by a class of feudal lords, who extracted a surplus from the peasants by political legal relations of compulsion.

The term feudalism is derived from the institution of 'self' which was a piece of landed property. During the medieval period of European history, this type of property was given to a vassal by a lord in return of military service. In this sense feudalism was relationship between vassal and his lord. This relationship was expressed in terms of property holding through the fief. The relationship was exercised through jurisdiction. Lords held courts for their vassals, settled disputes and punished breaches of law and custom. The court was also an administrative body which levied taxes and raised military forces.

The consequence of such a system was that political sovereignty was never focused in a single center. The functions of the state were disintegrated in a vertical allocation downwards, at each level of which political and economic relations were integrated.

According to Marx the formation of an exchange of economy is the outcome of historical process, and capitalism is an historically specific system of production. It is only one type of production. It is only one type of production system and no more the final form. An assumption of the economists is that purely 'economic' relations can be treated in abstract. This is not true. Any and every economic phenomena is at the same time always a social phenomenon, and the existence of a particular kind of 'economy' presupposes a definite kind of society.

Capitalist mode of production is founded upon a class division between proletariat, or working class on the one hand, and bourgeoisie or capitalist class, on the other. These class one is endemic conflict as regards the distribution of the fruits of industrial production. Wage on the one side and profits on the other, are determined by the bitter struggle between capitalist and worker, a relation in which those who own capital are easily dominant. Marx's analysis of alienation is capital production starts from a contemporary economic fact, which is again an early statement of the theme later developed in detail is capital, the fact that the more capitalism advance, the more impoverished the workers became. The enormous wealth which the capitalist mode of production makes possible is appropriated by the owners of land and capital. This separation between the worker and the product of his labour is not, however, simply a matter of the explanation of goods which rightfully belong to the worker. According to Marx, in capitalism the material objects which are produced became treated on a par with the worker himself. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more goods he created. The devaluation of the human world increases indirect relation with the increase in value of the world of things. The product of labour is external to the worker not only in an ontological sense but also in the much more specific sense that what is embodied in the product of his labour is no longer his own.

The agrarian class composition varies depending upon social, economic, geographic, political and administrative conditions of the region. Nature of land control and land use

varies, from place to place and even at one and the same place, depending upon the productivity of the region, largely because of the type of soil, availability of water, adoption of improved agricultural practices, development of communication, integration of market forces, political and administrative set up, etc. These factors affect agrarian relationships everywhere in the country. Today penetration of market forces and adoption of technology are considered very important factors for shaping agrarian composition. For a large country like India, which has numerous complex combinations of agrarian systems, it is difficult to describe the various agrarian class combinations. Here, we study this system as it obtained under the feudalistic system that existed during the pre-British era and then during the British period when the colonial power had a vested interest in perpetuating it. With the influence of capitalists, changes began to take place in the agrarian field. These changes were stimulated by anti-feudal movements leading to the ratification of abolishing landlordism and the introduction of land reform measures after independence.

Peasant Economy and Market:

The term peasant economy refers to modes of rural economic activity with certain defined characteristics. The first characteristic is that the basic unit of production is the household; therefore, the demographic composition of the household was of paramount importance in determining the volume of output, the percentage of output consumed by the household, and, thus, the net remainder to be used for investment or savings. Second, the majority of household income is derived from agricultural production, that is, the household is dependent upon its own labor. Third, because the household depended upon agricultural production for survival, peasant households were assumed to be conservative and resistant to changes that would threaten their survival. In particular, a school of thought called the "moral economy" arose, which argued that peasant households would resist the commercialization of agriculture because it violated their values and beliefs - their moral economy - and attempted to replace the patterns of interaction among personal networks in the villages with impersonal transactions based on market principles.

Perhaps the greatest theorist of the peasant economy was a Russian economist named Alexander Chayanov, who lived from 1888 to 1939. Chayanov published a book

entitled *Peasant Farm Organization*, which postulated a theory of peasant economy with application for peasant economies beyond Russia. He argued that the laws of classical economics do not fit the peasant economy; in other words, production in a household was not based upon the profit motive or the ownership of the means of production, but rather by calculations made by households as consumers and workers. In modern terminology, the family satisfied rather than maximized profit.

According to Chayanov, the basic principle for understanding the peasant economy was the balance between the household member as a laborer and as a consumer. Peasant households and their members could either increase the number of hours they worked, or work more intensively, or sometimes both. The calculation made by households whether to work more or not was subjective, based upon an estimate of how much production was needed for survival (consumption) and how much was desired for investment to increase the family's productive potential. Those estimates were balanced against the unattractiveness of agricultural labor. Households sought to reach equilibrium between production increases and the disutility of increased labor. In short, households increased their production as long as production gains outweighed the negative aspects of increased labor. This principle of labor production in the peasant economy led Chayanov to argue that the optimal size of the agricultural production unit varied according to the sector of production at a time the official policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was pushing for large collective farms. As a result of this disagreement with Marxist economists and the Party line, Chayanov was arrested in 1930 and executed in 1939.

A Peasant cannot satisfy his needs only by engaging in agriculture. The patterns by which a peasant obtained the needed goods and services which are not produced by him are obtained through a mechanism of division of labour with in the larger society; and the system of peasant interchange in Market.

Communities produce chiefly for home and local consumption, but few commodities produced for cash and market exchange. A market links a set of communities which are scattered around it in radical fashion, like the planets of the solar system around the Sun. Outside the market, each of these communities lives its own life, maintaining its own body of

customers. The communities form independent bodies of Market, in the network of exchanges each community is a section, and the act of exchange relates each section to every other. Hence such Markets might be called sectional Market.

M.C. Bryde had described another kind of peasant market in western Guatemala were the people who come together in one town at one time to buy and sell. One can also describe the people who move about the country from one market, to another town market. We shall call this kind of market the 'network market'. In such an open-net work Market, what is bought and at what price are determined ultimately by the relative prices of products.

The Participants in a network Market must open with the fact that every other participant in the Market play potentially both a beneficial and an exploitative role. The peasant stands, at the centre of a series of concentric circle, each circle marked by specialists with whom he shares.

2.3 Jajmani System

Jajmani system was an Indian social system of interaction between upper castes and lower castes. The origins of the word 'jajmani' are to be found in the Sanskrit word 'yajman', meaning the one who employs a Brahmin priest to offer a sacrifice. The irreducible essence of the jajmani relationship is the exclusive property right possessed by a member of an artisan or servant caste to serve a specific patron family.

It was an economic system where lower castes performed various functions for upper castes and received grain in return. According to the Jajmani System there is exchange of goods and services between landowning higher castes and landless service castes. The service castes are traditionally weavers, leather workers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, barbers, washer men and so far constituting a group of artisans serving the community. The landed higher castes are called Jajman. The Jajmani system is based on agricultural system of production and distribution of goods and services. It is the link between the landowning high caste groups and occupational castes. Oscar Lewis mentions that each caste groups within a village is traditionally bound to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes. While the landowning high caste families receive services from lower castes and in return members of the low castes receive grains.

Jajmani System as a term was introduced into Indian social anthropology and sociology by William Wiser. Wiser in his study of Karimpur village of United Provinces of India during 1930s found that Jajmani System is an example of solidarity in inter-caste relationships, but at the same time it does not represent symmetrical interrelationship for the members of different castes involved in the system. He found that the system has economic weakness.

Economic exchange is only one fact of jajmani relations. A land owner family may have only occasional transactions with some of his associates but the servant's family expects help on his ceremonial occasions from the owner's family. Jajmani associates are expected to be supportive of each other like close kinsmen are expected to show.

The Jajmani system clear the means by which the economic factors of production and distribution be made subsequent to jathi system, it omit or simplifies several crucial points. The relation usually involves multiple kinds of payments and obligations as well as multiple functions. The traditional method of payment in all regions is made at harvest time. These harvest payments are only part of what the workers family receives.

Zamindari System

Under the British Rule, there were three main types of land tenure systems which existed for many years even after Independence, namely Zamindari, Mahalwari and Ry otwari.

i) Zamindari:

This system was introduced by Lord Cornwallis in Bengal in 1873, known as the Bengal Settlement or the Permanent Settlement. The settlement is known as zarnindan system widely introduced in Eastern India. Under this system, the land of a village or few villages was held by one person or few joint owners who were responsible for the payment of land revenue to the Government. Generally there were a number of intermediaries between the zamindars and the actual tillers of the soil. This system was adopted in several forms such as Zamindari, Jagirdari, Inamdari, etc. In many cases revenue collectors were raised to the status of land owners. This system was introduced in many parts of the country. As per this settlement arrangement, tenure was a form of socio-economic authority or

control; moreover the tenants and subtenants all enjoyed similar kinds of power and privileges, each based on similar kind of settlement or agreement. In this system, tillers of the soil were exploited by way of exorbitant rents. It is said that the British introduced zamindari system to achieve two objectives. First, it helped in regular collection of land revenue from a few persons i.e. zamindars. Secondly, it created a class of people who would remain loyal to the British. The zamindari system was a way of collecting taxes from peasants. The zamindar was considered a lord, who would collect all taxes on his land and hand over the collected taxes to the British authorities. Under the system there was a provision of keeping a portion of taxes for the zamindar himself.

Zamindari Abolition

The first attempt to bring about the agrarian transformation was by the implementation of land reforms by states in India. Immediately after independence zamindari abolition bills or land tenure legislations were introduced in a number of states as UP, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Madras and Assam. Land reforms in India may be divided in to two phases. The first phase of land reforms started almost immediately after independence. It focused on institutional reforms and lasted till the early sixties, aimed at abolition of the intermediaries like zamindars and jagirdars.

It provided ownership of land to the tenants or the security of tenure to tenants, reduction in rents and conferment of ownership rights on tenants. Another feature of this phase of land reforms was ceilings on landholdings. Apart from achieving these goals, the land reforms of this phase also aimed at community development programmes and cooperatives.

The origin of the second phase can be traced to the middle of late sixties. This phase marked the beginning of the Green Revolution in India. Green Revolution attempted to introduce technological changes in certain states of the country, where favorable conditions for such change existed. Some of these states were Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It introduced HYV (High Yielding Varieties of Seeds), new technology like tractors and irrigation facilities, etc. The main focus of the second phase has been technological reforms. The land reforms i.e., zamindari abolition and Green Revolution have

brought tremendous changes in the agrarian sector. It has affected not only the ownership pattern but also impacted discernible changes in social structure, pattern of dominance and the complexion of politics. The first phase of the land reforms especially. The abolition of land reforms, were result of the impact of the peasant movements in the pre independence period. Leaders like NG Ranga and Charan Singh played very decisive role in it.

Ryotwari System

Introduced by Sir Thomas Munro at first in Madras State, this settlement was intended to deal with each 'ryoyat' or 'cultivator' as an individual. Under this settlement every registered holder was recognized as its proprietor who could sell or transfer the land. He was assured of permanent tenure as long as he paid the revenue. The land holder was allowed to sublet his land. Madras and Bombay Presidency areas are generally classified as Ryotwari areas. Subsequently, this system was extended to Maharashtra, East Bengal, parts of Assam and Coorg. Under this system, the ownership and occupancy rights of land were vested in the ryats or tillers of the soil. They were required to pay the revenue directly to the Company. They were free to sell or transfer their lands. But the system failed to protect the interest of the ryats. The rate of revenue was too high and the method of collection inflexible; the peasants were forced to take loans from money-lenders which made the latter exploits them.

Mahalwari System

The British introduced this system in the Gangetic valley, the North-West provinces, parts of central India and Punjab. Under this system, the revenue was determined on the basis of assessment of the produce of a Mahal (estate consisting of several villages). Here the settlement was made with the whole village community jointly and separately. While the ownership rights were vested with the individual peasants, the responsibility of payment of land revenue of the Company rested jointly with the village community. This system rather than protecting the peasants increased the social inequalities and proved economically disastrous.

Under this settlement there was direct contract between village community and officers of the government. The village community did not necessarily mean entire village

population. It was a group of elders, notables of high castes. They in joint capacity governed the affairs of the village and faced the demands made by the superiors backed by the higher authority. In this system, the village land was held jointly by the village community and members jointly, or in group, were responsible for the payment of land revenue. Land revenue was fixed for the whole village and the village headman (Lafibardar) collected it. Many names were used for this kind of settlement i.e. joint rent, 'joint lease', 'brotherhood' tract (mahal) holding and 'gram wari' etc. All in all this form at its best was considered as the village settlement or Joint Village Settlement. This system was prevalent in Northern and Central India.

Feudalism and Land Lordism

Historically, the concept of feudalism has generally been used for social organisation that evolved in parts of Europe after the tribal groups settled down and became regular cultivators. With the success of industrial revolution during the 18th and 19th centuries, feudal societies disintegrated, giving way to the development of modern capitalist economies. However, over the years, the term feudalism has also come to acquire a generic meaning and is frequently used to describe the pre-modern agrarian societies in other parts of the world as well.

Compared to the concept of 'peasant society', the term feudalism conveys very different notion of agrarian class structure. Cultivators in feudal societies were seen as a subordinate class. The land they cultivated did not legally belong to them. They only had the right to cultivate the land whose legal owner was usually the "overlord"/ "feudal lord" or the king. The distinctive feature of the agrarian class structure in feudalism was the structures of "dependency" and "patronage" that existed between the cultivators and the "overlords". The cultivating peasants had to show a sense of "loyalty" and obligation towards their overlords. This sense of loyalty was expressed not only by paying a share of the produce of land to the landlord but very often the peasants were also obliged to work for the overlord and perform certain duties without expecting any wages in return. The system of *begar* (unpaid labour) popular in many parts of India until some time back would be an example of such a system.

Development of Capitalism in Agriculture

The spread of industrialisation in the Western countries during the 19th century and in rest of the world during the 20th century has brought about significant changes in the agrarian sector of the economy as well. We can identify two important changes in agrarian economy that came with industrialisation and development. First, agriculture lost its earlier significance and became only a marginal sector of the economy. For example, in most countries of the West today, it employs only a small proportion of the total working population (ranging from two or three to ten percent) and its contribution to the total national income of these countries is not very high. In the countries of the Third World too, the significance of agriculture has been declining over the years. In India, for example, though a large proportion of the population is still employed in the agricultural sector, its contribution to the total national income has come down substantially. Though it continues to employ more than half of India's working population, the contribution of agricultural sector to the national income is less than 25 per cent.

The second important change that has been experienced in the agrarian sector is in its internal social organisation. The social framework of agricultural production has experienced a sea-change in different parts of the world during the last century or so. The earlier modes of social organisation, such as "feudalism" and "peasant societies" (as discussed above) have disintegrated, giving way to more differentiated social structures. This has largely happened due to the influences of the processes of industrialization and modernisation. The modern industry has provided a large variety of machines and equipments for carrying out farm operations, such as ploughing and threshing. These technological advances made it possible for the landowners to cultivate larger areas of land in lesser time. Scientific researchers have also given them chemical fertilizers and high yielding varieties of seeds. The introduction of new farm technologies has not only increased the productivity of land but has also led to significant changes in the social framework of agricultural production.

The mechanisation and modernisation of agriculture made it possible for the cultivating farmers to produce much more than their consumption requirements. The surplus came to the market. They began to produce crops that were not meant for direct consumption of the local community. These "cash crops" were produced exclusively for sale in the market. The cultivators also needed cash for buying new inputs. In other words, the mechanization of

agriculture led to an integration of agriculture in the broader market economy of the nation and the world. The mechanisation of agriculture and its integration in the broader market economy has also in turn transformed the social relations of production, leading to the development of capitalist relations in the agrarian sector. This capitalist development in agriculture has transformed the earlier relations of patronage and loyalty into those that are instrumental in nature. The growing influence of market and money meant that the relations among different categories of population become formalized, without any sense of loyalty or obligation. However, not everyone benefits from the mechanisation process equally. The market mechanisms put various kinds of economic pressure on cultivating peasants. Some of them get trapped and become indebted eventually, selling off their lands and becoming landless labourers. Similarly, those who worked as tenants are generally evicted from the lands being cultivated by them and are employed as wage servants by the landowners. While some among the cultivating population become rich, others are left with small plots of land.

In other words, this leads to differentiation of the peasantry into new types of groupings. The peasantry gets divided into different strata or classes. The attitude of the peasants towards their occupation also undergoes a change. In the pre-capitalist or the traditional societies, the peasants produced mainly for their own consumption. The work on the fields was carried out with the labour of their family. Agriculture, for the peasantry, was both a source of livelihood as well as a way of life.

They begin to look at agriculture as an enterprise. They work on their farms with modern machines and produce cash crops that are sold in the market. Their primary concern becomes earning profits from cultivation. Thus the peasants are transformed into enterprising 'farmers'. The agrarian societies also lose their earlier equilibrium. Farmers, unlike the homogenous peasantry are a differentiated lot. They are divided into different categories or classes.

MODULE III

Agrarian Relation and Peasant Movement

3.1 AGRARIAN CLASS STRUCTURE

The agrarian class composition varies depending upon social, economic, geographic, political and administrative conditions of the region. Nature of land control and land use varies, from place to place and even at one and the same place, depending upon the productivity of the region, largely because of the type of soil, availability of water, adoption of improved agricultural practices, development of communication, integration of market forces, political and administrative set up, etc. For a large country like India, which has numerous complex combinations of agrarian systems, it is difficult to describe the various agrarian class combinations. Obtained under the feudalistic system that existed during the pre-British era and then during the British period when the colonial power had a vested interest in perpetuating it. With the influence of capitalists, changes began to take place in the agrarian field. These changes were stimulated by anti-feudal movements leading to the ratification of abolishing landlordism and the introduction of land reform measures after independence.

Agrarian Class Structure in India

As mentioned above, traditional Indian society was organized around caste lines. The agrarian relations were governed by the norms of jajmani system. However, the jajmani relations began to disintegrate after the colonial rulers introduced changes in Indian agriculture. The process of modernisation and development initiated by the Indian State during the post-independence period further weakened the traditional social structure. While caste continues to be an important social institution in the contemporary Indian society, its significance as a system of organising economic life has considerably declined.

Though agricultural land in most parts of India is still owned by the traditional cultivating caste groups, their relations with the landless menials are no more regulated by the norms of the caste system. The landless members of the lower caste now work with the cultivating farmers as agricultural labourers. We can say that, in a sense, caste has given way to class in the Indian countryside.

However, the agrarian social structure is still marked by diversities. As pointed out by D.N. Dhanagare, 'the relations among classes and social composition of groups that occupy specific class position in relation to land-control and land-use in India are so diverse and complex that it is difficult to incorporate them all in a general schema' (Dhanagare, 1983). However, despite the diversities that mark the agrarian relations in different parts of country, some scholars have attempted to club them together into some general categories. Amongst the earliest attempts to categorize the Indian agrarian population into a framework of social classes was that of a well-known economist, Daniel Thorner (1956). Thorner suggested that one could divide the agrarian population of India into different class categories by adopting three criteria. First, type of income earned from land (such as 'rent' or 'fruits of own cultivation' or 'wages'). Second, the nature of rights held in land (such as 'proprietary' or 'tenancy' or 'share-cropping rights' or 'no rights at all'). Third, the extent of field-work actually performed (such as 'absentees who do not work at all' or 'those who perform partial work' or 'total work done with the family labour' or 'work done for others to earn wages'). On the basis of these criteria he suggested the following model of agrarian class structure in India.

1) **Maliks**, whose income is derived primarily from property rights in the soil and whose common interest is to keep the level of rents up while keeping the wage-level down. They collect rent from tenants, sub-tenants and sharecroppers. They could be further divided into two categories,

a) the **big landlords**, holding rights over large tracts extending over several villages; they are absentee owners/rentiers with absolutely no interest in land management or improvement;

b) the **rich landowners**, proprietors with considerable holdings but usually in the same village and although performing no field work, supervising cultivation and taking personal interest in the management and improvement of land.

2) **Kisans** are working peasants, who own small plots of land and work mostly with their own labour and that of their family members. They own much lesser lands than the Maliks. They too can be divided into two sub-categories, a) small landowners, having holdings sufficient to support a family; b) substantial tenants who may not own any land but cultivate a large enough holding to help them sustain their families without having to work as wage labourers.

3) **Mazdoors**, who do not own land themselves and earn their livelihood

primarily by working as wage labourers or sharecroppers with others. Thorner's classification of agrarian population has not been very popular among the students of agrarian change in India. Development of capitalist relations in agrarian sector of the economy has also changed the older class structure. For example, in most regions of India, the Maliks have turned into enterprising farmers. Similarly, most of the tenants and sharecroppers among the landless mazdoors have begun to work as wage labourers. Also, the capitalist development in agriculture has not led to the kind of differentiation among the peasants as some Marxist analysts had predicted. On the contrary, the size of middle level cultivators has swelled.

The classification that has been more popular among the students of agrarian social structure and change in India is the division of the agrarian population into five or six classes. In terms of categories these have all been taken from Lenin-Mao schema, but in terms of actual operationalisation, they are invariably based on ownership of land, which invariably also determines their relations with other categories of population in the rural setting, as also outside the village.

At the top are the big landlords who still exist in some parts of the country. They own very large holdings, in some cases even more than one hundred acres. However, unlike the old landlords, they do not always give away their lands to tenants and sharecroppers. Some of them organize their farms like modern industry, employing a manager and wage labourers

and producing for the market. Over the years their proportion in the total population of cultivators has come down significantly. Their presence is now felt more in the backward regions of the country.

After big landlords come the big farmers. The size of their land holdings varies from 15 acres to 50 acres or in some regions even more. They generally supervise their farms personally and work with wage labour. Agricultural operations in their farms are carried out with the help of farm machines and they use modern farm inputs, such as chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds.

They invariably belong to the local dominant castes and command a considerable degree of influence over the local power structure, both at the village level as well as at the state level. While the big landlords command more influence in the backward regions, the power of the big farmers is more visible in the agriculturally developed regions of the country.

The next category is that of the middle farmers who own relatively smaller holdings (between 5 acres to 10 or 15 acres). Socially, like the big farmers, they too mostly come from the local dominant caste groups. However, unlike the big farmers, they carry out most of the work on farms with their own labour and the labour of their families. They employ wage labour generally at the time of peak seasons, like harvesting and sowing of the crops. Over the years, this category of cultivators has also begun using modern inputs, such as, chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds. Proportionately, they constitute the largest segment among the cultivators. The small and marginal farmers are the fourth class of cultivators in India.

Their holding size is small (less than five acres and in some cases even less than one acre). They carry out almost all the farm operations with their own labour and rarely employ others to work on their farms. In order to add to their meager earnings from cultivation, some of them work as farm labourers with other cultivator. Over the years, they have also come to use modern farm inputs and begun to produce cash crops that are grown for sale in the market. They are among the most indebted category of population in the Indian countryside.

As the families grow and holdings get further divided, their numbers have been increasing in most part of India.

The last category of the agrarian population is that of the landless labourers. A large majority of them belong to the ex-untouchable or the dalit caste groups. Most of them own no cultivable land of their own. Their proportion in the total agricultural population varies from state to state. While in the states like Punjab and Haryana they constitute 20 to 30 percent of the rural workforce, in some states, like Andhra Pradesh, their number is as high as fifty per cent. They are among the poorest of the poor in rural India. They not only live in miserable conditions with insecure sources of income, many of them also have to borrow money from big cultivators and in return they have to mortgage their labour power to them. Though the older type of bondage is no more a popular practice, the dependence of landless labourers on the big farmers often makes them surrender their freedom, not only of choosing employers, but invariably also of choosing their political representatives.

This is only a broad framework. As suggested above, the actual relations differ from region to region. The agrarian history of different regions of India has been quite diverse and the trajectories of development during the post independence period have also been varied.

Caste and Class Structure

Agrarian classes and categories are societies which depend largely on agriculture as their main source of sustenance. Agrarian settlements and groupings of people depend for their livelihood on cultivating land and by carrying out related activities such as animal husbandry.

Like all other economic activities, agricultural production is obviously an economic activity and as such is carried out in a framework of social relationships. Those involved in cultivation of land also interact with each other in different social capacities. Not only do they interact with each other but also with other categories of people who provide them with different types of services required for cultivation of land.

The social, economic and cultural interaction of different classes and categories of people takes place in an institutionalised framework. The most important aspect of the

institutional set-up of agrarian societies is the pattern of landownership and the nature of relationships among those who own or possess land and those who till the land or do the actual cultivation. The form of employment of labour and the nature of relationship that labour has with their employer farmers or land owners are important aspects of a given agrarian structure. Those who own land invariably command a considerable degree of power and prestige in rural society. These sets of relationships among the owners of land and those who provide various forms of services in the landowning groups or work with them for a wage could be described as the agrarian class structure. What is a class? The views of leading scholars and thinkers like Karl Marx and Max Weber vary on this issue. Class for Marx is a dichotomous one. He says that in every class society, there are two fundamental classes. Property relations constitute the main criteria on the basis of this dichotomous system.

For Max Weber, class depends on the 'market situation' or the purchasing power of a person. The class status of a person also determines his/her life chances. Thus, in Weberian framework, the concept of class could not be applied to pre-capitalist peasant societies where market is only a peripheral phenomenon. In comparison, the concept of class is applicable to all surplus producing societies. The social structures of agrarian societies are, however, marked with diversities of various kinds. The nature of agrarian class structure varies from region to region. In recent times, the agrarian structures in most societies are undergoing fundamental transformations. In most developed societies of the West, agriculture has become a marginal sector of the economy, employing only a very small proportion of their working populations. In the Third World too, the ratio of population dependent on agriculture has begun to decline but it still employs considerable sections of the population.

There is an influential group of scholars in the field of agrarian studies who are critical of analysing agrarian societies in class terms. Peasant societies for them are 'a type' of population fundamentally different from the modern urban industrial societies.

Theodor Shanin (1987) developed an 'ideal type' of the peasant society. He defined peasants as "small agricultural producers, who with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produced mostly for their own consumption, direct or indirect, and

for the fulfillment of obligations to holders of political and economic power.” The historical literature on different regions of the world tends to show that the agrarian societies were not as homogenous as they are made out to be in such formulations. Agrarian societies were also internally differentiated in different strata. In India, for example, the rural society was divided between different caste groups and only some groups had the right to cultivate land while others were obliged to provide services to the cultivators. Similarly, parts of Europe had serfdom where the overlords dominated the peasantry. Such societies were also known as feudal societies.

With the success of industrial revolution during the 18th and the 19th centuries, feudal societies disintegrated, giving way to the development of modern capitalist economics. However, over the years, the term feudalism has also come to acquire a generic meaning and is frequently used to describe the pre-modern agrarian societies in other parts of the world, besides Europe. The attitude of the peasants towards their occupation also undergoes a change, as you read earlier. In the pre-capitalist or traditional societies, the peasants produced mainly for their own consumption. The work in the fields was carried out with the labour of their family. Agriculture, for the peasantry was both a source of livelihood as well as a way of life. But in modern times, landowners begin to look at agriculture as an enterprise. They work on their farms with modern machines and produce ‘cash crops’ which fetch higher prices in the market and therefore generate more money. Thus, profit motive becomes part of agricultural enterprise. Lenin and Mao, two well known leaders from Russia and China, suggested that with the development of capitalism in agriculture, the peasantry that was hitherto an undifferentiated social category, gets differentiated or divided into various social classes. On the basis of their experience, they identified different categories of peasants respectively in Russia and China and the nature of relations the different categories had with each other.

However, that actual experience of capitalist development in agriculture in different parts of the world does not seem to entirely conform to Lenin’s prediction. There is very little evidence to support the argument that the agrarian population is getting polarised into two classes. In the West, as in the Third World countries, the middle and small size cultivators have not only managed to survive but in some countries like India, their numbers

have increased. Traditionally agrarian societies in India were marked by a pattern of relationship called the “Jajmani system” where the different classes were interdependent on each other in terms of service.

The land owners were the patrons or jajmans and the service providing castes were the ‘Kamins’ such as, the caste of carpenters, ironsmiths, etc. But gradually, after Independence, this system has declined. The two significant reasons which led to this decline were the abolition of Zamindari system and the Green Revolution.

The process of modernisation and development initiated by the Indian state during the post-Independence period weakened the traditional social structure. While caste continues to be an important social institution in the contemporary Indian society, its significance as a system of organizing economic life has nearly disappeared. The agrarian class/caste structure is still the same; but it is not defined by caste any more as it traditionally used to be. The landless members of lower castes now work with the cultivating farmers as agricultural labourers. We can, therefore, say that in this sense, caste has given way to class in the Indian countryside.

3.2 Changing Structure of Agrarian Relation in Pre and Post Independent India

In India social structure can be described through institutions based on birth, the family, lineage, sub-caste and caste. An alternate way of describing the structure is through class and here there are two views (i) class is a better spring board for describing structure and (ii) both caste and class are necessary to describe the structure. K.L. Sharma (1980) elaborates the second position, “caste incorporate the element of class and class has a cultural (caste) style, hence the two systems cannot be easily separated even analytically”. In the modern period, the British land revenue system gave rise to a more or less similar agrarian class structure in villages in India. They were the three classes of the landowners (zamindars), the tenants and the agricultural labourers. The landowners (zamindars) were tax gatherers and non-cultivating owners of land. They belonged to the upper caste groups. The agricultural labourers were placed in a position of bondsmen and hereditarily attached labourers. They belonged to the lower caste groups.

The impact of land reforms and rural development programmes introduced after independence has been significant. Land reforms led to the eviction of smaller tenants on a large scale. But the intermediate castes of peasants, e.g., the Ahir, Kurmi etc. in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh benefited. Power of the feudal landed families started declining all over the country. The onset of the Green Revolution in the 1960s led to the emergence of commercially oriented landlords. Rich farmers belonging generally to upper and intermediate castes prospered. But the fortune of the poor peasantry and the agricultural labourers did not improve. This has led to accentuation of class conflicts and tensions. Agrarian unrest in India has now become a common feature in various parts of the country. P.C. Joshi (1971) has summarised in the following manner the trends in the agrarian class structure and relationships. (i) It led to the decline of feudal and customary types of tenancies. It was replaced by a more exploitative and insecure lease arrangement. (ii) It gave rise to a new commercial based rich peasant class who were part owners and part tenants. They had resource and enterprise to carry out commercial agriculture. (iii) It led to the decline of feudal landlord class and another class of commercial farmers emerged for whom agriculture was a business. They used the non-customary type of tenancy.

The process of social mobility has been seen in two directions. In his study of six villages in Rajasthan, K.L. Sharma (1980) observed that in some villages, not only the agricultural labourers but quite a few of the ex-landlords have slid down in class status, almost getting proletarianised. On the contrary, the neo-rich peasantry has emerged as the new rural bourgeoisie replacing the older landlords. Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1957) in his work *Dynamics of a Rural Society* dealt with the changes in the agrarian structure suggesting that a number of classes (categories) were reduced, and that small cultivators were becoming landless workers.

Further, Kotovsky (1964) has noted the process of increasing proletarianisation of the peasantry in villages. According to him, “with the agriculture developing along capitalist lines the process of ruination and proletarianisation of the bulk of the peasantry is growing more intensely all the time”. This is substantiated Rural Social Structure by the fact that in the two decades between 1961 and 1981 the share of cultivators came down from 52.3 percent to 41.5 percent while during the same period the share of agricultural labourers

increased from 17.2 percent to 25.2 percent of the total labour force. During the two decades the proportion of peasants operating less than two hectare increased from 40 percent to 55

Percent of the total. By the year 2001 the share of cultivators to the total work force further declined to 31.7 percent and the share of agricultural labourers became 26.7 percent (Census Report (provisional), 2001). The increase in proportion (and certainly numbers) of agricultural labourers has gone along with a general increase in wage labourers in the rural economy. The process of social mobility and transformation in rural India has been explained by sociologists by the terms *embourgeoisement* and *proletarianisation*. *Embourgeoisement* refers to the phenomenon of upward mobility of the intermediate class peasantry i.e., their emergence as new landlords. *Proletarianisation* describes the process of downward mobility, i.e., *depeasantisation* of small and marginal peasants and a few landlords and their entry into the rank of the rural landless agricultural labourers.

3.3 Role played by the peasantry in the anti feudal and anti imperialist struggle During British Rule

British colonial rule in India brought about major transformations in virtually every area of Indian social and economic life. Its impact on the agrarian society was very decisive. It divided the agrarian society into the proprietors, working peasants and labourers. After Independence, the Indian Government attended to some of the problems caused by the colonial rule, while other problems have persisted, at least some areas.

We can trace the roots of exploitation and misery of majority of people in agrarian society to the land tenure systems introduced during the colonial period. The emergence of the peasant movements during that period may be considered as outcomes of the misery and hardship experienced by the people. This unit will give an overview of some of the major movements and their impact on the society

Agrarian Structure in the Colonial Period

The agrarian structure that emerged from the changes in land relations introduced by the British was very different from the preceding period. There were also considerable differences in the agrarian structure in different parts of the country. As pointed out by Bipan Chandra (1979) it would be difficult to make valid generalizations at an all India level about the agrarian structure. However there were similarities in the structure which is discussed here. The agrarian structure contained the characteristics of being both capitalist and feudalist.

The colonial agrarian structure had the zamindars on the top and the landlords who owned large tracts of land and were also revenue collectors. Many of them were absentee landlords who in turn appointed others to collect the revenue. This led to sub-feudation and increase in the number of intermediaries leading to rack renting and increasing pauperization of the cultivators. Moneylenders, traders, speculators and the parasite sections took advantage of the situation leading to increasing land alienation. Till Independence, around 70 percent of the total cultivated land was owned by the zamindars class in the permanent settlement areas and in the ryotwari areas 30 percent to 50 percent of the land were owned by the landlords, who often doubled up as moneylenders and made of most of the sources of the rural credit. However, the situation was not good for the landlord class. The stagnant economy resulted in the sharp differentiation within the landlord class. With each economic crisis, many of the cultivating owners and tenants joined the ranks of agricultural labourers. Thus, the society was divided into two major categories with number of both non-cultivating landlords and agricultural labourers increasing, while the number of cultivating owners actually declined.

The result of this differentiation was the landlord class did not have any interest in land development and cultivation and looked only for surplus extraction and speculation. There was little interest in investing in land or using the latest innovations to improve agricultural productivity. Due to these factors Indian agriculture remained a low productive activity, which prevented any capitalist transformation and remained semi feudal country.

According to the Agricultural Labour Enquiry in 1951: 19 per cent of the rural families had no land. Among the landowning class 38.1 percent had less than 2.5 to 5 acres of land constituting 5.6 percent of the total land while 21 percent of the families owned 2.5

to 5 acres of land constituting 9.9 percent of the area. The first category can be called small peasants and the latter can be termed as small and middle peasants. 16.2 percent of the families held 10 to 25 acres of land constituting 32.5 percent of the area and they are the middle and rich peasants. 4.2 percent of the families held 25 to 50 acres of land which constituted 19 percent of the area and they can be called the rich peasants. 1.4 percent of the families held 50 or more acres of land and controlled 15.4 percent of the area. These were the big landowners and the zamindars. (Chandra, 1979) This situation had several consequences. However for the better understanding of our study of social movement we can summarise the situation in the following way:

(i) British agricultural policies resulted in the impoverishing of the majority of the

Indian peasantry except for a small number of landlords and zamindars; (ii) their adverse conditions especially for the small peasantry and the agricultural labourers could have been fertile soil for the emergence of social movements;

(iii) extreme differentiation among the various sections itself resulted in the formation of diverse class interests;

(iv) Caste and religious affiliation at times retarded and at times helped in the mobilization of the peasants; and

(v) there was hardly any scope for meaningful change within the existing systems of zamindari and ryotwari and the only real alternative was its replacement.

The Nature of Exploitation of Peasants in Colonial Period

The British introduced two major land revenue and tenure systems the zamindari system and the ryotwari system. There were two major reasons to introduce these systems. The British found the existing land revenue system very complicated and difficult to comprehend with its different systems and sub systems. The zamindari system delegated the responsibility of calculating land revenue and its collection to the zamindars and their agents, sub tenants and other middlemen. The British government had only to obtain the revenue from the zamindars, which greatly simplified the process of land revenue. Another important reason was the need for the British to create a powerful class of people who would

be their loyal supporters and serve as a link between them and the general population. The zamindari system did create such a class as the zamindars owed their existence to the British and therefore acted as collaborators. The zamindari system did help the British attain their aims of subjugation of the vast population and continue their exploitation. However, for the peasants the result was the opposite, as they had to suffer greater hardships.

Peasants as a social category were an important component in any agrarian society. They had survived through a number of political, social and economic changes in the society. However, the imposition of the tenure system by the colonial rulers brought a different degree of hardship to the peasants. The pre-colonial system was also exploitative and oppressive towards the peasants. But there existed a few safeguards in form of customary rights and practices, which imposed some rules and obligations on the landowners' conduct towards the peasants. The British superimposed on the existing system their own tenure system leading to greater exploitation without the safeguards which had protected the peasants. The result was greater misery for the peasants in form of increased rack-renting, sub-infeudation and insecure tenures. While for most of the time the peasant tolerated and adjusted to these unfavourable conditions, there were times when fellow peasants got mobilized and organized movements to revolt against the worsening situation. The British government's reaction to the peasant movements differs from case to case mainly on the basis of the methods used by the peasants, the seriousness of the situation, response of the zamindars and the administrative contingencies. The ultimate objective of the British, of course, was the self-preservation and continuance of their rule in India, and all other considerations were secondary.

Kathleen Gough (Desai (ed) 1979) summarizes succinctly the condition of Indian peasants and the nature of agrarian movements during the 200-odd years between the beginnings of British rule and the Indian Independence. She denies that the Indian peasant was passive or fatalistic in nature and hence did not participate in movements. She also contradicts the opinion of many scholars, both Indian and foreign, that the caste system and different religious background of the Indian peasants prevented them from uniting into common movements and challenging the colonial state. There were at least 77 revolts during the period many of which had thousands of participants. Caste system and religious

affiliations often helped the peasants organize and rally against their oppressors. It was the colonial government which labeled some of these legitimate peasant movements as religious or caste based to deny the just demands of the peasants. Gough lists out the prevalent conditions of the agrarian situation during the 200-year rule of the British.

The early period of British rule under the East India Company was characterized by blatant exploitation of the Indian peasants mainly by high land revenue taxation which at times was twice the rates imposed by the Mughal rulers. In the later years, the nature of exploitation changed with the rates being reduced.

However much of the peasant surplus was taken by the moneylenders, landlords and other intermediaries. The British rule was known for increasing encroachment of tribal lands and the exploitation of forests and other natural resources by the government and government supported agents like businessmen and contractors. British policy of promoting British industries at the cost of Indian industries which were mainly handicrafts destroyed the industrial base of India and forced the erstwhile weaving communities to join the already swollen ranks of the landless.

Cultivators were often coerced into producing cash crops like tea, coffee, rubber, indigo, cotton etc. Other means of plundering India was the export of capital to Britain by the way of repatriation of profits and salaries, debt services and home charges. Speculation and investment in land by businessmen, especially absentee landlords, contributed to the replacement of traditional paternalistic way of life, which though exploitative gave some security to the peasants, by a more aggressive and exploitative system having profit as the sole objective. Population increase and the slow growth of industrialization retarded the capacity of industries to absorb the increasing labour force resulted in the increasing fragmentation of land and the lower productivity. The introduction of railways increased the movement of goods, especially food grains, within the country. This, in many cases, destroyed the largely self sufficient villages, making it vulnerable to famines. It, however, needs to be mentioned that in many cases improved transportation resulted in better supply of food grains to needy areas. Further, it also helped the peasants in different regions to

connect with each other and with the leadership, leading to better organization of the peasantry.

3.4 Peasant Movement in India

Peasant Movements

Movements can be classified according to the nature of social change they seek. According to one classification by Rao (1988) movements can be classified into reform movements, transformative movements and revolutionary movements. Reform movements seek partial changes in the value system and consequential changes in the quality of relationship. Many of the religious movements in India can be termed as reform movements as they were concerned with certain aspects of religion like rituals, outlook and others. Transformative movements aim to make middle level structural changes in the distribution of power, status and access to economic resources. There conflict is used or there is a threat of use of conflict. Revolutionary movements aim at radical changes in the society and want to replace the existing system with new system. The existing system is considered to be so corrupt and degenerated that no solution within the existing framework is considered to be effective. Hence, advocates and participants of revolutionary movements consider the need for total replacement of the existing system. The communist revolutions of Russia and China which replaced the, semi capitalistic-feudal system with the communist system can be termed as revolutionary, so can be the Islamic revolution of Iran which -replaced the secular state lead by the Shah by a theocratic state.

Peasant movements can also be viewed using these criteria of ideology, methods used and the nature of social change desired and finally achieved at the culmination of the movement. It is important to recognize that from the beginning itself all social movements may not possess the characteristics of social movements. In many cases social movements begin in an ad hoc manner involving a group of people, maybe, in response to an action taken by the government or some other group individual whose decisions adversely affect a large number of people. Similar sentiments spread to other areas at a later stage either in a spontaneous manner Land Tenure System and or by design and protest spreads. If these sentiments and actions continue for an agrarian Structure considerable period of time and

over a considerable area it is termed as a movement. Admittedly a number of factors influence the emergence of a movement gravity of the situation, the willingness of the participants to spend time and money, their energy and enthusiasm, their willingness to take risk and their level of consciousness.

Equally important is -the response of the authorities or of people who can address the problem. In some cases it is observed that a quick and violent response to the situation from the authorities leads to the end of the movement, while in other cases the consequence is the strengthening of the movement as more people join it to protest against the response. Another important set of factors that play a major role in the movement is the organization factors namely the quality of leadership, the effectiveness of the strategies, its ability to mobilize internal and external resources, communication strategies, its dealings with authorities, use of symbols, etc. Organizational factors play an important role in determining the success or failure of social movement.

In Indian context there has been the processes of transformation of social movements from that of the intensive phase of radical action to institutionalization (SinghaRoy 1992, Oommen 1984). Peasant movements are important variants of social movements (Dhangare 1983). These movement can be categorized in terms of their ideological orientation, forms of grassroots mobilization, and orientation towards change as 'radical' and 'institutionalised' to analyze their dynamics. A 'radical peasant movement' is viewed as a non-institutionalized large-scale collective mobilization initiated and guided by radical ideology for rapid structural change in peasant society. A 'institutionalised' peasant movement', on the other hand, is one where institutionalized mass mobilization is initiated by recognized bodies for a gradual change in the selected institutional arrangement of society. It has been observed that peasant movements, however, are not discretely radical or reformative, rather one may be an extension of another through transition over a period of time (SinghaRoy 1992: 27), that the process of mobilization and institutionalization do coexist and that institutionalization provides the new possibilities of mobilization (Oommen 1984: 251) and that the process of transformation of these movements from 'radical' to 'institutionalised' directly affects the process of new collective identity formation of the peasantry.

PEASANT MOVEMENTS AFTER THE 1857

Indigo Revolt (1859-1860)

Indigo, a plant extract used as dye, was a valued item in the international market. It was mainly grown in the areas of Bihar and Bengal. The indigo planters were mainly British, who compelled the tenants to grow indigo, which were then processed in the factories before export. The planters would force the tenants to take token amounts as advance and enter into fraudulent contract, under which the tenant would grow only indigo in the best lands and sell the produce to the planters at the price fixed by the latter. The price fixed by the planters was much below that of the prevalent market prices. The system gave no freedom to the tenant to neither grow the crops or of his choice or sell the produce to the buyers of his choice.

This oppressive system was sustained by coercive and violent methods that included floggings, kidnappings of tenants and their family members, physical attacks and destruction of property. All these were done to compel the cultivators to obey the dictates of the planters. The attitude of the colonial government was of indifference to the plight of the cultivators or, in many cases, of explicit support to the planters. The cultivators were naturally against this system but were forced by circumstances to endure it. On 17 August 1859 a deputy magistrate of Kalar, Rao Hem Chandra Kar, issued a notification which declared the end of force system of indigo cultivation.

It is suggested by some historians that the magistrate had exceeded his powers and that he had no authority to take such a step. However the news spread and was greeted by a sigh of relief by the cultivators. But to their dismay and frustration the cultivators soon found that the planters had no intention to obey this order and wanted to continue the oppressive practice. When the cultivators came to know of this, they appealed to the authorities by sending petitions and representations. The response of the authorities was that of indifference and inaction. Finally the mass anger against the system exploded took the form of the Indigo Revolt.

The significant incident that triggered revolt took place in Govindpur village, in Nadia district. Led by Diganbar Biwas and Bishnu Biswas, the villagers stopped cultivating

indigo. The planters sent a gang of armed men to beat the villagers into submission which was countered by the villagers using lathis and spears. Similar protests by the cultivator took place in other villages of Bengal. Cultivators' resisted the attempts of the planters to force them to plant indigo and often it resulted in violence. At times the cultivators had violent clashes with the police and administration as they were seen as supporters of the planters. The planters tried using every strategy possible. They tried to use the zarnindarj rights over the tenants. They threatened to increase taxes and evict them if they refused to continue cultivate indigo. But the cultivators used legal means available to counter the planters. Also, social boycott organized by the cultivators forced the planters and their supporters to leave the areas. By 1860 the planters began to close their factories and leave the area. The cultivator's movement had succeeded.

A number of factors contributed to the success of the movement. The problem affected vast cross sections of the cultivators, the landless agricultural labourers, peasants and medium sized landlords, all of whom participated in the movement. Leadership, in most cases, was provided by the better off peasants. There was also almost perfect unity between the Hindu peasants and the Muslim peasants. The government response to the movement can be described as rather restrained and not harsh as in some other uprisings. The government understood the situation and appointed a commission to study the conditions in which indigo was grown. The report revealed an oppressive system, often including the use of violence and other unlawful acts. The government after receiving the report, banned some of the unlawful and oppressive practices prevalent there. The movement also received support from the Indian and British press who publicized the details of the oppressive system to the general public in India and Britain. Intellectuals like Harish Chandra Mukherjee gave wide publicity to the plight of the cultivators. Din Bandhu Mitra famous play 'Nee1 Darpan' highlighted the injustices taking place in the Indigo production.

Pabna Movement

The epicenter of the peasant movement was Pabna, a relatively prosperous district in East Bengal. Many peasants here had occupancy rights which protected them against arbitrary eviction by the landlords. However the rent was fixed by the landlords who

increased it seven fold during the period from 1793 to 1872. By the early 1870s the zamindars again attempted to raise the rents by using dubious means, of measurement of cultivated land. Coercion was used against those who resisted this and they were forcibly evicted.

The peasants found the situation too hard to bear and began to organize against the zamindars. Among the first to organize were peasants of the Yusufshahi paragona who formed an agrarian league to counter the zamindars. They raised funds to fight cases against the zamindars, mobilized the people and refused to pay rents.

The movement spread to other areas in the district. The aims of the peasant movement were limited to abolishing the increased rent and to prevent zamindari excesses. Most of the time, the protests were in form of litigations and the protesters rarely used violence. They did not demand structural changes like end of the zamindari system. They often stressed on their loyalty towards the colonial rulers and emphasized that their major demand was they were the riots of Her majesty the Queen and of Her only (Sarkar, 1983).

Many of the disputes between the peasants and the zamindars were settled due to government pressure, which feared that the growth of peasant movement would lead to a law and order problem. Further, the zamindars feared the radicalization of the movement and also the increasing litigations from the peasants. They had limited options and were forced to compromise. The attitude of the government towards the peasants was that of restraint and sometimes even of support. The peasants were penalized only if they became violent or destroyed public property. Otherwise the government adopted the role of a mediator between the peasants and the zamindars.

In response to the demands of the peasants to regulate the system of tenancy the government passed the Bengal Tenancy Act in 1885 which gave some form of protection to the tenants. Like the Indigo revolt the peasants got support from a wide range of people. Most intellectuals of Bengal supported the peasant cause. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, and later Surendranath Banerjee, Anand Mohan Bose, Dwarkanath Ganguli campaigned for the peasants and supported of the tenancy bill. They wanted the legislation fixing the rate of the

tenant's rent and occupancy rights for the cultivator on his land. Some landlord based organization opposed the movement.

The peasant's demands were met to a large extent, though there were not much structural changes in the system. However, there was peasant unity across various sanctions including the Hindus and the Muslims. This unity was achieved in spite of the efforts by vested interests to show the movements as a Hindu Muslim conflict, as most of the zamindars were Hindus and most of the tenants were Muslims.

Deccan Peasant Movement

This movement took place around the districts of Poona and Ahmednagar in 1875. The root cause of the problem was again the increasing burden of rent on the peasants. But three conditions aggravated the situation for the peasants. The price of cotton the main crop in the region, crashed after the end of the civil war in America. Dramatically increased in the price of cotton during the war period due to shortages had persuaded many peasants to invest, in cotton and the fall in price was a real disaster. The second reason was the bad harvest in the period. Thirdly the government itself increased the revenue by 50 percent. Peasants had to resort to distress borrowing from the moneylenders who charged exorbitant rates of interest. Most of the moneylenders were marawaris and seen as outsiders. Widespread indebtedness was the consequence. The condition became unbearable for the peasants and there were uprisings.

Moneylenders were the natural targets of these protests. In 1875 riots took place in 6 taluks of Poona and Ahrnednagar districts. Debt bonds were seized from the moneylenders and destroyed in bonfires. Social boycott of the moneylenders was organized by the peasants. People refused to buy items from shops of the moneylenders and labourers refused to till their land. Some instances of looting were also reported, but once the debt bonds were destroyed the uprising seceded.

The peasants in some areas had already refused to pay enhanced revenue demanded by the government. The combination of these sentiments helped the leaders organize the peasants. The government acted swiftly to contain the movement and prevent violence, though, the government handling was mild, compared to its response to other uprisings. But

then the movement had achieved its objectives within the period of three weeks. In 1879 the Deccan Agriculturalists' Relief Act was passed which gave relief to the peasant by making available legal remedies to counter unreasonable demands.

The peasants got support from social reformers based in Bombay and Poona. Justice Ranade and his Poona Sarvajanik Sabha supported the peasants struggle. There were many other peasant revolts like the short lived Ramosi uprising in Maharashtra lead by Vasudev Balvant Phadke during 1879. Influenced by Ranade's 'drain of wealth' theories and worsening peasant conditions, Phadke led a band of about 50 youths to indulge in social banditry wherein they looted the landlords and the moneylenders. Their activities were supported by the peasantry who often gave them shelter and served them from authorities. The uprising ended when Phadke was captured and sentenced for life. However the uprising continued till 1880s. Another significant uprising which was carried on intermittently for a longer period were the Moplah revolts. The Moplahs were Muslim tenants and cultivators of North Kerala who were working for the mainly Hindu landlords. Between 1862 and 1880 rents increased by 244 % and there were also increase in the eviction of peasants. Their worsening conditions gave rise to a violent revolt which took a communal turn. The Moplahs targeted landlord property, temples and government buildings. The government suppressed this movement using heavy force which resulted in the death of a number of peasants. Hindu peasants also took part in the resistor but they tended to engage themselves mostly in social banditry rather than organized revolt.

Anti - Feudal movements in India

Another important form of struggle is the anti feudal struggle. These struggles were aimed at opposing the atrocities committed Feudal land loards. Feudal Medieval Europe witnessed large number of anti feudal struggles in Germany, Hungary, Austria, England etc. One famous anti feudal struggle was Dozsa Struggle. In India anti feudal struggle became a common feature after tile inauguration of British rule. Their struggle was prompted by the fact that British rule or administration introduced new agrarian structure, which created a hierarchy of feudal structure or relations.

Following are some important anti-feudal struggles waged during all these years- bagining from colonial period to post colonial period.

Nagar Peasant Uprising in Kaniataka 1830-33;

Pabna Revolt against the Zamindars 1870;

Mopilla Revolt against the Zaniindars 1920s;

Ellarinji Struggle against the Zaniindars 1941

Nadiyanga Struggle in Kcrala 1940s

Kodayu Satyagraha in Kamataka 1951

Worli Revolt in Maliarashtra 1945

Kotiyoor Struggle of Kcrala I945

Peasant Movement in Early Twentieth Century.

The peasant movement of this period took in a different context than the movements that took place earlier. The nature of the national freedom movement was changing from being an elite dominated movement with limited objectives to that of a mass movement with broader objectives. New ideologies were coming into India which captured the imagination of the leaders and the masses. Communism, socialism, nationalism and extremism of various types were competing with each other for increasing their adherents and their sphere of influence. The international events gave new hope and at the same time raised new fears in the government as well as among the people.

The First World War affected the people in many ways e.g. ise in prices of commodities and shortages of foodgrains. The Russian Revolution of 1917 gave the alternative to the capitalistic system. The emergence of Communist parties all over the world during that period shows its rising influence. For the rulers it became important that peasant and workers movement are contained and do not get by influenced by communism or socialism which could lead to graver consequences and be threat to the Empire itself.

Peasant Movement in Avadh

The condition of peasantry in the former princely state of Avadh was deteriorating after its annexation in 1856. As collectors of revenue, the talukdars or big landlords were in control of the agrarian society. The beginnings of the nineteenth century saw the increased revenue demands and forced evictions of peasants. The World War I resulted in the rising of food prices and other household items. The unbearable plight of the peasants presented conditions for the result.

The organization of peasants was initiated by the members of the Home Rule which was a liberal organization of Annie Besant and Lala Rajpat Rai. The peasant organization was started by Gauri Shankar Misra, Indra Narain Dwivedi with the support by Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1918 and was named U.P. Kisan Sabha. The organization established 450 branches in the 173 tehsils of the province. Gradually it began to organize protests against the injustices faced by the peasants. It also received support from Jawaharlal Nehru - and other leaders.

Some of the protests took the forms of social boycott of landlords in Pratapgarh in 1919, the mass complaints with the Deputy Commissioner of Pratapgarh against talukdars for unjustified levies and subsequent mass protests against the arrest of Baba Ramachandra in 1920, Kisan Sabha rally at Ayodha to stop forced labour and unreasonable levies in 1920. The movement was grown radical as time passed.

The government reacted strongly to the violent incidents. Further the Seditious Meeting Act was passed which punished these actions severely. At the same time the Oudh Rent (Amendment) Act brought limited relief to the-tenants. These steps contributed to the decline of the movement.

The movement, however, got fresh lease of life in northern areas of Avadh in the districts of Hardoi, Bahraich and Sitapur. The Eka movement, a product of the Khilafat movement, took up the cause of the peasants. The movement also combined a religious ritual. When the peasants took a pledge in holy water that they would not obey the illegal orders of the landlords.

The later infusion of the lower castes changed the nature of movement from being non violence to the use of violence. The movement was suppressed by the government using brute force and by 1922 the movement was controlled.

Moplah Uprising 1921

The Moplahs movement had been suppressed earlier using brute force. But the conditions had not changed for the Moplahs. Lack of security, high fees, and illegal levies were some of the major problems faced by the peasants. The discontent increased and in 1921 when the movement reached its apogee. The peasant's cause was given support by the Malabar district Congress Conference held in Manjeri in April 1920. Finally the tenants association was formed in Kozhikode and later in other areas. The Khilifat Movement was also influential in these areas, but only among the Muslims. The Hindus distanced themselves from the movement which later affected the movement. But major leaders like Gandhi, Shaukat Ali and Maulana Azad gave support to the movement.

The incident that precipitated the rebellion was when in August 1920 district magistrate of Earnad, E.F. Thomas led the police to raid a mosque to arrest a Kilowatt leader priest. The situation further worsened when the leaders of the community appealed peacefully to the British officers to release the persons arrested during the raid. But the crowd was fired upon by the police and many were killed. The crowd retaliated by attacking the policemen and the public persons. The violence soon spread to other areas in Malabar. Attacks continued to take place on public property and increasingly on the Hindu landlords. Often Hindu peasants and some landlords were spewed if they had not harmed the peasants.

The British were alarmed by the violent mass protest of the Moplahs and declared martial law to suppress the movement. Many Hindus were also opposed the Moplah rebellion because of the religious ideology of the Moplahs and instances of forced conversions and increasing attacks on Hindus. Further, the support from outside a leaders and organizations ended when the Moplahs used violent methods.

By December 1921 the movement was totally suppressed by the government. The rebellion had cost more than 2000 lives while some accounts put the figure above 10,000. The rebellion undoubtedly was the one of the most serious challenges to the government,

though being guided by fundamentalist religious ideology, its support base could not extend beyond the Muslim community, which was its weakest feature. Secondly, government was too strong to be challenged by violent methods.

Peasant Movements under Gandhi's Leadership

Champan agrarian struggle was the first popular movement that Mahatma Gandhi led after he returned from South Africa where he had led a number of successful agitations. Champan was place in North Bihar where the European planters took a lead in growing indigo. The system locally called tinkathia forced the cultivators to grow indigo on 3/20th part of their holdings. But as synthetic dyes began to replace natural ones throughout the world the demand for indigo declined. The planters demanded that the cultivators pay them large amounts of rents to release them from their contracts, even though indigo cultivation was forced and also illegal.

Local leaders like Rajendra Prasad, A.N. Sinha, Braj Kishore Prasad, J.B. Kripalani and Rajkumar Shukla were already leading the agitation against the planters. Local moneylenders, village mukthars (attorneys) and school teachers supported the agitation. Shukla invited Gandhi to lead the movement. Gandhi arrived in the district and was served an order to leave the district which he disobeyed. The government however did not take any further action in the matter.

The first step Gandhi took was to conduct an enquiry into the matter and Gandhi and the others went into the villages to get a first hand view of the problem. Meanwhile the government set up its own Commission and nominated Gandhi as its member. The Commission after examining the evidence, came to the conclusion that the tinkathia system should be abolished, the planter's demands be termed illegal, and cultivators compensated. The recommendation was accepted by the Government. The planters were asked to return twenty five percent of the illegal dues they had seized from the cultivators. The practice of tinkathia was ended and soon after the European planters left the area. This was the first victory for Gandhi and his methods in India. Gandhi wanted to continue the work in Champan and he appointed a group of fifteen volunteersto carry on the constructive work. But the efforts were only partially successful and by May 1918 only three volunteers

remained. Another area Gandhi intervened was in Kheda district of Gujarat where most of the peasants belonging to Kanbi-Patildar caste, were engaged on producing food grains, cotton and tobacco. In 1917-18 the crops failed and simultaneously there was a price rise of essential commodities.

The peasants appealed to the government for remission of land revenue, but it was ignored by the government. Gandhi and Vithalbai Patel were taken up the peasant cause which was genuine and just. The Gujarat Sabha led by Gandhi was joined by other leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yagnik and others. They toured the areas, organized the peasants and persuaded them to join the no-revenue movement. The peasants refused to pay the revenue and resisted government attempts to coerce them into paying. Government officials would seize land, cattle and household items from the defaulters which were collectively resisted. Finally the government through secret orders asked the revenue officials to collect revenue from only those peasants who could afford to pay. The movement also was losing support from the peasants. Besides the crop in the next season was good and the very basis for the movement was more or less declined. The movement was withdrawn for political and strategic reasons. Gandhi's involvement with peasant movements made him a nationally known figure in the independence movement. Further it convinced him and others of the suitability of his methods of using Satyagraha and civil disobedience. He could also recruit many of his future followers like Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel and others. Most importantly he used these opportunity to build the organizational base for the Congress party which already had significant influence on the national movement. But it should not be assumed that Gandhi led the peasant movements without any initiative from the peasants themselves. (Sarkar, 1983)

Bardoli Peasant No Tax Movement of 1921

Bardoli was a taluk in Surat district in Gujarat. The Non Cooperation Movement of 1922 had already increased political activity and awareness in the area. Local leaders had emerged in the area and had organized the people for the freedom movement. After the movement was withdrawn the activists continued their involvement in constructive activity. There were numerous activities to address the problems of untouchables and tribes.

In January 1926 the rates of land revenue were arbitrarily raised by thirty percent which led the peasants to protests against the raise. The congress leader set up an enquiry to look into the situation which found that the Hali system (a form of bonded labour) was exploiting the lower castes. The report was published and was widely publicized by the media. The matter was also raised in the legislative assembly. However there was no effect of these efforts on the government and the rates of revenue were not lowered.

The leaders of the movement decided to initiate a more vigorous mass based movement. The representatives of peasants asked Vallabhbhai Patel to lead the movement. After getting the consent of the leaders for participation Vallabhbhai Patel wrote to the Governor about the situation, but the response from the governor was unfavorable. The peasants decided to conduct a no-revenue campaign and mass pledges were taken by the peasants not to pay the revenue to the government. 1500 peasant volunteers were organized. A newspaper was launched which informed the population of the various activities of the movement. Social boycott of government officials and their supporters increased the pressure on the government. The campaign also influenced moderate political leaders who otherwise stood for constitutional means. Also, support for the peasants came from workers. Public opinion in the country against the government was building up. Rallies were held in different parts of the country in support of the peasants.

In a face saving measure the Governor announced an Enquiry committee to study the situation. The report of the Enquiry came to the conclusion that increase was unjustified. It was a political victory for the peasants and established the strength of the peasant's movement.

Peasant Movements in 1930s and 1940s.

The World economy was in the grip of a severe Depression which adversely affected countries all over the world. India was no exception and experienced a number of economic problems like declining demand for items, rising prices of food and reduced job opportunities. On the other hand the independence movement led by Gandhi was growing with mass based activism. The Civil Disobedience and the Quit India were major movements

lead by Gandhi. The success of the Bardoli movement inspired a number of such movements around the country. Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Malabar were the areas when mass protests against unjustified land assessments, levies and taxes were organized.

Another influential factor was the growth of the Left movement, especially the communist parties. Many Congressmen were influenced by explain aspects of the socialist ideas. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jayaprakash Narayan were the influential leaders with socialist persuasion. The formation of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 brought about some degree of unity among the otherwise disparate socialist groups. Organizing the peasants and workers was an important part of their strategy. Political consciousness increased in almost all the sections of the society due to these events. Peasants were no exception. All over the country there was a demand to form organizations which would represent peasant interests in the public sphere. These organizations were started independently or as mass organizations.

Sometimes the independent organizations merged with or became part of the ideologically closer political parties. Peasant organizations were both regional and national in character. Also, it tried to represent the interests of all categories of peasants who often had varied interests. Similarly these organizations were platforms for a member of different castes who came together on common issues.

One of the most influential and largest peasant organizations was the All India Kisan Sabha. The Sabha was started by a number of individuals around the country working together. N.G. Ranga was the leader of the Provincial Ryots Association and Zamin Ryots' Association. Along with E.M.S. Namboodripad, he also the leader of the South Indian Federation of Peasants and Agricultural Labour. It was in its conference in 1935 that it was suggested that an all India peasant body was needed. The suggestion was supported by the Congress Socialist Party. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was another leader involved in the process and was the first president of the Kisan Sabha. He had already organized the Bihar Kisan Sabha in 1929 and had led a number of agitations against the government and the zamindars. Indulal Yajnik was also a leader of the movement and he became the editor of the Kisan Bulletin. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Yajnik were earlier staunch Gandhians but

later distanced from him as they felt that he was not completely supportive of the peasant because he had compromised with the zamindars on numerous occasions. The All India Kisan Congress (later changed to All India Kisan Sabha) was established in 1936. The first President was Swami Sahajanand and the General Secretary was N.G. Ranga. A Kisan Manifesto was presented to the Congress Working Committee before the General Elections in 1937. The Second session of the Sabha was held in Faizabad along the Congress party session. The establishment of an all India organization for peasants gave a thrust to peasant movements. This coincided with the formation of popular ministries in various provinces when elections were held under the Government of India Act 1935.

Congress formed the government in most states. Many provinces, especially those under Congress governments, were sympathetic to the peasant's cause. They passed a number of legislations related to debt relief levies, revenue assessment etc. Peasants organisation were in a position in new situation to function as interest groups and influence the government.

A number of peasant organisations at the village, district, province and national levels were started in the country. The leaders organised a number of meetings which sensitized the peasants and aroused their interest in joining the organizations.

Institutes and camps were organized for training peasant activist. Long marches, Rally and agitations were often the weapons of the peasants against the zamindars as also against the government. The movement was active till the late nineteen thirties when international and national event overtook it and led to its decline. But by that time there were a number of events had taken place in different parts of the country which influenced the national political scene even after the independence. The peasant movement was very strong in many regions of the country.

Andhra Pradesh: The coastal areas were in state of ferment during this period. The Andhra Provincial Ryots Association and the Andhra Zamin Ryots Association led the movement. Struggles against the zamindari system grew more vigorous after the defeat of the zamindar backed candidates in the elections. It was particularly strong in Bobbili, Mungala and Kalipattanam.

Bihar: The demand for the abolition of zamindari system was adopted by the Kisan Sabha in 1935, the demand for the return of badshahi lands being the most popular. The Sabha and the Congress ministry were on opposite sides with the ministry opposing demands to take radical steps to resolve the issue. Clashes between the zamindars men and the peasants became frequent.

Malabar: The Congress Socialist Party was popular in this region. Under its guidance and support Krishakam Sangams, literally meaning peasants groups, were formed at the different levels, their most popular form of protest being the jathas marches, which were often conducted to create awareness and to encourage mass participation. The movement was successful in influencing the government to pass legislation for debt relief.

Punjab: The resettlements of land revenue and canal rates were the major issues here. The Unionist government was pro zamindar which made the task difficult for the peasants.

U.P. experienced a strong no tax movement in the earlier 1930s and subsequently an anti zamindar movement. Similar struggles were reported in different parts of the country, including the princely states. In the princely states where almost two fifth of the population lived where the peasants plight were even more difficult. Unlike in the British government where public pressure worked at least sometimes, the closeness of the princes with the feudal elite resulted in severe repression for peasant activist.

The freedom movement was nonexistent for most time until the All Peoples Conference came into being, which meant that political consciousness was, low as was the organizational strength. These conditions made the initiation and their growth very difficult, but some significant movement was organized here too.

Most of these movements focused on the problems of the peasants, such as high levies, illegal evictions, debt relief and rates of assessments. In many cases a compromise was aimed at by the government or with political leaders which diffused the situation. Often the government would enact legislations to solve the disputes. All these were testimony to the strength of the peasant movements.

31.4 Radical Peasant Movement in India

To highlight the diversified facets of the peasant movements we shall discuss some aspects of the peasant movements in India, since India has been the hotbed of several peasant movements. Peasant movements, however, are not episodic. These undergo a process of transformation along with the broad social, economic and political transformation of the society. Many of these peasant movements have retained their continuity with the past, by maintaining legacy of the celebrated peasant movements in one way or the other. However, the contemporary peasant movements have undergone substantial changes in the ideological orientation, leadership, organisation, and significantly in the forms of collective mobilisation and the tactical line of action. All these have affected the process of grass-root mobilization, process of new identity formation and transformation of radical peasant movements into an institutionalized one. Peasant movements, however, are not discretely radical or reformative, rather one may be an extension of another though transition over a period of time. The processes of transformation of the peasant movement from 'radical' to 'reformative' directly affect the process of new collective identity formation of peasantry. Is the process of new identity formation of the peasantry autonomous of the issues, aims and ideology of a given social movement? Do they acquire an autonomous identity in the process of transformation of the movement from radicalization to institutionalization?

The process of transformation of the peasant has affected not only the form and extent of their participation in these movements, but also the very essence of their collective identity formation, the nature of the autonomy of these mobilizations and the new identity formed therein. However, the direction of transformation of the peasant movement and their consequent implication for the peasantry has not been the same across the country because of the diverse patterns of economic development and social and political formations in the peasant societies. Since the middle of the last century the peasant societies of Indian experienced three vehement peasant movements. The poor peasantry of undivided Bengal revolted for the peasant societies of Indian experienced three vehement peasant movements: The poor peasantry of undivided Bengal revolted for Tebhaga (two-third of the share of the produce from land) 1946-47. Peasantry of the Telengana regions of Andhra Pradesh revolted against the landlords, moneylenders and the state for the abolition of forced labour, forced collection of high rate of interest and for their indignity in the society in 1948-52; and the

peasantry of Naxalbari of the West Bengal revolted against the local landlords money lenders and the state in (1967-71). Though the Tebhaga, Telangana and the Naxalite movements took place in different geographical places and in different period of time, there are some striking similarities among these movements: a) Increasing landlessness, poverty, under employment and various types of social and economic deprivation of the backward classes Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and their exploitation by the upper caste landowners and money lenders were the major issues involved in this movement b) All these movements were organised under the auspice of the organization and leadership of the Communists(of different political establishments) c) All these movements were ideologically radical in nature. These movements challenged the normative and the pre-existing institutional arrangements of the society. d) Uninstitutionalised collective mobilization and action were sponsored in these movements. e) These movements were immediately directed against the traditional landlords, police administration and other apparatus of the state f) These movements looked for a radical change in the pre-existing agrarian arrangements of the society g) Though the leadership of these movements came mostly from the urban intellectuals and the higher caste groups, the poor peasantry especially from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, were the main driving forces in these collective mobilizations h) All these movements experienced the phenomenal participation of women in all phases of progression of the collective mobilization; and exploitation of women by the upper caste landowners had become a prominent issue in these movements.

31.5 The Tebhaga Movement (1946–47)

The Tebhaga movement was manifested in the undivided Bengal in mid 1940s centering around a demand for *tebhaga* (two-third shares) by sharecropper's of their produce for themselves, instead of one-half traditionally given to them by the *jotedars*—a class of intermediary landowners. This movement grew against the backdrop of the flourishing interest of the intermediary class of landowners on the one hand and that of the deterioration of the economic status of the agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and poor peasants on the other. The deteriorating economic condition of the lowest strata was

reflected in the rapid expansion in the number of the sharecroppers and agricultural labourers in the Bengal agrarian society of the time. Report of the Land Revenue Commission in 1940 observed that of 8,547,004 inquired acres all over the Bengal Province undivided Bengal 592,335 acres were transferred, of which 31.7 per cent was turned over to *barga* (sharecropping) and 24.6 per cent to under-tenants. The traders, moneylenders and intermediary landowners exploited to the hilt the poverty of the poor peasant and lent him money at usurious rates of interest. When the poor peasant was unable to repay the debt and lost his land to the creditor, he was resettled on the same land on condition that he handed over half of the produce to the creditor. The peasants who were not settled on it as sharecroppers became agricultural labourers. The Land Revenue Commission pointed out in 1940 that agricultural labourer constituted 22.5 per cent of the total number of families of Bengal (LRC 1940, Vol. 2: 117–20).

The exploitative intermediacy systems of land tenure, which was introduced through the Permanent settlement, had furthered the process of downward mobilisation of the peasantry of Bengal. The emerging patterns of exploitation and social oppression, impoverishment and pauperization of the peasantry got institutionalized during the British rule (Rasul 1974). Questions pertaining to the deteriorating economic condition of the peasantry received organized focus since early 1920s with the formation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) 1921, the Workers and Peasants Party (WPP) 1922 and the Krishak Praja Party (KPP) in 1929. The Bengal Kisan Sabha (VKS), a provincial branch of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) was formed in 1936. The KPP won the provincial election with promise to abolish the intermediary system of land ownership.

In alliance with the Congress it formed the first popular Ministry in Bengal and subsequently appointed the Land Revenue Commission in 1938 to look in to the agrarian issues. This commission recommended in 1940 that “All *bargadars* should be treated as tenants, that the share of the crops legally recoverable from them should be one-third, instead of half” (Vol. I, 1940: 69). However as the KPP did a volte-face on agrarian problems the government showed no urgency for implementing the recommendation of the Land Revenue Commission the AIKS began to radicalize its agrarian programme. In November 1946 the

BKS passed a resolution in Calcutta for ‘*Tebhaga*’ (two thirds share of the produced crops) for the sharecroppers and ‘*langal jar janin tar*’ (land to the tiller).

North Bengal, especially the Dinajpur district became centre of the BKS activism because of the high intensity of the sharecropping system of land cultivation there. The poor peasantry of Khanpur village, who were mostly from the scheduled castes (Rajbansi, Polia, and Mali), the scheduled tribes (the Oroan, Colkamar Santal) and ex-tribes (Mahato) responded spontaneously to this movement. When the movement escalated into mass action, the sharecroppers began to harvest paddy and carry it to their own *kholan* (courtyard) under the instructions of the local leaders. In a surcharged situation of heightening tension the local (landowner filed a FIR against the sharecroppers.

Early on the morning of 20 February 1947 police entered the village and arrested a few sharecroppers. This news spread like wildfire all over the village, and an alarm was raised by the beating of drums, blowing conch shells and beating gongs and utensils by the peasant women. The village and its environs reverberated to the sounds of drums, tin jars, gongs and conch shells. A vast mass of poor peasants and sharecroppers from both Khanpur and its neighbouring villages, armed with bows and arrows, *lathis* and axes, surged on the police. They demanded the release of their sharecroppers. But the police were adamant and ended up firing 119 rounds, injuring hundreds and killing 22 sharecroppers, including two women. The episode of Khanpur triggered off the Tebhaga movement very quickly in most part of Bengal. Poor peasants ignoring their conventional ties with the landowners declined to share half of their produce with the landowners. Protest, firing, killing became part of this agrarian society in 194. However the rulers used all possible repressive measures to crash this movement by introducing a reign of terror in the rural areas.

The Telangana Movement (1946-52)

The Telangana Movement (1946-52) of Andhra Pradesh was fought against the feudal oppression of the rulers and local landowners. The agrarian social structure of Hyderabad emerged to be very oppressive in 1920s and thereafter. The process of the sub-infeudation in the landholding accentuated the insecurity of the tenants and the poor peasants. In rural

Telangana's political economy, the *jagirdars* and *deshmukhs*, locally known as *dora*, played a dominant role.

They were the intermediary landowners with higher titles. Village officials were mostly from the upper caste or influential Muslim community background. Because of their privileged economic and political status they could easily subject the poor peasantry to extra-economic coercion through the *vetti* (force labour) system. At the bottom of the agrarian hierarchy were the untouchable castes and tribal groups, such as the Konda, Reddy, Koyas, Chenchus, Lambodis and Banjaras. The lower strata of the agrarian hierarchy had a sub-human level of existence. The Harijans and the tribals were the worst sufferers under this system (Dhanagare, 1983). Besides the unbridled feudal exploitation, the Muslim ruler also maintained the utter isolation of from the vast masses of his Hindu subjects (Sundarayya, 1985).

The Indian National Congress, Andhra Jana Sangam and Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS) raised the issue of poor condition of the peasantry of Telengana since late 1920s. Several resolutions were passed against the *jagirdari* and the *vetti* system by the AMS. Under the auspices of the AMS the Jagir Ryotu Sangham was formed in 1940 to bring pressure upon the government to solve the problems of the *jagir* peasants working under the *jogirdars*. Significantly the Andhra Communist Party was established in 1934. After the ban on the Communists was lifted in 1942, they captured the leadership of AMS. They raised the issues of 'abolition of *vetti*', 'prevention of rack-renting and eviction of tenants', 'reduction of taxes, revenue and rents', 'confirmation of occupancy (*patta*) rights of the cultivating tenants', and so on. All these processes of mobilisation of the peasantry increased tensions in the rural areas of Telengana, which ultimately culminated into the political consciousness of the peasants, and gradually there was a new awakening. It was against such forced labour and illegal exaction and against eviction of the poor tenants that the peasantry of the Telengana region of Hyderabad State, waged innumerable struggles. The beginnings of the Telengana armed struggles were against the atrocities of Vishnur Ramchandra Reddy, the *deshmukh* in Jangaon tehsil of Nalgonda district, in 1946, when his goondas attacked and murdered Doddi Komarayya, the local Andhra Mahsabha worker, in Kadivendi village on July 4 (Sundarayya, 1985). This incident intensified the struggle between the landlords

openly supported by the Nizam's government and the poor peasantry organized by the CPI in the disguise of the AMS. The movement took a new turn with India attaining independence in 1947, and the subsequent refusal of the Nizam to join the Indian Union. The CPI openly called for a guerrilla struggle against the *razakars* (state paramilitary wing) and the government forces by forming village defence committees and by providing arms training to the *dalams* (armed squads). The administrative machinery of the Nizam came to a standstill in nearly 4000 villages.

In its place were established *gram rajyas* (village administrative units). *Vetti* was abolished, and some 1.2 million acres of land was redistributed very quickly. Unpaid debts were cancelled, tenants were given full tenancy rights, toddy tappers got back its over trees, untouchability was abolished and a new social awareness became visible. Armed women defended themselves against the *razakars*. With the Nizam refusing to merge with the independent Indian Union, the Indian government initiated army action against the Nizam, and subsequently against the CPI in September 1948. The CPI adopted the path of a protracted struggle. They planned for a liberated area and intensified their struggle. However, it was very difficult for the communist cadres in Telangana to withstand the Indian Army. Several hundred peasant rebels were killed. Many died for lack of shelter and support. With the Nizam already overthrown by the Indian Army, the logic of the movement was rethought by the leaders and the common peasantry of Telangana. In 1951 the politbureau of the CPI called off the struggle.

Sundarayya (1985) presents an overall balance-sheet of this peasant uprising: 'As many as 4000 communists and peasant militants were killed; more than 10,000 communist cadres and people's fighters were thrown into detention camps and jails for a period of 3-4 years; no fewer than 50,000 people were dragged into police and military camps from time to time, there to be beaten, tortured and terrorized for weeks and months together. Several lakhs of people in thousands of villages were subjected to police and military raids and to cruel lathi-charges; the people in the course of these military and police raids lost property worth millions of rupees, which were either looted or estroyed; thousands of women were molested and had to undergo all sorts of humiliations and indignities' (Sundarayya, 1985:4).

Naxalite Movement (1967–71)

The agrarian society of independent India experienced a new epoch in the history of peasant movements with the peasant uprising of May 1967 under the Naxalbari *thana* of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Immediately after the country's independence, the Govt. of West Bengal enacted the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act (1953) to abolish the *zamindari* and other intermediary systems and the West Bengal Land Reform Act (1955) to put a ceiling on landholdings, to reserve for the sharecroppers 60 per cent of the produced share, and to put a restriction on the eviction of sharecroppers. However due to the lack of the political will the progressive provisions of these acts remained in the statute book only. Moreover eviction of the tenants and the sharecroppers, sharp downward mobility of the peasants, their economic insecurity and unemployment emerged to be the integral part of the agrarian society of that period. The sharecroppers who constituted 16 per cent of the rural households in 1952-53 came down to 2.9 per cent in 1961- 62. Though because of modified land transfer proportion of the marginal and the small cultivators increased among the rural population, in real term poor peasantry was undergoing a desperate situation caused by their livelihood insecurity. This was clearly visible from the phenomenal increase of the agricultural labourers from 15.3% in 1961 to 26.2 in 1971 and the decline of the category of cultivators 38.5% to 32 % during the same period (Census of India 1961, 1971).

Significantly the All India Credit Committee in its report of 1968 pointed out to the 'emergence of sharp polarization between classes in the rural areas' (Govt. of India: 1968) In this backdrop while the economic condition of the poor peasantry was deteriorating, the political happenings in West Bengal took a new turn. In February 1967 the United Front (dominated by the communal parties viz. CPI, CPI (M) RSP etc.) came to with the promise like 'land to the tiller', 'proletarian rule', etc. The United Front pledged to implement the land reforms, promising land to all landless households and invited more militant initiatives from the peasantry as an organized force (Banerjee 1980: 105). The Left political parties had initiated rigorous mobilisation of the peasantry in the Naxalbari areas since the early 1960s when the landowners of the Naxalbari region started large-scale eviction of sharecroppers.

The CPI-M Darjeeling district committee started to organize the peasants on a militant footing after the United Front Government was formed. The Naxalite movement spread rapidly in many parts of the country, protracted arm resistance, declaration of liberated areas, killing and arrest became a regular phenomena in the agrarian society of West Bengal. By the end of June 1967 the CPI-M leadership came out against the Naxalbari leaders, calling them 'an organized anti-party group advocating an adventuristic line of action'. Nineteen members were then expelled from the party. The rift was complete. Moving through the stages of the Naxalbari Peasant's Struggle Aid Committee and a Coordination Committee, the CPI-ML was finally formed in May 1969 by the organized militant groups (Chatterjee 1998).

Political and Social Impacts of Peasant Movements.

The impact of such a diverse nature peasants movements is obviously difficult to determine. However the peasant movements did reveal the anti landlord tendencies of the peasants. The peasant movements in the 1930s and 1940s combined these anti landlord sentiments with that of colonialism which enabled the peasant's to assert themselves politically and political consciousness grew. Their political demands of abolishing the zamindari system, providing security of tenure and fixing of rents taken up a part of the land reforms programme of the Indian government.

Though there were significant achievements, it cannot be said that these movement were able initiate to revolutionary changes in the society, as was the case in Russia and in China. In Russian Revolution (1917) and even more so in the Chinese Revolution peasants along with the workers, played a leading role to bring about revolutionary changes in the society. This was perceptibly in Indian peasant movements except for the eglantine movement.

The reasons for the restricted role of the, peasantry can be attributed to a number of reasons. One of the most common weaknesses of peasant movements was the increasing differentiation in among the peasantry and the zamindars. The introduction of the zamindari and the ryotwari land tenure systems had lead to increased sub infatuation and growth of intermediaries. Pauperization increased as consequence of the indebtness of the peasants.

Frequently peasants in difficult circumstances lost their land and joined the category of landless labourers. Therefore several categories of peasants emerged, all of whom were no doubt adversely affected by the situation. At the same time they also had varied interests. Leadership at the higher levels often rested with outsiders who belonged to the urban middle class and their values and perceptions were opposed to radical ideology and more suited to advocating middle peasants' interests. Often the interests of the landless labourers and smaller tenants got sidelined in the process.

The zamindar class also experienced differentiation. The rich zamindars and the moneylenders were the biggest beneficiaries of the system. But the smaller zamindars often were the losers. Many of these zamindars joined the peasant organizations to further their sectional interests. Later on they joined the national movement.

Their presence in these bodies prevented the radicalization of these bodies and as a result objectives of these bodies were moderates in nature, they were unable to advocate radical programmes of land distribution elimination of landlords etc. Peasant movements especially in the eighteen, nineteen and early twentieth century generally were local in nature covering a limited area. Leadership was also drawn from the nearby areas. They had limited or no exposure to the struggles of peasants or workers outside their regions. This prevented them from developing inter-regional cooperation with similar groups to form larger and more powerfully coalitions.

The issues that were taken up by the movements were also topical and most times related to the immediate rise in revenue rates, illegal levies and forced evictions. The peasants responded to these extremely unfavorable conditions and revolted against it. Once the issue was resolved either by government action or by a compromise with the landlords, they would go back to their work and not put forth more demands. Organizationally too the movement came at an end and no follow up steps were initiated to build on a peasant organization for day to day functioning.

The All Kisan Sabha was the first organization that attempted to represent peasants of the country. It also built up an organizational network which would continuous work during the times when the movement was dormant and inactive. These activities were indeed

needed to prepare the participants ideologically and organizationally. It is only when these tasks are done during the dormant phase that, the movement can subsequently be launched in an effective manner. This crucial organizational element was missing in the early peasant movements.

Another important aspect was the lack of political consciousness among the peasants. It did not mean that they were unaware about their exploitation and their exploiters but they could not develop the critical consciousness needed to bring about social transformation. The prominent Marxist historian, E.J. Hobsbawm wrote about the pre-political and political populations. Among the pre-political people there is a near absence of political and organizational consciousness. Pre-political people were unable to find the language to express their aspirations about the world around them. These conditions can produce only spontaneous and short lived agitations. Social banditry was a form of revolt of the pre-political populations. Both these forms of revolt accomplish little with regard to social transformation. Hobsbawm's contention has been contested by other historians. Ranajit Guha terms Hobsbawm's classifications as being Eurocentric and not of much use to explain the Indian situation. According to Guha ('1983) the exploitation of peasant was political rather than purely economic. The basis of this exploitation was the landlord's position in the subordinate-superior relationship with the peasants was established and supported by the colonial state and legitimized by the traditional culture. Hence the conditions in which the peasant's movement can be termed political. Guha further describes the nature of these peasant revolts (and tribal revolts) as using 'negation' or rejection of the role and identity prescribed to him by the powerful in society. Further the peasant also clearly understood the targets of their attack and adopted appropriate modes of protest. In most cases, peasants were guided by the value system which clearly distinguished 'right' and 'wrong'. They resisted only those measures which they felt were unjustified. Their use of violence was only in those conditions when the authorities or zamindars themselves used violence.

All these are evidences that there was no lack of critical consciousness among the peasants who very often knew what they wanted to achieve and how to achieve. Of course this did not mean that the peasant could rise above caste, religion and other social structures

of which he was part, but only that there was complete absence of political consciousness among the peasants.

Module IV

Development Programmes and Impact on Agrarian Social Structure.

4.1 Trade between Agriculture and Non Agriculture Resource Mobilisation

The economic laws of capitalism operate as inexorably in agriculture as in industry. With the development of the social division of labour, agricultural products are produced for sale and become commodities. Agriculture is transformed into a branch of the economy producing commodities. A fierce competitive struggle breaks out between the individual commodity producers, making most precarious the position of the small cultivator who possesses the least amount of land, implements and draught animals, The small producers are ruined *en masse* and thrown into the ranks of the proletariat. A considerable share of production is concentrated in the hands of the capitalist upper strata of the countryside. Two extreme groups develop there: on the one hand, poor peasants and farm-labourers, and, on the other, the rural bourgeoisie-capitalist farmers and the more or less bourgeoisified landlords who continue to exist. The middle peasantries occupy an intermediate position between these two groups. Agriculture lags considerably behind industry in the process of capitalist development. This applies not only to backward countries where the development of capitalism in agriculture is retarded by feudal survivals but also, in some measure, to the highly developed capitalist countries, One of the most important

reasons for this backwardness lies in the fact that part of the surplus-value which is created in the agricultural economy is appropriated by the parasitic class of landowners in the form of ground-rent.

4.2 Green Revolution and Class formation

Indian agricultural development can be looked at from two different perspectives: institutional and technological. The *institutional approach*, mainly typified by land reforms and changing agrarian relations, was the strategy adopted way back in the mid fifties. Land reforms, as an engine of agricultural development, registered limited success. Moreover, it was realized that in the absence of further scope for increasing the area under cultivation, advances in productivity remained the only means of stepping up food-grain production in the country. The problems of agriculture were highlighted by two consecutive bad monsoons in 1965-66 and 1966-67. There was a dramatic fall in output and several areas (such as Bihar) experienced near famine conditions. By 1960-61, imports accounted for a significant part of domestic food-grain consumption. Consequent upon the two bad harvests, imports accounted for nearly one-sixth of domestic production of food-grains.

By 1966, India was heavily dependent on food aid from USA, and this forced India to accept harsh terms for aid from USA and international multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. Many domestic economic policies were adjusted under this external pressure, including substantial devaluation of rupee in June 1966. The poor agricultural performance had also a negative impact on industry and the overall growth of the economy was affected adversely. This highlighted the urgency of an agricultural strategy, which could release a steady and growing market surplus of food-grains to meet the consumption demand and the demands of industry. The strategy that emerged as a response to this crisis was called the Green Revolution.

WHAT IS THE GREEN REVOLUTION?

The Green Revolution, which began in the mid 1960s is the name given to the first systematic attempt to increase agricultural production, particularly that of food-grains, in India and some other developing countries by applying new technologies of cultivation. It is based on “biochemical innovations” that include high yielding varieties, chemical fertilizers

and pesticides. There are three main components of this approach: a) An improved technology in the form of new high-yielding varieties (HYVs) of crops) A package of practices which consists of appropriate application of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation facilities which are necessary for the technology to be effective, and c) an overall strategy, which includes government policies for the provision and subsidy on inputs, remunerative prices for output and availability of credit. This has been the broad strategy for agricultural growth followed by India since the mid 1960s.

The Basic Strategy of the Green Revolution

The new policy towards agriculture, which began in the mid 1960s, was a departure from the earlier approach in a number of ways. The main features are summarized below:

a) The government policy was now oriented towards **changing the technical conditions of production** in agriculture rather than introducing land reforms and other changes in the property relations in the countryside. In so far as institutional changes were part of the policy, they were chiefly in the form of spread of state agricultural extension services in order to spread information and provide access to the new technology, establishment of **Agricultural Price Commission** (now known as Commission on Agricultural Costs and Prices, CACP) **in 1965**, establishment of **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** in the same year and efforts towards ensuring the availability of credit from institutional sources.

b) The new **technology consisted essentially of a package of inputs** and practices including seeds of high yielding varieties, which responded very favourably to fertilisers, irrigation and pesticides.

c) The emphasis was **primarily on increasing the output of food-grains** (especially wheat and rice). Other crops such as sugarcane, oilseeds, pulses, coarse cereals, jute and cotton were not a part of this policy.

d) Given the requirement of assured water supply, the new technology was introduced and employed successfully in areas *having irrigation facilities*. The strategy was, therefore, selective in approach. The focus was on selecting new areas with assured irrigation water or rainfall for the effective application of this package. This combined with the higher yield of

new wheat seeds in India, led to a regional concentration of the new HYV technology in the irrigated wheat-growing region of northwest India. This region, comprising the states of Punjab, Haryana and West Uttar Pradesh, became major success stories of the Green Revolution by early 1970s.

e) The new strategy also focused on increasing **marketed surplus of food-grains through price support and procurement operations**. It meant a focus on those groups of farmers who could produce surplus for sale, over and above their own consumption. Essentially, these were the larger and richer farmers, who had both resources and access to market, which encouraged them to adopt the HYV package.

Although the package itself was scale neutral (that is, yields did not vary with the size of the holding), there were two major forms of bias in favour of larger farmers: the need for irrigation and access to institutional credit which were more easily obtained by larger farmers. This bias was also to some extent a conscious policy choice by the government—a policy to favour faster growth in output with a view to attaining self-sufficiency in food-grain production. The government hoped that the effects of this growth would “trickle down” to the rest of the rural population, as against a policy in favour of greater equality within a slower growing agriculture. In other words, gains in productivity rather than better distribution of rural incomes were emphasised.

IMPLICATIONS OF GREEN REVOLUTION: SOME PROBLEM AREAS

A revolution of this magnitude was bound to create some problems of its own. Critics charged that the effects of the Green Revolution show an uneven spread leading to increased income inequality and environmental degradation. Some of these criticisms are valid and have been or still need to be addressed. Some of the important problems are discussed in the following sub-sections.

Uneven Spread

A large body of empirical literature suggests that the green revolution increased regional inequalities and adversely affected the poor farmers. It was found that better endowed areas and owners of large farms were the main adopters of the new technology

because of their better access to irrigation water, seeds, fertilisers and credit. The Revolution was also criticized for being crop-specific. On the one hand the rice-wheat system of cultivation made a spectacular growth, on the other pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals suffered from low productivity and poor production. With greater area coming under rice and wheat, these crops were pushed to marginal lands. The situation is reflected in the fact that the per capita availability of pulses has declined and a large quantity of edible oil is still imported.

Soil Nutrient Depletion and Imbalances

Diagnostic surveys conducted by regional agricultural universities and international agencies have shown that in recent years higher amounts of fertilizer need to be applied for getting the same level of yield as that achieved in the 1970s and early 1980s. Crops remove substantial quantity of major nutrients from soil, particularly, in high input intensive rice-wheat systems. It has been observed that with time agricultural practices in northwestern India have been removing more nutrients than the amount added externally through fertilizers. It is, therefore, not surprising that farmers would eventually need to apply higher amounts of nutrients per unit of yield. Further, it has been shown in long term experiments as well as at farmers' fields that soils are becoming deficient in Green Revolution.

A declining trend in available zinc content of soils has also been reported. This imbalance in soil nutrients has been attributed to be a major cause for the stagnation in the yield of rice and wheat. Awareness about balanced fertilization and efficient nutrient management would help ameliorate the situation.

Declining Total Factor Productivity

It was realised during the late 1980s that the rapid growth attained during the early years of the Green Revolution might not be sustainable in the long run. Total Factor Productivity (TFP), sometimes referred as multifactor productivity, is one of the widely used methods to quantify the sustainability of any system. It also measures economic efficiency. TFP can be defined as the rate of growth in quality adjusted output less the rate of growth of quality-adjusted inputs. It provides a measure of increase in output that is not accounted for by increase in the quantity of inputs. As an example, suppose we note that over a year the

agricultural output (e.g. rice-wheat cropping system) has grown by 4% while the inputs used in production (e.g. land, labour, seeds, fertilizers, etc.) have increased by 3.2%. The difference between the two (i.e. 0.8%) is labeled the Total Factor Productivity Growth. A declining trend in TFP growth is a sign of declining sustainability of system.

A recent study reports that during 1980s, 63 per cent of gross cropped area of the Indo-Gangetic plains showed moderate to high growth in TFP, which declined to 31% during the 1990s. On the other hand, 33 per cent of gross cropped area of the region showed either stagnant or negative growth in TFP during 1980s, which increased to 62 % during the 1990s. This requires corrective steps in the form of agricultural research, infrastructure development and policy interventions failing which there can be serious implication for the food security of the country.

Water Management Concerns

There are two sources of irrigation water in Green Revolution areas – canal water and groundwater. Excessive use of water in these areas is causing a gradual decline in the water table and also in the quality of water in many regions. Pumping water from deeper layers increases the total operational cost and thus decreases the profitability of growing rice and wheat. Another problem for water management, particularly in the trans-gangetic plains, is that of water logging. Due to excessive use of irrigation water and percolation from canals, distributaries and water-courses, water table has risen in some areas of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. This has led to soil salinity in these areas.

Pest Problems

A change in the spectrum of pests is possible with a change in agro-ecosystems such as that brought about by the intensification of the rice-wheat area of northwestern India. Green Revolution led to the cultivation of uniform artificially produced seed types replacing the enormously large range of local seed types, which were grown and flourished through centuries of evolution. The susceptibility of new varieties to insect-pests has become evident from a considerable rise in their attacks since 1980s. Among weeds, *phalaris minor* has spread considerably over time. There is growing recognition now that resistance to

herbicides has appeared in large areas under the rice-wheat sequence and that is a real threat to wheat production

Green Revolution: An Assessment

Overall, the Green Revolution is a major achievement for India, as it has provided an unprecedented level of food security. It represents the successful adaptation and transfer of the same scientific revolution in agriculture that the industrial countries had already appropriated for themselves. It has lifted a large number of poor people out of poverty and helped many non-poor people avoid the poverty and hunger they would have experienced had it not taken place. The largest benefits to the poor are mostly indirect, in the form of lower food prices, increased migration opportunities and greater employment in the rural non-farm economy.

The direct benefits to the poor through their own on farm adoption, greater agricultural employment and empowerment have been more mixed and depend heavily on local socio-economic conditions. In many cases inequalities between regions and classes that adopted Green Revolution technologies worsened, but in a number of other cases they did not. Also, it has given rise to many negative environmental issues that have yet to be addressed adequately. Indian agriculture is facing new challenges.

The potential of the Green Revolution varieties appears to have exhausted. The yield barriers have to be broken through research and development. A tempting option is developing and growing genetically modified (GM) crops or transgenic. They are said to give higher yields, be nutrient enriched and display greater immunity to pests. However, an objective scientific assessment of the claims made for GM crops is not yet complete. Once such claims, which are mainly made by multinational companies, are vetted, large-scale cultivation of such varieties may provide another opportunity. On the other hand, a large number of farmers have yet to adopt the existing yield increasing technologies. Extension access to such farmers should be ensured for wider acceptance of the existing technologies. The indirect benefits to the poor due to another technological breakthrough in agriculture are likely to be weaker in the future as globalisation and trade in agricultural commodities makes food prices less responsive to local production. Diversification in crop production, value-

addition and agribusiness development in the rural sector hold the key to livelihood security in rural areas. By building on the strengths of Green Revolution, while seeking to avoid its weaknesses, scientists and policy makers can take significant steps toward achieving sustainable food security in the country.

4.3 Technological development and its impact on agriculture

The benefits of the achievements in scientific and technological fields have, by and large, accrued only to limited groups, especially the urban-centered. Their trickle-down effect to the rural masses has been grossly inadequate. This disconcerting dualism is not only between the urban and rural sectors but is perceptible even within the rural sector. The benefits of new technologies are reaped primarily by the landed and rich in rural areas. The gravity of the situation is brought out even more by a number of studies which suggest that in a society marked by inequalities, technological changes often enlarge the same.

The potential of technology in improving the quality of life of the masses remains largely untapped. The task of effecting technological change in the rural areas is extremely complex. It requires a multi disciplinary approach which is sensitive to the actual needs of the rural community and attends to the reality of the rural scene. For instance, if renting out the land is more beneficial than cultivating it, then it would continue to be rented out. In such circumstances, neither the landlord nor the tenant is likely to invest in new technology and the rate of adoption of agricultural innovations remains low, as is argued to be the case in India. Ground level realities such as these must be borne in mind when planning for development and the use of S & T for the same. Also, development and transfer of scientific and technological solutions should be based upon an objective assessment of what is actually needed by the people. For success in the diffusion and adoption of technology, active participation of the target population in the definition of its needs is important.

In decades of development endeavor, a large number of schemes and projects have been, and are being, tried out in rural areas. Almost all of them suffer from the defect of being 'imposed from above' and hence do not have sustained impact. To promote the acceptance and application of science and technology inputs it is important to fully mobilise public participation at the grass roots level. In such a case, the members of the target

population take a greater interest in the improved technology being offered to them. They know that their previous knowledge and experience is not a waste and that what is being offered to them is based on their choices and decisions.

Mobilisation of people's participation cannot be done only through the district level official machinery like the District Rural Development Agency, for instance. Revitalisation and involvement of popular local democratic institutions like Zilla Parishads and Gram Panchayats as also the various voluntary organisations based in rural areas is a must. A continuous feedback from these would help in evaluating technologies that are sought to be extended and in identifying areas for new research and innovation.

A part from involving agencies, it would be desirable to have more of our young scientists and technologists take up rural development work. Talking of voluntary action, it would be worth mentioning the name of CAPART - Council for Advancement of people's Action and Rural Technology, which is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Agriculture. The objectives of Capart include (i) to strengthen and promote voluntary efforts in rural development with focus on injecting new technological inputs, and (ii) to act as a catalyst for development of technology appropriate for rural areas, by identifying and funding research and development efforts and pilot projects by different agencies and institutions, particularly voluntary organisations.

A close link between research and extension is necessary. Research scientists are required to be aware of the problems at the field level through feedback received either directly from the farmers or indirectly via the extension agencies. In practice, the researchers get little feedback and as a result, the research work often goes on without being in harmony with the conditions and requirements of the target population. It is important that the new technology is extensively field tested before being introduced so as to detect any operational field - level problems which can be tackled before introducing the technology. This is, however, generally not done. For instance, studies indicate that many high-yielding varieties of seeds that were introduced could not establish themselves in the different agro climatic environment and soil conditions in the various regions of our country.

The need of the hour is developing 'appropriate technology'. There is no consensus on the meaning of this term. However it is generally agreed that appropriate technology should; be labour intensive (capital saving) involve maximum utilisation of local resources.

use renewable sources of energy and materials which can be recycled. have minimum destructive impact on the environment be adaptable to local socio-economic and cultural conditions.

be comprehensible, accessible and easy to maintain.

In today's world of rapidly developing sophisticated technology the term appropriate technology is sometimes misunderstood to mean some kind of second rate technology. This is not so, rural technology would not be taken to mean primitive technology of yesterday. A determined effort is needed to take modern science and technology to the rural areas so that is brought well within the material, financial and skill resources of the rural people.

The other side of the picture is the need for diffusion and adoption of the relevant technologies that have been developed. Development of technology is of little use unless it is transferred to the target group. The use of improved methodology and equipment has to be communicated to the people and they have to be motivated to replace their traditional ways and means by these. Thus, for greater application of Science & Technology in rural areas, we need not only effect a breakthrough in research and a package of improved technology, but also (i) supportive infrastructure to assist the target group in adopting the technology, and (ii) extension services through a pool of trained manpower that is thoroughly acquainted with the village conditions on one hand and latest technology on the other.

Technological advancement has had an effect on the agrarian relations. Introduction of irrigation, seed technology, high yielding varieties, green revolution, introduction of chemical fertilizers in the place of organic fertilizers, introduction of tractors and tillers in the place of bullock carts etc. has helped in the growth of agrarian capitalism in different countries.

4.4 New economic Policy and its impact on emerging agrarian Social Structure.

Welfare measures and change in life

Economic Reforms Process: Since July, 1991 the country has taken a series of measures to structure the economy and improve the balance of payments position. The New economic Policy (NEP-1991) introduced changes in the areas of trade policies, financial policies, fiscal & budgetary policies, and pricing & institutional reforms. The salient features of NEP-1991 are (i) liberalization (internal and external), (ii) extending privatization, (iii) redirecting scarce Public Sector Resources to Areas where the private sector is unlikely to enter, (iv) globalization of economy, and (v) market friendly state. Research reports reveal that this macro-economic adjustment programme is remarkable for its relatively painless transition compared with similar programmes elsewhere and a large part of the credit for absorption of these shocks is due to the steady increase in agricultural production. The GATT agreement signed in 1995 will fundamentally change the global trade picture in agricultural sector.

Impact of Economic Reforms Process on Indian Agricultural Sector

Agricultural sector is the mainstay of the rural Indian economy around which socio-economic privileges and deprivations revolve, and any change in its structure is likely to have a corresponding impact on the existing pattern of social equality. No strategy of economic reform can succeed without sustained and broad based agricultural development, which is critical for

- raising living standards,
- alleviating poverty,
- assuring food security,
- generating buoyant market for expansion of industry and services, and
- making substantial contribution to the national economic growth.

Studies also show that the economic liberalization and reforms process have impacted on agricultural and rural sectors very much.

According to Bhalla, of the three sectors of economy in India, the tertiary sector has

diversified the fastest, the secondary sector the second fastest, while the primary sector, taken as whole, has scarcely diversified at all. Since agriculture continues to be a tradable sector, this economic liberalization and reform policy has far reaching effects on (i) agricultural exports and imports, (ii) investment in new technologies and on rural infrastructure (iii) patterns of agricultural growth, (iv) agriculture income and employment, (v) agricultural prices and (vi) food security [Bhalla93]. Reduction in Commercial Bank credit to agriculture, in lieu of this reforms process and recommendations of Khusrao Committee and Narasingham Committee, might lead to a fall in farm investment and impaired agricultural growth [Panda96]. Infrastructure development requires public expenditure which is getting affected due to the new policies of fiscal compression. Liberalization of agriculture and open market operations will enhance competition in "resource use" and "marketing of agricultural production", which will force the small and marginal farmers (who constitute 76.3% of total farmers) to resort to "distress sale" and seek for off-farm employment for supplementing income.

Marginalisation of Small farmers

A central issue in Agricultural Development is the necessity to increase productivity, employment, and income of poor segments of the agricultural population. Among the rural poor, the small farmers constitute a sizeable portion in the developing countries. Studies by FAO have shown that small farms constitute between 60-70% of total farms in developing countries and contribute around 30-35% to total agricultural output.

Liberalisation era (1990-91) began in India when over 40% of rural households were landless or near landless, and over 96% of the owned holdings and 68.53% (over 2/3rd) of owned land belonged to the size groups (marginal, small and semi-medium). The decade of 1981-82 to 1991-92 seems to have witnessed a marked intensification of the marginalization process - the percentage of small owners increased from 14.70% to 21.75%. Small farmers emerged as the size group with the largest share of 33.97% in the total land, which is just doubled during this decade. As regards the Large Farmers, they were 1 % of the total owners in 1990-91 but owned nearly 13.83% of the total land. An interesting, but speculative, inference is that the changing position of the large owners represents the other side of the

marginalization process, i.e., the presence, and possibly growing strength, of a small but dominant and influential group in agriculture. Analytical reports reveal that marginalisation process could gather further momentum in the years ahead to become an explosive source of economic and political turbulence, due to the features of prevailing policy-cum-market environment in the country.

Trend towards a greater casualisation (erratic and low-paid work) of the workforce that was witnessed in the 1980s appears to have continued in the 1990s. Low productivity and inability to absorb the growing labour force make the agricultural sector in India witness to a pervasive process of marginalisation of rural people. This process is likely to get intensified in the coming years, raising formidable problems in achieving sustained development of rural areas and rural people [VMRao&Hanumappa99]. Information Technology, Genetic Engineering and Bio-Technology, which are the "drivers" of globalisation with their complementarities of liberalisation, privatisation and tighter Intellectual Properties Rights, are bound to create new risks of marginalisation and vulnerability. Information Technology is able to produce a penetrating and clinical mapping of the land, encompassing the physical, chemical and biological features, and groundwater resources, and forecast of climatic conditions in a focused manner, that even small geographical segments - the small farms - can be benefited through the guidance provided by the ways in which natural and human resources can be optimally combined with appropriate technologies, inputs and options to enhance and diversify agricultural production. Information Technology will facilitate dissemination of information on development, education, extension, husbandry, marketing, production, and research, to agricultural farmers.

Indian Agricultural Sector

The Indian Agricultural sector provides employment to about 65% of the labour force, accounts for 27% of GDP, contributes 21% of total exports, and raw materials to several industries. The Livestock sector contributes an estimated 8.4 % to the country GDP and 35.85 % of the agricultural output. India is the seventh largest producer of fish in the world and ranks second in the production of inland fish. Fish production has increased from

0.75 million tons in 1950-51 to 5.14 million tons in 1996-97, a cumulative growth rate of 4.2% per annum, which has been the fastest of any item in the food sector, except potatoes, eggs and poultry meat.

The future growth in agriculture must come from:

- new technologies which are not only "cost effective" but also "in conformity" with natural climatic regime of the country;
 - technologies relevant to rain-fed areas specifically;
 - continued genetic improvements for better seeds and yields;
 - data improvements for better research, better results, and sustainable planning;
 - bridging the gap between knowledge and practice; and
 - Judicious land use resource surveys, efficient management practices and sustainable use of natural resources.
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