PREFACE

The task of the present work "Peasant Movements and the Left" 1926-51 is to examine critically the various peasant movements and the role of Left during the period 1926-51. These two dates are important as in December 1925, the Communist Party of India (one of the major constituent of the Left) was formed, and the peasant unrest acquired a clearer and sharper, social and economic content. Similarly, the year 1951 marked the change in the nature of peasant movements. Earlier the peasantry had a two fold programmes: One against the colonial regime and another against social opponents under condition of Capitalist development and technological change. The country got independence, but the forces ànimical to the interest of peasants are still strong and great inequalities exists in levels of living, perennial indebtedness, poverty and social status.

In India, social scientists of diverse intellectual persuasions have increasing turned their attention towards the study of peasant movements. This question of the peasant movements have been analyzed from different parameters of class, role of different agrarian classes, role of different political parties, emphasizing the social questions, ideologies in different period. Recently the peasant question has been discussed by many a eminent scholars
such as D.N Dhanagare, “Peasant Movements in India (1920-50 Oxford)” Ashok Majumdar, “Peasant protest in Indian Politics (1931-41),” David Hardiman, “Peasant Nationalist of Gujarat (1917-34)” Sunil Sen, “Peasant Movements in India (Calcutta, 1982),” Kapil Kumar, “Peasant in Revolt (1886-1922)” Sukhbir Chaudhary, “Peasantry and Workers Movement in India (Delhi 1977),” Shive Kumar, “Peasantry and the Indian National Movement 1919-33 (Meerut),” Ranjit Guha, “Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in India (Delhi 1983),” and Arvind Das, Agrarian Movements in India, 1982, but there is no work where the role of Left has been studied in detail. Keeping this in mind, we have taken this problem for our research.

Working on the peasant question, it seems the scholars generally agreed that the Indian Left’s main pre-occupation was the vanguard role of the proletariat on the Indian political scene. The agrarian question was largely neglected though it was always conceded that the agrarian movements whether of Ghandhian frame or that of Communist provided much of the latent social energy not for national movement but also after the political independence from the colonial rule. The question still remains whether independence meant any fundamental change in the life of lower groups of peasantry. The problem related to the food, land to the tiller, tenancy issues remain a source of turbulence and disruption. The indebtedness, poverty and social discontent
of the peasants results in the desperate outburst of violence. Their mobilisation for struggle is frowned upon. It is in this context, the role of Left on the peasant question becomes very significant. The Left's struggle, tactics, programmes as also its responses during this period has been studied. Theoretical and analytical issues have been raised to highlight the contributions of Left for the struggling peasantry of India.

In 1920 a Left-wing group developed on the Indian scene which contributed to the radicalization of the ongoing national movement. The Left group leading the peasant as the 'class' had shaken the mass at grassroot level and mobilise them about their just demands and power. Thus, awakened peasantry later showed its progressive role in the peasant movements. The present work attempts to find the character of the various peasant movements, the nature of feudal exploitation, role and potential of various peasant strata of peasantry and the impact of Left ideology in these movements. How and up to what extent the Left Channelise the energies of the rural peasantry and what were points which hampered their programme and which provided an impetus to their efforts.

This work is divided in to six chapters. The first chapter deals with various of aspects like formulation of definition of "peasant" by taking views of different socialscientists, model of peasant classification, analysis of
revolutionary potential among various stratas of peasantry, nature of various peasant movements before 1926, role played by the Indian National Congress in these movements. It also deals with the gradual progress in the genesis of Left in India and affiliation of the Indian Left movement with International Left movement and finally, the position of peasants who remain ignored and exploited.

The second chapter deals with the origin of term “Left”, various constituents of Left such as the Communist Party of India, Congress Socialist Party, Workers’ and Peasants’ Party, All India Kisan Sabha etc., definition of Communism and Socialism, tactics adopted by various countries to achieve these systems, composition of various Left groups, their ideology, programme and tactics. It also describes views of Left historians, contribution, compulsions and weaknesses of the Left movement.

The third chapter describes the Bardoli movement in Gujarat, Awadh peasant movement in U.P and no-tax campaign in the various other provinces. In the description of these above movements the emphasis is laid on origin, causes, environment, social and economic conditions, role of Indian National Congress which led these movement, lukewarm response and justification of the Left political parties. In this period the Left was in embryonic form. There was no disciplined cadre and concrete programme. It was suffering
from ideological predilections

The present work attempts to find the character of the various peasant movements, the nature of feudal exploitation, role and potential of various stratas of peasantry and the impact of the Left ideology these movements, How and up to what extent the Left channelise the energies of the rural peasantry and what were the points which hampered their programme and which provided an impetus to their efforts.

The forth chapter deals with Consolidation of the Left parties, rise of their organization “The All India Kisan Sabha”, composition and genesis of other parties like the Congres Socialist Party, Andhra Provincial Ryot Association led by N.G. Ranga. It also describes various peasant movements led by the All India Kisan Sabha in provinces like Bihar, Andhra, Punjab and Bengal, the role of other political parties causes of these movements, including organization ideology, tactics and programmes.

The fifth chapter deals with the famous post war ascendancy of Left and the peasant movements such as Tebhaga, Tqjangana, and the movement in princely states of Punjab. It describes causes of these movements, organization, programme and tactics of All India Kisan Sabha led by the Communist Party of India, role played by the various agricultural classes and various political parties. Since this period marked the ascendancy of the Left,
the peasants were fighting both against the oppressive feudalists and the imperialist foreign domination. However, the movement was crushed by the army of Independent India. It also analysed complete domination of Communist Party of India over these movements.

The chapters sixth deals with the concluding remarks comprising an assessment of the role of Left in this period of 1926-51 in various peasant movements. This chapter deals with the question like character of the peasantry, success or failure of the Left in this whole period and their compulsions under which they were working.

In this research work the following hypothesis are tested.

In the present research work following hypothesis are tested. First, the Indian Left was a fragmented lot. Diverse ideologies from utopian socialism to communism were clubed together. Consequently, the Left was sunk deep in the ideological quagmire and suffered heavily from it for a number of years. Secondly, the Communist Party of India, the leaders of the Left had a troubled beginning. It was either an appendix of International Communism or it was defected mainly by the Communists located in London. Consequently, it could not develop its own mind. Its program were dictated by the outsiders whose understanding of the Indian situation was faulty, poor and unrealistic. Thirdly, the Indian Left was preoccupied with problems of the hegemony of
the proletariat in the bourgeois revolution. It took it for granted that the
peasant masses mainly the poor peasants must work in the harmony with the
proletariat. Only the peasantry should prepare the ground for the socialist
dictatorship of the proletariat. Fourthly, the hidden manifestation of this
thesis was the subordinate role for the peasantry on the Indian scene. It led to
Left-sectarianism, a monster no less than the right reformism.