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The history of mankind is a history of unending struggle to attain higher forms of life - to develop forces of production and to change correspondingly the production relations. Being a part of the nature, the human beings have been struggling to control and conquer it so as to suit them better. On the other hand they waged struggles to end the unequal social relations that existed and to establish a better social order. These struggles always correspond to the stage of the development of a particular society - its land, agriculture, industry and trade, the nature of the ownership of the means of production and the degree of economic and social oppression. Thus, the toiling people on land played an important role in such struggles in Asia and Africa, Europe and America to break the shackles of slavery, feudalism and capitalism.

In the specific context of India, its history is replete in both the medieval and modern periods with agrarian protests, revolts, agitations and struggles including some large scale militant and
armed struggles involving lakhs of peasants and labourers lasting for years in which several hundreds of them gave up their lives in the cause of social revolution. The peasants—who own agricultural tools and employ family labour on the land they own—and the wage labourers—who live primarily on wages from agricultural work irrespective of the fact whether they own a plot of land or not in modern India moved against the British encroachment of their rights on land, enhancement of revenue rates, statutory landlordism, and for more wages and land and for responsible democratic system of government. Their movement continued even after independence for the development of agriculture, for the betterment of their living conditions and ending the monopoly on land. These struggles not only changed the patterns of agrarian relations but also brought important changes in the political structure.

The agrarian question remains important in India not merely because India's economy is predominently agricultural—it absorbs nearly three-fourths of the country's working force and nearly 40 per cent of the net national product is derived
from agricultural sector - but because the social and economic oppression is widespread in the countryside and millions of people are ready to struggle for revolutionary changes in social relations. It is also important because the entire progress of the country is hinged on the correct and urgent solutions to the agrarian question as the agriculture cannot be developed if the substantial sections of rural population is impoverished and deprived of the land and the industrialisation of the country get impeded if the rural poor cannot buy a minimum quantity of manufactured goods. The agrarian question becomes all the more important because of the semi-feudal, semi-capitalist nature of Indian agriculture in which the development of capitalism-though slow and halted it may be - only further enriches a few without any substantial improvement in the living conditions of the landless agricultural labourers and poor peasants. This semi-feudal, semi-capitalist nature of the Indian rural society, this transitional stage, makes certain classes of peasants and the mass of labourers revolutionary because under feudalism as such the subdued and submissive peasants
were mostly unable to think of a struggle against
the feudal lord or the king to promote their rights
and under capitalism it is only a conflict bet-
ween capital and labour. The Indian ruling classes
face serious limitations to develop agriculture
completely on capitalist lines, despite their
efforts, due to several factors—firstly taking
the size of the country and magnitude of the agrarian
problem they do not possess required industrial
base or capital accumulation; secondly, it is at a
stage of world development when the capitalist order
is in a crisis, thirdly, the kind of land ownership
pattern that exists in India which include millions
of small land owners, imposes certain limitations
for the development of capitalism and fourthly such
a process, wherever proceeding, would only increase
the class of wage workers and poor peasants. The
revolutionary role of certain peasant classes and
the agricultural labourers, therefore, gains pre-
dominance in solving the agricultural problems of
this country.

It is in this light the present study of agrar-
rian movements in coastal Andhra region is taken up
having in mind that the studies on the concrete
agrarian movements in different parts of the country would help us in arriving at a more useful understanding regarding the trends in and nature and form of agrarian movements in the past, present and future. However, no concrete study of a specific movement can be done in an isolated way, because to explain even a single event one has to do it with an understanding of the broader economic, social and political framework; it rather becomes explaining the whole through the specific.

Though the agrarian movement in this area is more than a century old and important agitations and struggles were organised under the leadership of the Congress, Communists and the peasants and labourers' organisations, the researchers in social sciences had not paid adequate attention to study the changes in agrarian relations during the British rule and after, the perception and the role of the Congress and Communists, the pattern of these movements and factors behind them, the classes that participated, the ideology, leadership and functioning of these organisations, the factors for the decline of the agrarian movement in this region.
Though several significant agrarian struggles were waged, Congress agrarian campaigns were conducted in the early 20s, peasant associations formed much before their formation at the all-India level, agricultural labourers' organisation was formed on class basis for the first time in India, though this region was once considered to be the strongest fort of the Communists, so far no comprehensive study has been done on agrarian movements in Andhra. The present study is confined to the period 1921-1971, the two years having been chosen as cut points only for convenience but not without any significance in the sense that it was in 1921 the peasants of this region were mobilised in an organised manner to fight against the revenue burden and by the year 1971 the struggle of the girijan peasants in Srikakulam district was totally crushed by the State and the 'Maoist' theories regarding agrarian revolution ended in a fiasco. This is not a study of any particular movement, but looks at the agrarian movement as a continuous process - in a continuum - as a series of campaigns, agitations, and struggles inter-connected and as a result of the earlier developments and changes. It includes the three major sections of the rural population - the peasants, agricultural labourers, and the giri-
jans - whose struggles were led by different political forces at different periods.

The whole study is organised into seven chapters. Certain questions are sought to be answered. The first and second chapters deal with the changes in agrarian relations which came in Andhra during the British rule: What were the effects of the ryotwadi and the Zamindari systems, better irrigation and transport facilities, emergence of private property rights in land and increased commodity production and accompanying with them the concentration of land? How rapidly was the old peasantry disintegrating into different classes of landlords, rich, middle and poor peasants and agricultural labourers? What were the main contradictions that had emerged in the agrarian class relations and how the conditions for the agrarian movement were prepared?

The third chapter deals with the peasant movement till 1936. How the agrarian problems were initially raised and political consciousness grew among the peasants - the beginning of the local level peasants' associations and the formation of the state-level
associations. How the issues like reduction of revenue and water cess, and rights on land and reduction of rent were given the political shape and content against colonialism and feudalism; how the political parties and leaders articulated the peasants' aspirations, their attitudes towards the latter, the emergence of political leadership from the rich peasantry, and the process of creating a base among different sections of the peasantry on the lines of traditional institutions and modern class interests. How the initial struggles were conducted? What was the reaction of the zamindars to the growing social awareness among the peasants and their unity and political movements.

The fourth chapter is about the peasants movement from 1937 to 1948, the period during which militant peasant struggles were waged. The questions raised are: What were the changes that came in the character of the agrarian movement in Andhra as a consequence of the Communists' entry? How the peasant movement developed in the ryotwari and zamindari areas and what were the major peasant struggles? Why they broke out only in some zamindaris, that too mostly during the periods of the Congress government (1937-
39 and 1946-48)? Which classes constituted the base of peasant movement? What were the major political trends in the peasant movement? What were the important methods of political education and propaganda in the peasant movement?

We discuss in the next chapter the peasant movement in the post-independence period till the split in the Ryots' organisation: What were the issues on which the Ryots' Associations conducted campaigns and agitations and what was the understanding underlining such agitations upon irrigation facilities, remunerative process, additional taxes, and land reforms (fixation of ceilings)? What were the consequences of the new political system, of Congress agrarian legislation and certain other measures, its repression of the Ryots' Association, its propaganda on the agrarian movement? Why was the peasant movement constantly receded in Anhra—was it because of the failure of the Communists to give a correct class orientation to the whole movement and to evolve new-strategies in the changed realities and give a new shape to the peasant movement? How they understood and reacted to Congress agrarian policies? How the organisations functioned and what were the weaknesses in the organisation?
The sixth chapter deals with agricultural labourers' movement before and after independence. The questions asked are: what were the different trends in the organisation of the agricultural labourers - the approaches of the Congress and Communist leaders? Why the labourers' movement became strong in the initial years in 1930s and what were the issues - wages and land? Why the movement deteriorated in the post-independence period - was it because that the class struggles were not conducted seriously on the fundamental questions of abolition of landlordism of all varieties and wages or because the agrarian movement was itself peasant based? What was the state of organisational functioning?

A study of the tribal peasant movement (1960-1971) in the Sriiskulam region is made in the last chapter. In this examine the process of disintegration of the primitive and communal mode of production among the tribals and the deprivation of their rights on the soil under the colonial rule ending independent India, leading to worsened conditions
of life: How the Congress leaders and later the Communists mobilised them to break the domination and oppression of the landlords, moneylenders and merchants and how they were able to raise the political and class consciousness among the tribals through the Girijan Sanghams? Finally, we analyse the programme and actions of the Naxalites and how the movement was transformed into one of guerilla armed warfare ultimately ending in the liquidation of the mass movement of the Girijan peasants.

There are certain limitations to such a study of agrarian movements of the peasants, agricultural workers and the girijans led by the Congress, Communists and the Naxalites in a period of fifty years spanning over the pre-independence and post-independence periods. Some inadequacies and gaps may be found due to the fact that it is the first time an attempt is made at a comprehensive study of the agrarian movements in this region.