CHAPTER TWO

From Grain to Gain

Changing Culture of Agriculture in India

Agriculture has played a pivotal role in the progress of human civilization. In fact it is very fundamental to the emergence of human society and culture. 'Agriculture, wrote David Ludden (1998) very perceptively, 'is civilization at work on the land, humanizing nature and naturalizing the powers that human societies exert upon nature'. Before terms like agribusiness and agrimarketing gained currency, the idea of gain, profit making and surplus-motives were remote to the culture of agriculture. Traditional agricultural environment and its universe were woven into religion, caste, deities, symbols and values. Lands, seeds and humans were not so much units of production as elements of larger religio-cultural universe. Culture of agriculture displayed sharp dichotomized spaces of the sacred and the profane. Use of agricultural produce for grain and trading was considered sinful, ploughing of field by women was considered part of profanity and while some grains could be indispensable part of religious rituals, others were strictly prohibited.

What is interesting, however, is that traditional societies in the past everywhere have shown similar inclinations. As Adam Smith wrote, 'in ancient Egypt every man was bound by a principle of religion to follow the occupation of his father and was supposed to commit the most horrible sacrilege if he changes it for another.' The idea of gain, the idea that each man not only but should constantly strive to better his material lot is an idea which was quite
foreign to the great lower and middle strata of Egyptian, Greek, Roman and medieval culture, only scattered through renaissance and reformation times and largely absent in the majority of Eastern civilization. In the middle ages, for example, the church taught that 'no Christian ought to be a merchant and behind that dictum lay the thought the merchants were disturbing yeast in the heaven of society.' Not only is the idea of gain by no means as universal and ancient as we sometimes suppose, but the social sanction to the notion of profit and gain is even more modern and a recent development. In Shakespeare's time the object of life for the ordinary citizen, for everybody in fact, except the gentility was not to advance his station in life but to maintain it. Even to our pilgrim forefathers, the idea that gain might be a tolerable-even a useful- goal in life would have appeared as nothing sort of doctrine of the devil (Heilbroner, 1967). The central argument here is that the idea of profit was not as much a pursuit diffused throughout the society earlier as much as it developed in modern times. Heilbroner rightly observes:

Wealth, of course, there has always been and covetousness is at least as old as the Biblical tales. But there is a vast deal of difference between the envy inspired by the wealth of a few mighty personages and a general struggle for wealth diffused throughout society. Merchant adventurers have existed as far back as Phoenician sailors, and can be seen all through history, in the speculators of Rome, the trading Venetians, the Hanseatic league, and the great Portuguese and Spanish voyages who sought a route to the Indies and
to their personal fortunes. But the adventures of a few are far different things from an entire society moved by the venture spirit (ibid: 13).

Hence the idea of ‘making out a living’ or ‘profit-making’ is a rather modern concept. All civilizations show this common early characteristic where economic life and social life was one and the same thing. Markets, trade, exchange – all this existed even prior to the arrival of the phase of industrial capitalism but the market system of the kind that is fuelled predominantly by the rational-economic logic of profit making was clearly a new concept. All societies to begin with were guided by its customs and traditions. Heilbroner’s understanding of ‘land’ in a pre-modern situation, for instance, as a factor of production is quite interesting and contextual:

Take, for example, land. As late as the fourteenth or fifteenth century there was no land, at least in the modern sense of freely saleable, rent-producing property. There were lands, of course- estates, manors and principalities- but these were emphatically not real estate to be bought and sold as the occasion warranted. Such lands formed the core of social life, provided the basis for prestige and status…. (ibid: 16).

In other words, the idea of business and profit making or gain was not just quiet alien but also socially illegitimate in most of the traditional societies. Catholic churches’ annoyance with the trading or business activities is legendary. The Church of Rome had always regarded the merchant with a dubious eye and had not hesitated to call usury a sin. Similarly if the
agriculture was the most primary civilization occupation, the idea of gain was certainly the most foreign concept here too. References in the ancient texts about land, seeds and human labor have been deeply enmeshed in religio-sacred environment. In Indian contexts the universe of agriculture has traditionally been more of a religious domain with every process and even equipments carrying sacred connotations. Agrarian relations and the factors such as land, seed and human labor have been found to be intimately linked and embedded in to the larger religio-cultural contexts and rituals and thus being a very defining part of the normative structure of the society. It perhaps explains why grains or a crop is treated with so much reverence. Grains and the whole complex of prescriptions and proscriptions attached to it, especially in terms of its use and the notions of purity and impurity reflects the true configuration of a caste society based on the idea of social distancing. Seeds, therefore, as a product of agricultural realm is as much a social product. There is plethora of studies available noting the normative inter linkages of the domain of agriculture and the elements such as eating and cooking to the larger societal culture (Douglas 1966; Khare 1976; Vatuk 1978). These studies essentially underline that food is not a neutral object within Indian culture. Food, for instance, is perceived to be having more than nutritive qualities as it lays the foundation of both the physical and moral fiber of an individual (Belliappa and Kaushik 1978). Similarly there are references about satvik and tamsik food mainly highlighting the causation between the kind of food one eats and its resultant qualitative impact on the personality of an individual (Vasavi 1994, 1999; Daniel 1984). In similar vein, land has been likened to ‘mother nature’, as a woman and notions and cycles of reproductive
behavior patterns in human beings mark the nomenclature of agrarian discourse and its harvesting patterns. Radhika chopra provides a glimpse of this interlocking between culture and agriculture from her work in rural Panjab: Upturning of the first furrow was undertaken by married men; the Punjabi term form cultivator is *khasam*, which is also the term for husband, and it would perhaps be more accurate to translate the term *khasam*, when used in the context of agriculture, as husbandsman. It is the husbandsman who parted the earth (*cheer*: furrow; as well as the verb for making furrows or partings), with the ploughshare (*phala*), paying particular attention to the first field, the *lari*, also a term for a bride. *Phalayee* was the term for the copulation of cows and buffaloes and it is related to the word phalanx, the organs of generation which propagate *phal* or fruit (Chopra 1994: 85).

The mediating role of agriculture between the man and nature is clearly manifested through these analogies to reproduction. Chopra further writes:

> Just as the bullock plough or tractor was driven by the husbandsman, the seed was also sown by men. The term for seed, *bi* was also the word for spermatozoa and it was clearly the task of the husbandsman. The ploughing of the at least the first field, the *lari*, and the sowing of the *bi* by the husbandsman acquired their meaning when juxtaposed with the prohibitions upon those prevented from performing these tasks—women and bachelors (ibid, 85).

The primacy given to the staple diet and cereals for internal household consumption, in contrast with the crops meant to be market and money

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oriented is another representation of how the idea of profit and gain are construed as violative of religio-sacred arrangement between the nature and man. Instances of certain crops considered impure and inauspicious by virtue of the fact that they were grown primarily for market further corroborate the thesis that agriculture in its pure sense remained largely averse to the instinct of profit making. The simultaneity of the rhythm of agricultural cycle to the pattern of socio-cultural and religious calendar has been well documented (Srinivas 1976; Chopra 1994, Vasavi 1999) and it is another significant occasion where the organic and symbiotic relationship between agronomic domains with the larger socio-cultural universe is on display.

The understanding about grain was informed not merely in terms of its physical qualities of weight, form or color, but also in terms of the quality of the future and the potential of prosperity inherent in it. Pierre Bourdieu also observes similar trend in his study of an Algerian peasant community where he finds a link between the significance of staple grains and the quality of future prosperity they evoke (Bourdieu 1963; Chopra 1994). The manner in which, for instance, potato which is a cash crop in Panjab is treated in a non-sacred manner; in sharp contrast to the food crop like wheat which is surrounded with whole lot of rituals from field to home only establish the position that market is clearly considered the domain of profane. Reactions towards hybrid seeds, for example, articulate similar sentiments of aversion towards technology, market and profit-orientation in a traditional agricultural universe. Vasavi’s ethnographic work from Bijapur in Karnataka highlights this orientation:
'Just as associations were made between strength and dry or organic grains, and between weakness and wet grains, the evaluation of hybrid seeds is extended to both the physical and moral effects of consuming them. Noting that hybrid seeds are delicate, susceptible to disease, and need expensive chemical and technical inputs, village residents, especially those of the older generation, refer, to the current period as 'hybrid period' (hybred kala) and to themselves as 'hybrid people' (hybred mandl). Unlike the sturdy organic (Javan) seeds, they are like the hybrid seeds that they now sow—'delicate (sukshme), diseased (rogi) and needing constant attention' as one woman put it' (Vasavi 1999: 121).

It is therefore amply demonstrated that the traditional agricultural universe has a strong notion of sacrality associated with its elements and processes. The idea of purity and sacredness is eminently pronounced. The paramount idea was that life on earth was only a trying preamble to life eternal and the business pursuit was neither encouraged nor did it find spontaneous nourishment. Manusmriti, for example, has many such references which describe how even in the worst of crisis a Brahmin or a Kshatriya was not supposed to trade in food. This, according to the text, would demean their status in the society and would mean committing such a sinful offence that they will be reborn as worms after their death to eat dog's shit. Any surplus or amassing of food was considered sinful and inappropriate and it was advised to be given to the needy. 
The above discussion clearly shows the overwhelming and intimate proximity between the universe of agriculture and the culture of a society. Most prominently it shows unambiguous social proscription for the idea of gain and profit making. Agriculture was considered more of a cultural and social activity rather than a purely economic enterprise. Representations of its activities, tools and nomenclature about land, labor, seed and crops sufficiently display its organic interconnections with the community life and its cultural context. Land, for instance, has always been seen as a status symbol; something representing family’s honor. Hence, buying and selling of land in traditional agronomic discourse was always an occasion with intense emotional quotient symbolizing the vicissitudes of fortunes in cultural and social terms more than its implications in terms of pure economic transaction and exchange. Land was living, organic and a social capital (Bolle 1969; Srinivas 1976; Bhattacharya 1976; Vasavi 1999). Similarly attitude and response towards seeds, especially hybrid ones, has been skeptical. The farmers carry forward these understandings from one generation to another. There is distinct bias and inclination for ‘natural’, ‘old’ and ‘consumption-orientation’ as they are perceived to be morally rich and correct as per societal norms.

In fact the idea of village has a considerable antiquity in Indian civilization which has been underlined, for instance, by the historian Niharranjan Ray who emphasized the high value attached to it in the Dharamshastras (Ray 1973). The setting of high religio-moral embeddedness for agriculture has further added to the myth about India’s villages. As Beteille (1980) rightly points out:
the point to bear in mind is that the importance of the village within Indian civilization is to be understood not simply demographic but also in normative terms. The village was not merely a place where people lived; it has a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilization (p: 108).

Hence, traditional culture of agriculture continues to determine the contemporary internal dynamics of changes in village India. Especially the agriculture-technology-market interface becomes a crucial juncture of the interplay between contesting forces. Most interesting however, is the way the idea of village India has been perceived and academically projected since colonial times. It can be argued that such background has conditioned not just the dominant academic view about villages in India but also post independence the government’s policies towards village transformation and thus to agriculture has been influenced by a particular kind of status-quoist view which pandered to the idyllic, self-sustained construction of image of an Indian village and life. It would not be inappropriate to argue that the religious-ritual background of agriculture and the idea of an Indian village as a self sustained entity fed and complemented on each other at least at the level of ideation.

The Indian village: From Colonial Exotica to Reality

Indian villages have been projected essentially as an idyllic locale with overdose of harmony, isolation and romanticisation. It came across as a landscape which is self-reliant, self sustained and insulated from the outer
bad world, meaning urban society and culture. Early colonial literature is where it all started. The idea of 'little republic' became popular. Sir Charles Metcalfe described Indian villages in 1810 as 'self contained little republics', while Sir Thomas Munro saw them as 'mini republics'. The emphasis was clearly on the static, timeless and the obdurately unchanging nature of these villages. The late 19th century saw the works by scholars such as Sir Henry Maine and B.H.Baden Powell who also stressed upon the unity and harmony of village life (see O' Malley 1934/75; Cohn 1968). Around that time many other attempts of collecting data and generating reports from the countryside by the colonial administration were on. All of them however continued to highlight the idea of self sufficiency and the immutability of the villages in India. As according to Ronald Inden the colonial administration saw the village as the atom of Indian civilization, no less (Inden 1990: 131).

The notion of 'little republics' had clearly gained currency in the colonial literature which perpetuated the myth of Indian villages as unchanging and static among the western scholarship and the arm chair anthropologists. The first influential account of the Indian village appeared in the celebrated Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East Indian Cy (1812). The report read as follows:

Under this simple form of municipal government, the inhabitants of the country have lived from time immemorial. The boundaries of the village have been but seldom altered; and though the village s themselves have been sometimes injured and even desolated by war, famine and disease, the same name , the same limits, the same interests and even
the same families, have continued for ages. The inhabitants gave themselves no trouble about the breaking up and divisions of kingdom; while the village remains entire, they care not to what power if it is transferred or to what sovereign it develops, its internal economy remains unchanged. (Fifth Report, 1812, pp. 84-5)

Similarly Karl Marx, for instance, believed:

'... these idyllic village communities ... had always been the solid foundation of oriental despotism... they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetuation of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no consideration bestowed upon them than that of natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who designed to notice it all... we must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and slavery, that they subjected man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self developing social state in to never changing natural destiny' (1853 a: 94).
Louis Dumont has traced the authorship of the Fifth Report to none other than Sir Thomas Munro. Infact many believed both Marx and Munro to be largely responsible for the oversimplification and misconceptions about the Indian village. According to Dumont, 'although Marx and Maine are poles apart in other respects, they come together retrospectively as the two foremost writers who have drawn the Indian village community in to the circle of world history.

In keeping with contemporary- Victorian- evolutionary ideas and preoccupations, both saw in it a remnant or survival from what Maine called "the infancy of society" (1966, p.80). Also it fitted in the then dominant academic thinking about the unilinearity of the idea of social evolution and change as articulated in various theories of modernization. In process there emerged a picturesque image of a landscape which existed as tiny and politically autonomous little republics with no private ownership of land and no economic inequality and exploitation whatsoever. Most importantly it was pristine and morally unadulterated, quite in contrast to the harsh, immoral and the bad world of urban life.

Other than these two views there were other reports, such as the statistical survey of the country by Francis Buchanan in the 1810s which was spread over several years and many volumes. But 'such reports and others before and after continued to eulogize the idea of self sufficiency and immutability of the village. Such a narrow view did tend to ignore other significant issues, such as the greatly unequal, weakened, and unstable character of the rural economy' (Madan 2002: 6). The later works by Green (1852), Pannikar (1992), Dhanagre (1991) etc. on the occurrences of the peasant turmoils or
unrest in the late nineteenth century interrogated the homogeneous, unproblematic and harmonious viewpoint about the villages of India.

Gradually more realistic and balanced studies on the villages of India started coming up, especially post independence which questioned the existing 'little republic' image. The works by Hutton (1951/1963), O'Malley (1934) etc. provided the initiative in the background of increasing significance of ethnographic tradition courtesy A.R.Radcliffe Brown etc. bringing about thereby a shift in the study of village studies in India. These works were not 'hit and run raids into the countryside' as Thorner (1976) would call it; rather they were participatory and first-hand studies.

M.N.Srinivas, for instance, found these adjectives about the Indian villages such as 'self-sufficient' and 'little republics' mere myths. He wrote:

'A closer view of the village will, however reveal several loopholes in self-sufficiency. Even a basic commodity like salt was not produced in most villages, and many spices also came from outside. Iron, indispensable for ploughs and other agricultural equipments, was not available everywhere, and iron-smelting was a localized industry. Sugarcane was not grown in all villages and it was the biggest source of jaggery, widely used by peasantry... weekly markets are a feature of rural India everywhere and they are a traditional institution. They dramatize the economic interdependence of villages and provide conclusive refutation to the idea of economic self sufficiency. In is indeed surprising their
existence has been ignored by most writers'. (Srinivas 1987, as quoted in Madan, Vandana 2002, p: 65)

He further wrote;

'Individual villages, it is clear, are far from self-sufficient economically. It may be added that socially and religiously, also villages were anything but self-sufficient. Caste ties stretched across villages, and in a great part of northern India the concept of village exogamy, and the existence of hyper gamy on a village basis, constitute an advertisement for inter-village interdependence. The partiality of peasants for pilgrimages and fairs also highlights the fact that the Indian village was always a part of wider network' (ibid, p: 67).

More studies on caste and other features of Indian villages highlighted the shortcomings in colonial scholarships and their projections about Indian villages. Cohn (1968) rightly pointed out that colonial research stopped at the boundaries of villages instead of penetrating in to the domains of everyday life. Inden also felt, 'scholars have depicted the Indian village as the archetypical peasant community... an organic solidarity composed of collective actors and a specialized but closed economy of subsistence exchanges' (1990: 4-5).

Studies such as by Beidelman (1959), for example, established that the much celebrated jajamani system and the harmony of village India and its inter-caste relationship networks were simply exaggerated and distant from the
reality. Then M.N. Srinivas's idea of dominant caste came which further questioned the romantic portrayal of village India. Bose (1991), Bandhopadhyaya and von Eschen (1991), Harriss (1982), Sahay (2001) and others highlighted the agrarian tension and asymmetrical distribution of power in villages. Far from the idyllic and utopian image of the village as a landscape of peace, harmony and undivided community solidarity, the village India gradually emerged out of its false representation as a cocoon. Yet the image of Indian village as an unadulterated, pristine and all-good place lingered on for a long time.

Gandhi's constant invocation of Indian villages in terms of *gram swaraj* and *grammodhdhar* had the distinct echo of its colonial legacy. The Gandhian notion of national upliftment and development had the strong urge to centralize villages in the scheme of economic planning. Gandhi was of the view that the freedom struggle would be meaningless unless the rural masses that lived in abject poverty were to benefit from the efforts to build a new India. As Anthony Parel puts it:

'No Indian thinker had a better grasp of the truth that swaraj would mean little for India if the lives of poor in the villages saw no significant improvement. ...In a country so overpopulated and so heavily dependent on agriculture, the villages had the key to economic and political development' (1997: xii).

His concern for the villages, notwithstanding, it tended to, however, become a bit utopian and moralistic. It showed signs of mollycoddling the old colonial image of villages as republics, as self-sustainable and self reliant entities.
Gandhi though was aware of some of the shortcomings of the village life but he nurtured and articulated his dream of returning the villages to its pristine and authentic existence.

Gandhi's position, however, did not remain uncontested. B.R. Ambedkar was of the view that Indian village was nothing but a 'cesspool of factionalism and den of iniquity'. Similarly peasant leaders such as Swami Sahjananda Saraswati brought forth the harshness of village life where the landlords plundered poor peasants and lived off the fat of the land (Rasul 1974). More recently Alok Bhalla and Peter Bumke wrote about the villages as place with '...a life mired in customs which carry the stink of ages' (1992: 9).

As the focus of socio-anthropological work shifted from 'book view' to 'field view', to use Srinivas's phraseology and newer and more nuanced and detailed studies on villages from across the country started pouring in picture became clearer; many myths stood unraveled and the aura of romance started evaporating from around the depiction of Indian villages. Studies by Milton Singer and McKim Marriott in the 50s and the latter's conceptualizations of the process of Universalisation (elements of village culture being incorporated into a wider regional and even larger society) and Parochialisation (cultural elements of a pan-Indian culture filtering down to the village level ) established the inter penetrations between the rural and the outer world. Hosts of studies showing not so closed village India with porous boundaries mediated to the outside world through caste based interdependence and social relationship networks came forth questioning further the myth of an Indian village as an island insulated from all sides (see Dube 1955; Bailey 1957; Mayer 1960; Pradhan 1966; Chakravarti 1975 etc).
M.N. Srinivas's study of the coorgs (1952) and later A.M. Shah and I.P. Desai's work (1988) further reinforced the argument about interconnectivity among various social groups and locales within the village and without.

Thus the transition, from the days when firstly the colonial administrators and then armchair 'anthropologists started digging and collecting exotic details about the villages in India enamored by its myths, magic and rituals to professional social anthropologists with serious intent engaged in participatory field work with the objective of bringing about a more real and differentiated understanding, brought about some kind of a balance in the perspective.

Yet the fixation with the caste continued for a long time. Beteille, for example, felt that the shadow of caste loomed large over most of the village studies of the 1960s (Beteille 1969). Inden also believed that caste created an impression of the village being just an economic and living space (Inden 1990). The works by Louis Dumont and David Pocock emphasizing caste as defining feature of Indian villages also contributed to a large extent in the kind of lopsidedness that affected the understanding about the villages of India.

Both Dumont and Pocock believed that it was caste which was sociologically real while the village was only an architectural and demographic entity. They in fact argued against the conception of community for the villages as they felt it was far too non-egalitarian. This view was later contested by Srinivas as he wrote, 'the argument that only 'equalitarian' societies can have local communities has to be proved, and can not be the starting point for evaluating hierarchical societies. Nor can an implicit assumption that 'equalitarian' communities do not have significant differences in property, income and status be accepted as a 'sociological reality' (Srinivas 1987: pp. 20-59).
However with increasing village studies, post independence focus shifted from caste to class to some extent and Srinivas's concept of sanskritisation and other works by Beteille (1965), Bailey (1963), Gough (1989) etc articulated other economic and political dynamics of the village India leading to a more reasoned and closer-to-reality understanding. These studies for the first time perhaps introduced the idea of change in study of villages of India which was so far considered static and obdurately unchanging.

It is interesting here to briefly recall the journey of the portrayal of Indian villages as reflected in popular Hindi cinema. Early 50s and 60s typically depicted the cities as place of opportunities, of mobility through all means not necessarily all of it being morally sanctioned, of vices and vested interests. In contrast the villages were shown as pockets of deprivation but with high moral quotient; a more morally correct world. And a protagonist migrant from a village will always be shown with a deep urge to return back to its roots. A deviant character will always tend to wear city-friendly aura around, indulging in drinking, smoking and gambling. Not that these vices were not there in the villages but they quintessentially represented the urban for some inexplicable reasons. For city was the 'bad other' for the good and pristine village.

Even in the much celebrated film 'Upkar' of Manoj kumar, the younger brother, the role played by Prem chopra, is a deviant and a villainous character, just because he prefers leaving the village in favor of the comfort of a city life. The central character from the film, the elder brother, the role played by Manoj kumar to earn the sobriquet Bharat kumar in years to come, illuminates in film precisely on its village centric diatribe laced with hi dose of patriotic fervour. It is all the more interesting how patriotism is linked to pro-
rural dispositions. The underlining thesis was that a true and a patriot Indian was essentially a ruralite. No wonder this link was sensed by many political personalities and leaders very early and accordingly they fashioned themselves in their projection as a mass leader by cultivating their pro-village image.

In contrast a city was portrayed as a place of greedy, avaricious moneylenders, underground activities, black money, profit-orientation and immoral activities. City was seen as manufactured, artificial and primarily distorted entity in contrast to village as natural, pure and immaculate. These dominant perceptions, though clearly not honest to real situation, were so powerful in the imagination of the people that for a long time, especially up to 80s, they were favorite themes of the film makers. Much of Amitabh Bachchan's popularity, for instance, owes to this anti-city bias. Gandhi, for instance, thought of cities and its dwellers as primarily responsible for the backwardness of the villages and as Barrington Moore (1966: 376) rightly commented, 'as is usually the case with backward-looking idealization of peasant life, Gandhi's love of the village had anti-urban and even anti-capitalist overtones'.

What is important here to underline is that despite hosts of substantial and balanced studies on the villages of India, the image of a village as idyllic little landscape proved to be the most powerful and indelible. It is because of this impression of an extremely cohesive community bound by mechanical solidarity, to use Durkheim's phraseology, the development attempts to uplift the social and economic standards of the villages after independence shows distinct thrust on 'collectivity' and 'homogeneity' and almost none or marginal
emphasis on individuals as actors of social change. In other words the focus was on institutions such as caste, communities etc. rather than on individuals and their possibilities and potential. This despite sociologist like S.C.Dube (1958) had underlined and cautioned about the role of the individuals, such as village level worker (VLW), in successful implementation of rural development schemes. Although here again individual is essentially part of an institutional network, as a village level worker. Secondly villages were seen to be stable, static and fixed entities waiting to be explored and interfered and hence there was clear unilateral invasion of ideas without much consideration of the local cultural and value orientation (Nair 1961, Kurien 1997, Vasavi 1999). It is little wonder that the early developmental paradigm of trickle-down variety was in a sense deeply influenced by these dominant preconceptions about the villages of India that prevailed from Metcalfe and Maine to Gandhi. Beteille observes,

‘at the time of independence there was perhaps some hope that Indian villages, battered for two hundred years by the forces released by colonial domination, could be reconstituted in to peasant communities of a sort. Land reforms, co-operatives, community development were all thought of as possible means to that end. These and other means have been tried in the three decades after independence but there is little indication of the village acquiring the kind of social homogeneity that is typical of the peasant village. The basic mistake lay probably in the assumption that the typical Indian village ever was a community of peasants’ (Beteille 1980: 117).
It is important as well as intriguing to ponder that in the entire corpus of literature and studies on villages of India; there is marginal talk in the form of some passing references or rather complete silence on the issue of individual entrepreneurship. Villages come across as boats in which its inhabitants were made to look destined to swim or sink together. There was no third possibility of individual emancipation. Rather it would be apt to argue that the subject did not find much favor among the academia which was far too busy analyzing things from a spectacle of dichotomies and water tight compartments. After all mobility was a dominant theme of the cities and individual was the exclusive unit of urban landscape. Rural was all about collectivity, status quo and caste and kinship networks. Though lately, interest in village ethnographies with individual at the centre has found currency. Ann Gold's study (1988) of pilgrimage in a Rajasthan village, for example, tries to understand the phenomenon by following an individual villager's journey beyond the village boundary for religious fulfillment.

Moreover, post independence the concern for food security loomed large especially in the background of a hoary past replete with famines and successive droughts and hence the entire thrust of village economy veered around production of staple diets of wheat and rice to feed the country's burgeoning population. It would not be wrong to argue that the onus of this 'moral task' of feeding the population fell on the villages of India which responded with as much enthusiasm as the responsibility had the age-old religious resonance which considered feeding the hungry as the ultimate act of good deed or karma/punya. M.N. Srinivas, for instance, in his book 'The Remembered Village (1976: 102)' underlines this element of visceral
determinism (if they did not grow the food how could anyone do his work) that the primacy of agriculture among the villagers was derived from the primacy of food. The agriculturists in his field did admit that the smiths performed a useful if not essential service but they were convinced that ‘no work was as important as agriculture’. The usual refrain of the common villagers would be that everyone was kept alive as a result of their efforts but there was little appreciation of this obvious fact among the city dwellers. Understandably the slogan ‘jai jawan, jai kisan’ given by the then Prime minister of India Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri captured the mood of the time and became one of the most popular political slogans in the years and decades that followed. In a recent Handbook on agriculture (2007) published by the oxford university press the editor of the volume Shovan Ray while introducing the theme writes on the role of agriculture:

While these cultural, social and environmental effects are leaving their indelible marks, many good things are happening too. Agricultural growth is reducing poverty locally and, though their external effects, in many other parts of the country and these external effects may be considerable. Food and nutritional security in the society could, and indeed did, improve dramatically as a result of agricultural development and these are far ranging in their effects. The Punjab and U.P. farmers may be producing rice, wheat and sugarcane for their earnings, but these also feed the hungry in the poor regions of central and eastern India- in Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar (p:2).
It does not seem to be intended yet the echo and the imprint of that moral responsibility and thus a rationale to feed the hungry is unmistakably apparent in the paragraph. The fact of the matter is that the pockets of green revolution, which were encouraged in its early phase and celebrated later on for a long time as bread basket etc., as in the case of Panjab, continued to bask in the glory of this much vaunted projection as a grain feeder or provider for the whole country. The states like Panjab prided themselves on these sobriquets and Panjabiyat was primarily defined by its greenery, great enterprising farmers and successful agriculture. Indeed the Punjabis for a long time wore the tag of ‘agriculturist par excellence’ up their sleeves with much pride.

Understandably since the Green Revolution was India’s first intense and intimate encounter with the modern farming with the technology-assisted planned model for increased food production, there was obvious euphoria about its success. It had major contribution in making India move from a severely deficit to a food surplus state. Sadly amidst all this bonhomie what was glossed over was a ‘sense of balance’ which in hindsight proved to be counterproductive making the entire experiment unsustainable given its ever rising tally of negative consequences after more than three decades. The severe lack of balance as far as the implementation of green revolution was concerned is amply reflected in the table below which also demonstrates the extent of possibilities had the experiment been broad based:
### Achievable Targets by Bridging Yield Gaps through available Technologies under irrigated conditions (based on National Demonstrations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Current Area 2003-04 (,000 ha)</th>
<th>Current yield gap t/ha</th>
<th>Additional production Possible (000t)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.P.</td>
<td>8418.0</td>
<td>1.346</td>
<td>11330.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.P.</td>
<td>2831.8</td>
<td>2.071</td>
<td>5864.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>2103.1</td>
<td>1.646</td>
<td>3461.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>1483.0</td>
<td>1.196</td>
<td>1773.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>2303.0</td>
<td>0.581</td>
<td>1338.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>660.7</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>471.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>581.1</td>
<td>0.656</td>
<td>380.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>97.0</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>96.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>3444.0</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>24800.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yojana, April 2008

This is besides hosts of criticisms relating to it being anti-poor, pro-gentleman farmers, too capital intensive etc. The environmentalists and the Gandhian have been the most livid:

> The strategy of the Green Revolution was aimed at transcending scarcity and creating abundance. Yet it put new demands on scarce renewable resources and generated new demands for non-renewable resources. The green revolution technology requires heavy investment in fertilizers, pesticides, seed, water and energy. Intensive agriculture generated severe ecological destruction, and created new kinds of scarcity and vulnerability, and new
levels of inefficiency in resource use. Instead of transcending the limits put by natural endowments of land and water, the Green Revolution introduced new constraints agriculture by wasting and destroying land, water resources, and crop diversity (Vandana Shiva 1991:46).

Shiva adds:

Having destroyed nature’s mechanism for controlling pests through the destruction of diversity, the ‘miracle’ seeds of the Green Revolution became mechanisms for breeding new pests and creating new diseases. The treadmill of breeding new varieties runs incessantly as ecologically vulnerable varieties create new pests and diseases. The only miracle that seems to have been achieved by the green revolution is the creation of new pests and diseases and with them the ever increasing demand for pesticides. Yet the new costs of new pests and poisonous pesticides were never counted as part of the ‘miracle’ of the new seeds that modern plant breeders had gifted the world in the name of increasing ‘food security’ (ibid, 98).

These observations and positions have been, however, found by many to be too moralistic and romanticized takes on an issue which deserves a more pragmatic treatment instead of a wooly minded nostalgic activism around it. Meera Nanda, for example, while developing a strong critique of ecofeminism of Vandana Shiva argues:
While I am not unsympathetic to the problems of soil erosion, salination, and loss of diversity that the ecofeminists have raised, I don’t think these problems are ‘inherent’ in the nature of modern science or technology, and neither do I believe that these problems have been created, ab initio, by the new technology. Environmental problems, like anything else, have a history and must be understood historically (Nanda 2004: 242-43).

Nanda in fact provides some hard-nosed counterpoints:

If the history of deforestation and soil erosion is kept firmly in the background, it becomes totally unjustified to hold the green revolution alone accountable for India’s ecological crisis. In fact it becomes reasonable to think that the yield-increasing, land-saving nature of the Green Revolution has reduced the pressure to put more land under the plough....The ecofeminists complaints of chemicalisation of agriculture are similarly overblown and abstracted out of the totality. That fertilizers and pesticides are often misused and over applied is true, but it is not something that can not be corrected through proper training and extension services (ibid, 243).

The bottom-line is that the experiment of Green Revolution was lopsided and had regional bias which, as it appears now, did not help either the areas where it was implemented or the regions who remained untouched by it. It can be safely argued that this imbalance because of the inability in replicating or broad basing the success, of say in Panjab, to other equally agriculture-friendly regions of the country and its resultant multilayered negative

Socio-Cultural Dimensions of Agribusiness Practices in Selected Villages of the Terai Region of Uttarakhand 49
consequences thereof, has exposed the failure on the part of the policy makers and planners concerned with India's agricultural development. It is quite clear that the villages were dominantly used as producers to feed and sustain India's urban consumers. In the bargain, however, the villages got only lip services and tokenism that also of the kind which again harped on its purity of life, simplicity of its small haats and weekly mandis and annual village fair and similar such stereotypes, meaning nothing in substantial terms.

The fate of the land reform measures and Community Development Programmes earlier in India bear testimony to this. 'But the general conclusion, wrote Barrington Moore, 'that about half the total area was held by less than an eighth of the agricultural population, is probably not misleading. Official agrarian policy has an equalitarian tinge that comes out more strongly in speeches than in results. This has been equally true of the Community Development Programme (Moore 1966: 392).'' Infact the whole emphasis on village panchayats and democratization in the early decades after independence was seen by many as an extension of romantic Gandhian nostalgia which only operated on papers:

In practice, the policy of the Community Development Programme has been to proceed very gingerly with any changes affecting rural social structure. In the beginning, official instructions to program officials in contact with the villagers made no mention of caste, property relationships, or surplus manpower in the village- in other words any of the real problems. I have come upon no signs of change on this score. Most of the attempt at changes was directed toward
reviving and reintroducing village democracy through the encouragement of village councils (panchayats)...

Fundamentally, the notion of village democracy is a piece of romantic Gandhian nostalgia that has no relevance to modern conditions. The premodern Indian village was as much a petty tyranny as a petty republic; certainly the modern one is such. To democratize the villages without altering property relationships is simply absurd (Moore 1966:393-4).

The available data on investment in agricultural infrastructure like roads, irrigation networks and market-interlink ages since independence tell the story. Shovan Ray seems to sympathize with these concerns:

We may also view the issues through a different set of lenses. It is for instance the case that huge sums of money have been invested over several decades to create food security in the country in a regionally unbalanced manner, though the priorities of resource allocation in the face of food shortage may have prompted this strategy somehow. However, this has created a powerful farm lobby which has been sheltered in a protected market to deliver on this promise. As a consequence of this, other parts of the country have not found the wherewithal to catch up with them and develop in a like manner (op.cit. p. 2).
AGRICULTURE TO AGribUSINESS:
The 1990s however was a watershed in the annals of India's economic history. The country followed the route of emerging global economic logic of opening up of the domestic economy. Consequently a new wave of initiative on production of export oriented cash crops such as flowers, grapes, cotton etc. purely for the purpose of money making picked up. The new regime brought the word 'agribusinesses' at the centre of agricultural development in India. With increasing global players eyeing the prospects of a huge market of seeds, technology etc in India the theme of agribusiness gained in currency. Infact it is interesting to note that the word found place in Indian sociological discourses primarily in the 90s. The words such as modern farming, commercialization of agriculture etc. were being used to denote the changes in traditional agriculture but somehow the word 'agribusiness' could not enter in to serious sociological literature till the beginning of the 90s. Even though in the advanced industrialized countries, especially in the United States, the word was in circulation for a long time to describe the changes and transition in the traditional agricultural universe towards a market oriented and profit driven cultivation.

Agribusiness is the sum total of all the operations involved in the manufacture and distribution of the farm supplies, production activities on the farm, storage, processing and distribution of farm commodities and items made from them. In the U.S. agribusiness signifies increasing interdependence of farmers and agriculture related industries. Agribusiness includes the manufacture and distribution of farm supplies, plus the processing, handling, merchandising, and marketing of food and agricultural products, plus farming
itself (Davis, 1956). Agribusiness therefore is much broader than farming. It also connotes conversion of a farmer from mainly a producer to a significant purchaser. Agribusiness, in other words, means increased significance and role of elements such as market, profit and business in the traditional domain of agriculture. The word agribusiness connotes the trends towards commercialization and profit orientation, away from traditional subsistence agriculture, much more powerfully. For a social anthropologist in the field the word agribusiness symbolizes a momentous departure for ‘culture’ in agriculture towards ‘businesses’. If culture and society evolved together, as Sociologists argue, the idea of society with some sort of stability, order and permanence coincided with the domestication of animals and production of food for its own survival and consumption on a more stable level in and around their habitation by the primitives. Justifiably agriculture carried the word culture as a suffix to denote their shared sense of origin and ancestry. As Ludden (1999: 19) rightly says, ‘agriculture is humanity sculpting the earth, designing habitats, making a landscape as a kind of architecture, and producing symbolic domains that form the spatial attributes of civilization.’

It seems, one reason why the word agribusiness did not find favor by the mainline sociology in India was perhaps because the transition here did not have the kind of scale and magnitude that was being observed in the U.S.A. in the 60s and 70s onwards or the peasants did not have the kind of interdependence with the large corporations in India. Also may be the dominant preoccupation of the academia to the ‘little republic’ image of Indian villages was the reason, which considered the word business replacing the sacred context of culture in agriculture to be too rupturous. It is indeed quite
surprising given that the quick anticipatory socialization to anything American became a fad in India much before the 90s. The hyphenated use by many, of the word business in agribusiness (agri-business) till today underlines that dilemma and lack of conviction in the idea. So powerful does seem the connection of culture in the word agriculture. Hence the transition from agriculture to agribusiness in India, given the society’s rather deep rooted religio-sacred cultural context and its strong inter-twining with agriculture, is an occasion which understandably spawns significant socio-cultural transformations. Conversely the process of transition toward agribusiness is conditioned to a great extent by the socio-cultural dimensions.

The opening up of the economy in the 1990s heralded a new era of growth and entrepreneurship in agriculture of India. ‘The national policy on seed development that was announced in 1988 seems to have inaugurated significant new trends in the globalization of Indian agriculture. This policy permitted entry of private enterprises in seed production and development thereby encouraging numerous private enterprises- both national and multinational- to launch ambitious plans in the production of seeds, horticulture, floriculture, poultry, animal husbandry and meat processing to cater to both domestic and foreign markets. Many internationally reputed agribusiness corporations including Cargill Seeds, Pioneer Overseas, Monsanto and Kentucky Fried Chicken have entered the Indian market either on their own or in joint ventures with Indian enterprises (Panini 1999: 2168)’. It also unleashed a new wave of collaboration between the traditional agriculturists and the big corporate houses. The export friendly regime encouraged this culture of tie-up. Multinationals such as PepsiCo, for instance entered into contract farming with the farmers of Panjab in the early 1990s in
chilli, tomato and potato cultivation and soon the result was multifold increase in the production. Just about the time when PepsiCo began its tomato-processing operations, the average Indian tomato yield, according to the National Horticulture Board’s 1991-92 statistics, was 10.3 tons per hectare compared with America’s 57.8 tons, Greece’s 50 tons and Spain’s 45.2 tons. The world’s average was 24 tons. Since Pepsi’s entry however the tomato yield shot up to three and a half times and the total production quadrupled in Punjab (SPAN, Oct/Nov 1996).

Punjab today is the hub of such collaborations and tie-ups and the state’s agri-based export-import networks has spread from the gulf to the European and American markets. A tiny village called Langrian in the district of Sangrur, Punjab, today, for instance, is known as ‘phullanwala pind’. The credit for bringing this nondescript village on the global map today goes to an entrepreneur floriculturist Mr. Avtar Singh Dhindsa with his flower crops spread over 800 acres in Panjab and Karnataka from where he exports 90 tonnes of exotic flower seeds - roughly half of India’s export-clocking an annual turnover of Rs 2.5 crore. His clients include 12 of 19 global flower seed giants in the US, Japan and Europe including the flower seed capital of Netherlands. Interestingly he has been able to not just compete but give tough time to its rivals such as heavily subsidized Chinese exporters by outsourcing seed production to 200 small and marginal farmers in the surrounding areas in and around village Langrian. That an acre of flower seed cultivation yields a return of Rs 30000 to 40000, compared to Rs 12000 from wheat- comes as a major motivating factor for many farmers with smaller land holdings but with higher entrepreneurial drives (India Today’s city magazine Simply Punjabi, April 2006).
This is not a one-off instance rather such stories of prosperity and success are in plenty. These stories are increasingly being reported and highlighted in the newspapers. Take for instance the case of Gurdaspur, another district in Punjab, which is known for its mango orchards. Individual farmers with support of ever willing villagers are now too eager to collaborate with the multinationals. Disillusioned with the lack of initiative from the government the villagers are now themselves planning to approach the multinationals. It has been reported that the American food-giant, McDonald has short listed Gurdaspur as a preferred site for a processing plant specializing in juice and jam. The company is planning an investment of Rs 100 crore to complement its sourcing activities in the local markets. And it won't be the first multinational company to tiptoe in to Gurdaspur. Over the past five years, Pepsi Foods, Hindustan Lever and Rallis have moved in, setting up partnership for processing and marketing of mango, litchi, basmati, mentha oil and aromatic plants (The Hindustan Times, HT CITY, June 8, 2008).

Understandably the pro-capital and zone-biases continue. For instance these collaborations have largely concentrated in the pockets mainly located in the old green revolution belts such as Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Yet big and not so big farmers even in some lesser known areas but with some history of commercial farming have shown positive response to the new regime and its thrust on cash-crop oriented agribusiness activities, such as in the case of farmers from the terai region of Uttaranchal. The present study documents the level of agribusiness currents in varying milieu which includes a vexatious range of farmers with land holding varying from 2-3 acres to 10 acres but with the common motive of maximizing their
earnings from the land. Two things are noteworthy here: one, the baffling range of peasants, though a minority, trying to take the route of innovation to uplift their economic standing and secondly the question as to why a majority, however, remain muted to these experiments? India, it is said, is a country of contrasts and paradoxes and this is in full view in the countryside if one wishes to have a glimpse of that coexistence of contradictions and enigma called rural India. Also it throws some fresh light on the subject of entrepreneurship in agriculture.

The issue of entrepreneurship in agriculture has been a well researched theme, especially in the US (see Barlett 1984, Rogers et al 1988). Indian peasants and their traditional normative settings have long been held responsible for the underproductivity in agriculture in India. Barrington Moore (1966), however, has attributed the problem of rural underproductivity in India to a host of factors, namely to 1. Parasitic land lordism 2. Exploitative regimes throughout from the Mogul to the colonial times 3. The surpluses generated from the agriculture were never spent on rural infrastructure unlike China and Japan 4. Caste system and the upper or the dominant caste monopoly over arable land depended on labor from the lower castes. Both the masters and the tillers were never interested in or motivated towards increasing the productivity 5. Complete insulation of the rural landscape from the modern market and business networks 6. The culture of submissiveness, of conformism as dictated by the caster prescriptions was an anathema to experimentation or change 7. Backward looking idealization of peasant life.

Moore actually warns against any tendency to psychologism. He comments in this regard are worth taking note of:
Before going any deeper, it is appropriate to warn once more against a certain kind of psychologism and acceptance of facts as they are—without really ascertaining why they are facts—in commenting on the absence of a stronger impulse toward change...it would be easy enough to pile up cases of innovation within the system to demonstrate the lack of this talent is not the problem. The people who have entrepreneurial ability are probably in a minority in any large group. The problem is one of releasing this talent and also of controlling it for larger social purposes. The creation of an appropriate situation to release it is in very broad terms a political problem (Moore 1966: 386).

Some of the benchmark researches and theories about peasant's responses to innovation and the entire process of diffusion of new ideas or objects in agriculture have been propounded as early as in the 1940s by the rural sociologists and anthropologists in the U.S. The prototype early diffusion study was the Bryce Ryan and Neal Gross (1943) investigation of the spread of hybrid seed corn among Iowa farmers. Ryan and Gross concluded that hybrid corn spread in the two Iowa communities as a kind of social snowball. They wrote: "There is no doubt that the behavior of one individual in an interacting population affects the behavior of his fellows. Thus the demonstrated success of hybrid seed on a few farms offers a changed situation to those who have not been so experimental. The very fact of acceptance by one or more farmers offers new stimulus to the remaining ones" (as quoted in Rogers et al 1988: 304). The two rural sociologists
intuitively sensed what later diffusion scholars were together more detailed evidence to prove: the heart of the diffusion process consists of people exchanging information and borrowing ideas.

Diffusion is the process through which 1. An innovation 2. is communicated through certain channels 3. Over time 4. among the members of a society. An innovation is an idea, practice, or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. A typical innovation-decision process has been identified as following these stages:

**Stages in the Innovation-Decision Process**

However there existed considerable debates on the issue of peasants' response to innovation. Schultz (1964) for instance articulated the growing opposition to the then entrenched argument that peasants were poor because of their conservatism and unwillingness to adopt new practices. For, Schultz, poverty did not imply inefficiency. It was Lipton (1968), however, who rephrased it in more realistic terms; farmers are reasonable, he clarified, but they can not always be efficient, given the uncertain nature of their world. This brought in the role of socio-cultural factors and other enabling conditions in the agricultural decision making. Cancian (1972), for example, has tried to
relate risk taking with rank position in a stratified society. He suggests that people are rank seeking creatures, whose economic and social acts vary systematically with their relative socio-economic status. Thus he argues that although the ability to bear risk increases with income and/or assets, upper-middle class farmers will be more averse to uncertainty than lower middle class farmers because they have more to lose in terms of rank. During the early stages of the introduction of an agricultural innovation to a given community, when local experience with the innovation is limited or non-existent, and therefore uncertainty is high, lower-middle class farmers are expected to adopt it more readily than upper-middle class farmers because they have less to lose should the innovation fail. As time passes, and farmers gain experience with the new crop or cultivation method, however, the rate of adoption among upper-middle class farmers should increase and even surpass that of lower middle-class farmers whose resources are more limited.

Similarly Nash (1965) makes the connection between behavior and an outlook that either emphasizes freedom of want or risk of success. Fogg (1965) illustrates the same point when discussing Ibo attitude toward innovation as reflecting cultural attitudes to failure: a farmer who tries a new technology and fails will lose a great deal of prestige in his community. Foster (1967) adds the suggestion that such an outlook may be rooted either in cultural visions or in the nature of activities pursued by peasants (e.g., potters are more conservative because low-profit margins encourages a cautious personality). Other social scientists have elaborated upon Atkinson’s (1966) work relating personality and motivation to avoid failure by outlining what they believe are
the institutional arrangements that have contributed to the development of certain personality characteristics. Rural sociologists examine risk aversion in the context of innovation and draw some general conclusion about institutional arrangements that foster certain risk averting strategies. Similar concerns are shared by Rogers when he suggests that the peasant’s subjective evaluation of the minimal bearable income level must and will change as he increases his motivation for gain. Such an attitudinal change will be affected by increments in return that are above the motivational threshold (Rogers and Shoemaker 1971: 143).

Based on some of the dominant views and understanding on the theme of peasant’s responses to innovation, especially in relation to his economic level, the following models have emerged (Billie R. Dewalt and Kathleen Dewalt 1984: 289-299):

**Model 1. The Homogeneity Model**

The simplest model of the relationship between economic position and adoption of new technology is advocated by those who see little or no variation in either of these variables. Much has been made in these studies of the conservative, non-changing character of peasants (e.g., Banfield 1958; Foster 1967; Rogers 1969). Peasants are thought to be poor candidates for adoption of new technology and ideas that will make them more modern. This model also presupposes socioeconomic homogeneity existing in peasant communities. Often anthropologists and others quote peasants who say 'we
all are equal here' as justification for presenting description of them as a relatively undifferentiated, non-stratified mass. On the basis of these it is possible to illustrate a model of the relationship between economic position and adoption of new cultural items as shown here:

![Diagram](image)

The single point indicates that peasants are homogeneously poor and, further, they are unwilling to change. On the basis of those peasant studies that have ignored intracultural and intrasocietal differences, however, this unrealistic theoretical stance appears to summarise their position.

It is believed that this kind of research has contributed unfortunately to the maintenance of stereotypes about what peasants are "really like". On the one hand, this position has led to a feeling that the most important changes needed are in the values, attitudes, and motivations of the peasant. Several major theories of socio-cultural change have reinforced such views (Kahl 1968; Lerner 1958; McClelland1961; Rogers 1969). Although there may be some credibility to these theories, they conveniently shift the burden to failure...
to modernize to the peasants, leaving the larger societal structure relatively free of criticism. A second unfortunate consequence of these stereotypes is that they provide a built in excuse for economic agents when their programmes fail.

**Model 2. The Linear Model**

This model asserts that within any community the wealthier individuals or families are likely to be first or principal adaptors of new technology. The following figure summarizes this view:

![The linear model](image)

In effect this model has greatest support in the literature as many studies of technological adoption are statistically oriented. The correlation coefficients presented in these studies express only the linear relationship between to variables. This view also has the most common sense support in the popular saying, ‘The rich get richer and the poor get poorer’.

**Model 3. The Middle-class Conservatism Model**

Homans (1961) on the basis of evidence from socio-psychological experiments hypothesized that people of very low status and people of very
high status were likely to be innovators or adopters of innovation. Though he did not directly apply his theory to peasants, he felt that low-status individuals of generally of low reputation and, therefore, easily could adopt behavior not in conformity with their groups. Upper class people have a secure position and have nothing to gain by conformity and also will be able to adopt behavior not 'normal' to the group. Only the middle class maintains close conformity to traditional or group behavior. Essentially this is a position that alleges the existence of middle class conservatism. This position can be diagrammed as follows:
Model 4. The Modified Middle-class conservatism model

This model is premised on the view with regard to the process of adoption of new technology as advanced by Cancian (1967). The Cancian model is very similar to the linear model with the addition of some of Homan's ideas about middle class conservatism. The most important feature of this model is that the upper-middle class is more unwilling to take risks than the lower middle class. Cancian interpreted this as signifying willingness to risk among the lower middle rank because of a greater desire for upward mobility in this economic group. The upper middle class rank on the other hand is unwilling to risk their relatively favorable socio-economic position by investing in new opportunities that may fail. Cancian model follows the linear model in regarding the lowest economic group as unable to invest in new opportunities, and therefore lowest in terms of adoption of new technology. The wealthiest individuals are, as in the linear and middle class conservatism model, regarded as the group most likely to adopt new cultural items because of their secure economic position.
In the background of these models it would be interesting to see how much do they correspond to the Indian scenario. Given the overwhelming mix of multiple conditions, both systemic and value orientation, Indian peasants do grapple with hosts of negative circumstances making it difficult to fit them in to any particular model. As Lipton, for instance, found that how in an Indian village, farmers did not adopt a yield-increasing innovation (contoor ploughing) although understood its value, because for purposes of inheritance, hillside land was held and cultivated in vertical rather than horizontal strips. The inheritance system served, as Lipton showed, to spread risks among inheriting sons.