Chapter-II
PEASANTRY AND STRATIFICATION:
THEORETICAL ISSUES

In colonial countries peasants alone are the evolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms (Fanon 1963: 48).

Peasantries and peasant societies are an inseparable part of the historical lineage of every society which moves from the pastoral economic and the sedentary life to the modern capitalist mode of production. Since the end of the pastoral life and the inception of the settled and the organized life by mankind to the present day, substantial periods of the history of the human population were dominated and depended on diverse form of peasant agricultural production. However, the pattern and the social organization of the agricultural production and the social relations which evolved out of it, differed from society to society and continent to continent. In spite of this fact, there existed a certain amount of homogeneity across the peasant societies in different parts of the globe in different historical epochs. Likewise, there also appeared to have evolved a pattern of social hierarchies including rituals, belief systems and cultural practices etc which had similarities across peasant communities in different part of the world.

Contending Perspectives on the Peasantry

The perspectives and approaches to theorising the peasant social realities, class stratification, mode of production and cultural practices etc. have had divergent and often contradictory views among scholars and which were the material reflection of the very nature of the peasantries and peasant social structures which differ within and across nations. Similarly, the studies on the latter also differ depending on the theoretical perspectives one employs. The Western liberal scholars who studied peasant societies from the vantage point of different social science disciplines provided divergent interpretations to the social realities of the peasant social structure and cultural practices. Although most of these Western literatures on peasant societies share the same methodological framework whether it is anthropology, sociology or political science yet they differs in their focuses as well as their findings. Nonetheless, due to their common methodological premises, most of these literatures attributed the lack of certain values and institutional practices followed by the Western societies and its structural roots in the way in which the West encounters its modernity as the
fundamental cause for the persistence of pre-capitalist and feudal practices within peasant societies.

The economic literature on peasant societies and diverse modes of production prevailing within those societies often attributed the lack of penetration of the capitalist mode of production and its corresponding institutional arrangements as its fundamental concern. The mainstream economic literature links the structural imbalances prevailing in these societies due to the persistence of pre-capitalist and feudal mode of production. Many of those literatures considered family or peasant households as the basic economic decision-making unit and the lack of choice for making rational choice and the underdeveloped nature of the rural market etc. as the crucial variables and the therefore the focus of attention, rather than on the political economic relations prevailing in the countryside. They hardly gave any attention to the agrarian class structure and the nature of internal differentiation prevailing among the peasant population and share many common concerns with the peasant essentialism of the populist and the neo-populist school (Warriner 1939; Chayanov 1996; Mitrany 1950).

Generally speaking, most of the studies of peasant societies cutting across the social science disciplines in one way or other borrowed, internalised and utilised the peasant essentialism premise of the Russian populist tradition (Lampert 1965). Populist tradition evolved in the specific socio-economic realities of 19th century Russia and transformed into a reference point for any study of the peasant societies irrespective of the perspectives one employs. Even the Marxian literature on peasant production and the social differentiation of the peasant classes emerged in response to the latter. Although Marx and Engels extensively referred to the peasant societies in their writings, yet they did not provide any specific theoretical focuses on the peasant societies. Most of their writings in reference to the peasant societies such as the Asiatic mode of production or the British colonial occupation in South Asia often generated a wide range of criticism both within Marxist framework as well as from mainstream scholars. In such a context, we would attempt to analyse the above perspectives in detail. Rather than narrate a detailed description of the peasant societies and all its complexities from the disciplinary boundaries of the dominant social science disciplines, herein we attempt to categorise the above views and perspectives in two major traditions within the peasant studies, namely the populist and the Marxian tradition. Many other major approaches and interpretations to the specific realities of the peasant societies are discussed in reference to either of these approaches.
The Populist Tradition and the Agrarian and Peasant Question

As mentioned elsewhere in the previous sections, the populist perspective on the peasant question was the product of the specificities of the social structure of 18th and 19th century Tsarist Russia and the pattern of feudal social relations which prevailed there along with its unique communal ownership in the land, etc which influenced and shaped the populist tradition (Shanin 1972, 1982; Mitrany 1950). The peculiar feature of the social formation which existed there still the Emancipation of the Serfs in the second half of 19th century was the entire agrarian production and social relations which evolved from it were shaped and determined by the village commune known as mir which prevailed in Russia for centuries.

As a direct outcome of these peculiar institutions in the imperial Russia, there were hardly any private property rights in land and the village commune was the sole authority which monitored and allocated the land to the families depending on the demographic strength and the composition of the family. The peculiar character of the imperial dynasty which ruled the country along with its own isolation from the West European pattern of modernisation prevented the penetration of any capitalist practices and values in society up to the emancipation of slaves in 1861. With the emancipation of the serfs which was necessitated by the increasing internal contradictions of the agrarian formation which prevailed in society for which centuries had seemed to be egalitarian, non-exploitative and less hierarchal due to the centrality of commune system. On the contrary, the concrete realities prevailing there show that in its concrete manifestation, it had created a large proportion of people as serfs and outcaste who were excluded from all forms of communal rights (Jerome 1966). This internal contradiction evolved from the very concrete manifestation of the village commune along with the penetration of the capitalist mode of production in agriculture forced the imperial regime to initiate the reform policies in the form of Emancipation of Serf in 1861.

The populist movement or the Narodinik movement as they were popularly known in Russia emerged in response to the changes taking place in the village commune. The initial propagators of the movement were the upper-middle class youth hailing from the elite and privileged class locations which lived and were educated in the imperial centres of Russia. For them, the problem encountered by the Russian society in that period was the direct outcome of the penetration of the capitalist mode of
production and the resultant marginalisation of the village commune. They argued that Russia's future lies in the communal village and moving back to the communal practices and traditions of the village was the sole solution to the agrarian crisis. According to them, Russian village communes were egalitarian and self-reliant and whatever differentiation existed there was the result of the demographic transition of the families rather the structural characteristics of the village commune. The fundamental tool to analyse the internal differentiation which prevailed among the peasantry were the demographic characteristics of the families and they mapped different stages of the demographic transition of a family in its life circle and attributed social differentiation to these demographic changes (Chayanov 1966). One of the noted characteristics of their argument was the notion of the peasant essentialism. They built their theory on the premises that the notion of the essentialist peasantry was characterised by lack of internal differentiation and being a peasant and practising certain forms of manual labour and engaging with nature in a sustainable manner rather than a capitalist farmer, sharing a set of rituals and values evolved and handed-over from the past generations etc. were the unifying characteristics of the peasant population.

Since the imperial regime initiated the reform policy of the emancipation of serfs, many such policies followed by it were intended to promote a new class of capitalist owners in agriculture and this process reached its logical conclusion in 1906 through the Stolypin reforms (Macey 2004; Dorothy 1973; Danilov 1990; Adrain 1977). The penetration of the capitalist tendencies into the agrarian countryside resulted in a situation in which a portion of the medium and marginal farmers were either forced to leave from agricultural production or became wage labourers in the emerging capitalist farms. The communal forms of agricultural production and social relations in mir existed with a set of supportive mechanisms and the penetration of the capitalist mode of production to the Russian countryside resulted in the disappearance or the weakening of most of those supportive agencies. The agricultural goods produced in the village commune declined massively as a result of the collapse or weakening of the traditionally evolved supportive mechanisms and in the absence of periodical renewal of the farm infrastructure, seeds, tools and other farm cultivating practices.

The emergence of Populist or the Narodinik movement in Russia has to be analysed in this context. However, most of the arguments put forward by this tradition were mere romanticisations of the past which neglected the structural aspects of the
problem altogether by ignoring the social exclusion and exploitations experienced by large portions of the population in the glorious period of the village commune.

Most of the theories of the peasant economy and their cultural practices in many respects shared the essentialist argument provided by the populist school. Many of these theories emerged in the second half of the 20th century when most of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America were liberated from the colonial occupation and had a substantial majority peasants or agricultural wage labourers in the population. Most of these countries followed a state-guided model of capitalist development and initiated massive land reform measures in accordance with the requirements of agrarian capitalism. The neo-populist theories on peasantry emerged in response to these changes. This was marked by the publication of A. V. Chaynov’s classic Russian work *The Theory of Peasant Economy* in English in 1966. It received wide attention and reviews among scholars engaged with the peasant societies and resulted in the revival of the populist tradition across globe. In the Third World context, the peasant essentialism manifested in the form of cultural essentialism and most of the neo-populist arguments revolved around the centrality of the cultural practices in the life of peasants’ production-cycle and hardly gave tantamount concern to the economic factors. In the late 1960s and 1970s, several scholars from neo-classical economics to proponents of rural development put forward many theoretical interpretations for the backwardness of the peasant societies, especially in the Third World context and most of these theories were enormously influenced by the populist tradition.

Most of the anthropological literatures on the peasant societies generally share a tendency to idealise the peasant society and their cultural practices and identifies whatever crisis and contradictions within it with the penetration of the forces and values generated by Western modernity. Most of these studies provide an interpretation of the glorious, ‘non-violent’ and ‘non-stratified utopia’, etc. being common characteristics of the pre-modern, pre-capitalist peasant and tribal societies of Asia Africa and Latin America and ignoring the diverse form of contradictions, violence and hierarchies prevailing in those societies. For them, the pre-capitalist and tribal societies have had its own social dynamics and internally evolved inherent mechanisms to adapt to the institutional and the social requirement of the time and bringing to the European model of linear progress to a higher social order in tandem with the Europe’s past trajectories from the slave mode to present capitalist mode of production is inherently problematic and non applicable to those societies (Galeski in Shanin 1971). According to Daniel
Throner, the peasant societies existing in the non-European part of the globe should be analysed and approached with the categories internally available to these societies rather than viewing them with the prism of the European encounter with its modernity mainly because those peasant societies existed for centuries even before the Enlightenment rationality reshaped the European continent. Peasant societies, which constitute a substantial portion of the earth's human inhabited areas, should be analysed independent of the European social reality and its own journey from late antiquity to the present-day social order (Daniel Throner in Shanin 1971). Likewise, one should also restrain from giving any sort of essentialist argument to the peasant societies without properly analysing or ignoring the diverse forms of differentiation existing in those societies.

**Peasantry as the Leftover of the pre-Capitalist Social Formation**

Most of the literature evolved out of the tradition of the western modernity and enlightenment despite its diverse and often contradictory methodological and theoretical orientation sharing certain common notion on peasant societies. These literatures characterizes that, peasant production and its corresponding social relations are the product of certain stage of the human development and it should be bypassed to the higher phase of social development if it has to overcome the internal crisis encountering these societies. The fundamental notion of the above mentioned proposition is that the existing state of human social order was historically evolved and every society is moving from a lower phase to a higher one and therefore peasant societies should also move to a higher social order associated with values of European modernity. Most of the Western narratives on peasant societies characterises it as non-dynamic, stagnant, primitive and still practising obsolete and naturally depended method of cultivation and reluctant to overcome the primordial beliefs and practices. These literatures opine the traditionally evolved labour intensive technique of production to be inefficient and unviable to the large-scale production. Thus, the introduction of the capital-intensive modern farm techniques such as mechanisation, introduction of irrigation system, utilization of hybrid seeds, large scale farming instead of small plots, etc. were essential requirements for the peasant society if it was to attempt to overcome the persistent stagnation and underdevelopment facing it vis-a-vis advanced Western capitalist societies. In spite of these broad similarities in contextualizing the peasant societies and pre-capitalist social formations, there still prevails a deep chasm within Western literatures on how to theorise peasant societies. These differences mainly emerged from
the divergent methodological standpoints by which those literatures relied on theorising peasant societies.

Dominant social theories on society (both modernity inspired liberal tradition as well as emancipatory modernity inspired critical tradition) in spite of its common origin and co-habitation in its initial phase moved in radically opposite direction and due to this, their fundamental perception towards each social category it uses also radically differed.

**Different Views on Pre-Capitalist Mode of Production.**

Dominant perspectives on pre-capitalist modes of production and social formation fundamentally vary in respect to theorising the prevailing social realities in the peasant societies. Most of the mainstream literatures on peasant societies generally share a common premise that the prevailing forms of social hierarchies and power relations are the inevitable character of any society and the social divisions of labour and the ascribed social stratification etc. were the essential constituent of any form of such organized society.

The nature and characteristics of the peasant societies emanate from the very nature of human being itself. For them, human beings are inherently selfish and each individual in any such society irrespective of the form and stage of the development of the society concerned, attempts to maximise his/her interests. The voluminous quantity of literature on peasant societies emanating from the mainstream sociology and the political science perspective viewed these societies from the vantage point of modernisation theory and often follow the simple diagnosis that the absence of the Western pattern of liberal institutions and practices and the persistence of the primordial practices including the unviable peasant production etc. are the major dilemmas encountered by the peasant societies. Likewise, the methodological individualist perspective of the mainstream social science studies neglected the socio-economic and cultural differences between different classes of people that emanated from the very political economic relations prevailing in respective societies. One of the inherent weaknesses of the mainstream approaches to the peasant societies or in that case, study on any other society is that it artificially compartmentalise social realities into economic, anthropological, historical and such other components. The major focuses of the economic approach is to analyse the transition of the peasant subsistence economy
to money economy and peasant petty-commodity production to extended commodity production.

Any meaningful Marxist approach to the study on societies requires a focus on the historical development and analysis of the mode of production to socially locate and examine the internal dynamics of the respective society. Mode of production consists of the dynamic interaction of the productive forces and their corresponding social relations of production. Productive forces include objects and instruments of labour plus labour-power. Marxist perspective viewed each mode of production as characterized by the connections between different practices or instances such as economic, political, etc.

Marxian literature on the pre-capitalist social formation fundamentally varies and departs from the mainstream theories analyses of the past. Without historically contextualizing the hierarchies and social stratifications prevailing in peasant societies around the globe, one cannot grasp the structural routes of the problem. According to this perspective, the present political economic relations were the historical outcome of the past structures and practices and therefore every present concrete manifestation of hierarchies and class divisions is to be viewed and located in the political economic relations prevailing in the past in respective societies rather than categorising it as very manifestation of the behaviour of individuals and communities they belong to. Its basic premises inform us that the structural hierarchies between different classes of people in any society are crucially shaped and determined by the relations of production and therefore the dialectical relation between the material productive forces and the relations of production determines the general character of the society to certain extent. The pre-capitalist mode of production is characterised by different forms of petty-commodity production and the internal contradictions between the advanced relations of production and the obsolete forces of production would lead to a qualitatively different form of society (Marx 1972; Althusser 1992). Likewise, Marxian perspective negates all forms of mainstream notions of fixed characters to the individual and it argues that the very nature and evolution of the very being of individual are determined by the political economic relations to which he/she belongs and without linking to the latter, one could not properly grasp the former. In such a context, we look at the specificities of peasant culture and how it was articulated by different approaches.
Specificities of the Peasant Culture

Most of the standard academic literature on peasant societies irrespective of the methodological contradictions and diversities unanimously agreed that the state of the beliefs, rituals, centralities of myth and superstitions in day-to-day lives etc. together constitute the culture of the peasants' and it constitutes the main stumbling block of the peasant societies towards the modernisation process. In all dimension of social life, in all efforts of human co-operation, the production and accumulation of the cultural gains and the achievements were motivated by contrasting tendencies (Dobrowolski in Shanin 1971). The fundamental structural basis of contrasting tendencies emanated from the very nature of the societies. The social forces that were the beneficiaries of the existing order were therefore engaged with the intention to preserve the status quo and the privileges in the society and those social forces who were the victims of the existing social order engaged with the intention to replace it with a more humane one. The pre-capitalist social formations existing in every nook and corner of the world and predominantly in the Afro-Asian and Latin American continents still preserve many characteristics which were completely alien to the cultural ethos of modern capitalism (Levi-Strauss 1968, 1969).

The socio-historical origin of most of these cultural practices of the peasant societies emanated due to many factors namely, specificities of the landscape, climate, geographical locations, access and proximity to the sea, river, lake, etc, the nature and state of the agricultural practices, the beliefs, myth and life experience of the past generations, the kind of interaction between the external societies, modern values etc in dual ways uniting and separating the peasant societies from each other and at the same time differentiating them from the modern capitalist society. Even though there are multiple level of similarities in the above mentioned factors across the peasant societies in different part of the world most of these commonalities would emerge from the similarities of the material life experiences of the respective peasant societies and the centrality of natural forces in the life cycle of the agrarian producers rather than any common collective experience of the peasant population in a far away land. Every peasant society has its own myth, belief and justification for each cultural practice. Most of these practices were devolved from the preceding generations. Similarly, origin of most of the myths, imaginaries and rituals of the peasant societies were emerged from the specificities of the rural landscape and its environments.
The peasant societies inhibit many features of the tribal population and practices and share varieties of factors with the modern farmers, yet most of the academic literatures tend to differentiate peasant societies from the tribal people and the modern farmers. One of the major factors which differentiate the peasant societies from the tribal population are the centrality of family and family bases in agricultural production in the life cycle of the peasant societies. Forest and forest resources occupy a central role in the life cycle of the tribal population. They are the least influenced social groups by the values, discipline and ideals of the modernisation process (Ibid). Peasantry were differentiated from the farmers mainly by agricultural practices following these two categories. Most often, peasant agricultural production is family-based subsistence production. Peasant families rarely cultivate with the commercial concern of selling in the market place. Nonetheless, they do sell surplus goods above the subsistence requirement of the family in the local market, though the primary intention of their engagement with the land through the cultivation is shaped by the material and cultural requirement of the family rather than profit. The primary intention of the modern farmer is the motivation and the quest for profit and thereby more accumulation of capital and the kind of cultural attachment and loyalty inhibited by the peasant cultivators to the land is hardly found in the nature of treatment shown by the commercial farmer to the soil and for the latter it is just another medium of accumulation of profit and capital (Marx 1972). Most of the sociological and anthropological literatures treated peasantry and their culture as the assortment of the modern and the primordial cultural practices. The emergence of the close interaction between the peasant societies and the nascent modernised segments of the broader society resulted in the penetration of the modern value and ideals in the peasant material culture. As a result, the enormous reach of the formal education and the values associate with it fundamentally transformed the peasant societies (Robert Redfield and Milton Singer in Shanin 1971). Even though qualitative changes occurred within peasant societies with the diffusion of modern practices and values, peasant societies in many respects withheld many of its earlier cultural practices and norms. Patriarchal authority and the subjugation of the females to the former were the prominent features of the peasant communities across the continent barring few exceptions. Many of the peasant societies were reluctant to change the age-old cultural norms and agricultural practices due to the fear that departure from the beliefs and practices of the past generation would generate unwarranted punishments from the natural and heavenly forces around whose kindness and protection their destiny revolves.
Nature and Characteristics of the Agrarian Production and Division of Labour in Peasant Societies

Peasant producers are often considered as the simple producers or petty-commodity producers by modern economic literature. The elementary character of the peasant production is the centrality of family in the production process and the composition of the family determines the nature of division of labour in peasant production. Hence, the centrality of the unskilled manual labourers which is the characteristic feature of the peasant societies across regions also differentiate peasant producers from the modern commercial farmers who increasingly rely on the capital intensive technique of production. The time and space of the peasant producers across regions are inseparably linked to the cyclical changes in the nature. For centuries, peasant producers across globe accumulated vast knowledge regarding the weather conditions and the seasonal changes in nature and thereby adapted production technique, crops and seeds varieties etc that are appropriate and able to withstand the cyclical changes in nature. Thus, the centrality of nature in the production cycle of the agrarian petty-producers is more self-evident when one observes the beginning of the new crops and harvest season and most of the traditional cultural festivals in peasant societies that were very much linked to the cyclical changes in nature. Self-subsistence and the consumption requirements of the family are the fundamental motivating force for the peasant producers.

Due to the centrality of the family labour in the peasant agricultural production, the demographic characteristics of the family plays a crucial role in the nature and the pattern of the cultivation. Peasant producers very rarely hire wage labour from external sources and even if they use hired labour, it is very marginal and seasonal in nature. The major qualitative difference between the peasant producers and the modern capitalist farmers is that the latter have treated the farming as the professional occupation and employs his/her labour accordingly and hardly spend the entire time in a day in the farm. On the contrary, for the former, farm and the family are an inseparable part of his/her existence and throughout the agricultural season, the peasant and most of his matured family are engaged in the farm from the early morning to the late evening sometimes even without much break in between (Chayanov 1966; Manning Nash in Shanin 1971). In most of the cases, peasant producers were simple commodity producers and the production of agricultural goods with the intention of selling in the market place are alien to the traditional peasant societies and this became an influential factor after the diffusion of capitalist practices to the agrarian countryside. One of the
distinctive characters of the peasant societies across continent are the centrality of the patriarchal power with few exception in the crucial decision making in the family and often female members of the family were subordinated to the elder male head in the family (Meillassoux 1972). Although hardly any clear cut gender division of labour existed in the traditional peasant societies, very often household duties were considered as the prerogative of the women members in the family and men were hardly engaged in family labour in spite of the fact that females were often forced to engage both in the household as well as the farm labour. The nature and the internal character of the peasant farm varies from societies to society and in many cases, the size and the nature and character of the agricultural practices were determined by the head of the village committees or such traditionally evolved bodies. Often every family farm in the traditional peasant societies were self-reliant production units and they cultivated almost all of the consumption requirements of the peasant family in sharp contrast to the modern capitalist farmers of higher societies.

In traditional peasant societies, the mutual co-operation and transaction of agricultural goods, seeds, etc through the barter system were very prevalent and profit and maximisation of self interest as in the case of the capitalist producers have never been a determining factor. Since the primary intention of the peasant producers were the consumption requirements of the family, often peasants never stock goods beyond the next harvest season (Boguslaw Galeski in Shanin 1971). In many occasions, the crops failure or the adverse weather and the natural conditions would even push the normally well-off peasant families into a state of poverty and starvation. One of the crucial factors which differentiated peasant producers from each other were the nature of the control over the productive forces such as the size of the land, number of farm animals, other farm instruments, etc. Most of the literatures attempt to provide a homogenous picture of peasant societies and hardly give adequate consideration to the sharp internal differentiations prevailing in the peasant societies (Shanin 1971, 1972; Chayanov 1966; Mitrany 1950). Many of the critical literatures reveal that a large section of the population were even permanently treated as inferior human beings and bonded labour to the privileged peasants. The Russian populist school and many of its later day inheritors treated demographic characteristics of the family as the crucial variable which determines the nature of internal differentiation within peasant societies. The next section tries to examine this in detail.
Populist Perspective on Peasantry

Populist perspective on peasantry was generally treated as the most influential and widely used approach for the study of agrarian and peasant societies. As mentioned in the previous section, it was the product of the specificities of the social formation prevailing in Tsarist Russia. Any meaningful analysis of the populist tradition demands a revisit to the socio-economic realities of 19th century Russia in order to situate the populist tradition in an appropriate historical perspective. The specificities of the social formation prevailing in the Tsarist Russia was that for a long historical epoch in contrast to the West European pattern of classical feudalism hardly manifested its form and content as such in Russia. With the departure from the feudal mode of production prevailing in the Western part of Europe, in Tsarist Russia, land and other productive assets were always a communal property and also completely managed by the traditionally evolved village commune commonly known as Mir. Populist movement commonly known in Russia as Narodinik movement and its main slogan in its early phase was going back to the Russian villages where the soul of the glorious cultural heritage of the country lies (Shanin 1972; Judith Pallot in Palat 2001). In Russia, the word Narodinik means peasant and socio-economic and the cultural heritage of the peasant population. The village commune was presented as the most authentic representation of Russian civilization.

Most of the initial propagators of the Narodinik movement were the urban educated youth. Their experiences, physical as well as material distances from countryside along with the glorious memories of the bygone era have had a profound impact on constructing a romantic notion of the political economic relations of the past. One can easily unearth varieties of current and tendencies within the populist theoretical and ideological framework. The overriding tendency among them was the one which pleaded for going back to the village commune and the cultural heritage of the past. The propagators of this tradition argued that the degeneration and abandonment of the socio-cultural heritage of the past and the penetration of the Western values including the capitalist pattern of production was the main threat to the unique social relations prevailing in the country for the past many centuries.

Chayanov and neo-Populist Theory of Peasant Economy

Russian scholar and economist A.V. Chayanov is considered as one of the foremost proponents of the neo-populist school. He rejuvenated the populist tradition and
enormously extended its theoretical terrain by providing meticulous empirical accounts of the nature and the pattern of production and internal decision-making process in the peasant household farm in early 20th century Russia by using Zemstvo statistics. Chayanov and his disciples were very influential in Russia in the first quarter of the 20th century and he was appointed as the director of the Soviet agricultural academy in the post-revolutionary period. His school was also known as organisation production school.

Populist theoretical tradition which emerged in Russia in the second half of the 19th century lost its appeal and currency in the first decade of the 20th century mainly due to the considerable extension of the social revolutionary movement which sharply distanced itself from the populist perspective along with the deep incursion of the capitalist relations of production in general and the formation of the agrarian landed class in particular. Like their antecedents, neo-populist tradition also downsized the impact of capitalist relations of production in Russian society and continued to plead that the traditionally evolved village commune which prevailed in the country in the past linger as the dominant pattern of social production in the countryside (Chayanov 1966). In contrast to the populist or the Narodnik movement, the neo-populist current acknowledged the presence of the capitalist relations of production in the countryside. Yet they claimed that it was a transitory phenomenon and peasant mode of production remained the dominant one. One of the major contentions of the neo-populist scholars was that peasant mode of production prevailing in the Russian countryside were qualitatively different from the capitalist and the feudal mode of production and therefore it had to be treated as an independent specific form of social production like any other mode of production.

For the neo-populist advocates the specific peasant mode of production prevailing in Russia and many other Third World societies, the mere comparison or interpreting the fundamental differences prevailed in the peasant mode of production vis-a-vis capitalist and the feudal mode of production. In the feudal and the capitalist mode of production a large chunk of the population was forced to sell their labouring to the controllers of the means of production i.e. feudal lords and capitalist respectively. On the contrary, in the peasant form of production, the majority of producers were independent petty-producers and therefore in most cases, the specificities of the peasant production could not condensed as the variant either of the feudal or capitalist mode or the combinations of the capitalist and the feudal mode of production. In other words, in
the peasant mode of production, the owners of the means of production and the producers were the same. In most of the cases, the peasant petty-producers were undergoing self-exploitation of his/her labour working the entire day in the family farm rather than exploiting by the external elements that were alien to the production process. This was mainly due to the specificities of the socio-cultural life of the petty-producers. The life cycle and the destiny of the peasant producers were inseparably linked to the outcome of the corps they cultivated. One of the characteristic features of the neo-populist approach is that its increasing stress and the weightage it attributed to the specificities of the peasant social practices, especially increasing attention to the subjective factors in the peasant production process. While providing prime importance to the subjective consciousness to determining in the day-to-day life of the peasant producers, the neo-populist theorists underestimated the role of the objective material conditions in shaping the subjectivity of the petty-producers. Chayanov in his study of the peasant farm organization and the resources utilisation in the peasant household heavily borrowed from the subjective dimension of the Austrian school of economists (Chayanov 1966). This naturally contributed to focuses on the specificities of the peasant producers minute concerns and dilemmas to the central stage of his analysis by reducing the political economic relations in the production process to a secondary status. The peasant essentialism of the neo-populist approach also ignored or relegated to the status of dependable variable to the concept of the internal economic differentiation prevailing among the peasant producers.

Many of the Chayanovian formulation related to the peasant farm organisation were deeply influenced by the subjectivist interpretation of the economic phenomenon of the Austrian marginalist school. The fundamental hypothesis of the neo-populist theorists was that demographic transition taking place in the peasant household due to the generational changes was the fundamental cause for the prevalence of the internal differentiation within the peasant producers. According to the neo-populist view, once the generational changes taking place in the peasant family reaches its normalcy i.e. every member of the family reaches demographic maturity, then the internal differentiations emerged would subsequently be reduced to the normal state (Chayanov 1966). In fact Chayanov acknowledges the presence of the capitalist propensity in the Russian countryside, though he presumed it to be a temporary phenomenon and that the centuries old farm and the cultural practices of the peasant produces would resist its further penetration to the specificities of the Russian countryside. Likewise, the neo-
populists also underestimated the significance of the productive forces such as land and other farm equipments and farm animals in the process of determining the nature and character of the size of the peasant farm (Lenin 1972; Cox 1985). Lenin's study of the development of the capitalist relation in Russian agriculture along with the many studies done by the agrarian Marxist such as L. N. Kritsman and his followers proved that the ownership of farm animals was one of the major factors for identify into the nature of the internal economic differentiation within the peasant producers.

**Populist and neo-Populist Views on Agrarian Capitalism**

In spite of many similarities and common theoretical and methodological premises shared by the populist and the neo-populist tradition, yet there also exist sharp differences on the question of how to theorise the agrarian capitalism in a predominantly peasant society. The populist tradition, as we discussed in the previous section, were more focused on the social implication of the capitalist development on the otherwise egalitarian peasant society such as Russia and their fundamental focuses were on how to skip capitalist development to reach more egalitarian society with an advanced level of social development. Populist theorist were of the view that the process of capitalist development would inevitably result in a situation in which those who controlled the means of production would have the tendency to accumulate the productive assets in society and thereby accelerate the process of class divisions in the society.

The populist propagators argue that peasant economy prevailing in the Russian society for many centuries have had many unique features which differentiated it from European and the other Western societies. One of the major distinctions is that the Russian peasant economy organised in the communal bases was radically superior in its social structure and the organization of the production. As a result, the Russian peasant economy was to a certain extent liberated from the Western pattern of hierarchical social relation and internal differentiation in the society. Many of the early populist activists were also very closely associated with the radical revolutionary wave experienced by the most of the European societies in the middle of the late 19th centuries. Even radical populist activist like Vera Zesulich had had regular contact with the leading revolutionary figures like Karl Marx and in many of their correspondences, Marx acknowledged that the specificities of the village commune prevailing in the Russian society for centuries proved that the linear path of social development experienced by the West European society could not be considered as the ideal path for all non-
European society with its specific social relations. Many of the recent literature provided by the Shanin shows that even after completion of the first volume of *Capital*, Karl Marx with the intense interaction with the Russian populist revolutionaries began to rethink his own premises on the future socio-economic transition of the non-European societies and agreed with the Russian populist activist that the future socialist development of the non-European societies would not be the replica of the West European pattern of social development (Shanin 1983). Most of the populist theorists tended to take an essentialist notion on the peasant society and also provided a romanticised picture on the patriarchal village commune prevailing in Russian society.

Populist propagators argued that due to the specific feature of the Russian society and its isolation and socio-cultural differences with the European mainland, there were hardly any prospects for capitalist development in Russia. For the populist scholars, the destiny of the Russian society and the soul of the country lie in the village community and any deviation from it would be great cultural trouncing to the glorious tradition of the country. They also argued that the uniqueness of the Russian society was that 70 percentage of the population were the commune dwellers and the penetration of the capitalist forces in the industrial sector hardly provided any meaningful alternative to the countries under-development. Even if the capitalist development would increase the productive potential of the country, it would be unable to give egalitarian distribution of the resources and there for it would be radical departure from the communal tradition of the Russian society. According to the propagators of the populist school, the nature and pattern of the agricultural production and ownership of the land and other assets were the common ownership of the village commune and nowhere in the recent history could one find the practice of private ownership of land. Due to the absence of the notion of private property in the ownership and distribution of land, no one would equate modern capitalist farmers with the peasant petty-producers. Due to these reasons, the fundamental motivating factor of the peasant cultivators engaged in the communal land was never maximising profit. The populist tradition also argued that the communal and the cultural tradition of the Russian village commune were the unique features of the country and the penetration of the capitalist mode of production would inevitably result in the alienation from these historical trajectories. In short, the major reservation of the populist activist vis-a-vis the penetration of the capitalist relation of production was that it bought forth a new set of social and cultural practices which could radically alter the existing egalitarian social
relation prevailing in the county up to the emergence of the private property based pattern of social production.

Neo-populist view on agrarian capitalism radically differed in its form and content from that of the populist school. If we contextualise the evolution of the populist and the neo-populist traditions, one can easily grasp why they sharply took divergent position vis-s-vis agrarian capitalism. Populist tradition emerged in the second half of the 19th century when the emancipation of the serfs in Russia brought forth the seeds of the evolution of the capitalist social formation in the country. On the contrary, the neo-populist school evolved in the early years of the post-revolutionary period when the radical revolutionary measures initiated by the Leninist regime resulted in a radical departure from the hitherto prevailing mode of social production in the country. Moreover, in the immediate post-revolutionary period, the radical policy measures initiated by the Bolshevik regime, rather than wreaking the peasant petty producers strengthened it. The decree on land was one of the few major decisions took by the nascent regime after coming to the helm of power (Bettelheim 1978). The social implication of the new decree on land gave a death blow to the feudal and emerging large scale capitalist forces in the country and it in many respects strengthened the economic and the social status of the large number of medium and marginal farmers in the country. The theoretical foundation for the neo-populist tradition was laid by the work of A.V. Chayanov whose seminal essay titled “The theory of Peasant Economy” was a radical departure in many respects both theoretically and methodologically from the Marxist theorization of modes of production. Chayanov and the later generation of scholars who followed his tradition gave increasing importance to the subjective and the customary practices among the peasant petty-producers as the major factor shaping the destiny of the agrarian dwellers rather than the structural characteristics of the society. The populist theorists made many attempts to prevent the penetration of the capitalist social relations in Russia. At that time, capitalist social formation was in its infant stage and village- based commune system had degenerated and the stagnated state remained as the major determinant force in the agrarian social relations. On the contrary, when Chayanov formulated his perspective on the Russian peasant economy with the re-interpretations of the Zemestvo statistics, the capitalist mode of production had deeply penetrated into the agrarian countryside (Chayanov 1966). Although more than three quarters of the country’s population were agrarian dwellers and within that the overwhelming majority of the population were medium and marginal peasants and
major chunk of the productive land had already been transferred into the hands of the narrow chunk of the capitalist farmers in the society. Yet neo-populists argued that peasant petty producers remained as the dominant mode of agricultural organization in the country and therefore focuses should be given to the internal structures of the peasant household rather than the general socio-economic dynamics in the society. One of the major propositions of the chayanovian view was that demographic transition of the peasant household was the determining variable that shapes the nature and character of the internal stratification within the peasant producers. Chayanov demonstrated this with empirical data collected from the Zemestvo, that internal levelling mechanism practised by the village commune was capable of preserving the egalitarian basis of the village commune.

According to the practices of the village commune, the commune authorities re-distribute the communal property among the new house-hold members in every seven years. Neo-populists argued that the number of the able bodied members in a house hold in relation to the total strength determines the economic status of the household. In other words, only one or two members would able to engage in the household farm activities, in its early formative years after split away from its mother household. Until children who reach the state of full maturity, the labour-consumer equilibrium in the household were adversely against the family and therefore would remain as margin of the village commune. Once all the members of the household reached maturity, it would automatically overcome the infantile disadvantages and reach the status of the normal family. In short, at any time in the village commune, some members would be in the state of its formative years and therefore socially located on the margins of the commune due to the economic status. However, the major distinguishing feature of the neo-populist perspective vis-à-vis other major perspective on the peasant society was that the former attributes the internal differentiations to the demographic transformation of the family and most of the latter perspective relate it to the structural characteristics of society.

Resurgence and the Revival of the neo-Populist Theory: Recent Trends

Neo-populist theory received wider scholarly attention and massive popular appeal in the late 1960s and 1970s when most of the Third World countries were liberated from the colonial domination and initiated radical policy measures to attain socio-economic modernization and development. The nature and the character of the state and the
internal class composition within those states necessitated a pattern of autonomous capitalist development unattainable to the class realities of the Third World societies. As a result, most of these societies pursued a pattern of capitalist development in which the state played crucial role in the economic policy making as well as the functioning of the market. This was also necessitated by the lack of development of the indigenous capitalist class and the long years of the colonial exploitation systematically destroyed all the resource bases of the society. The major structural characteristics of these societies were that substantial majorities of the population were petty-peasant producers and more than eighty percentage of the population were agrarian dwellers.

Dominant modes of production in most of these societies were combinations of the feudal and the capitalist production relations co-existed with the simple commodity production of the peasant producers. Even though a substantial majority of the population were agrarian dwellers and petty-peasant producers, or agricultural labourers, both free and un-free, most of the productive assets and other means of production were controlled by a handful of feudal elements and a group of capitalist forces which emerged under the tutelage of the colonial powers. Due to the specificities of the internal class combination of the state along with the working class and the peasant masses' active participation in the anti-colonial national liberation movements in most of those societies, radical political parties emerged as dominant political formations in the late 1960s. As a result of these developments most of the ruling regime initiated radical policy measures to overcome the feudal and other pre-capitalist relations of production by initiating radical land reform measures. In spite of these facts, due to the specificities of the internal class combination in which the crucial role were played by the feudal and other powerful pre-capitalist elements, the nascent state were unable to carry forward or fulfil its commitment made to the substantial majority of the populations. Thus, the prevailing social realities along with the radical revolutionary upsurges encounter by the newly liberated peasant societies of the Third World necessitated the re-interpretation of the Marxian revolutionary ideology. Thus, the successful re-interpretation of the class agency by bringing the peasants and peasant masses to the central stage of the revolutionary mobilisations was intended to provide radical departure from the prevailing social relations.

The successful completion of the Chinese and the Vietnamese revolutions qualified the above arguments. Most of the Third World societies which began to pursue capitalist modernisation along with liberal democratic institutions and practices created
a number of academic institutions in which Marxian social analysis received wider appeal and currency. This was the context in which many of the studies on the nature and character of the dominant modes of production, social formation and the class character of the state structure emerged in the Third World societies. Neo-populist theory emerged in the Third World societies as a response to these developments. The forthcoming section would discuss the major neo-populist theorists whose contribution resulted to the revival in the neo-populist theories.

Daniel Thorner's Thesis: Peasantry as an Autonomous Economic Category

The neo-populist theory on peasantry received wider scholarly attention and resurgence in the mid 1960s when A.V. Chayanov classic work, *The Theory of Peasant Economy* was first translated into English by Daniel Thorner et al. under the auspices of the American Economic Association. As a result, generations of scholars cutting across different social science disciplines were deeply influenced by the Chayanovian perspective on the peasant economy. The massive empirical richness of the Chaynov's work and especially his emphasis on the micro factors in relation to the macro features seems to be more comfortable with those scholars who were perusing neo-classical methodology to the study of socio-economic realities. This resurgence of the study of the peasant societies also happened in an era in which huge volumes of anthropological literature on peasant societies emerged. It also unanimously concluded that, irrespective of methodological and theoretical differences, the lack penetration of the values of capitalist modernity was the reason for the contemporary crisis in the peasant societies. Daniel Thorner's sharply disagreed with the classical Marxian hypothesis that peasantry was the left-over of the pre-capitalist social formation and once the process of penetration of the capitalist mode of production to the peasant societies would inevitably lead to the eventual break down of the petty commodity production and vast majority of the agrarian producers would be manifested into agricultural wage labourers. Daniel Throner challenged this proposition and proposed that peasant societies should be treated and studied by their own categories rather than viewing it from the vantage point of the values and categories of capitalist societies. The crux of Thorner's proposition was that each society should be treated and approached as an independent entity and every society had its own specificities that was determined by historical and socio-cultural factors.
Most of the standard academic literatures approached the peasant societies from the vantage point of the above described approach and the basic premises of the above mentioned hypothesis was that human society is moving in a teleological or linear direction and therefore each successive stage is considered as qualitatively superior to the former (Daniel Throner in Shanin 1971). Throner further argued that by approaching the peasant societies from the perspective of the capitalist society and especially viewing diverse social formations across the globe from the prism of the historical evolution of capitalist mode of production from the classical feudal relation of production in the late 15th and 16th centuries was not an appropriate perspective to understand the internal complexities of the non-European social formations. The peasant societies had qualitatively and quantitatively different experiences and moved in radically different trajectories. He argued that most of the peasant societies were far older than the West European societies and therefore viewing the non-European societies from the vantage point of West European experience of the transition from feudalism to capitalism ignored the specificities of non-European societies.

The Contributions of Teodor Shanin, Barrington Moore Jr. and Eric Wolf

The contributions of Teodor Shanin, Eric Wolf and Barrington Moore Jr. etc. profoundly influenced the contemporary understanding on the peasant societies. In many ways, the above scholars had in commonality evolved out of certain fundamental premises they shared with the neo-populist school. However, these theorists also shared certain proposition with those scholars who engage in the critical political economy of the Marxist tradition. Among those scholars, Tedor Shanin is often treated and categorised as the proponents of the neo-populist theory. Shanin’s voluminous contributions to the internal dynamics of the peasant societies distinguished him from many other scholars engaged in the similar pursuits. Within the rural social structure, Shanin treated middle peasant as the most dynamic strata with possible potential to manifest as agency for changes in existing status-quo. Shanin also emphasised such characteristics of the peasant producers as their relationship to land, relative stability of the peasant household, its role as the production-consumption unit, centrality of the family labour in the household production and the relative autonomy of the household production in relation to producers and market (Shanin 1971: 143-45). Shanin argued that like any other social formations, peasant societies should also be treated as independent social formation having their own internal dynamics.
One of the major contributions of Shanin was that he challenged the received notion of the Karl Marx writings on the peasant societies. Whereas the conventional literatures on Marx’s theorisation on the peasant societies included many of those who were sympathetic to his theory and methodology as well as its hard-core critics alleged him in certain range of determinism in his whole theorization and at the same time, his writings on peasants’ and its social structure depict some kind of essentialist undercurrents in it. Shanin’s research revealed that Marx spent most of his labour after the publication of the first volume of *Capital* up to his last day in careful studies and analysis of the village commune existing in Russia. Marx’s views were also shaped by his frequent interactions with Russian revolutionaries associated with the populist movement worked in the Western Europe. He, therefore, concluded that village commune in Russia and its communal form of social production had the possibility of attaining an egalitarian form of socialist society without necessarily going for the capitalist mode of production (Shanin 1983). Moreover, any serious engagement with the Marxian literature would reveals that one of the distinguishing features of Marx’s theoretical project was that it negated all forms of determinism and essentialism per-se as reactionary as it would impose various constraints on the potential of the human agency to change the adverse and exploitative material conditions in which they were part.

Barrington Moore Jr. was one of the leading scholars whose researches could be broadly located in the Marxian traditions despite his sharp departures in shifting focuses from class exploitations to power structure in a given society as a primary reference point for mapping up the nature and characteristics agrarian transitions that were taking place in different parts of the world in varying forms in the modern era. The kind of alternative explanation suggested by him in many ways breaks from the existing interpretations provided by scholars working strictly in the populist as well as the Marxian traditions. In his comparative analysis of the modern evolution of democracy and dictatorship in different part of the world by looking from the vantage pint of comparative historical sociology approach, he identified three modes of revolutionary changes experienced by the peasant societies existing in the European, North American and Asian continents in the process of their eventual transition from the feudal mode of production to the capitalist form of production.

According to Barrington Moore Jr., the nature of the role performed by the peasant masses in that process were to a large extent determined by the internal power
structure of the concerned society and the kind of class alliance it had made with other dominant social classes in the society. Moore pointed out that in England, peasant classes hardly perform any prominent role due to their inability to align with the leading classes in the revolutionary process and, in contrast, it did major role by aligning with the urban middle class in the French revolution. In fact the nature of the power structure and alignments of social classes largely determine the form in which the revolutionary potential of any class would ultimately manifest itself and contribute to change in a given society (Moore Jr. 1966). Moore identifies three ideal-type routes to radical change and modernisation, which were ‘the bourgeoisie –democratic revolution (as it took place in England, France and America); the fascist revolution (as in Germany and Japan); the communist revolution (like the Russian or the Chinese revolution)’ (Moore Jr. 1966: 413-14). One of the pertinent questions raised by the author was that why the Indian peasantry had been excluded from the kind of roles depicted by the peasant populations elsewhere and what are the factors which explain its specificities from the general pattern of behaviour depicted by its counterpart elsewhere. He suggested that the peculiarities of the rural social structure and its caste divisions and hierarchies and the active role of religions in the day to day social life, etc. In many ways, prevented internal social dynamics in the Indian villages for centuries. In fact, the kind of structural connection between social practices of the peasantry and their symbiotic link to the social hierarchy prevented the development of peasant discontent into the extreme form of antagonism and thus immunised the Indian peasant against any potential rebellious impulse (Moore Jr. 1966: 455-59).

Many scholars raised a wide range of questions against the conclusions he draws as the reason for the passive response of the Indian peasantry vis-a-vis social change. In fact, by treating the rural social structure as stagnant, he ignores factors such as regional diversities and the prolonged subjugation by the colonial and imperial powers which had determining effects on the rural social structure. As a result, social movements emerged in the country in the form of anti-colonial movement mobilised against the external domination and it diverted hardly any meaningful attention from the internal contradictions prevailing in society.

Eric Wolf, one of the other leading contributors in his classic piece, “The Peasant War of 20th Century”, provided an in-depth analysis of the involvement of the various strata of the peasants groups in the major social revolutions that had taken place in the modern era. Though his study was set in an anthropological framework, the way
in which he approached the peasant question and the categorization of the different class of the peasant based on their socio-economic location in the society led him to reach conclusions more or less in conformity with the Marxian positions. Eric Wolf, like Shanin and Hamza Alavi treated the middle peasants as the most potential social strata among the peasants as they could be easily influenced by the changes in the society and in fact performed a major role in the past revolutionary movements. The mobilisational potential of the poor peasants and the rural proletariat were severely curtailed by the lack of tactical power and Wolf argued that without some form of assistance by the external agencies, there would be limited possibilities for any rebellious response from the most exploited segments of the rural social hierarchy.

The peculiarities of the middle peasants are that “it presents a curious paradox in the sense that he is the reservoir of the peasant traditions, institutions’ and conservatism and at the same time he is the instruments of dynamiting the peasant social order. Exposed to crisis situation within the peasant economy, wrought by the industrial commercialism, the middle peasant is also subjected to the influences from the developing urban proletariat. Although the most achieving and aspiring type, the middle peasant is the worst sufferer of both the encroachment of landlords on his customary rights and also of the unfavourable fluctuations in the market” (Eric Wolf cited in Dhanagare 1983: 11). Therefore, it is the middle peasant who is most likely to pursue a revolutionary course of action. The specificities of their social location and the nature of their interconnection between the urban area and the countryside contributed to a scenario marked by a mixture of both currents among the middle peasantry. Eric Wolf remarks that:

middle peasants are also most exposed to influences from the developing proletariat. The poor peasant or landless labourer, in going to the city or the factory also usually cuts his tie with the land. The middle peasant, however, stays on the land and sends his children work in town: he is caught in a situation in which one part of the family retains a footing in agriculture, while the other undergoes the training of the cities (Wolf 1971: 270).

Hamza Alavi who was also a proponent of the middle peasants’ theses and a leading contributor of the class and social dynamics of the Third World states and societies disagreed with the Wolf views. Alavi argues that even though middle peasants provide early momentum to the rebellious activities, middle peasants gradually withdrew from the forefront of the movement mainly due to their limited social perspective and their class position (Alavi 1966: 50). However, Wolf asserts his position and vigorously argues “the middle peasants’ and those poor peasants who are outside
the power domain and effective control of their land lords, constitutes the pivotal groupings for peasants uprisings” (Wolf 1967: 292-93). In fact, Eric Wolf treated the middle peasants as such an ideal-type category and thereby assumed that it possessed some essentialist features. Moreover, the socio-economic status of the middle peasants led to a situation where they were always vulnerable to changes. It might move in either direction and in most cases, when the process of economic differentiation takes place among the peasants, the middle peasants were increasingly dragged to the status of poor peasants as presumed by Lenin and Mao.

**James Scott and the Theory of Peasant Moral Economy and Everyday Forms of Resistance**

In the recent times, James Scott is considered as the one of the most leading contributors to the peasant question from a neo-populist perspective. His first major contribution, *The Moral Economy of the Peasantry*, received widespread endorsement and acclaim from scholars broadly working in the non-Marxian terrain in the mid 1970s, when Marxian inspired researches on agrarian and peasant question enjoyed wider currency. Scott’s works on the peasants’ moral economy was based on an ethnographical study of a certain selected household in a Malaysian village. By drawing from the agrarian history of the diverse societies in South East Asia such as Lower Burma valley, Vietnam and Malaysia he examined how the peasant families encounter and later adapt to the phenomenon of exploitation, hierarchy, starvation etc. and the ways in which they overcome the threats they face from the privileged groups within the society. Scott’s later work, *The Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Form of Peasant Resistance*, clubs together all forms of acts peasants commit in the day-to-day engagement in the rural areas as some form of passive resistance to the dominant form of structures and hierarchies in the society. He rejected the prevailing notion of the resistance through the organized movement and the planned militant action, etc. which were treated by Scott as alien to the peasant form of the passive every-day resistance.

In fact, Scott considers that the nature and form of the peasant resistance were shaped and determined by the behaviour of the concerned peasants rather than influenced by any larger macro social practices or ideologies. Scott argued that peasants (and others) subjected to social and cultural subordination create continuous, mundane and hidden ways of resisting oppression inequality and hierarchy—in effect, through avoidance, ridicule, and acts of petty revenge. He considered that these weapons of the
weak have a greater cumulative effect in ameliorating their condition than the organized collective action and dramatic but intermittent outbursts of rebellion. Thus conceived, everyday forms of resistance were applied to the behaviour of workers in colonial plantations for example, and to peasants in virtually any conceivable historical situation (Bernstein and Byres 2001: 33). Scot’s view was sharply criticised by Tom Brass, who pointed out that the notion of the middle peasantry moral economy, everyday resistance, subaltern studies, new social movements, post-modernism, culturalism, relativism, and all forms of agrarian my theology and populism, linked ‘epistemologically’ by peasant essentialism and ideologically by hostility to any project of social emancipation informed by enlightenment ideals and optimism (Tom Brass cited in Bernstein and Byres 2001: 34).

David Mtrany’s Criticism of Marx’s Views on Peasants

Among the scholars who were engaged in agrarian question from a broad terrain of liberalism, David Mtrany’s much acclaimed work, *Marx Against the Peasant: A Study in Dogmatism* received wider scholarly and public interest than any other similar worth. His work had been published in 1950, the period marked by the end of the Second World War and the emergence of the Cold War rivalries between the United State and its allies of the west European capitalist countries on one hand and the Soviet Union and its East European socialist allies were on the other end. The early years of the 1950s also witnessed the massive spread of the Marxist-inspired communist and socialist parties into the continents of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and these tendencies received further momentum when the Chinese revolution attained its primary goal. The dominant role played by the Chinese peasantry in the victorious revolutionary process and was a significant departure from the nature of the role it carried out in the Russian revolution.

Mao’s interpretation of classical Marxism to the Chinese and in fact, the socio-economic realities of much of the Third World societies wherein marked by overwhelming majority of population engaged in land and the feudal and semi-colonial relations of production as the predominant characteristics, received increased support from the peasant masses. The collectivisation of agriculture in the Soviet Union was more or less completed just a decade back and most of the people in the West and elsewhere in the world, still remembers the kind of hardships and force encountered by the peasant population in Soviet Union from the working class state apparatus. In fact,
without properly locating the socio-economic context, one might not fully grasp the significance of David Mtrany’s work and its real effects in society. Moreover, in spite of the claims of the practices of value neutrality in the academic exercises, as claimed by the liberal theorists, the period also witnessed the increasing appeal and justification of policies and imaginaries of the free-market economy in the Anglosaxon academies.

David Mtrany’s criticisms of Marxian conception of peasants were based on two major propositions. The first was based on his assessment of Marxian theory and the extrapolation drawn from it that it was inherently against the persistence of peasant-petty production. The second was that the 1917’s revolutionary change had dual dimensions. The Russian peasantry led the real revolution in 1917, which was the natural outcome of their real social experience and the second dimension was a political one which he considers accidentally manipulated by the Bolsheviks in favour of them (Mitrany 1950: 57). In the very first paragraph of the foreword of his work, he remarks, “History knows no other instance of a vast social movement is being so misread and misnamed as an agrarian revolution that has spread over the half of the world since 1917. It has suited the communists to advertise it as a Marxist revolution; but the Marxist theory had nothing to contribute it, and the practical offshoots has been the final demolition of the semi-feudal conditions on land, complete social upheaval for the benefit of the masses of the small peasants attached to their traditional family subsistence economy. Marxist theory and writings have had quite a lot to say about the economic and political place of the peasants in the evolution of modern society and an eventual social revolution, but what they had to say has been invariably and dogmatically inimical to them. All the more ironical is the fate which, since 1917, has made very communist revolution so far dependent on the peasants part in it, with the strange effects on Marxist doctrine and in the end, with dire results for the peasants themselves” (Mitrany 1950: ix).

In fact, Marx had specifically focused on the peasants question at length in a few of his works similar to the case of class, but throughout his major works, ‘class’, ‘peasants’ question were implicitly discussed in one way or other. One of the major questions raised against the Marx’s perspective on peasants was that he ignored or under-estimated the capacity of the peasants’ petty-production to persist in the context of the penetration of the capitalist mode of production in the countryside. Similarly, some critics of Marx also criticised him for ignoring or reducing the potential of the peasant producers to transcend into a class conscious social agency there by
emancipating themselves through their collective action against those structures which exploited them.

**Marxist Theorisation on Peasantry and the Agrarian Question**

The writings of Karl Marx and his collaborator and friend, Frederick Engels constituted the theoretical, methodological and epistemological foundation of the Marxian theory of society. Marx and Engels were not merely intellectuals and philosophers, they were also real revolutionaries. They participated in the 1848 revolutionary wave which was witnessed across the empires in Western Europe. The abrupt failure and the resultant setback of the movement inspired them to form the International Working Men's Association in 1864. Since the formation of the First International, the revolutionary social agenda proposed by them through their series of intellectual and political engagements influenced and shaped innumerable people from diverse intellectual, academic and political persuasions who in turn, came to be known as Marxists. The theoretical traditions initiated by Marx and Engels were enormously influenced and shaped by the political economic evolution of the modern West-European societies since its feudal epoch. Likewise, the founders of the Marxian tradition were deeply influenced by the diverse intellectual traditions such as the classical English political economy, French socialism, the German idealist philosophy of Hegel and Feuerbach's materialist philosophy.

The fundamental preposition of the Marxian perspective on society is that it believed that all the existing structures and practices in human societies were historically evolved and the nature and character of those practices were determined by the nature of the social production existing in the concerned societies. This is explicitly clear from in the formulations of Marx's 1859 *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totalities of these relations of productions constitute the economic structure of the society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness... A certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or this merely expresses the same in legal terms with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From the forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolutions. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure (Marx 1972: 20-1).
Many critical commentators had alleged that a certain level of economic determinism entails in the above much-cited introduction to the preface of the contribution to the critic of political economy. In fact, Marx would have intended in the passage just to undermine the pre-determined naturalistic interpretation of the socioeconomic hierarchies and practices provided by many of his contemporaries. Marxist perspective on the peasant question to a certain extent was directly connected to the question of capitalist development. In other words, ‘capital’ and the ‘level of its penetration’ were the reference points for the Marxian analysis of any peasants’ society. Marx’s and Engels’s writings on the feudal and other pre-capitalist social formations received a wide range of critical attention. Many scholars broadly engaged in the Marxian framework itself found some of their propositions inherently contradicting with their general theory. Marxian theory on peasant societies were enormously modified and enriched by a generation of Marxian thinkers who follow Marx and Engels namely Karl Kausky, V.I. Lenin, Mao Tse-tung, Rosa Luxemburg and many others which would be discussed in the forthcoming sections.

**Marx and Engels on the Peasant Social Formation**

The major factors which determine the Marxian views on any mode of production or social formation are the nature and character of the social organisation of production and the location and role of the different social classes in the labour process. In fact, one could identify the different and often seemingly contradictory views and interpretations made by Marx in his voluminous writings. Without properly locating the socioeconomic context in which Marx had expressed his views, there would be possibility of misreading it. Marx observation on the French peasantry was the precise evidence of it, wherein Marx remarks:

The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France’s bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small-holding, admits of no division of labour in its cultivation, no application of science and therefore, no diversity of development, no variety of talent, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it itself directly produces the major parts of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. A small holding, a peasant and his family: alongside them another small holding, another peasant and another family. A few score of these make up a village, and a few score of villages make up a department. In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes. In so far as the millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interest and their culture from those of the other classes and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they
form a class. In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-
holding peasants, and the identity of their interest begets no community, no national
bound and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. They are
consequently incapable of enforcing their class interest in their own name, whether
through the parliament or through a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they
must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as
an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the
other classes and send them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence of the
small-holding peasants, therefore, finds its final expression in the executive power

In fact, Marx was concerned with the kind of profound changes brought about
by the penetration of the capitalist mode of production into the peasant producers. The
nature of fragmentation and regimentation experienced by the vast masses of the French
peasantry in many ways structurally curtailed the potential to form a collective force
against the exploitative regime. Even though the French peasantry demonstrated its class
awareness and consciousness while allying with the rising bourgeoisie against the
aristocracy, the consolidation of power by the bourgeoisie paved the way for the further
marginalisation of the peasant. In fact, within the peasants, the upper layer of the
peasants in the same period demonstrated that its class interests increasingly laid with
the bourgeoisie and therefore it tilted towards the new ruling class. The development of
the capitalist class relations, Marx’s argument takes place mainly through the
expropriation of the peasantry from the soil. This is the secret which reveals how a
capitalist class, owing nothing, the means of production, came to face the working class
owing nothing, the labour power. In England, expropriation was achieved chiefly by the
acts of enclosures, which forcibly evicted the cultivators from their lands (Marx 1972:
760-93). In France, the country’s peasant masses played a crucial role in the eventual
setback of the aristocracy during the revolution. In fact, due to the alliance with the
bourgeoisie, French peasants secured the right to possess lands. However, the nature of
the policies initiated by the bourgeoisie regime subordinated them to capital by means
of debt and usury, which allowed the latter to remain on their lands for some time, albeit
as increasingly marginal owners (Katz 1992: 60). Thus, the penetration of the capitals
development into the countryside led to the eventual marginalisation of the vast masses
of the peasant producers. The free peasant proprietorship, which at the beginning of the
nineteenth century was the condition for the liberation and enrichment of the French
country folk … developed in the course of this century into the law of their enslavement
and pauperisation (Marx 1975 189-90).

According to a critical commentator, “Marx language raises the question
whether, in his view the mid-nineteenth century peasantry had become a class-in-itself,
a set of producers objectively bond by the common production relations whom nevertheless failed to express their common interests in consciousness and practice. Capitalist relations of production, Marx pointed out, had the paradoxical effect of isolating rather than the uniting the peasantry, undermining their capacity for class struggle. But Marx’s analysis belies the thesis that the peasantry permits only a structural definition, independently of any expression of peasant class struggles, because it was merely the passive instrument of other classes and their various representatives. Quite contrary, Marx shows that the peasants could still resist mightily the loss of their lands, even if eventually they were defeated” (Katz 1992: 60). In fact, Marxian views and perspectives on the peasant societies and its viability and the sustainability was shaped by his analysis of the capitalist mode of production and the nature of transformation it brought about in the life of the European peasant producers. The profound changes initiated by the capitalist pattern of farming and the resultant dislocations of the marginal and medium agricultural producers compelled him to reach the conclusion that the presence of the peasant commodity production was inherently against the laws and logic of the capitalist development and therefore led to its increasing extinction, when the penetration of capitalist relation of production reach its zenith. However, Marx’s various studies and interpretations on the pre-capitalist peasant societies in the present day Third World countries received a wide range of responses. According to Utsa Patnaik, “Marx’s discussion of usury and merchant capital is of particular importance for developing countries where these “antediluvian” forms of capital have been important in undermining peasant production and pauperizing the small peasantry, given by the heavy tax and rent demands under colonial systems.” Marx observes:

Usurer’s capital employs the method of exploitation characteristic of capital yet without the latter’s mode of production. This condition also repeats itself within the bourgeois economy, in backward branches off industry or in those branches which resist the transition to the modern mode of production. For instance, if we wish to compare the English interest rate with the Indian, we should not take the interest rate of the bank of England, but rather, e.g., that charged by lenders of small machinery to small producers in domestic industry...

The really important characteristic domain of the usurer, however, is the function of money as a means of payment. Every payment of money, ground – rent, tribute, tax, etc., which becomes due on a certain dates carries with it the need for such a purpose. Hence from the days of ancient Rome to those of modern times, wholesale usury relies upon tax-collectors ...Then, there develop with commerce and generalization of commodity-production the separation, in time, of purchase and payment. The money has to be paid on definite date. How this can lead to circumstances in which the money capitalist and usurer, even nowadays, merge into one is shown by modern crises (Marx cited in Patnaik 2007: 13-14).
In fact, every past and present social formation practised in one way or the other the extraction and appropriation of resources from its original producers. In every social formation, the original producers of values would be exploited and marginalized by the dominant social groups within social formations. Since the time of the emergence of the asymmetrical relations in the process of production due to the private appropriation of the means of production up to the present capitalist era, appropriation of surplus from the original producers was the fundamental reasons for the classes and social hierarchies in the modern societies. However on many occasions, Marx raised his reservations against the evolutionary interpretations of human societies from slave mode to the present capitalist mode. By utilizing his studies on the evolution of the capitalist mode of production in West European societies, Marx categorically repudiated this form of interpretation made by the Russian writer N. Mikhailovsky in 1877 and in his communication to the Russian populist activist and thinker Vera Zeulich, Marx clearly asserted his position:

For him it is absolutely necessary to change my sketch of the origin of capitalism in western Europe into an historico-philosophical theory of the universal progress, fatally imposed on all peoples, regardless of the historical circumstances in which they find themselves, ending fatally in that economic system which assures both the greatest amount of the productive labour and the fullest development of man. But I must beg his pardon. This to do me both too much honor and too much discredit. In various places in Capital have alluded to the destiny which overtook the plebeians of ancient Rome. They were originally free peasants cultivating each of his own account his own parcel of land. In the course of the roman history they were expropriated. The same movement which separated them from their means of production and subsistence brought about not only the formation of the great landed estates but that of great holding of money capital as well. Thus, one fine morning there were on the one hand free men deprived of everything expect their labour power and. On the other, to exploit this labour, the holders of all acquired wealth. What happened? The roman proletarians became, not wage-earners, but an idh: mob...and beside them there developed a mode of production which was not capitalist but based on slavery. Thus, events which were strikingly analogous, but which took place in different historical circumstances, led to entirely dissimilar results. By studying each of these evolutions separately , and by comparing them afterwards, the key to these phenomena can easily be found, but one will never succeed with the "open sesame" of an historic-philosophical theory of which the supreme virtue consists in its being supra-historical (quoted in Blackstock and Hoselitz cited in Bettelheim 1978: 548-49).

From this lengthy passage of the Marxian explanation of his views of the socio-economic transition of society from one mode of production to other, it was explicitly clear that he rejected all forms of deterministic and teleological evolution of human societies from a lower stage to a higher stage, the kind of determinism and reductionism alleged to his theory by many of his critics and followers. Marx's analysis of the various forms of rents, namely absolute ground rents and differential rents and the importance of the absolute ground rents as the means for investigating the class structure of capitalist
agriculture, offering the possibility of identifying the manner in which surplus is
distributed and transferred (Banaji 1976: 2-49). Utsa Patnaik in a recent piece also
stressed that Marx’s writing on the absolute ground rents which is discussed in a series
of powerfully expressed chapters in Capital. Vol. III. She considered that the crux of the
Marx’s analysis of the nature of expropriation of the original producers and resultant
extraction of their labour power constituted the cornerstone of the capitalist class
formation (Patnaik 2007: 11-13). By looking at the vantage point of the Marxian
historiography, one could astonishingly realise that the most viable way of approaching
and explaining the internal social dynamics of those peasant societies are to consider
those as independent social formation having its own social dynamics similar to that of
capitalist and feudal social formations.

Engels has enormously enriched the Marxian perspective on the peasant
societies by his often cited Peasant War in Germany and The Peasant Question in
France and Germany. In his peasant war in Germany, Engels examines the origin of
the peasant war, the position of the various parties that played a part in it, the political
and religious, theories by which those parties sought to clarify their positions in their
own minds, and finally the result of the struggle itself as a necessary upshot of the
historically established conditions of social life of these classes; that is to say, it
attempted to demonstrate the political structure of the Germany of that time, the revolt
against it and the contemporary political and religious theories not as causes but as the
result of the stages of development of agriculture, industry, land and waterways
commerce in commodities and money then obtaining in Germany (Engels 1956: 8). In
fact, Engels’ piece on the peasant war in Germany was the finest class analysis of the
massive militant peasant’s rebellion witnesses in the late 15th and early 16th centuries in
present day Germany. It was not merely a rebellion against the feudal and the church
hierarchies who dominated the European societies in that point of time, but rather it
marked the gradual beginning of the nationalist assertion and the gradual separation and
emergence of guildsmen from the feudal guilds. The re-emergence of money (which
was completely replaced in the feudal era due to the self sufficiency of the each feudal
estate) accelerated the degeneration of the feudal mode of production and paved the way
for the modern bourgeoisie in the aftermath of the peasant war (Engels 1959: 179). The
penetration of the capitalist relation of production into agriculture in the West European
societies reveals that instead of completely transforming the middle and marginal
peasants into rural proletariat, they continue to remain peasant producers even though
their number has decreased substantially. Engels treated the poor peasants and along with middle peasants who remained in the countryside across Germany and France as the possible support base for the socialist politics and the potential allies for the working-class fight against the capitalist order. In fact, Engels' work on the peasant question and the nature of the classification and delineation on the basis of social differentiation he made on the rural peasantry was, as pointed out by Terry Byres, a valuable tool for the radical political groups in the Third World with substantial per cent of such population to follow (T. J. Byres in Rahman 1986: xv).

Karl Kausky's Views on Development of Capitalism in Agriculture and the Agrarian Question

Karl Kautsky was considered as one of the leading Marxist theoreticians in Germany whose piece Die Agrarfrage was one of the most widely acclaimed works which Lenin characterised as the one of the remarkable original contributions to the Marxist doctrine after the volume three of Capital (Lenin 1966: 14). Kautsky's work was divided into two parts and the first one "The Development of Agriculture in Capitalist Society" describes the developments of the capitalist relations in the German agriculture with massive empirical data. In the second part of the work named "The Social-Democratic Agrarian Policy" Kausky formulated the social democratic agenda for the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). According to Athar Hussain and Keith Tribe Karl Kautsky distinguishes between the two forms of discourses on agriculture: the analysis of specific situation and of tendencies. He considers the former as the essential for formulating agrarian programmes and political strategies. In contrast, the analysis of tendencies has scope. It is not restricted to any particular national economy. Though he does not conceive of it in this way, the distinction between the two forms of discourses amounts to one between intra-national and international analysis.

The task of the theorist, according to Kausky, is to look for general tendencies of social evolution which are supposedly the same in all capitalist countries. Hence the reason for the equating the analysis of tendencies with international analysis. Kautsky goes on to argue, though the tendencies of evolution in all capitalist countries (in particular those in agriculture) are the same everywhere, the form in which they are realised may well vary from one country to another. So far as agriculture is concerned, the explanations for the variations in the form of realization tendencies have to be looked for in factors such as differences in geographical location, climatic factors,
historical conditions and the balance of political forces between different classes" (Hussain and Tribe 1981: 103-4). Karl Kautsky along with Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg viewed the 'self sufficiency' as the crucial identification mark of the pre-capitalist economic formations, often also interchangeably used as natural economy. Karl Kautsky treats the shift from the natural economy and resultant emergence of the market relationship as the major factor leading to the evolution of the capitalist relations of production. The spread of market relationships as pointed out by Kautsky not only spins the web of personal interrelationships but also erode pre-capitalist relationship and organizations and led to their replacement by capitalist relations and organisations (Ibid: 115).

However, many Marxist scholars have had challenged this notion and they argues that the changes taking place in the relations of production and the resultant emergence of the vast mass of the property less population in the rural areas, who were manifested in to proletarians in the countryside paved the way for the evolution of the capitalist relations. In other words the expropriation of the vast masses of peasantry from their means of production sprout the seeds and routes of the capitalist social formation (Marx 1971; Patnaik 2007; Dobb 1978). Kautsky argued that the path of development taken by agriculture is of limited significance in the over all context of the society. In the capitalist society, industry is the leading sector of the economy and its relative importance would continue to increase over time. The economic industry and urban areas which are the sites of the major political and economic changes and it is from there that changes in agriculture initially originate. He argues that the nature of the development in the agricultural sector would not be diverged from the pattern of development witnessed in the industrial sector. The extension of the capitalist production in agriculture does not take the form of an extension in the area occupied by large capitalist farms - 'as it does in industry'--but rather a proliferation in the range of activities carried out by large farms. This, in turn, contributed to the increasing interconnection between industry and agriculture by penetrating the industrial activities to the countryside (Hussain and Tribe 1983: 108-9). Kautsky also reveals that contrary to the expectation of the Marx and many other such commentators that, the nature of capitalist development in agriculture would inevitably resulting the expropriation of the marginal and medium peasants from their access to the means of production similar to the transition witnessed in the industrial sector. In fact, the concrete manifestation of the penetration of the capitalist mode of production in to the agrarian arena
demonstrate that irrespective of the land concentration and mechanisation of the every aspects of farming, the small holding peasants continue to operate in the West European countryside. In Kautsky’s book, there is a clear separation of the peasantry into three distinct strata, with specific and differing class characteristics (in specific and differing relationship, to the means of production and to one another); rich middle and poor (Banaji 1976: 38-41).

The way in which the small and medium peasants adapted to the overwhelming capitalist relations in the countryside by re-orienting their past practices thereby manifesting themselves into agricultural wage labourers and preserving the land they possess. The manifestation of poor peasants as rural proletariat and restricting petty commodity production towards their family consumption undermined the general assumption that the emergence of market relations and resultant competition would necessarily pave the way for the collapse of the pre-capitalist forms of productions mainly due to the inability to compete with the large capitalist producers. Even though Karl Kautsky mentioned the proletarianisation taking place in the countryside, he hardly further expanded it. In fact, it was Lenin who focused his attention on the nature of class formation taking place in the Russian countryside after the penetration of the capitalist relations of production which would be examined in the next secession.

**Lenin’s Theses on the Economic and Social Differentiation of the Peasantry**

V. I. Lenin published his voluminous classic piece, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, in Siberian exile in the closing year of the 19th century. His work was a response to the populist and many other political groups in Russia who consistently argued for renovating the past communal practices and pattern of production as the sole remedy for the country’s economic stagnation and resolving the acute social chaos encountered by the Russian society. Between 1893 and 1900, Lenin worked on a number of studies which can be reduced into two groups: detailed evaluation of recently published material on Russian economic development and criticisms of the theory of the narodinism. These two strands come together in the development of capitalism in Russia which, in a sense, constitutes the summary of the agrarian writings of the previous years (Hussain and Tribe 1981: 187). Lenin demonstrated with extensive empirical evidents of the *Zemestvo* statistics that Russian countryside was increasingly moving towards the capitalist orientation and as a result, the development of the home market and increasing social differentiation of the peasant household was far from clear. The increasing
orientation of the commercial or commodity production would encourage the reorganisation of agriculture, specially the leasing of land and the hiring of labour. Market improvement with the concomitant indebtedness would make the producers vulnerable to economic and/or climatic variations. Under these circumstances, impoverishment and depeasantisation and resultant proletarianisation of the vast masses of hitherto peasant producers would be general feature of the Russian countryside (Schulman et al. 1989: 525).

The preface to the first edition, Lenin clearly stated the aim of examining the question of how a home market is being followed for Russian capitalism, and how in all forms of agricultural and industrial production, capitalist relations are increasingly dominant. The existence of the market relations itself provided the market that the narodnik deny. He also identified two lines of development along the capitalist direction either the old junker economy’ or the old economy is broken up by the revolution, allowing the free development of small peasant farming and a more progressive type of capitalist development taking place in the agriculture. In the latter, the pace of the differentiation is expected to be much more speedy and sweeping (Lenin cited in Rahman 1986: 5). In the Russian countryside, capitalist relations of production as demonstrated by Lenin, were increasingly visible in the last decades of the 19th century and the Narodnik claim that the peasants in the countryside were still a homogeneous entity hardly reflects the concrete reality existing in the rural sphere. In fact, in his work, Lenin emphatically reveals that peasants’ in the countryside were virtually polarised into different social classes.

Lenin, after the rigorous analysis of the latest Zemstvo statistics demonstrated that there existed an unequal distribution of resources which automatically produced a stratified peasantry. He also predicted that under the competitive market system, economic advantages and disadvantages would develop cumulatively and that the peasantry would be eventually polarised into two distinct groups of unequal size. In such a scenario, the peasantry would marked by all the contradictions usually emerging in the developing economy namely competition the struggle for economic independence; grabbing of land (purchasable and rentable); concentration of production in the hands of a minority; the forcing of the majority into the ranks of a proletariat; the exploitation of the proletariat by a minority through the medium of merchant capital; and the hiring of the farm labourers. Lenin endorsed that the above characteristics were empirically identifiable in the countryside and this in turn led to the formation of
different social groups with contradictory class interests (Ibid). Lenin’s formulations of the differentiated peasants were also influenced by the Marx description of the ground rents which he explained in the chapter 47 of the Capital volume III on the genesis of the capitalist ground rents. They are namely; labour rent, rent-in-kind, and money rent. In Marx’s words: “Labour rent arise in a system where the direct producers using the instruments of labour (labour, cattle etc.) which actually or legally belong to him, cultivates soil actually or legally belong him, cultivates soil actually owned by him during part of the week, and works during the remaining days upon the estate of the feudal lord without any compensation from the feudal lord” (Marx cited in Lenin 1977, 177). Rent in kind emanates from the practice where the original producer himself produces the entire product of land by personal labour and hands over to the land owner the entire surplus product in kind. In this type of rent, producers are relatively free and they are able to acquire by his labour certain surplus over and above the amount of produce that fulfil his essential needs (Rahman 1986: 15). The rent in kind is defined by Marx’s as:

...this form will give rise to greater differences in the economic position of the individual direct producers. At least the possibility for such a differentiation exists and the possibilities for the direct producer to have in turn acquired the means to exploit other labourers directly (Marx cited in Lenin 1977: 178).

In the case of the third category money rent, the direct producer rather than handing over the goods in kind would give him the value of the goods in money form. Money rent however, presupposes reasonable development of commerce, urban industry, commodity production in general and thereby of money circulation. The relationship between the peasants and the land owners would manifest into a pure cash-contact based one. Moreover, the transformation of the rent in kind into money rent is not only inevitably accompanied, but is even anticipated by the formation of a class of property less day-labourers, who hire out themselves for money. In the emergence of the money rent, Marx observes:

...in this way they gradually acquire the capability of accumulating a certain amount of wealth and themselves becoming transformed into future capitalists. The old self-employed possessors of the land themselves thus give rise to a nursery school for capitalist tenants, whose development is conditioned by the general development of capitalist production beyond the bounds of the countryside (Marx cited in Lenin 1977: 179).

In fact, Lenin’s perspective on differentiation of the Russian peasantry and the general patterns of the capitalist development as described by Marx in the Volume III of the Capital are identical process. By relying on the criterion mentioned above, Lenin
had divided the Russian rural dwellers into three groups. The upper layer of the Lenin's class hierarchy constitutes the rural bourgeoisie or prosperous peasantry who were economically strong, independent and engaged in all aspects of commercial farming. Within this category, some of them were pure agricultural producers which purchased or leased land and depended on the rural wage labourers for farm works and the nature of the wage labour they hires was proportionally far higher than the family labour used in the farm. These groups of farmers invested enormously in land, farm machinery and other such farm infrastructures. These groups of peasants nearly constitute 20 percent of the rural peasantry and have owned 60 to 70 percent of the purchased land, controlled 50 to 80 percent of the total of all leased land and owned more than 50 percent of total horses. They possess the industrial and commercial enterprise and the main employer of peasant labour.

The lowest ladder of Lenin's class hierarchy was constituted by the rural proletariat. They possess tiny plots of land and most of them hardly own a single horse. The states of their farm were in acute crisis and stagnation. Lenin clubbed people such as farm hands, day labourers, the unskilled labourer, and the construction or other such workers fell into this group. Lenin reveals that though they were not strictly landless people, the gradual penetration of capitalist relation to the countryside in Russia were similar to the kind of changes witnessed by the West European societies where exist there a limited range of marginal and medium peasants irrespective of overwhelming capitalist supremacy in the agrarian production (Rhaman 1986: 17).

The third group Lenin identifies is the middle peasants who constitute around 30 percent of the rural population. Their social conditions were miserable and hardly penetrated any practices of the commodity economy. Lenin considered the middle group as the most unstable social segments in the rural areas which probably would be pushed to the lower layer of the social ladder sooner than later. The massive expansion of the home market and the migration of the labouring class to the urban centres resulted in the simultaneous development of the industrial sector. Lenin mainly used two broad indices in order to demonstrate the differentiation of households in rural area: the amount of the sown are and the number of horses (Ibid). Lenin presented his well-received Preliminary Draft Theses on the Agrarian Question in 1920. It was mainly intended to analyse the capitalistic transformation of the agrarian production in the Western Europe and in the light of that development and he extrapolated a certain classification of the rural class
structure which emerged in west Europe since the capitalist penetration. The following are the classes Lenin identified in the Western European countryside:

(i) First, the agricultural proletariat or wage-labourers (by the year, season or day who obtain their livelihood by working on hire basis at capitalist agricultural enterprises).

(ii) Second, the semi-proletariat or peasants who till tiny plots of land i.e. those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage-labourers... and partly by working on their own or rented plots of land, which provide their families only with a part of their means of subsistence.

(iii) Third, the small peasantry i.e. the small scale tillers who, either as owners or tenants, hold small plots of land, which enable them to satisfy the needs of their families and their farm, and do not hire outside labour.

(iv) In the economic sense, one should understand by ‘middle peasants’ those small farms who either as owners of tenants’ hold plots of land that are small but under capitalism, sufficient to provide them with meagre subsistence for the family and the bare minimum needed to maintain the farm. It can also produce a certain surplus which may in good years at least be converted into capital.

(v) The big peasants are capitalist entrepreneurs in agriculture, who as a rule employ several hired labourers and are connected with the ‘peasantry’ only in their low cultural level, habits of life and the manual labour they themselves perform on their farm.

(vi) The big landowners, who, in capitalist countries directly or through their tenant farmers systematically exploit wage labour and the neighbouring small (and, not infrequently, part of the middle) peasantry, do not themselves engage in manual labour, and are in the main descended form of feudal lords (Lenin Cited in Rahman 1986: 55-6).

Many of the Soviet Marxists in various ways enriched and expanded the Leninist theoretical terrain before and after the revolution. The Agrarian Marxist School which emerged in the post-revolutionary period substantially expanded the classification made by Lenin in the context of the capitalist development in the West. But their focuses were shifted to the internal social changes initiated by the changes in the agrarian policy of the working class state.
In the early post-revolutionary period, many scholars who were associated with the various organs of the Soviet state party broadly followed the theoretical insight provided by the Lenin analysing the social differentiation in the countryside and collectively modified the Leninist concept while analysing the socio-economic transformations undergone in the Russian villages after the introduction of the NEP (New Economic Policy). Those scholars later come to be known as agrarian Marxist school. L. N. Kritsman and a group of scholars challenged the neo-populist interpretation of the peasantry and attempted to formulate appropriate methodology to study the socio-economic stratification emerging in the countryside in the post-revolutionary era (Rahaman 1986: 20). Kritsman and his fellow agrarian Marxists encountered a peculiar scenario arousing out of the inverse leasing of the land in the post-revolution and civil war in Russia. In the post-revolutionary context, they observed that rich peasants increasingly hired the labour and farm animals of the poor peasants. Therefore, they argued that in the new circumstances of the NEP, the emerging pattern of differentiation could not be explained with the help of the older indices (Cox 1978: 25). They considered that the stratification by 'sown area' (originally suggested by Lenin) was inadequate as the peasantry was being differentiated by the ownership of the scarce animals reflected in post-revolutionary Russia and the extent of dependence on farms. They thus advocated collecting data on direct class indices such as hire and sale of labour power, rent and lease of land and the hire and lease of stock and working animals (Rahman 1986: 20). Kritsman and others noticed that farmers entered into different types of relationships depending on the extent of possession of the above factors. Kritsman argued that it should be possible to discover the predominant balance of relations engaged in by particular farm and subsequently use these relations to characterize the class nature of those farms (Ibid).

Kritsman had classified the peasants in the post-revolutionary Russian countryside based on their engagement in the production process. The first types of farmers were those who were regularly hiring labour and classified those groups as entrepreneurial. The second group consisting of peasants’ producers whose relations were predominantly exploited were termed dependent. The last category consists of farm whose relations were more or less in balance between the exploiting and the exploited tendencies were considered to be an independent farm (Cox 1978: 3). When, Kritsman and his associates were engaged in the formulation of appropriate conceptual
method to identify the class stratification emerging in the Soviet countryside in the 1920s, Nemechinov (a statistician working in the Urals region and not member of Moscow based Kritsman group) was inspired by the Kritsman’s work and formulated a methodology to operationalise his idea. The methodology developed by the Nemechinov was able to demonstrate the nature of the stratification existing in the Soviet countryside both in qualitative and quantitative ways.

Kritsman while appreciating the initiative of the Ural Statistician also suggested some modifications. He pointed out that Nemchinov viewed labour and the means of production separately. This misled Nemchinov to assert that a peasant’s labour on his own farm was an indicator of his independence. The peasants could be termed independent, emphasised Kritsman, only if he laboured with his own means of production (Solomon cited in Rahman 1986: 23). Kritsman also found certain limitations in the method of calculation used by Nemechinov in working out the balance of tendencies with a farm. He advocated two rules of calculation instead. They are namely: (1) for farms hiring labour and leasing out stock, the ratio of the households owning labour to all labour employed on their farms should be calculated and the ratio of their own means of production employed on their own farms to the total value of their own means of production wherever it was employed. (2) for farming selling labour power and hiring stock or animals, the ratio should be calculated of their own labour on their own farms to their total labour power wherever it was employed, and the ratio of their means of productions on their own farms to all the means of production employed on their own farms (Cox 1978: 4). The first calculation would reveals the extent of farms moving to the capitalist form of production and the second inform about the extent of those farms pushed to the proletarianisation and depeasantisation in the post-revolutionary era. Kritsman claim that the kind of methodology and technique used by him would able to demonstrate the real picture of the emerging stratification in the early Soviet period. Kritsman’s two rules later became the core of the agrarian Marxist methodology for the study of the differentiation of the peasantry.

Mao’s Perception on Peasantry and Agrarian Classes

Mao Tse-Tung who succeeds Lenin in the Marxian tradition to apply with finesse the class model and the notion of dialectical materialism in analysing the Chinese agrarian society, and to bring about a revolutionary change in it. A sympathetic critic remarks: whereas Lenin’s model of rural classes and his characterization of the middle peasant
are based on the presuppositions of the capitalist relations of productions in agriculture. Mao’s framework is more elaborate and comprehensive enough to encompass the pre-capitalist, quasi-land lord-tenant relations as well as capitalist relations. His concept of middle peasants thus refers to “those who own land, or own only part of their land and rent the rest and also those who own no land of their own and rent all their land, but all of them have a fair number of implements. To Mao, a middle peasant derives his income wholly or mainly from his own labour and as a rule does not exploit others. In many cases, he himself is exploited by others by having to pay in land rent and in interest on loans. But generally the middle peasants do not sell their labour power. Although some well-to-do middle peasants do practise exploitation to a small extent that is not their regular or the main source of income” (Dhanagare 1983: 8). Mao-Tse Tung wrote his famous article “How to Differentiate Classes” in 1926. It was the time that, the Chinese revolutionary movement began gradually moving away from its infant stage. In fact, the Chinese Communist Party extensively referred to it after the victory of revolution to formulate and implement land reforms. In his characterisation of the Chinese countryside, Mao identified following classes.

(1) The Landlord: A land lord is a person who owns land, does not engage in labour himself or does so only to a very small extent, and lives by exploiting the peasants. The collection of the land rent is his main form of exploitation.

(2) The Rich Peasant: The rich peasants as a rule own land. But some rich peasants own only part of their land and rent the remainder. Others ... rent all their land. His main forms of exploitation are the hiring of labour ... A person who owns fair amounts of good land, farms some of himself without hiring labour, but exploits other peasants by means of land rent, interest or in other ways, shall also be treated as a rich peasant.

(3) The Middle Peasant: Many middle peasants own land. Some own part of their land and rent the rest. Others ... rent all their land. A middle peasants derives his income wholly or mainly from his labour. As a rule, he does not exploit others and in many cases he himself is exploited by others. Some middle peasants (the well-to-do middle peasants) do practise exploitation to small extent, but this is not their regular or their main source of income.

(4) The Poor Peasant: Among the poor peasants, some own part of their land ... others own no land at all, but only a few farm odd farm implements. As a rule poor peasants have to rent the land they work on and are subjected to
exploitation, having to pay land rent and interest on loans to hire themselves out to some extent. In general, a middle peasant does not need to sell his labour power while the poor peasant has to sell part of his labour power.

(5) The Worker: The workers (including the farm labour) as a rule own no land or farm implements, though some do own a very small amount of land and very few farm implements. Workers make their living wholly or mainly by selling their labour.

In many ways, Mao’s classification of the Chinese peasantry was a substantial shift from the hitherto Marxian conception of peasants. Irrespective of the number of similarities, one could explicitly find this with Lenin’s schema of classification of the peasantry named “Preliminary Draft Theses” which he had formulated in the 1920s wherein Lenin attempted to provide a general classification of the peasantry in the European context. While discussing the differences between the Leninist conception and the Mao’s classification of the peasantry Utsa Patnaik remarks:

In the first, labour hiring is taken as the only main index for differentiating classes within the peasantry, and it is specified that the holding may be the either owned or tenanted. In the second, however, along with the labour hiring, rent exploitation (and indeed also loan interest) is explicitly included in differentiating classes. We believe that the reason for the differences is the following: in the context of the European capitalist countries to which his PDT refers, rent exploitation by landlords, still remained as a feudal hangover, affected all sections of the peasantry and therefore was not germane to the question of differentiation of the peasantry. This was a result of developing capitalist relations, i.e. of labour hiring alone. In the Chinese context, however, extraction of rent and loan interest (besides labour hiring) by richer sections of the peasantry itself from poorer ones, as of some importance, and hence had to be explicitly considered (Utsa Patnaik Cited in Rahman 1986: 57).

In fact Mao’s classification of the Chinese peasantry would be a replica of the concrete realities prevailing in most of the Third World societies, still marked by the substantial majority of the population are agrarian dwellers. Moreover, it would in fact undermine the classical Marxian emphasis on the primacy of the industrial proletariat as the sole potential social agency which has the strength and necessary class consciousness to make a qualitative transformations in any society. Such kinds of reductionist and essentialist reading of the Marxian writings made by most of the First generation Marxian adherents were refuted by the experience of the Chinese and Vietnamese revolution where peasantry, especially its lower and middle strata played a substantial role.
Utsa Patnaik’s Extension of the Leninist Theory of Agrarian Differentiation

Utsa Patnaik is one of the leading exponents of the Leninist theory of the peasant differentiation in the context of the widespread penetration of the capitalist relations in Third World societies. In a recent piece, Patnaik re-emphasised her critique of the Chayanovian views of the demographic differentiation by using the empirical data provided by some of the earlier contributors. Though she agrees that the pre-capitalist social formations were still very much structural realities of the Third World countries, the capitalist mode of production emerged as the dominant social formation in the most of the areas of the Third World rural sphere. Patnaik had developed a criterion to measure the agrarian social differentiation prevailing across the Third World countries by expanding the Leninist and Mao’s perspective to the concrete realities of India and developed labour exploitation criteria (e-criterion) to demonstrate the extent of social differentiation existing in the countryside. Patnaik pointed out that:

By economic differentiation we refer to the fact that there is no single homogeneous type of holding with respect to the way production activity is organized, which may be taken as representative type. On the contrary, the very fact of concentration of means of production implies that there must be qualitatively distinct types of holdings which differ in the way their production activity is organized. A minority of households have so much resource relative to the family size that they cannot cultivate with family labour alone but must rely primarily on the labour of others. At the other pole a large proportion of the households—which may be the majority, have the so little resources relative to the working capacity and consumption needs of the family that they must rely primarily on working for others in some for another? Furthermore, these different types of holdings enter into relations with each other in the production process through labour hiring and land leasing. The Marxist position is that economic classes are to be looked at in terms of the above two related criteria: possession of the means of the production, and the exploitation of labour (Utsa Patnaik cited in Rahman 1986: 57-9).

Patnaik developed certain equations and formulas to measure the extent of the exploitation and differentiation prevailing in the contemporary Indian countryside. From her formula, she identifies two types of exploitation in the countryside. The first types where some land owners, and a portion of commercial farmers heavily depend on the hired labour for the farm activities; this means, they were the capitalist farmers in the countryside. In the second type she identifies, that some others highly rely on the rents accruing from their ownership rights. While using her formula, these groups could be characterised as the landlord type exploiters in the countryside. Her empirical findings also reveal that some peasants opting for frequent hiring out of their labour power and certain others rent their labour power, which means that they were either agricultural labourers or petty tenants depending on the way they channellised their
labour power. In the recent period, T. J. Byres, Venktesh Atherya et al. and many others in different part of the world, especially in the Third World context attempted to expand the theory of economic differentiation in the light of the further consolidation of capitalist relations in the developing countries by employing the profound insights provided by Lenin and Mao.

**Rosa Luxemburg's Marxian Critic of the Marx's Theory of Expanded Reproduction of the Capitalist Mode of Production**

Rosa Luxemburg was one of the leading Marxist activists and theorists who represented the revolutionary left fraction within the German Socialist Party (SPD). Luxemburg published her classic work, *Accumulation of Capital* in 1913. Her work was often considered as a Marxist critical of Karl Marx. Ashok Mitra pointed out that:

> Luxemburg's primary concern in her writings was to lay bare nature of the forces that sustain capitalist accumulation. She invited attention to an apparent lack of emphasis in Marx on the problem of realisation of surplus value through sales in the market; a problem she felt could indeed arise in a closed capitalist system. In the process, she wandered across to an exploration of the possibilities of non-equivalent exchange in the sphere of circulation (Mitra 1977: 26).

Luxemburg's main point of departure from the numerical examples for simple reproduction (production with a constant stock of capital) and expanded reproduction (production with capital were accumulating) set out in volume two of *Capital*. As she pointed out, Marx completed the model for simple reproduction, but the model for accumulation were left at his death in a chaos of notes, and they were not really fit to bear all the weight put on them (Robinson in Luxemburg 1963: 13). According to Luxemburg, the genesis of the capitalist crisis lies in the rationale of capitalist accumulation itself. The realisations of surplus value takes place in the market. A portion of the surplus value is used for the consumption demands of the capitalists and their hangers-on. The remaining part of the surplus value is assumed to be invested. But what provide the inducement to invest? She doubts this inducement would always be such as to absorb wholly the residual of the surplus value not used up in capitalist consumption? Luxemburg contends that in a closed capitalist system, this query cannot be answered unequivocally. Marx's reproduction schema by itself fails to provide an adequate solution to the problem. It suffers from a number of lacunae. For instance, it does not quite deal with the issue of technical change that is on an increase in the organic composition of capital, which could lead to a disproportion in the rate of expansion of constant and variable capitals. The interpretation of the nature of activities
In, and exchange between departments one and department two leaves many other similar loose ends. The major question concerns the substance of the urge to invest, which in turn depends upon the effectiveness of demand. There is no obvious mechanism by which the problem could be endogenously solved. Working with a numerical illustration of the Marxian model, Luxemburg invited attention to an instance of disharmony between the rates of output of the two departments: Department two throws up a surplus which cannot be absorbed in a closed system, that is to say, Marx's schematics is not self-contained; at the margin certain emendations are there for necessary to ensure the smooth development of the capitalist economy, one has to go outside the system (Mitra 1978: 26-7). Luxemburg identifies the capitalist conquest of the external market through the colonial domination, and through imperial hegemony capitalist system to over-comes its inherent inability for the expanded reproduction by sole dependence on the internal market and economic dynamics. Luxemburg described this in the Chapter XXVI of the *Accumulation of Capital*.

Luxemburg argued that through the expansion of its sphere of influence by penetrating the pre-capitalist social formations outside the capital-worker two class system, it could be able to resolve the question of excess supply of the output in the department two and thereby sustain accumulation. Capitalism can thus survive only on the assumption of the existence of an exogenous market. The pre-capitalist economies which still survive for instance, the pocket of feudal and petty 'commodity production' provide this much needed exogenous market. It is only through penetration to these primitive economies that predatory capitalism keep on functioning normally. By unfair trade, plunder, military conquest, the industrial bourgeoisie spread their tentacles over pre-capitalist economies, which became the dumping ground for the excess supply of the capitalist system. The problem of accumulation-cum-realisation is thus by solved going out of the system in this manner; the rising stream of industrial output finds an additional outlet in the primitive economies, which are forced to absorb that part of the supply of consumption goods which is internally in excess (Mitra 1978: 27-8). The existences of the pre-capitalist social formations serve two different purposes. Firstly, the internal crises of the capitalist economy were averted by the accessibility of the primitive societies thereby resolving the domestic demand deficiency and thus avoiding the internal disharmony between department one and two. The second function it performs for the capitalist economy was that due to the presence of the external market working class internally restrained from the demand for the hike in wages which
otherwise would have been argued to ensure the wages to the level of aggregate demand. The external markets act as a receptacle; it helps to enhance the rate of accumulation for a given rate of internal exploitation. When accumulation attains its momentum, further inroads are made to the pre-capitalist social formations. It is thus a dynamic picture of continuously growing penetration into those primitive markets, and the boundaries of exploitation that are steadily extending outwards (Ibid). In short, Luxembourg vigorously sticks on to her firm position that capitalist system could not sustain its internal disharmonies between in two departments and the expanded reproduction without the external market. Luxembourg argues:

The existence and development of capitalism requires an environment of non-capitalist forms of productions, but not every one of this form not serve its ends. Capitalism needs non-capitalist social strata as a market for its surplus value, source of supply for its means of production and as a reservoir of labour power for its wage system.

For all these purposes forms of production based upon a natural economy are of no use to capital. In all social organizations, where natural economy prevails where there primitive peasant communities with common ownership of land, feudal system of bondage or anything of this nature, economic organizations essentially in response to the internal demand; and there for there is no demand or very little, for foreign goods, and also as a rule, no surplus production, or at least no urgent need to dispose of surplus product. What is more important, however, is that any natural economy, production only goes on because both means of production and labour power are bond in one form or other ... capitalism must therefore always and everywhere fight a battle of annihilation against every historical form of natural economy that it encounters, whether this is the slave economy feudalism, primitive communism, or patriarchal peasant economy. The principal method in this struggle is political force (revolution, war), oppressive taxations by the state, and cheap goods; they are partly applied simultaneously, and partly they succeed and complement one another. In Europe, force assumed revolutionary form in the fight against feudalism (this is the ultimate explanations of the bourgeois revolutions in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries); in the non-European countries, where it fight more primitive social organizations it assumes the policy of colonial policy (Luxemburg 1963: 368-69).

Luxemburg’s detailed account on the European colonial practices and the way in which multiple ways acted as an engine of metropolitan capitalist development were empirically substantiated by many scholars. However, within Marxist tradition a number of scholars have challenged her basic preposition i.e. the capitalism cannot sustain its accumulation and expanded reproduction without a third marker outside the capitalist and workers in the national economy. Nikolai Bukharin who was the leading early critic of Luxemburg and in his work on Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital countered her argument from a conventional Marxian standpoint. In fact, in the classic transition among debates on the trajectories transition from feudalism to capitalism between the Marxist scholars in the 1960s and 70s, scholars like Maurice Dobb, Rodney Hilton, Robert Brenner, Prabat Patnaik, Utsa Patnaik etc. challenged this views of Luxemburg, Paul Sweezy and number of dependency and world system theorists in
(differing ways) within the Marxian tradition. Luxemburg's views on primitive accumulation and the question of the relation between industry and agriculture etc. became the focal point of attention in the early decades of the Soviet social formation, which the following section examines.

The Soviet Debates on Industrialisation and Primitive Accumulation

The formative years of the Soviet working class state witnessed sharp debates within the Bolshevik party regarding the question of possible trajectories of the socialist industrialisation and how to mobilise resources towards that end. It was necessitated by the concrete realisation of the Soviet leaders that contrary to their expectations, the possibility and success of the revolutionary movement in West increasingly became a distant possibility and it was far away from the reality. Thus, the miserable setback to the revolutionary movement in the West forced the Soviet Marxists to look for internal alternative to the capital deficiencies. With the introduction of the NEP (New Economic Policy) in the early 1920s, the industrialisation debates acquired its momentum and it continued till the introduction of the collectivisation and economic planning in the early 1930s. There emerged two major contending perspectives which were proposed by Yevgeny Preobrazhensky and Nikolai Bukharin. The major propositions put forward by Preobrazhensky were extracting the resources from the peasant producers through the nationalisation of the agricultural sector which alone provide adequate capital for the industrialization in a short span of time. He argued that the large-scale heavy and capital goods industries would be developed in the primary stage of the process, and thereafter it could remain as foundation for the subsequent development of the light industries. Prebrazhensky's Classic work *New Economics* which was published in 1926 when the industrialisation debates reached its zenith.

The major argument of his book was based on the assumption that the potential savings exceeded actual savings within the national economy as a whole. Further, the only effective way to create modern, technologically advanced capital-intensive industry was to go ahead and built it, rather than rely on some indefinite accumulation through the scale of consumer goods. It also required much larger increase in producer goods output in the early period in order to produce an increase in consumer goods in a later period—by a factor of four or five to one (Munting 1982: 65). Preobrazhensky compared his proposal for the forceful extraction of resources from the non-socialist bourgeoisie branches of the economy i.e. peasantry to that of Karl Marx description of the primitive
capitalist accumulation by the England and other western states from the colonies in the early stage of their capitalist development. Likewise, drawing from Luxemburg’s notion of the primitive capitalism as an inevitable necessity for the expanded reproduction of the capitalist accumulation process, Preobrazhensky argues that given the problems faced by the Soviet Union in the post-revolution period, socialist period, socialist accumulation must be accompanied by primitive scaling accumulation. (Mitra 1979: 33). He formulated the law which regulates the primitive socialist accumulation as:

The more backward economically, petty bourgeoisie, peasant a particular country in which has gone over to the socialist organization of production, and the smaller the inheritance received by the socialist accumulation fund of the proletariat of this country when the social revolution takes place, by so much the more, in proportion, will socialist accumulation be obliged to rely on alienating part of the surplus product of socialist forms of economy ... this process of extending and consolidating the state economy can proceed both at the expense of its own forces and resources, that is the surplus product of the workers in state industry, and at the expense of the private, including peasant (itself including middle peasant) economy (Preobrazhensky 1965: 124, 226).

Prebrazhensky argues that since the peasantry constitutes a substantial majority of the population and is the major contributor of the national economy, any meaningful strategies for capital accumulation would be based on the utilisation or the potential of peasantry. Usually, accumulation of capital could effectively be practised by a state in varying ways such as taxation, especially of capitalist profit (i.e. the states taking over the capitalist is accumulating), inflationary printing of money, through the banking system and the market. The state could exploit its monopoly position in banking by passing on as credit to state organs deposits received from private producers. The most crucial factor would be market and price policy. But due to the advantageous position of the state in the market, it can exploit any sector of the economy by fixing relatively high prices vis-à-vis that sector. In the case of the Soviet state, by fixing relatively high prices for the industrial sector controlled by the state, the peasantry who constitute the socialist sector were forced to part of an unequal exchange wherein the state earns super-profit. In short, the centrality of the Preobrazhensky argument was that the effective practices of unequal exchange between the industrial and primary sector by inflating the prices of the former would provide necessary resources for the industrialisation.

Nikolai Bukharin was the leading contender against the forceful resource extraction from the peasantry through the imposing of adverse terms of trade between the industry and the agriculture. In fact, in 1921, he was a close associate of Prebrazhensky and both of them co-authored the well-acclaimed ABC of Communism.
He agreed to the necessity for the resource mobilisation from the agriculture and the inevitability of the large-scale industrialisation to consolidate the socialist system in the country. He said in July 1926:

Our state industry cannot obtain the means for its expansion solely from the labour of the working class... the peasantry must take its share in helping the state to build up socialist system of industry ... the whole question is: how much can be take away from the peasantry ... what are the limits of the pumping over? Comrades of opposition are in favour of an immoderate amount of pumping over and want to put so severe a pressure upon the peasantry that in our opinion the result would be economically irrational and politically impermissible (Quoted in Maurice Dobb 1966: 203).

The main crux of the Bukharin’s argument was that the healthy development of the economy required a harmonious policy with equal treatment of agriculture and the industrial sector. He was concerned that there should be an optimal combination of producer goods and consumer goods, and that both industry and agriculture should go together at an optimum rate. Industry should not grow at the expense of the agriculture. In varying ways, industry depended on the primary sector for raw materials (timber, cotton, flax etc) and on peasant demand. Likewise, the agricultural development depended upon the industry for the supply of agricultural machinery, artificial fertilizers, and consumer goods and as a market for agricultural produce. He therefore argued that it is essential for the agricultural income to increase so that more savings could be obtained from the agrarian sector for the industrial investment. He argued that industrial development might be gradual or slow, but it would be steady and its rate would be governed directly by the growth in agricultural output and exchange. A faster rate of growth would be enabled by a faster turnover in trade between industry and agriculture, and this in turn implied an increase, not a decrease, in peasant incomes. Peasants saving could be easily channellised by the state since banks were under full state control. In many ways, Bukharin’s views on peasantry substantially differed from the conventional Marxian characterisation of the peasant classes. He considered peasants neither as capitalist nor as petty-bourgeoisie. He viewed the family economy of the peasantry as a substantially different category from the usual generalizations. The Bolshevik party considered the peasantry as not a single homogeneous entity and within the agrarian producers some of them were exploitative peasants (Kulaks), and the substantial majority was marginal producers or landless labourers’ (Munting 1982: 68).

In the mid 1920s, Bukharin’s position received wider support within the party and many liberal concessions and rights were provided to the peasantry to expand their production. The restriction on the hiring of labour by the peasantry was neutralised. This
also necessitated by the internal power with the part and the Preobrazhenensky was often considered as the spoke person of left opposition led by the Leon Trotsky and this in turn resulted in the acceptance of the proposal of Bukharin. However, the left opposition in the party was marginalised and purged from the party by the Stalinist leadership in the late 1920s, by alleging them to be the left deviationist. Moreover, Stalin also branded Bukharin’s position as right deviation and he also was purged out in the early 1930s. In fact, Stalin adopted the policy of forceful collectivisation of the peasantry by following a kind of policy similar to that one advocated by the Preobrazhensky. The Soviet state followed a policy of primitive socialist accumulation which brought the entire country folk under the newly constituted collective and state farms and individual ownership in land was completely abolished.

The Question on the Intra-Sectoral Allocation of Resources (Terms of Trade) between Industry and Agriculture

In the Third World’s context, there emerged a large quantity of critical literature which described the misallocation or the preferential treatment followed by the most of the Third World states against certain sectors within their national economy. It was, in one sense, the continuation of the debates that took place in the early years of the Soviet industrialisation process as we mentioned in the previous part. To a large extent, the resource allocation and mobilisation of the resources within a national economy was shaped by a variety of factors. Most dominant among them were the nature and class character of the concerned states and the internal social dynamics within concerned country. In the case of the most of the Third World states, post-colonial states followed a kind of developmental regime primarily intended to accelerate the process of capitalist accumulation in the national economy and thereby provide crucial importance to the industrialization and urbanization within the Third World states. Since industrialisation and urbanisation are considered as the indicators of measuring a country’s development and progress, most of the states in the world, especially in the Third World regions, formulated polices intended to accelerate these processes. As result, some scholars have argued that Third World development would have a clear urban bias (Lipton: 1977). However, scholars like Asok Mitra and Terence Byres challenged the notion of urban biases and proposed the alternative notion of rural biases in Third World development. They argued that,

the surplus generated and appropriated within agriculture by various means (rent, interest, profit on reduction/or or trade) is not transferred outside agriculture, at least in ways
available to industrial accumulation (via the inter-sectoral terms of trade, or effective taxation of landed property and the profits of agrarian capital), and that there may be net transfers (via the terms of trade, subsidies, institutional rents, etc.) to agrarian property and capital—both of which express the strength of the latter and its capacity to effect 'rural bias' in state policies and expenditure (Bernstein and Byres 2001: 29).

Asok Mitra, argued that since the substantial majority of the Third World population were agrarian dwellers and depended on the petty-commodity production for their livelihood, states should focus on strengthening the agricultural sector through cooperatives and other such endeavours to strengthen the primary sector thereby generating resources for the further industrial development rather than imposing adverse exchange rate between primary and secondary goods in favour of the latter (Mitra 1979). Mitra’s views have all the more relevance and critical importance in the neo-liberal era, where most of the Third World States were withdrawn from the agricultural sector substantially and total budgetary allocation to the primary sector were abysmally low in every consecutive year cutting across the Third World states in the post-reform period.

The Green Revolution and the Penetration of Capitalist Mode of Production into the Third World Countryside

Most of the Third World countries liberated from the centuries of colonial and imperial dominations in the aftermath of the Second World War, mainly due to the sustained militant resistance made by the anti-colonial national liberation movements in those countries. Most of these countries were situated in the Afro-Asian continents. Even though the majority of the Latin American states were liberated from the colonial domination in the early decades of the 20th centuries, the nature of the dependent relations created by the colonial regime, its link with the feudal-aristocratic ruling classes in these societies prevented any forms of effective social transformation in these societies. The major characteristics of these societies were that substantial majority of the population were peasants and earned their livelihood from agriculture. The dominant social formations in these countries were semi-feudal and semi-colonial in character and capitalist social formations were in its infant stage when most of them were liberated from the colonial yoke. The majority of the ruling class in the Third World state consisted of a social coalition by which feudal and aristocratic class share power with the emerging capitalist class. As result of this, most of the Third World states even after liberation were unable to introduce effective land reforms thereby liberating the vast majority of the country folk from the bondages and exploitation of the feudal gentry. In
fact, due to the severe food shortage and increasing pressure from the Western capitalist and multi-lateral funding states most of the Third World states were forced to follow a kind of developmental package designed by the West which aimed at accelerating internal agricultural production irrespective of countries. The introduction of the modern farming practices to create a network of the agricultural infrastructure such as research institutes, training experts and scientists, to create viable local financial and other institutional mechanisms to speed up the emergence of the large scale capitalist farming in the Third World countryside. All those practices along with number of new legislations were made by the concerned state to consolidate and to further expand the process through the introduction of new economic policy measures. This was to expand the home market and also to remove the various restrictions on the transportation of goods, especially grains and such items within countries. These new changes introduced in the Third World countryside and the resultant many-fold rise in the food production was commonly referred to as green revolution. However, the profound changes in it contributed to the agrarian social relations and the nature of its impact on the different segment of the rural folk reveal the real dimensions of the green revolution process. In fact, green revolution in way manifested the engine of the development of the agrarian capitalism in most of the Third World societies. The state had provided many concessions to the nascent agrarian bourgeoisie and also created multiple forms of infrastructural and local institutional mechanism to accelerate the capitalist development in the Third World countryside (Patnaik 1983; Alavi in Gough and Sharma 1973; Rahman 1986). As a result, countryside’s across Third World witnessed increasing economic and social differentiation and a large number of marginal peasants were forced to transform them into rural proletarians.

The Feminist Critique of the Dominant Perspectives on Agrarian Transition

In the recent period, a large number of scholars from different feminist persuasions raised profound critique to the dominant perspective on the peasant question and agrarian capitalism. They raised their criticism primarily against the Marxian and the Leninist theories on agrarian capitalism and class differentiation in the countryside. Inspired by the varieties of new theoretical trends such as post-modernism, poststructuralism and post-Marxism, these scholars challenged the macro-overarching framework of the Marxian inspired frameworks. These feminist scholars argued that the two dominant perspectives on the peasant and agrarian capitalism, namely Chayanovian and Leninist paradigm have a common gender blindness and it completely ignored the
gender dimensions of the stratification existing in the rural labour market, the production process in general and the rural peasant household in particular (Agarwal 1986, 1988; Gray 1993; Kapadia 1993, 1995; Mackenzie 1990). Many of the studies by these scholars and many others from the different regions of the Third World revealed that rural women were facing different forms of exploitation and exclusion from the dominant social relations and practices prevailing in the rural areas along with the larger social process and practices penetrating the countryside via the free-market economy which contributed to the varying forms of social exclusions and marginalisation of women in the countryside.

Neo-liberalism and the Marginalisation of the Question of Land Reforms

The kind of hegemonic status and dominance acquired by the neo-liberal model of development paradigm in the post-Soviet era across the nation states had contributed to the widespread withdrawal of the nation-state from all forms of social engineering roles in the society. In conformity with these developments, a majority of states which included advanced capitalist societies of the West, former socialist societies of Russia and its East European counter parts and the substantial majority of the Third World states etc fundamentally altered or revised their developmental priorities. The three cardinal principles which constitute the neo-liberal doctrine are globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, was prescribed as an all-in-all solution to the crisis and stagnations in the national economies of concerned countries. In fact, its primary goal was to open-up all sectors and all forms of economic and social transactions under the virtual control of the free-market regime.

Contact Farming, Special Economic Zones and the Emerging Mode of Capitalist Accumulation in Agriculture

The capitalist world economy witnessed unparallel expansion and hegemony since the last decade of the 20th century which was marked by the systemic disintegration of the socialist states of Soviet Union and other Central and East-European countries. Since its inception in the chaotic days of the First World War, the kind of the socialist social formation which evolved in the Eurasian land mass effectively remained throughout its existence as a critical alternative to the capitalist mode of industrial civilisation. The nature and character of the Soviet social formation and its marked deviations from its foundational principles generated multiple forms of contradictions in the Soviet society. The over accumulation of these contradictions into antagonistic dimension by
manifesting it into forms such as ethnic and nationality assertion, economic stagnation, decline in the living standard, especially in the rural areas, along with co-option and admiration of the Soviet party- bureaucratic elites to the imaginaries of the free-market economy paved the way for its eventual demise in the early years of 1990s. The disintegration of the Soviet Union also directly contributed to the unprecedented domination and hegemony of the capitalist mode of production under the imperial patronage the United States. This, in turn, paved the way for the increasing dependence and in fact manifestation of the various international institutions into offshoots of the state apparatus of the United States. Most of the Third World states since their inception as sovereign entities were depending on the various international financial institutions for monetary and other development assistance. This, in turn, forced these countries to restructure their economies and reorient development priorities in accordance with the neo-liberal doctrine. As a result, most of the Third World states were forced to liberalise their agricultural sector and to open it up for trans-national agri-business corporations.

One of the major commonalities of the Third World societies are that substantial majority of the population in these societies are still working in the primary sector and income they earn from the agricultural field is their sole source of livelihood. In conformity with the overall liberalisation of the economy along the neo-liberal pattern, most of the Third World states substantially withdrew various subsidies and other monetary and non-monetary supports provided to the primary sector. The liberalisation of the agricultural sector also contributed to the increasing penetration of the transnational agri-business conglomerates and a number of large corporations and companies which had hitherto strictly restrained their operations to the industrial sector increasingly shifted their focus to the countryside.

In the meantime, most of the Third World countries liberalize their economies further by opening up of the agricultural sectors to all forms of economic activities thereby completely removing of various forms of restrictions exists in the past. As part of the over-all march towards the neo-liberal free-market regime, most of the third world states also opened their wholesale and retail sectors of the economy into the free operations of the market forces. In most of the Third World countries, there existed multiple forms of restrictions regarding the land use, nature of the operations, and ceiling limits for all forms of land use except some large plantations. Many states also prohibited the conversion of the farming land into industrial purposes in the pre-
liberalised period. The virtual removal of all forms of constraints existing in the agricultural sector led to the entry of numerous corporations and other similar agencies into the countryside. The predominant modes of recent capital penetration into the countryside are the ‘contact farming’ and ‘special economic zones’ (SEZ) where innumerable investments are made by the agro-industrial concerns.

One of the distinctive characteristics of the recent capitalist penetration into the Third World countryside in contrast to the earlier era was that in the previous period, most of the private capital invested in the countryside was meant for the large-scale mechanised farming and in cash crops producing plantations. On the contrary, the recent inflow of transnational capital into the rural sphere was not intended to promote agricultural production, but rather to convert massive tracts of agricultural land into various kinds of industrial uses. The major characteristics of the special economic zones, which differentiate it from the earlier forms of industrial expansions by the large industrial concerns and states, are that in the special economic zones, states have been effectively barred from any form of interventions inside the zones. In other words, none of the laws followed by the states regarding wages, working conditions, working time and other such labour and trade union rights etc. have any validity inside the premises of special economic zones. Since the special economic zones are virtually immune from the laws of the states and therefore none of its practices or decisions could be even challenged in the judicial machineries of the state.

The ironic aspects of these forms of capital accumulation are that it ignores or undermines all the established universally-approved labour and trade union rights, which were also incorporated into the universal declaration of human rights by the UNO and member states have the mandatory obligations to uphold it and in fact it was effectively followed by the most of the states and private industrial concerns in the advanced capitalist countries. In fact, the special economic zones are the neo-liberal manifestations of primitive accumulation of capital. These kinds of neo-liberal capitalist penetration and expansion were characterised by David Harvey as ‘accumulation by dispossession’ whereby a vast chunk of the peasants and agricultural labourers were thrown away from the place of their livelihood (Harvey 2003). Due to the increasing penetration of speculative and money capital into the countryside through real-estate transactions, land is manifested from its earlier role as objective medium for the realisation of labour power by the labourer in the production process, to as an objective expression of the value of the money and speculative capital. This, in turn, profoundly
altered the shape of the rural landscape and increasingly the imaginaries of the free-market regime replaced the existing social imaginaries. Contract farming is projected and propagated by the neo-liberal advocates and various apparatus of the Third World States as the most viable alternative to the peasant petty-commodity production, and the panacea for the recent agrarian crisis in the Third World societies. In many part of the Third World countries, it is emerging as the major mode of agricultural production. The major characteristics of the contract farming is that it connects the primary commodity producers and the larger agri-business companies into a contract wherein financial and other assistance would be given by the companies who would also convert the goods produced in the contract farmers in his farms into output for the market. By the emergence of the contract farming, the state’s role in agricultural sector is effectively curtailed. By engaging in the contract, the farmers and the companies have to follow certain conditions and mandatory obligations in accordance with the contract. In most cases wherein it was practised earlier reveal that a contract between poor or medium primary cultivators and the larger agri-business entities always would tend to move in favour of the latter. Moreover, in the manifestation of the role of the infrastructure providers and provider of farm credits, those companies involving it transcend into the nature of the duties performed by the state and its various agencies in the past. In fact, the contract farming would lead to the virtual dependence of the farmers on the companies with which they have signed the contact and this in turn weakens the freedom of the farmer to decide which crops to use, nature of the farming, the kind of seeds for cultivation and the final sale of the products etc would arbitrarily taken by the companies. This, in a way, pushes the farmers back to many decades and even beyond that, marked by the virtual dependence of the peasant producers on the mercy of the money lenders and the landlords who determined the nature and character of the farm operation as well as profit without performing any productive role in the cultivation.

Conclusion

The political economic transition from various form of pre-capitalist mode of production which was characterized by the centrality of the manual labour performed by peasant petty-producer in the production process to that of the capitalist/socialist mode of production based on mechanization of farm cultivation by utilizing modern technology and other such expertise knowledge. In spite of the antagonistic contradiction exists between the capitalist and socialist mode of production on the very nature of the organization of farm production, in fact, the capitalist and socialist
perspective on the pre-capitalist peasant societies have had certain similarities which were emanated from their shared notion that peasants’ petty-commodity based production of subsistence natural economy as the characteristics of the bygone era and it should be transformed into modern capitalist/socialist forms to adapt with the requirements of the times. However, the populist (Narodinik) and neo-populist perspectives on peasants’ societies emerged in response to the penetration of the capitalist relations of production in the hitherto communal form of production prevailed in the imperial Russia’s agrarian landscape. As result traditional village commune lost its earlier appeal and currency in the Russian countryside. Narodnik tradition argued that peasantry in the countryside as homogeneous social group and the penetration of the capitalist practices resulted in the degeneration of the communal production in Russia. Throughout the 20th century agrarian transition from diverse pre-capitalist mode of production to the capitalist and socialist mode of production raises some profound questions which were to a certain extent addressed in the scholars and activists engaged in the critical political economy tradition.

Marxian inspired critical political economy rejects the notion peasants as a homogeneous social category and argued that peasants in a hierarchical stratified society always divided into different social classes. The most fundamental issue entails in the political economy of agrarian transition was the nature and character of the exchange relation between goods produced in the primary and secondary sectors of the national economy. Since the predominance of the capitalist mode of production past couple of centuries in the west and in across the globe in the 20th century undermined the primacy of peasant centred primary commodity production across world. Thus the expansion of the industrial production and its centrality in the modern capitalist and socialist economy undermined the status of the peasant petty-commodity producers.

Moreover, modern capitalist and socialist development in the last century demonstrated that both the modernisation theories of the capitalist advocates and the critical and emancipatory modernity of the socialist advocates equally considered shifting major chunk of the primary producers’ in the countryside to the urban industrial centres as indicators of development and progress. In the agrarian capitalist development across societies throughout 20th centuries revealed that it resulted in the increased proletarianisation of marginal and medium peasants. It also reveals that across societies land was increasingly accumulated by the rural bourgeoisie and resultant widening social differentiation within agrarian dwellers. Likewise the past socialist
inspired collectivisation in the Soviet Union and other socialist states demonstrated that irrespective of the formal absence of the private ownership in the means of production, majority of the peasants engaged in the manual labour in the farm throughout the soviet period subjugated to a second class citizen's status in the Soviet society. However the collapse of the socialist states in Russia and Eastern Europe also resulted in the reversal of agrarian relations in accordance with the free-market economy. Similarly majority of the Third World states were also fundamentally reoriented their agrarian policies in the late 1980s and 1990s in accordance with the structural adjustment programmes. As result nation states substantially withdrawn from the primary sector across third world states. In the recent period the witnessed the increasing penetration of large commercial farms and agri-business companies into the countryside across nation states. Thus the introduction of the free-market regime and resultant step-down of the state from rural landscape further accelerated the internal social differentiation across societies in the erstwhile socialist countries and much of the third world states.