Chapter IV

INTERNAL FEATURES OF THE VILLAGE
AND INDIAN VILLAGE ECONOMY.

In continuation of the earlier chapter, in the following we will discuss the internal characteristic features of the Indian village and its economy.

4.1.1 Internal Characteristic features of the Indian Village

According to Andre Beteille\(^\text{1}\) the typical Indian village of the past was characterized by three inter-related features: Firstly, it was a system of multiple gradations, associated with an elaborate division of labor. Secondly, there were in it innumerable vertical ties of diffuse an enduring nature between families and persons. Thirdly, there was a general acceptance of hierarchical values among different members of the village.”

Below, we will follow his discussion on these points and elaborate wherever necessary.

To begin with, the gradations in the village were very conspicuous and may be clearly noticed in the caste and agrarian hierarchies which we have already discussed. In India, as already noted, not all villages were communities of peasants. Villages differed greatly in their structural type. To repeat, there were “villages in which an elaborate caste hierarchy was matched by an elaborate agrarian hierarchy” while there were others which were inhabited by small holders belonging to the middle level castes who cultivated their own land. Also there were villages entirely owned by big Zamindars, who belonged to the upper castes. Since a single caste village was not feasible as even that caste required the help of other specialist castes to carry on their agriculture and domestic living, most villages tended to grow into multi-caste ones, at least in core areas, if not in the peripheral areas. “The typical Indian village was a multicastrate unit with a top, a bottom and intermediate layers of castes.”

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While social life in the village was based on an economy of land and grain, it also comprised a variety of crafts and services, besides agriculture, which engaged the largest number of people. A set of basic crafts and services ancillary to agriculture and domestic living were incorporated in the village community itself and the rest, varied and numerous, dotted the various villages and carried their petty production as their family enterprise. As Beteille points out “it is in the relations between agriculture and crafts and services that we most clearly see the distinctive design of the Indian village and when these relations change, the design itself becomes eroded.” These crafts and service groups were caste-determined, hereditary and self-recruiting.

The Indian village, thus, was elaborately hierarchical unit of multiple gradations designed by the warp and woof of caste and of economic inequalities of status, which found their concrete expression in the institution of caste, discussed earlier.

4.1.2 Vertical Ties

The second internal characteristic of the traditional Indian village is the existence of “innumerable vertical ties of diffuse and enduring nature between families and persons”. It should be noted that a village is wrought by local interactions and extensively woven into wider worlds of economic, social religious and ritual endeavor. At least four types of social network were discerned to shape the villagers’ world, viz., kinship, caste religion and ritual as identified by hierarchical social structure, the state and the agricultural and other calling they pursued within the hierarchical agrarian system of the village. Each network had its own rules, roles and routines that attained coherence within a culture and gave meaning to social and economic action.

The social and economic transactions arising out of the interaction in these networks can be classified as dyadic and polyadic or multiplex on the basis of number of persons involved and as single-stranded or many stranded on the basis of number of ties that bind them and further, as vertical and horizontal on the basis of the relative statuses of the parties. It should be noted that the complex web of socio-economic relationships established in the village society by virtue of a variety of ties between persons and families affected different modes of access to material resources and means of livelihood. The different ties affected

different needs, different values and motives. While some ties were based on relationships of equality and reciprocity, which are referred to as horizontal ties, the other ties denoted unequal relationships between persons or families and constituted vertical alignments. Either kind of tie arises in the context of the various structures of social and economic relationships.

Scholars on Indian village have stressed vertical ties and have taken caste, hierarchically ordered, as the horizontal axis, despite its economic heterogeneity within. In fact Shrinivas\textsuperscript{3} describes the Indian village as a “vertical entity made up of several horizontal layers each of which is a caste”. He further notes that “institutionalized vertical relationships” between individual and families include relationships of master and servant (yajman and kamin) subsuming in this category the agricultural laborers, and the artisans and servants, relationships of land owner and tenant and relationships of creditor and debtor. Shrinivas justifies the above subsumption as legitimate “as usually it is the rich land owner who employs… servants, lets off some land to tenants, lends money or otherwise helps people, who may be his relatives, caste-folk, tenants debtors or potential debtors and those who vaguely hope to receive some advantage from him and those who enjoy banking in the warmth of power”. This is elaborating the various ties of a patron to different clients, which he may possess in his retinue. But looking at from the client’s side, he may not depend for all his needs on a single patron, though his landowner or employer or creditor is the first person he may approach for help.

Some of these relationships cut across caste layers and also link persons who are rich and well-to-do with those who are poor. But all these relations are essentially unequal. He has subsumed all the above relationships as also those between a rich man and his depends under a single generalized category of relationship termed as “patron and client” relationships.

In this context, anticipating future discussion, it is important to note that “relations of this kind are not Jajmani relations” as Beteille\textsuperscript{4} observes, “in Wiser’s sense” “as they were not necessarily channeled along lines of caste. They took the form either of dyadic relations or of social networks which might to some extent cut across the structure of caste. Indeed what kept the vertically arranged layers of the village in their place were the many networks running up and down

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\textsuperscript{4} “The Indian village : Past and Present,” op.cit., p.115.
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– and laterally – through which individuals and families were linked together”.

Before we consider the different “institutionalized vertical relationships” noted above, let us elaborate the concept of patron-clientage, as it is necessary and important for our study of village service systems, particularly the so-called “Jajmani System”.

4.1.2.(a). The Concept of Patron-Clientage.

The term patron signifies a person of power, status, authority and influence. It may signify an employer or ceremonial sponsor (Yajamana). But it is only relevant in relation to a less powerful person or client whom he can protect. The patron grants favors in return for goods, services, loyalty, political allegiance, etc., from his dependant clients. Such reciprocal relationships may be expressed in terms of formal contracts with institutionalized rights and obligations for each party, to the less formal and more flexible relationships. In general, the relationship between individual patron and his client is biased against the latter who is, by definition, economically, socially, and politically far weaker, although the patron may be dependant on the collective support of his various clients in critical situations such as, e.g., in disputes with neighboring land owners and fractional fights within the village, etc.

The “patron-client” terminology comes from the feudal order of society in Western Europe where relationships of personal protection and subordination between the lord and peasant come to form the basis of social, economic and political organization. Under feudalism ties of patron-clientage formed a basic part of the system of land tenure and agricultural production and persisted in rural areas until long after the decay of feudalism.

Patron-client relations have developed in rural areas where land ownership is heavily concentrated in the hands of a relatively small and powerful group able to monopolize, wealth, political power and contact with the world external to the rural community. On the other hand, communities in which landholdings are distributed fairly evenly, have tended to develop very few linkages of patron-clientage. But in such communities the relations are characterized by instrumental and reciprocal exchanges which have been termed as “colleague contracts”\textsuperscript{5}.

view of this, we may find relative predominance of patron-client ties of former type in the zamindari areas as compared to the raiyatwari area in the country. However, both types of relations, dependant on the degree of land concentration, originate in situations of economic hardship and insecurity to offer protection which neither the state nor family can provide.

A further general observation about patron-client relationships to develop is due to the isolation of village communities by poor communication and lack of avenues for upward social mobility for village folk. Within the rigid social structure based on caste, occupation and land ownership, whether share-cropping or system of wage payments is in operation, the peasants and other workers in the isolated community are forced into debt with the landowners in order to alleviate economic hardships. With land owners exercising a sort of monopoly over labor employment, wage rates are pushed down. Poor wage payments, thus, reinforce debt dependency and perpetuate the need for a system of patronage which ensures servile obedience from workers in exchange for favors.

In spite of the rather diffuse nature of patron-client relations, two types are distinguished in literature, namely, (1) Patrimonial, i.e. those ties based on an overt acceptance of traditional values by subordinates, and (2) Repressive, i.e. those based increasingly on more obvious forms of repression by the powerful due to their decreasing legitimacy. In a situation of weak state authority and self-contained, isolated village communities as in pre-British India, the patrimonial type of patron-clientage existed as a solution for the weak and unprotected who could find shelter under a powerful who, in turn, got economic support and political following. This paternalism in work relations was based on the modes of attitudes and functions of an extended family in which the head of the household was responsible for the welfare of all those under his authority including his family, the attached as well as casual workers on his farm. The rural Indian joint family on the farm was well suited to take this extension with all its agnatic and often affinal relatives as also workers staying as members of the household. In this context it is illustrative to cite Shrinivas’ now defunct vertical relationship of “Halemaga” (old son) who was also a “Hole maga” (an untouchable son of Holeya caste) and also a “Hola maga” (son on the field) who was a traditional attached servant with well defined duties and rights in relation to the master and his family and who stayed with them despite the wide separation of both in the caste hierarchy.

6. The Social System of a Mysore Village, op.cit., p.87.
This paternalism which was mutually advantageous to the patron as well as the client was based to a large extent on general acceptance by the rural mass of the prevailing tradition-ordained socio-economic system and the value structure which allowed the workers under patronage to be “exploited”.

4.1.2(b). Patron-Clientage Categories in the Indian Village Communities.

In the following we will briefly consider the different patron-clientage categories enumerated earlier.

1. Landlord-Tenant and Laborer.

In the two sector agriculture characterized by feudal / proto-feudal / zamindari and independent peasant proprietors what was common to both share-croppers and laborers was their “exploitation” by and economic dependence on the landlord for access to their means of livelihood, which was an aspect of the relation of production.

An agricultural laborer, defined as one deriving the largest part of his income from hiring out of his labor, though not necessarily entirely landless, was distinguishable from tenants and share-croppers. The share-croppers of tenants were regarded in their villages as having a better status than laborers. A share-cropper was placed in the same rank as that of a settled peasant, while an agricultural laborer had the status of a “majur”, a mere laborer at best, if not a debt-bound servant. The distinction was, in very many cases, reinforced by their position in the caste hierarchy. Agricultural laborers largely came from the lower castes. Share-croppers or tenants and agricultural laborers need not, however, be looked upon as exclusive categories, one person sometimes combining both the roles and a share-cropper could, by losing lands, sink to the position of an agricultural laborer. On the other hand an agricultural laborer had to depend on wage labor, not because he had no land at all, but merely because his holding was far too small for the subsistence of the family.

Since the production relations were embedded in the social matrix, the structure of economic and social power and authority in the village typically made for an unequal contest between land owners and tenants and laborers on a number of levels. The fundamental weakness of the tenant / share-cropper and laborer consisted in his own position under conditions of landlessness and poverty.

The landlord and tenant relationships occasionally cut across caste barriers
and this was more common when the land leased out belonged to absentee landlords. While the relationship, generally, was apparently and opportunistically intimate, it was frequently marked by conflict, particularly under scarcity of land. If the landlord and tenant or competing tenant belonged to different castes the struggle over land was seen as a clash of castes.


Like other elements in the agrarian system in the relations between the employer and laborer took numerous diverse forms, for each of which we find indigenous terms denoting a particular kind of labor or laborer. The immense diversity that existed in different regions in respect of the nature of agreement or contract between the land owning master and servant laborer, the modes of payment of wages, perquisites and the traditional privileges enjoyed by the servant were all the outcome of age-long experience. It was custom which governed an untold number of daily acts and usages in agriculture and constituted everywhere an indispensable guide in relations between different groups of participants in agriculture. It created and preserved from generation to generation a characteristic stability in the structure of village society.

Thorner has grouped the diverse forms of labor relations under seven broad categories four of which are “free” relationships distinguished according to duration of employment. The remaining three categories pertain to “unfree” labor relationship, comprising full-time attached farm servant on an annual basis in a dependant status, secondly “beck-and-call” relationships under which labor was required to work for the master whenever he required and lastly relationships of “veth-begar” and other forced labor mostly extracted from tenants by the landlords.

It is the attached farm servant category, mostly of the “unfree” variety, that is discussed in literature while dealing with patron-client relations between master and servant. Shrinivas has referred to Jita servantship in Karnataka as “contractual servantship” under which a poor man contracts to serve a wealthier man for a stipulated period of one to three years which ultimately turns out into a debt bondage for more than a life time. He further observes that the “Jita servants


8. The Social Structure of a Mysore Village, op.cit., pp.87-88.
come from every caste except the Brahmin and elite castes, and the masters belong to all castes excepting the untouchable caste”.

In the matter of attached servantship, this seems to be the common pattern of the historically and geographically widespread system of debt-serfdom all over the country, with local variations from region to region. Breman’s monographic study deals with the Halis or bond servants. The Hali system of Gujarat represents an instance of Thorner’s “beck-and-call” relationship.

In the 19th century colonial literature, these attached servants are invariably referred to as “landless serfs”, “bonded servants”, “agristic slaves”, “debt servants” and the like. Whatever the terminology used, that agricultural labor of certain type was unfree and that the status of such labor was degraded was beyond question. Moreland did not find any other category of agricultural labor artists from bonded servants in Mughal India about whom he wrote: “so far as it is possible to judge, they were rarely free, and scarcely ever slaves; they may perhaps be regarded as in a state of mild serfdom, the incidents of which varied within wide limits.” Since these agristic laborers were tied to land and localities, the term serf has been used. In general, however, the sanctions which maintained these bonds between laborers and land owners were not based on conceptions of personal proprietorship enforced by a legal and police system, but more on an accommodation by persons to suffer the degraded status in return for survival possibilities of living in a chosen village. “The system of patron-clientage was such as to promote sharp status gradients between high caste land owners and low caste field laborers given the commitment to hierarchical values.”

Driven by poverty into debt to his employer-creditor the servant had to render lifelong service whom he could not repay otherwise. This relationship of coercion derived mainly from debt that originally led to attachment, from servant’s inability to sever the relationship and from more or less automatic continuance of bondage.

from father to son. Another element of coercion, mostly in the zamindari villages of north India, related to the house size of the servant. In several cases the ancestors of the present attached workers had acquired plots of lands from their employers as gifts. Such employers or their heirs did not recognize the gifts and always threatened the workers with eviction from the sites if the latter refused employment as attached workers.\textsuperscript{14}

Besides advances, a further incentive to tie the servant, the landowner gave his wages as a share of the total produce to keep him involved with personal interest in the crop production and improve his work performance. Bennet’s example of debt-bound slave ploughman in Gonda who received a share of the produce which he helped to cultivate referred to by W. Neale\textsuperscript{15} and Baden-Powell\textsuperscript{16} slave ploughman, who is called ‘Sawak’ in the adjoining district of Bahraich are instances to the point. In some cases the servants were given a plot of land for cultivation on Batai basis, free of rent and were paid daily wages in whichever operation they were employed. In the Punjab the attached workers received a share of the produce. These co-sharers were known as Siris and were entitled to one-fourth share in the total produce. In the Sanjhi system of Punjab the attached worker employed by the Bisvedar (non-cultivating owner) was almost a cultivating partner with apparently not much difference between a share-cropper.\textsuperscript{17}

3. Creditor-Debtor:

While the creditor-debtor relationships of the share-cropper\ tenants, farm servants and other non-agricultural workers in the village were with their landlord\ master besides borrowings from relatives and friends, all channeled through patron-clientage basis, they could by-pass the credit institution generally by their frugal living. Even so these dependents as also the land owning raiyat required cash and credit for house hold living rather than for economic functions of his calling, mostly for the following purposes: (1) marriage (2) death ceremonies, (3) special religious ceremonies, (4) birth festivals, (5) festivals during the rites of passage, etc. to meet these requirements the professional moneylender has

\textsuperscript{14} Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, op.cit., p.
\textsuperscript{17} Agricultural Wages in India, Vol. I, op.cit., pp.151-152, 247-248.
existed in the village whose function was to advance such cash and credit to the villagers. His role in the village assumed importance when he served as the repositer of the village “grain heap” or as the local shopkeeper or vendor of general merchandise. His position within the general social structure lay only in the hold he had as a patron on the clients who were in his debt and not in any assigned or achieved status. In fact, as Sir Henry Maine\(^\text{18}\) notes in his Village Community of East and West, the grain dealer \ trader was never incorporated in the village community and was outside the organic group functioning within the village. Even so, in very many cases, it was the wealthy landowner, village headman or the village goldsmith, if there be one, were indulging in this activity in lieu of any “Upari” moneylender \ trader.

During the early period of history when land revenue was linked to the village “grain heap”, though the moneylender was entrenched, his role was relatively minor one and was within the normal functioning of the village and was only related to the socio-religious credit requirements of the villagers. But the shifting of the land revenue payments from kind to cash basis had important consequences on the village economy. The whole position of the moneylender in the village changed due to altered relationship of the “grain heap” to money in which the socio-religious functions of credit by the moneylender gave way to the vastly and inherently more powerful ones for the village economy. The cultivator had to rush to the moneylender by his immediate requirements to meet the rigid revenue and the rent installments besides the socio-religious needs of cash, by selling his cash and jewelry and mortgaging his land. This reduced the peasant to form a debt peonage, which reflected far-reaching consequences. There was hardly a single moneylender in the village who was not a landlord and many big landowners, even of agricultural castes combined the business of money lending and grains dealing with that of land cultivation.

Before the British rule, while recovery of loans was not a legal right of moneylenders, the repayment, in the absence of formal machinery to enforce it, it was merely a moral obligation of the debtors. The more decisive factor in this respect was the personal relationship, of patron clientage, of creditor and debtor. Despite the strong sentiments the debtor had about the “sanctity of the debt” the creditor was forced to depend on various kinds of coercion to recover the loans, including physical ones. Debt slavery or attached labor of different forms was the

\(^{18}\) P. 127.
result of illegal duress for debts in several cases. While the effectiveness of coercive means towards recovery of debts was understandably limited, coercion, including physical one scarcely helped a creditor where debtors were without any means to pay.

(4) Artisans and Servants:

An important class of workers belonging to the non-agricultural sector of the village, which, as noted earlier, are subsumed under the master servant category of patron-clientage, concerns different types of workers of the “village service system” comprising artisans, functionaries and domestic servants. In respect of these workers their denomination by a single master arises in a few cases where a single family owns a whole village or a group of villages, as in the case of landlord villages in Zamindari areas. Gadgil D.R. notes “as regards the village artisans in the landlord village, they owed special duties to the landlord, but otherwise their position was not greatly different from the corresponding class in the Raiyatwari village.” In general, the village artisans and servants worked for several employers at the same time; they enjoyed relative autonomy, which sharecroppers \ tenants and field laborers did not have. They were over shadowed by the power of big landlords of the village but were not in the same situation as the other two classes.

In the light of the above discussion indicating patronage on the one hand and exploitation on the other, about the nature of different types of vertical ties representing patron-client relationships between the different categories of villagers, unlike Jajmani “in Wiser’s sense, were not necessarily channeled along caste lines.” Patrons might have had clients in their own caste as well as in other castes and this inter-caste relationship resulted in patron-client ties to help bridge the cleavages between castes. As Shrinivas notes: “strong employer-employee bonds provided a countervailing force to caste since generally the employers came from a high or dominant caste while the landless laborers generally came from the lowest strata... there is no reason however to think that landless laborers were always confined to the lowest castes... In any case, in rural India today landless laborers hailed from the variety of castes, high and low, though it is even now true that the lowest castes generally provide the bulk of such labor.” The existence

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of the patron-client relationship of the master and servant type, not only assured such landholder to steady source of labor but also helped to minimize competition between landholders for labor which might otherwise split them into rival fraction. Shrinivas further contends that “both political and economic forces in pre-British India converged to put a premium on localism and discouraged the formation of horizontal (i.e. caste) bonds stretching across political boundaries.”

Patrons belonging to same caste or to the same economic level might be rivals in the village, in which case they would use the ties with their respective clients in their contests with each other. Patrons depended on their clients for their power as well as prestige, while clients, in turn, counted on a support of their patrons in difficulty or distress. Since the politically ambitious patrons had the need to acquire and retain the local followers, they had to be generous to their clients with food and perquisites and provide loans and other needed help. “A far sited leader who gave or loaned on interest food grains to his tenants and laborers earned their goodwill which could be cashed in on a later occasion.”

“In the small world of the village,” observes Beteille “the patron – whether as landlord or as master or even as the creditor – has some personal involvement in the well-being of his clients. The relations between the two were typically multiplexed in character, even though they might not be equally durable in every case. In some cases these relations might be transmitted from generation to generation while in others the patron might exercise a degree of choice in discarding old clients and attaching new ones. But even the lowliest could turn for protection for someone, who in turn might enjoy the protection of someone else higher.”

4.1.2.(c) Class Model Vs Patron – Client Model.

It is often alleged that patron-client relationships signify a relationship of reciprocity from which each party gets some benefit. Powell has described it as “a relationship involving an interchange of non comparable goods and services between actors of unequal socio-economic rank” and considers the exchange to be “reciprocal.” The substantivists as discussed in chapter two have considered

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such non-market exchange transactions as reciprocal. In opposition to this paternalistic value judgement, the alternative value judgement would consider the relationships to be based on "exploitation of the actual cultivator, the share-cropper, laborers and others such as artisans and servants by a parasitical class of landlords. Let us elaborate the relative standpoints.

Referring back to our earlier discussion on the three broader views of the social world, elaborated in chapter 2, we note that paradigms of village India fall into two mutually exclusive categories each with a different conceptual framework and understanding of the reality. The paternalistic view discussed above, pictures landlords, tenants, laborers, artisans and other non-agricultural laborers as patrons and clients involved in a diffuse, complex network of mutually beneficial exchanges predicated on close paternalistic relations which sometimes take even a fictive kin form. The second model posits a class relationship based on profoundly unequal access to primary means of production: a relation, which is structurally, if not in experience, coercive and potentially conflictual. These two models correspond to two broader views of the social world. While the former corresponds to the substantivists's "integration theory of society" with roots in gemeinschaft sociology with emphasis on shared values and organic solidarity, the latter parallels what has been termed as "coercive theory of society with roots in Marxian theory. The third, namely the neo-classical economic paradigm landlords, tenants, laborers and others as equivalent economic actors drawn together in factor markets, differing only in factors they contribute to the production process, need not be considered here as that model applies to market economy \ society and not to the traditional agrarian economy \ society of village India.

As regards the class model it has been noted that the traditional Indian village can not be conceived "in terms of a simple dichotomy of land-owning and landless classes (or castes). The absence of ownership in the strictly contemporary sense does not of course preclude the conflict of interest among people occupying unequal positions in the system of production. At the same time groups acquire the character of classes to the extent that the conflict of interest between them polarized. What evidence we have of this kind of polarization comes more readily from the present than from the past".\textsuperscript{24} It was caste rather than class that represented the true division of society. But this does not mean that the people themselves never perceived the divisions centering around the ownership control and use of

\textsuperscript{24} Andre Beteille, "The Indian Village: Past and Present," op.cit., p.113.

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land in terms other than those of caste. Even so many authors make a distinction between caste society and class society and present the Indian reality as if it were a situation which refutes the later.

Joining the issue, Claude Meillassoux writes: “although L. Dumont seems to deny the existence of class relations because of a absence of a true property, he in fact recognizes their existence, on several occasions and quite precisely: ‘there are briefly two kinds of castes: those who hold land, and those who do not’ (Homo Hierarchicus S. 43). Occupation of land is, in Dumont’s terms ‘with full rights’ (S.74) and this possession was so well established that in modern times the intervention of the state was necessary for it to be broken. These land holders represented the dominant class. ‘only those’ writes Dumont, ‘who have at their disposal the main source of wealth and power, the land, can make displays of luxury’ (S. 42.2). ‘Dominance … is wealth, possession of landed interest, as well as political power’ (S.75). The Brahman of Karimpur were according to him ‘the dominant caste in this sense that they hold most rights over the land’ (S.42.2). This class which went under different names in different regions: Mirasdar (Hutton, Caste in India, 1946, p.179) or Zemindar (idem, p.189) is for Hutton unequivocally ‘that of landed proprietors’.”

If class relations, continues Meillassoux, “are those which bind together the greatest number of individuals; ‘usually’ writes Dumont (S.74.2) ‘it can be seen that the most numerous castes in a village are, first the dominant caste and second the caste which provides the greatest part of the labor force and is usually untouchable.’ ‘The Dominant caste’ he writes, finally (loc. Cit.) ‘Reproduces the royal function at the village level’. Its principal characteristics were: (1) relatively eminent right over the land; (2) as a result, power to grant land and employ members of other castes either in agricultural capacities or as specialists to build up a large client following or even an armed force (Fn. Dumont confuses client relations and relations of exploitation); (3) power of justice…(4) monopoly of authority.

In a foot note to the above C. Meillassoux observes that Dumont’s “vocabulary repays study. What does the word ‘caste’ encompass in this context?

Dumont defines this dominant ‘caste’ not by virtue of any hereditary status or the degree of purity, but according to a precise relation of production which it has with other sectors of society by means of right it exercises over land. In what sense is this the definition of ‘caste’? In what way can it be distinguished from social class? This is introducing ‘class’ by the backdoor in the caste frame analysis through the concept of dominant caste.

Referring to Leach E (caste, class and Slavery: the taxonomic problem in A. de Reuck and J. Knight, Caste and Race, 1967, pp. 5-17), C. Meillassoux\textsuperscript{29} observes that Leach though “much opposed to the Marxist interpretation of Indian social system, recognizes two hierarchies. One ‘according to their ritual purity with the brahman at the top and untouchables’ at the bottom. …The other… according to their political economic status in the local (traditional) feudal order, with the landlords at the top, free tenants below, “tied” tenants below that and landless laborers at the bottom, with certain artisan groups such as blacksmiths somewhere in the middle, (sic). The first corresponds to the formal representation of society, the second to the reality.”

It is clear from the above, concludes C. Meillassoux\textsuperscript{30} that “caste appears no more than an ideological screen which hid the social reality by scattering social divisions along the whole length of formal hierarchy and submerging exploitative relations among them. The conservative repressive ideology reinforced by physical violence and religious terrorism was one of the factors that prevented classes from recognizing themselves as such, maintained the subject and exploited sections in a state of alienation and suppressed critical and conflictual relationships beneath the cloak of divine harmony. The so-called caste system thus represents the perpetuation and adaptation of status relationships and status ideology within a class society, as a means of domination in the interests of dominant classes. …”

The recent view on the question of class vs. caste, has been put forward as below. As Yogesh Atal\textsuperscript{31} puts it, “the question of stratification relative to caste-class distinctions has been answered in three different ways. One approach regards the twin concepts as exclusive; authors following this approach characterize societies as caste-structured or class-structured. In the later analysis a greater degree of flexibility was introduced and the possibility of transformation

representing the second approach was envisaged. Viewing it from vantagepoint of the West, such transformation was only postulated for caste, which may give way to class. Scholars like Kroeber, however, regarded castes as special form of social classes. The third approach, which is of recent origin, refuses to see any polarity in the two concepts. The co-existence of the two-caste and class- is viewed as an empirically observable trend.” Elsewhere he reiterates the same by saying: “The dichotomy of class and caste as consisting of two incompatible types of stratification is not empirically tenable. Indian society offers an excellent example of stratification system where the two modes of inequality have so remarkably meshed. The internal structure of caste is characterized by class level differentiations and there also classes which cut across the boundaries of castes.”

The exploited class was the largest and most numerous and exploitation occurred either following old relations of servitude or by a system of contractual hire which kept workers in servitude by means of compulsory loans or debts that lasted sometimes for generations. We have illustratively described earlier the system of bondage and patronage of labor in the country prevalent in the pre-colonial India and later. Discussing about the servitude Breman, J. notes that it was associated with landlord agriculture and it was landlords who imposed it to ensure a steady supply of labor. Shrinivas has also adducted arguments in support of this view. However, this is one sided view in opposition to the alternative that “bondage was not associated with lack of voluntary labor, but with lack of employment, to which agricultural laborers reacted by accepting voluntary servitude” on their own initiative because of their own economic vulnerability and “tried to find security by putting themselves into the hands of the landlord”. This view, however, assumes that the dependent laborer was helpless to withdraw from the clutches of the landlord by geographical mobility. In this context, it necessary to note the relative isolation of the traditional Indian village where intra-village labor, credit and other transactions were the norm and inter-village movements of labor and credit, etc., were very thin and negligible. Tenancy was mostly confined to landlords and laborers within the village and mostly assumed the form of share

34. Patronage and Exploitation, op.cit., pp. 10-23.
35. Dominant Caste and Other Essays, op.cit., p. 42.
contracts. Irrespective of the way in which the relationship has come about, for
the worker the unfree element rested rather on the inability to break the bond
once it has been contracted. Hence this traditional bondage has been considered
as “a special form of unfree labor best described as voluntary servitude”.

But in this representation of bondage as a form of unfree labor originating
either from “a need of laborers leading to forced attachment or from a need of
security leading to voluntary servitude” the considerations that have gone into are
economic and purely as a relation of labor. But Breman argues that “the
relationship between landlords and agricultural laborers as it developed in the
course of time cannot be dissociated from the total context of the traditional
Indian village or from the changes that have occurred within it. That is to say, the
relations between the land owners and farm servants must be judged in the light
of a much more general pattern of relationships, which prevailed among the various
castes in the traditional society and which has come to be called the jajmani
system.”

While we will be discussing the “jajmani” model, particularly its application
to the village service system and will also consider the question as to whether
agricultural laborers were partners in the so-called “jajmani system”, it is necessary
to note here that alongside class relationships there were common economic and
political relations which come under clientship and the institutional character of
which, in direct contrast with class relationships, was clearly attested. And as argued
by Breman, since relations of clientship are personal ones, the nature and
implications of these relations override their economic content.

4.1.2 (D) Patron – Clientage and Jajmani

The patron-client model of agrarian social structure builds upon the
understanding that production and exchange relationships are largely embedded in
broader, diffuse and complex social, ritual and political relations, which have strong
personalistic components. We have already noted Thorner’s observation that even
the indigenous terminology used in respect of landlord-tenant-laborer of different
types are indicative of fictive kin ties than purely contractual economic
relationships. Indeed connections of blood or marriage and caste often overlap
tenurial, labor and other service contracts.

The normative content of patron-client relations is difficult to determine, however. Because the terms of exchange are mostly unequal, the observed differences and legitimating ideology of caste and social status may obscure deeply held attitudes of bitterness and hatred arising out of class feeling. Even though the existing legitimacy and legitimating ideology and its acceptance by large numbers of agrarian under class clearly had a material base. Though these affective ties may prove quite ephemeral when subjected to pressure, it would be wrong to deny their reality and importance in the everyday consciousness of clients.

The material base of patron-client relationship in the agrarian society is the ability of the landed patron to provide clients with goods and services, which are not available to patronless members. This is relatively crucial, for he typically compares himself not with landlords but with his class fellows who fare less well in the absence of goods, services, and most critically, security, provided by the patron. The range of services provided by the patron has been elaborated, in literature which includes consumption loans in kind, production inputs and credit, brokerage functions vis-a-vis the outside world, meditation services, employment opportunities for the client’s children, assistance towards sickness, marriage and other ceremonies and so on. A more diffused service is what has been termed as “subsistence insurance”, a guarantee that client’s family will not starve regardless of the severity of production disaster, so long as patron’s granary is full.

It should not be assumed that patron-client relations are the only and dominant forms of employer-employee relations. Pure contractual relations based on reciprocal exchanges could not, however, thrive, as they required an atmosphere of economy based on contracts. The preponderant existence of patron-client overlay on the service exchange relations modified the normal contractual behavior wherever contractual service exchanges existed. At the normative level any higgling for increased compensation for services may mean a poor compensation if the concomitant sacrifice is off season employment or interest-free loans or subsistence insurance against bad years, etc. Thus whatever the normative costs, the very real and material costs may be incurred in violating the norms of patron-client relationship.

The embedding of production relations in personalistic and social relations of a broader sort alters the experiential quality of class relationships, encasing it in an elaborate ideological complex of mutuality, quasi-familial intimacy and norms of reciprocal and diffuse obligations. But it has been argued that patron-client
relationship between the landed and the landless, is still structurally a class relation. The legitimating ideologies and personal attachment of patron-clientage obscure the structural conflict inherent in such production relations.

Attention might, however, be drawn to the reinforcement of master servant relationship, by ties of patron-clientage and the set of “rights” and “obligations” known as Jajmani system. It confers “rights” on the subject who has privileged access to certain favors from his masters and imposes “obligations” of the latter. The Jajmani system legitimates and reinforces the “secular” patron-client ties of the subject to his master by “sacred” ideological ties.

While discussing class relationships and jajmani Claude Meillassoux identifies two types of class relations in the classical Indian society: the one Seigniorial and the other land owning. Although the overlord retained an eminent right over the land conquered the bond that was established directly or indirectly between the lord, his dependents and agents appeared as of personal nature and the eminent right was turned into a private right. “Personal relations and land owning relations became superimposed and confounded, and both methods of domination being employed simultaneously.”

“Alongside class relationships were other economic and political relations which came under clientship, and the institutional character of which, in direct contrast with class relationships, was clearly attested.” In the agrarian economy seigniorial and landlord type village society the class and client relations revolved around the transfer of goods and services obtained from exploitation and prestation. “Encompassed within the relation of clientship specialist groups” retained in the seigniorial retinue furnished goods and services to the ruling classes who, in turn, but not necessarily in exchange, maintained them by means of supplies of provisions and other products which they reaped from their exploitation of working classes. In imitation of the nobility the landlords eventually attached clients to themselves by similar ties.”

Arguing from the class point of view, and considering the primary and original

40. Ibid., pp. 103-104.
meaning of patron and client, Meillassoux\textsuperscript{41} notes that "relations of clientship are personal relationships, the nature and political implications of which override the economic content." Indian jajmani, according to him, "represented this type of client relationship" under which "families following intellectual, artistic or economic activities were bound by material and social obligations with regard to their patrons. In return the latter accorded them help and protection as well the means of life.... Thus, relations of clientship were off shoots from class relations which enabled the patron to make use of essential goods for the maintenance of his clients." He further points out that "clientship is not based on exchange, properly speaking; the goods and services are not accounted for, measured, they are not granted as an immediate counterpart nor equated. The transfer is not made in accordance with any assumed value of goods in circulation, but above all on account of personalized ties which unite the parties in question and held good even in the event of the temporary or permanent incapacity of the client. Nor is it a question of a relation of exploitation.... By means of jajmani the master does not so much endeavor to obtain goods or services at the best price as to attach groups of producers to himself for political or social ends, outside the circuit of buying and selling and aside from any notion of business profit. No equation of payment exists between the parties, which would have resulted in a surplus product, as in the relations of exploitation.... The groups of clients, far from being necessarily exploited, n the contrary profited through the mediation of patron who maintained them from the exploitation of the laboring classes." "Dumont himself notes", he argues\textsuperscript{42} "that the clients were dependent on their masters for their subsistence but with out troubling further as to the manner in which this subsistence had come to the master, (that it is through a relationship the opposite of that of clientship)".

Criticizing the literature on jajmani, Meillassoux\textsuperscript{43} observes that "most studies of jajmani confuse this relationship of clientship with all forms protection and paternalism whatever their actual content including relations of exploitation. So doing they build up the jajmani as the overall model of social relations in India. Under these circumstances it is easy to deny the existence of class relations by analyzing only this relation of ‘clientship’. T. O. Beidelman (1959) is confused in just this way when he wishes to demonstrate, on the contrary, that the jajmani

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 102.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Meillassoux, op.cit., p. 110, fn. 21.
\item \textsuperscript{43} Op.cit., pp. 102-103.
\end{itemize}
was a relationship of exploitation. Beidelman, surprisingly casual, considers slavery and clientship as 'extremely similar' (idem: 11) a deliberate confusion which makes his analysis useless.” Continuing Meillassoux observes that jajmani relationships were formed “essentially between ruling class families and clients who specialized in one activity or another. They did not include relationships with agricultural workers, slaves, serfs, tenants, or wage earning workers, even when these were associated with paternalistic relationships.”

Distinguishing class relations from relations of clientship, Meillassoux\textsuperscript{44} notes that “the latter have, by reason of their institutional character, been confused with the totality of relations of dependence when in actual fact they were only derived, secondary relations whose functioning depended on class relations that fed them.” Continuing with the clientship, he further observes that “the effect of clientship was to preserve relations of prestation between the land owning classes and specialized producers, exclusive of commodity relations. It slowed down or attenuated exchanges among specialist groups, and in the same way between them and the classes that produced subsistence goods. It enabled the patrons to hold themselves apart from these exchanges and yet at the same time to keep themselves at the apex of the circulation of goods. There in resides one of the conservative virtues of the system. In this way, the land owning classes held back the growth of bourgeois class, which could only develop through exchange, and maintained their dominant position in spite of the changing economy and diversification of production.” “However, this control depended for its functioning on the continuance of the relations of exploitation and could last only as long as the authority was able to maintain them. Otherwise the transfer of goods and services would cease to revolve round the master and or the patron and become established directly between the producers on the basis of commodity exchange.”

4.1.3 Acceptance of Hierarchical values:

Andre Beteille’s third internal characteristic, interrelated to the other two, of the traditional Indian village was “the general acceptance of the hierarchical values among different members of the village” and the philosophy of inequality embedded in the society.

In the caste-ordained social system the individual had no choice of behavior.

\textsuperscript{44} Op.cit., p. 103.
His norms were those set by the caste to which he belonged. The castes were hierarchised with Brahmins at the top and the most pollutable. At the bottom were castes whose touch was supposed to pollute others. The caste in power tried to hold the lower ones to their lowly occupations and to the ritually impure position. There were Dharmashastra authorities to legitimate the plurality of practices of the castes, while holding the individual bound to the narrow grooves set by the castes. The social world of the village was permeated by inequality, besides hierarchical values. Not only different people mutely suffered inequality but also they knew where they belonged in the total scheme of things and reconciled to it as ‘natural’. This acceptance, it is true, contributed to the stability of society.

Noting that the hierarchical value system was a general feature of most pre-industrial societies, Beteille finds in India, a remarkable extent to which these values were elaborated. It was not only the castes but also every type of social arrangement involving superior and inferior positions were also hierarchised. Thus not only the Brahmin and untouchable but also landlords and laborers were considered as destined to play unequal roles in socio-economic life. “However the landlord was more than a landlord was when he was also of a superior caste; conversely the landless were doubly deprived when they were also untouchables”. While the different castes were “allowed, even encouraged to maintain their identities by pursuing their distinctive styles of life” they had to acknowledge their non-egalitarian position in the village society. Among Hindus, the “twin concepts of Dharma and Karma served to relate the hierarchy of the village to that of the universe.”

While it is not necessary for us to go into the philosophy of Dharma and Karma which brings caste society into a conceptually connected structure, while the philosophy of Dharma and Karma was a later justification and rationalization of the long existing caste system and caste society, the history of India shows that all rulers, native or foreign, did rule according to this theory, “allowing each caste to rule itself and a group of castes to accommodate themselves mutually, provided the taxes were paid to whomsoever was the ruler.”

The above philosophy was communicated and propagated throughout the length and breadth of the country, from generation to generation, so much so that it

45. The Indian Village: Past and Present, op.cit., p. 115.
permeated into the entire cultural ethos of the country. Besides, “custom, law and religion combined to sustain a moral environment in which hierarchy was considered to be a part of the natural scheme of things.” While the hierarchical and non-egalitarian relations appeared to be clearly “exploitative” in character in the present day perspective, “the perspective itself was significantly different in the past from what it is today.”

Even so, it is difficult to get an understanding of the values held by the people at different levels of the village hierarchy. As Beteille observes, “it unlikely that the hierarchy would appear in the same light from the top as from the bottom. While it is true that we shall never fully know what Dharma and Karma and the like concepts actually signified for the untouchable laborer in the past, it is also true that these concepts were widely, if not universally, recognized and acknowledged. Perhaps hierarchical values were actively espoused only by those at the top while those at the bottom were merely reconciled to them.”

We have been considering so far Andre Beteille’s three internal and interrelated features of the traditional Indian village, namely, that it was a system of multiple gradations associated with an elaborate division of labor; secondly there were in it innumerable vertical ties of diffuse and enduring nature between families and between persons; and lastly, there was a general acceptance of hierarchical values among different members of the village. In connection with these interrelated features of the village, Beteille observes “when changes take place in all these features, as they appear to be doing, the social organization of the village corresponds less and less to its characteristic design” endowed to it by the Indian civilization over the centuries.

4.2.1 Indian Village Economy

Historically, the problem of describing the Indian village economy was chiefly attacked chiefly by a succession of British administrators of India in the context of land revenue settlement and subsequently by Sir Henry Maine and Karl Marx. While the British administrators conceived the Indian village after the system existing in the English countryside, it was Maine who recognized that the Indian

49. Ibid., p. 116.
50. Ibid., p. 110.
village was a close unit with rights and obligations of its own. It was made up of extended joint family groups and castes whose legal and economic relationships were inter-familial rather than inter-personal. Western conception of property rights, consequently alienability, sale and market relationships was not applicable to a system organized according to the principles laid down in the Hindu Dharmashastras. That the Indian village community did not center on market was an invaluable contribution by Maine to economic history. Maine gave the term “status societies” to the ancient Roman and Hindu systems of law, pointing out that they were not organized around nor did they contain a system of contracts. The prices, and therefore rents, and the sale of land did not exist in the market sense that we understand today. According to him the measure of “price” was “custom” and any form of competition existed by its absence. They never traded on commercial principles. Though the picture of the Indian village community as portrayed by Maine has been criticized on some of its aspects, the importance of his findings lay in their emphasis upon the corporate unity of the village economy, upon its system of collective responsibility above all on status as opposed to Western contract, as the rationale of motivation and as the principle upon which the village economy was organized and integrated.

A further insight into the village economy was blazed by Marx in his discourse on Indian village communities. Marx located the base of the Indian village economy on two opposite elements existing side by side. The dominant feature of the village according to him was “domestic union of agriculture and manufacturing” giving self-sufficiency and thereby limiting the domain of exchange within the village. The second important base was “an unalterable division of labor” with artisans and servants of the village maintained through customary payments in kind and \ or land allotments, dispensing again with “commodity exchange”.

Maine, Marx and earlier commentators held that the Indian villages were economically “organized and self- acting”. Baden Powell51 too appears to have agreed that the economy of the village was self-sufficient and that payments in fixed shares were integral to it.

Thus the absence of a free market, of individuals, of private property and of a competitive spirit said to characterize the Indian village were not simply the empirical findings of the 19th century theorists; their absence was essential to the type of society itself. “They were opposed to the feature that formed the essence

51. I.V.C., op.cit., p. 16.
of ancient societies- reciprocal exchange of goods and services within a specialized but closed economy, collective actors and total unity within the kin-group. 52

Before we enter into a discussion of the various aspects of village economy, let us look into its economic structure.

4.2.2 A Resume on the Economic Organization of the Village:

In India, historically the village has been considered as a unit to pursue land cultivation by the resident agriculturists as also to facilitate the administration of royal revenue. Also, the country has been a land of small land holdings, whether worked by peasant proprietors or cultivating tenants. The rights that the peasant possessed over his land were dependent on the nature of his tenure. The variety of tenures in India was rather complex and have been grouped into two broad divisions called Raiyatwari and landlord tenures, as discussed earlier. A great majority of villages came under these two divisions. In the Raiyatwari tracts there was no single ownership over the whole village. The village consisted of a number of independent peasant proprietors. In the landlord village on the other hand, it was either owned by a single landlord or by a group of co-sharing landlords. Where a single landlord owned a village all cultivators were his tenants. In the co-sharing landlord village the practice differed, in some the whole cultivation was carried on jointly and there was no definite division in plots of different co-sharers; in others such a division existed. Again sometimes the joint landlords with their families worked the whole village, but sometimes they also admitted tenants in the village. Of these different systems, the Raiyatwari system predominated in the south of the country, the single landlord system in Bengal as then constituted comprising Bihar, Orissa, while the co-sharer villages were mostly to be found in the erstwhile North western province (i.e. U.P) and the Punjab.

These different tenures did not make a great deal of difference in the internal constitution of the village. As regards village artisans and servants in the landlord village, we noted earlier, they owed special duties to the landlord, but otherwise their position was not greatly different from that of corresponding class in the Raiyatwari village. The common bond holding together the Raiyatwari was the power and the unique position of headman and the preserve and the common set of artisans and servants paid by the village; while in the landlord village it was the single or group ownership.

52. Inden, R., Imagining India, op.cit., p. 144.
However, as Gadgil⁵³ points out, “the mere fact of isolation of the village is not striking, nor was the fact that all the requisite artisans and servants lived in the village peculiar. But the peculiar feature of the Indian village community was that the majority of artisans and servants were the servants of the village”. This aspect needs to be underscored even in the case of landlord villages, where they were apparently servants of the landlord who owned the village, and enjoyed patronage by rendering special duties to him. “These different artisans and servants had usually their own plots of land, however small which they held from the village of landlord rent-free or at reduced rental, and one of the chief sources of income of these artisans and servants consisted in the fixed share in each year’s produce paid by each cultivator.”

The dues and duties of this village servant class varied from one part of the country to another. The variation was not only in dues and services in the artisans and servants who were recognized as servants of the village, for an artisan who would be a village servant in one part of the country, would be an independent artisan in another part. In spite of these differences the remarkable feature of the artisan being the servant of the village was found everywhere. But not all village servants were artisans of this group also included in many parts of the country, the headman, the village accountant, the priest and other domestic servants such as barber and washerman. Neither were all artisans village servants. For example, the weaver, the oil presser (Teli) were nowhere village servants. But the artisans whose services would be regularly required by all members of the village community generally, formed the artisan group of village servants.

The incorporation of this village service group of specialists gave a peculiarly compact form to the Indian village community. The office of these specialists being hereditary, it “stereotyped”, to use Marx’s characterization, the whole life of the village. As regards artisans, Weber⁵⁴ said; “it has stereotyped and thus made impossible the utilization of inventions or introduction of any industry based on capital. The introduction of any technical improvement whatever at any time would have presupposed the founding of any caste below all the old series previously existing.” While it was no doubt a very good device for ensuring that the services required for the village community would be regularly provided for, “at the same

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⁵⁴. General Economic History, Translated by Knight, 1923, p. 123.
time”, notes Gadgil55 “it insured against progress in the methods of the artisans. To begin with, the artisan did all the miscellaneous duties connected with his occupation in the village, did not specialize and the division of labor within the occupation was very limited. The proficiency, therefore, of the artisan and his craft could not be expected to be great. Sometimes his methods were very bad, and this fact helped in some parts of the country, when communications grew, to break down the system.” Further, the system also protected the artisan from the pressure of the external competition. A village cultivator was not likely to buy, for instance from an outside potter, if he has been paying the village potter for his supplies, even though the latter’s wares were not so superior. “Thus the lack of proficiency, very little division of labor, and absence of competition and almost no specialization in products at different localities, rendered rural industry to remain very backward.”

While the position of the village artisan in the traditional structure of the village was definitely fixed, all artisans in the village did not have such fixed position. As already noted, there were two classes of them, namely, those who were village servants and those who were an independent class. In the village there was a wide distinction between the two groups: the “village menial” and the independent worker in terms of status. The village menials comprising artisans and servants, whose services were required in husbandry and daily domestic life, were paid not by the job but by customary dues consisting of a fixed share of the produce of the fields. Those artisans whose services were only occasionally required, such as the weaver, the oilman and the dyer, were paid by the job in cash or kind or by being allowed to retain a fixed share of the raw material which their employers provided them to work upon. But this difference in status in the village community did not necessarily mean a difference in the economic position. It lay not so much in their economic condition as in the mode and the times of payment for their services. For the village menial group, there was an obvious advantage in that their income was fixed and steady. However this apparent advantage was of a doubtful nature in reality. For instance in case of a failure of a harvest, while the village weaver or dyer would get no orders and would have to face starvation, the condition of “village menial” classes would be no better, as the failure of the harvest would very considerably reduce their share to the starvation level. Therefore, the above distinction is nominal and the prosperity and well being of all village artisans depended intimately on the prosperity of the cultivator which in turn as

55. The Industrial Evolution of India, op.cit., p. 10.
also of the whole village depended on one important fact- the nature of the agricultural season.

While all artisans were not included in the village service system, the village servant group was not composed only of artisans. There is also a combination of occupations pursued, in some cases by those included. For instance take the case of the Mahar of the Maratha country. His position was that of a village watchman and as such he had a small plot of land which he cultivated, but mostly lived on the village dues or Baluta and was one of the first recruits to the landless labor class. He apparently had none of the characteristics of an artisan and was not known as such by the village community. Yet, as Gadgil informs us, the Mahar was also a weaver of coarse cloth, an occupation falling outside the village service system. On the other hand the potter was a true artisan, but in many parts of the country, he also worked as a general carrier for the village as his craft required keeping a donkey. Similarly the leather worker was more often a day laborer, like the Mahar of the Maratha country. In most cases the artisans and the servants of the village service group combined occupations which fell outside those reserved for the service group. While a blacksmith combined his smithy with carpentry, a leather worker did not take to carpentry.

In spite of these difficulties Gadgil\textsuperscript{56} demarcates three distinct groups in the village population outside of agriculturists, pure and simple. The top stratum amongst them, socially and economically, was composed of the village accountant and priest; next came the artisan group comprising chiefly the carpenter, the blacksmith, the oilman, the weaver, the potter and the shoe maker. Lastly came the group of village servants, such as watchman, washerman and scavengers, etc., who formed the unskilled labor class. Since their small plots of land were insufficient for their needs, they had to remain as laborers occasionally combining their hereditary occupation with occupations like coarse weaving, basket making rope making, etc.

In agriculture, the self-sufficient character of the village dictated the nature of cultivation. The bulk of the produce had to be foodgrains, consumed in the village and such crops as oilseeds, cotton, etc., grown for local requirements. However, cotton and sugarcane, on account of their nature could not be grown generally all over India. The trade even in these commodities was of limited extent and the area it covered was also limited.

Against the background of the above delineation of the economic structure of the village we will now consider the different views and the characterizations of the village economy.

4.2.3 Some comparisons:

It is the fundamental thesis of the Substantivists that in pre-industrial era the economy is embedded or instituted in society, as discussed earlier in chapter two. Hence it is difficult to isolate the intermeshed economy from a variety of social institutions whose functions are partly economic and partly non-economic. While an economy depicts patterned human interaction in economic activities such as production, distribution, consumption and exchange, any act of exchange of goods and services has not only economic but also social and political implications and it is no more possible to separate one group of activities as purely economic and another as social or political. Therefore, it can be stated that production and distribution of material goods was embedded in social relations of non-economic kind; neither labor nor the disposal of objects nor their distribution was carried on for economic motives of gain or “economizing”. In other words, if we take “economic system” to mean the aggregate behavior traits inspired by individual motives of hunger and gain, there was no economic system in existence at all. If, on the other hand, we take that term to comprise the behavior traits relating to production and distribution of material goods, then we find that there was, of course, an “economic system in being” which was not institutionally separate. It was simply a by-product of the working of other non-economic institutions.

Since there is no separate economic system as such, there has to be an elaborate social organization to take care of such aspects of economic life as division of labor, organization of work, disposal of produce, etc. These and many other economic aspects have been found to be built and integrated into social organization. However to state the economy is embedded in society leaves unspecified the characteristics of social relations through which the economic is effected. Several and varying types of social arrangements have been repeatedly found to facilitate the “supply of want-satisfying material means.” “But what we know of these devices is indeed little compared to our richer and better organized knowledge of structures effecting the supply in market organized economies.”

In the previous section we discussed the “economic” in the social organization of the Indian village society. Earlier, we have discussed separately the caste and the agrarian hierarchies, which have determined the village social organization. In the following we discussed the same in a comparative way with respect to two important aspects singled out by Eric R. Wolf\textsuperscript{58} namely (1) the provision of complementary goods and services and (2) disposition of peasant surpluses.

The peasant, engaged in agriculture, needs, besides food, many other things for cultivation and for his household living. In this regard the relevant question is “the degree to which each peasant household carries on the necessary craft specialities or—correspondingly—the degree to which these specialities are in the hands of others whom he must pay in food for their specific services.” This necessitates exchange relationships. Our interest in this matter concerns the ways in which the needed goods and services not produced by peasants but complementary to peasant production or obtained by them. “These patterns are obviously a function of division of labor within the larger society and the particular mechanisms which assure the pooling of the fruits of cultivation with those of other skills are consequently tied closely to the scale and scope of the societal division of labor.”\textsuperscript{59}

The simplest and the limiting case is that in which a peasant household produces most of the agricultural and craft requirements for itself with only minimal ties with the outside world. Such a situation prevailed in primitive village societies of where agricultural cultivation was vertically integrated, with the peasant household itself attending to all its craft and other speciality services. For instance in the economies of Africa, with the exception of need for food, the other needs were few and were met by work in the family. Most of the transactions were barter transactions and were carried on by payments in kind. But in no part of Africa, “annual barter of goods and services” in an organized form was ever known to have existed as in India. As Sir Allen Pim\textsuperscript{60} writes “the village (in Africa) as such has no corporate life, though there is a very real tradition of family cooperation... there are no village servants and skilled artisans and crafts. Some pottery and basket-work is made, but there is no class depending on such work

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Wolf, op.cit., p. 37.
\item Rural Economies in India and South Africa, a Comparison, Asiatic Review, July 1935, pp. 550-552.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
for a living and the potter's wheel is unknown in south and I believe also in central Africa.”

In contrast to the African tribal society with undifferentiated occupational structure, the traditional Chinese village society was predominantly peasant in the true sense of the term, undifferentiated and unstratified with not much division of labor and specialization of crafts and professions within the village community. The predominance of the peasant villages in China was due not only to social but ecological separation between peasantry and gentry. Agriculture was the primary occupation common to all villagers except among landless outsiders. The difference only was a matter of emphasis. Those who were in agriculture did not depend exclusively on land but were also engaged in raising silk worms and sheep and also in trading ventures. The whole group of craftsmen and professionals constituted a very insignificant proportion of the total population due to the fact that such work was not exclusively specialized and work such as tailoring, shoemaking, etc., were common and vertically integrated in all peasant households. Also wood, bamboo and masonry of crude type, which required little specialization, were also so integrated and the necessary tools for such work were also found in all peasant households. Since the dominant crop grown was rice, the requirement of cultivation equipment was a hoe, a weeding equipment and a reaping sickle. Specialized craftsmen and traders did not part of the village community but lived outside, as they were landless. Only the work of barber, temple keepers and priests was so specialized as not be usually undertaken by the farmers themselves. While goods and services were available outside the village, however, for any better quality of goods and services they depended on towns. With an extended family setup and strong kinship and neighborhood relations stood for them in good stead because of mutual help and aid in many economic and social activities.

Like China, in Japan too much of the craft and professional service requirements were met within the peasant household, linked as it was by strong kinship and neighborhood ties mutually aiding in many economic and social activities. However, two important crafts were carpentry and blacksmithy and the services of these were hired by the peasants. Another artisan was the stone cutter

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who made gravestones and foundation stones for buildings. He also supplied rice grinders and tubs of stone for household use. There was also the roof maker. The peasants, irrespective, whether the specialists were members of the village community hired the services of these or not. When the services of the blacksmith were hired he set up a temporary forge and worked a couple of weeks on work brought to him by the villagers, like the itinerant blacksmith in the Indian setup. The other visiting specialists were the tub maker, tinker, fishmonger and cake makers. While most carpenters, blacksmiths and stone masons, etc., made their living by their trade, the other specialists were however, primarily farmers. The barber ran his shop and also did farming. Similarly the Buddhist and Shinto priests combined their farming with their speciality.

Thus either in China or in Japan there did not develop anything like a village service system like that in India as much of the craft and professional requirements were vertically integrated into the peasant household itself. Even in India it is not impossible to trace the existence of such villages in the tribal belts or in areas where the dispersed village settlement exists. However, the larger tribes – the Santhals, Gonds, Bhils, Oraons and Mundas – are all, by now, settled agriculturists and their villages have revealed the presence of a simple but definite division of labor so that one can find in these tribal villages, in addition to cultivators, households specializing in such crafts as basket-making, oil pressing and blacksmithy – all necessary elements in an economy of land and grain.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, under the dynamic circumstances of socio-economic growth and development, social division of labor sets in, so much so that even the market exchange becomes the order of the day.

Wolf’s second type of exchange relationships associated with peasantry takes place within the village community. Examples of this inter-community division of labor are furnished not only by India but also by mediaeval Europe. Indian villages, as elaborately discussed earlier, have frequently formed into corporations of cultivators admitting a group of non-cultivating artisans and servants and other specialists, engaged in a variety of callings providing complementary goods and services to the cultivating community. These non-cultivating families performed their hereditary services to the community and were paid in kind on a customary basis, not by the job, but annually at the time of farm harvest. The system stipulated

\textsuperscript{63} Vide : Andre Betelille, Six Essays in Comparative Sociology, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974, Chapt. 3.
rights and duties between cultivators and specialists.

A situation similar to that obtaining in the Indian village characterized the mediaeval peasant community in Europe, observes Wolf. "The community contained not only peasants but also full – time or part – time specialists – a miller, a smith, a herdsman, sometimes a priest." Writing about England, Ashlay noted that "many villages though not all had their blacksmith and carpenter who probably were the first officers holding land on condition of repairing ploughs of the lords demesne and of the villagers though in the course of the 13th and 14th centuries this practice came to be commuted for money and craftsmen received payment for each piece of work. Another village officer who appears as holding land in virtue of his office was the pounder." Again, writing about France, Theodore Morrison has noted: "It is perhaps less generally realized that village in ancient France were organized in much the same way as are villages in India at the present day. The village appointed the watchman to protect its goods and herds, to look after its sheep and cattle and these village servants were paid, as village servants were paid in India, by contribution from each proprietor in proportion to his income. With the growth of central government in France the executive organization of the village community decayed as an effective force it had, ceased to exist at the time of the Revolution (1779 A.D.)."

Looked at from the way in which peasants obtained the services of different specialists, the Indian and mediaeval European peasant community are similar to certain extent in maintaining some specialists within their own boundaries. It was a universal and everyday need. While the institution of village community, no doubt, is one which was once common in almost all over Europe and Asia, there was one feature of the village community in India which had no parallel anywhere else and that is the incorporation of a set of specialists as servants of the village on a hereditary basis. This was largely due to the castewise division of labor which was not found elsewhere. Elsewhere such specialists who have accepted their trade voluntarily would settle where the prospects of the trade invited them and would indifferently accept work from any customer, being paid by the job. But in India, the village community invited the requisite set of caste – specialists and found for them, on a hereditary basis, almost exclusive employment, and instead of paying

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65. Introduction to English, Economic, History and Theory, Part I, p. 34.
them by the job, established a regular income or customary mode of annual payment at harvests, on receipt of which every village resident was entitled to have his work done without further individual payment.

If under certain circumstances, the village did not have the requisite speciality craft service, the peasants had to obtain it from the nearby village or from the weekly bazaar or town. This is the third exchange system enumerated by Wolf. While a market links a set of communities which lie scattered in different villages around it, each of these village communities may have its own economic speciality produced either on full – time or part – time basis such as pottery, textiles, leather goods, wooden implements and goods, iron products, baskets and ropes, etc., besides speciality crops. Periodically people from various villages meet in the weekly market and exchange the fruits of their labor.

In this context it will be interesting to consider the example of Burma. Baden Powell finds “no mention of any staff of artisans serving only one village, hereditary, and specially remunerated by free holdings or grain fees such as we meet with in all Indian villages.” There was no inter – community division of labor with in the village community as such. In spite of the great difficulties of transportation there was localization of artisan industry in Burma to a small extent in areas of small cluster of villages. The artisan villages specialized in one trade or the trade or the other and existed side by side with the peasant villages. The craftsmen of these villages catered not to one village but to a considerable area. For example, one village would specialize in pottery, more or less monopolizing the market for several villages around, buying its cartwheels from one village, its cart bodies from another, cutting implements from still another. Exchange often took place through a system of five-day bazaar. Any given village would have its market day every fifth day and some dealers would go, in a circuit of five, to nearby villages buying a given commodity in one and selling it in another.

Outside the market each of these communities lived its own life maintaining its own body of customs; each group regarded others as strangers in contrast to their own. But the periodic market helped bringing these separate units together, with each to some extent dependant on the specialist activities of the other. Although village communities from independent bodies outside the market, in the

68. I.V.C., op.cit., p. 149.
network of exchange, each community constituted a section and the act of exchange related each section to every other.

"If we compare," writes Wolf\(^69\), "such 'sectional' markets to the Indian village, we would say that in India exchange relations are carried on between separate but interdependent sections, operating with in the same village community, whereas in the sectional markets the segments are geographically dispersed, each organized into a separate community. Where the relations between peasants and specialists in India are built up from many strands of relation between two people, in the sectional market relations are built upon a single interest. The relation is confined to the particular act of exchange between two parties, who otherwise remain relative strangers to one another, and is tangential."

Let us now consider the second topic namely the disposition of peasant surpluses as it is important to know the several ways in which the peasant produce was transferred to other segments of the society which have a claim on it, principally to the overlord who has the domain over the land.

Looking in this regard, to the situation that prevailed in mediaeval Europe, as to the relationships between the lord of the manor and villein, Wolf\(^70\) observes that "the manor was not so much one large unified farm as held by the manorial lord. The lord granted the land to his dependant cultivators and in return for the grant of land, hunting rights, rights to pasture or woodland fuel, the different cultivators had to pay the lord, produce or furnish labor services upon lord's land. Each cultivator might have quite different relation with his manorial lord drawing on different resources in the lord's lands and owning different services in return. Hence there were many different grades and kinds of dependant cultivators giving services to lords and receiving perquisites from the lord's estate. The cultivators, moreover, might in turn furnish house sites to landless laborers in return for their labor or even lend out the land placed at their disposal to third parties without land, until each piece of land supported a complecated pyramid of claims and counter – claims. As in the Indian villages, there was a tendency to make the system hereditary, to pass from father to son both the rights and duties connected with the holding directly from a lord."

What stands in Wolf's comparison in the Indian village systems, with the

mediaeval European one, is the type of the village which we have distinguished as Zamindari or landlord village in contrast to the most popular type known as the raiyatwari or severalty village. We have earlier discussed the nature of the landlord village in section 3.1.3. In fact Wolf’s Indian example for comparison is the village in 18th century Oudh as discussed by Walter C. Neale. And such comparative understanding is possibly the main source of the “Jajmani model”. Earlier also, while discussing the provision of complementary goods and services and the village service system Wolf has couched it in terms of the “Jajmani system” and had discussed it with the example of Oscar Lewis’ study of Jat village, Rampura. The so – called Jajmani system is one of the village service systems found in India about which we will discuss in the next chapter.

In respect of the comparison between the European manor and the Indian Zamindari village, what is common to both is that “same person or group of persons claims a right to land used by the peasantry and exercises his domain over it.” “Private property in land giving right to sell or otherwise dispose freely of a given stretch of land, is only one form of domain. A person, on the other hand, may not be allowed to sell land over which he has rights, or clear it of its peasant occupants, yet continue to exercise his right of domain over it, expressed in the right to exact tribute in return for permission to use it.”

In the section that follow we will discuss the disposition of the produce in the Indian village under the heading “The Grain Heap”.

4.2.4. “The Grain Heap”.

From the 19th century reports of British administrators in India to the modern anthropological literature the enduring symbol of the moneyless economy of the village has been the “grain heap” or the village produce divided into shares on the village threshing floor. Writing in the context of the village of the joint or the co – sharing from where a series of rights and interests in land superimposed one on another, Baden – Powell explains how “these complicated rights” were “in practice given effect to and how they could exist together without interminable confusion.” “Up till quite late in historical times, the most complicated interests would be dealt with in terms of sharing the actual produce.” He further quotes from W.C. Bennet’s Final Settlement Report of Gonda District (1878 A.D.),

belonging to old Oudh Kingdoms (now U.P.) which states: “The produce is the common property of every class in the agricultural community from Raja to slave. No one is absolute owner any more than others; but each has his permanent and definite interest.” Around Raja’s right to his share in the produce there clustered a number of rights which were recognized and had the character of permanent property. And Raja’s was a State – right, always conceived, historically, as a share of the produce and no one conceived his hereditary right as setting up an exclusive title to the enjoyment of the whole produce of the land tilled. But a claim to a certain share of the produce was “tangible element and apparent symbol of right” in the soil, whether individual or collective. As a matter of history, the claims of the Raja, the proprietary owner of the village, soon became consolidated and got recognition as the attribute of ruling power and as a matter of custom it had combined right to the share of the produce, the right to the waste and the right to tolls and transit dues. This aggregate of rights was from early Muhammedan times was spoken of as zamindari. Later, the old State – right or zamindari was magnified, due to political instability, into a general superior ownership of the entire domain with increases in the share demanded.\textsuperscript{73}

It was not that all the grain produce from all the holdings was thrown into one common heap and after first deducting the dues of the “village establishment” the remainder was formed into two heaps, of which the Raja took one and the rest was equally divided among cultivators, share and share alike. Every holding collected its own produce for partitioning. While the gradation of right from Raja to the cultivating tenant was expressed in terms of a division of the produce, “ownership” was not in the soil but in the shares of the produce, and in the business of cultivation and of paying the state revenue.

In the south of the country also the same plan of division of the produce and payment of revenue in kind prevailed which was originally universally all over India. The produce, if there was no co – sharing body of Mirasi class, was simply divided into the State share (melvaram) and the occupant’s share (kudivaram) after the fees (merai) of the village establishment have been taken out of the grain heaps. But when there is a body of Mirasi proprietors then there were three instead of two shares: the royal share, the lord’s share (tunduvaram) and the occupant’s share. As Baden – Powell\textsuperscript{74} notes, the Mirasi village tenure worked exactly in

\textsuperscript{73} Vide I.V.C., op.cit., p. 208.
\textsuperscript{74} I.V.C., op.cit., p. 378.
analogy with the North Indian joint or co–shared village with superior tenure. He observes that “the Madras history is just the same thing in another form”.

In respect of a non–mirasi village named Settur from Tirunevellli district of Tamil Nadu, the following details for the year 1796 A.D. regarding the disposition of the village produce are illustratively provided by David Ludden. He writes: “The qanungo, a local revenue official supervised the division of the grain heap on the threshing floor; he made deductions from the gross produce to pay village watchman, overseers, laborers who had reaped and threshed the crop, plowman and workers who bailed water from the tank to nourish the crops when water ran low. In addition he made deductions for the village maniyams – the village management fees – in turn divided among landowners, village servants, and unspecified group of maniyamdars, probably landowners who managed village external affairs. Finally cultivators and government divided the remainder, the qanungo’s fees being taken from the landowner’s share. Government agents in turn charged for protection (Kaval) and took one quarter of fees paid for labor supervision (Kankanam), some of which they must have provided.”

The following is the quantitative picture of the division of the crop at Settur village (1796 A.D.) as supplied by Ludden from the official records.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>% of Harvest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultivator’s share (kudivaram):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ net produce (after deductions)</td>
<td>36.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus Qanungo’s fees</td>
<td>-1.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus share of the village maniyam</td>
<td>4.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government’s share (melvaram):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ net produce (after deductions)</td>
<td>36.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection (Kaval) fees</td>
<td>7.00.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ of supervision (kankanam) fees</td>
<td>0.1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ of Qanungo’s fees</td>
<td>0.4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.5.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75. Peasant History in South India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, pp. 77-78.
Service Fees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qanungo</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor supervisors</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reapers and Threshers</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plowman</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterers (for bailing from tank)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village maniyamdars</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 15.0.

Source: PBR. IOL, 19 March 1798, pp. 2175 – 90.

In Tod’s description of the scene at the threshing floor in the villages in the kingdom of Udaipur (Rajasthan) in the early 19th century provides us another example of disposition of the produce. He states that the crop was divided into heaps, each of a standard volume, which were then cut into four equal parts. From each heap fixed amounts were taken to be headed over to the village headman, accountant, watchman, messenger, carpenter, blacksmith, potter, washerman, shoemaker and barber. Altogether, these shares totaled one of the quarter heaps. The second quarter went to the king and the last two quarters to the cultivator himself, after further shares had been taken for king’s heir. Small shares for the royal family were also taken out from the grain handed over to the village servants. The net result was that the king’s share actually totaled three-tenths, not one quarter. Most probably, it may be noted, Tod’s description is a generalized one, not an account of the specific village that he visited, but there is no doubt that the system was broadly as he portrayed it, and certainly there were many other regions, including the Deccan Plateau in which similar distribution of grain was effected.

In connection with the grain heap and sharing it out into various right and interest holders, we may briefly refer to the position of the “village establishment”, particularly the resident craftsmen and servants who were employed by the village on a fixed remuneration but sometimes of bit of rent – free land, small payments

at harvests as well as customary allowances in the produce. This custom of paying
the village artisans and servants by allowances of grain on the threshing floor
taken out before the division of the heap between king’s officers and the cultivator
is, to repeat, very ancient and universal in every part of the country, more or less,
but highly variable in respect of their number and modes of payment between
villages and between regions. Since these payments were in the nature of cultivation
costs, they were taken out before the final division.

4.2.5 (a) W.C. Neale’s

4.2.5 (a) W.C. Neale’s Analysis of the Village Grain Heap in Terms of
Polanyian Reciprocity and Redistribution:

Dismissing the sloganized characterization of the Indian Village economy as
“pre – capitalist”, as having a “barter economy”, a “subsistence economy” or as
being “communistic” or “collectivistic”, as not providing any formal principles or
a frame of reference for a positive description and analysis as to how the
production and distribution of goods in the village economy is organized, Neale
finds that the traditional Indian Village economy operating under non – market
conditions can be better explained on the basis of Polanyian concepts of
reciprocity and redistribution than by the more usual terms of economic theory.
As the strength and utility of the above concepts lies in their ability to reduce
complex relationships to simple patterns, Neale notes the “maize of relationships
in the village economy can be set out in terms of reciprocity and redistribution
applied to groups that make up the village as well as the main goods and services”.
Since the basis of the village society being the grain heap in which each constituent
rank had its definite interest, Neale further notes that “the Indian solution to what
one would consider the problems of the Western market society such as an property
rights, rents, wages, prices and taxes was a system of interdependent rights and
duties made effective through a complex series of operational devices which
assured each party to the village economy from the Raja down to the slave
ploughman, a share in the grain heap”.

Neale gives the following descriptive elements of the traditional Indian village
for fitting the Polanyian model, as gleaned from Bennet’s Final Settlement Report
on Gonda District in Uttar Pradesh. The data relate not to a specific villages as

77. “Reciprocity and Redistribution in the Indian Village: Sequel to Some Notable Dis-
cussions,” In Trade and Market in the Early Empire, eds. Karl Polanyi et al, Glencoe :
The Free Press, 1957, pp. 218-236. This section is a detailed summary of Neale’s
article.
such, but to the generalized village abstracted from the observations in the district as a whole by Bennet. These further relate to the economy of a zamindari village belonging to former Oudh. While the Gonda village is typical of the Oudh villages, it was probably untypical of Oudh as a whole, because of its complete lack of monetization in comparison with other districts. Even so, the distribution of grain on the threshing floor of the type Bennet describes for Gonda, was widespread and continuing.

Though the Gonda village did not hold its lands in common, it did have a set of common officials and servants. The list was as follows:

1. The officials were: the watchman, and where the Raja took his share from the village, a headman (mukadam) and a Patwari (accountant).
2. Village servants: the blacksmith, the carpenter, the herdsman, the washerman, the barber, the priest, the potter and sometimes a Kahar servant to the headman.

Neale notes that “the system of allotting shares in the gross produce of the village was highly complex. Yet it did not require any previous knowledge of the total gross produce to be divided among members of the community. While the exact arrangements in the division and distribution varied from place to place, we may take as a typical example, the system recorded by W.C. Bennet.”

In the Gonda village the distribution of the harvest in favor of the various members having right and interest in the produce was of three kinds and took place in three stages as below:

1. on the standing crop before it was cut,
2. on the whole grain heap before the main division,
3. on the Raja’s or cultivator’s separate share after the main division was made.

The right to cut one-twentieth of a bigha of the standing crop called “Biswa” on each cultivator’s land was generally enjoyed by the watchman of the village site, watchman of the outlying fields, the blacksmith, the carpenter, the herdsman, the priest and frequently the cultivator himself. (Bigha measure varied from place to place from a quarter of an acre in Bengal to two-thirds of an acre in U.P. with variation both elsewhere and within these provinces. The Biswa from Bisa = 20 is the 20th part of a bigha. Besides being a measure of land it was also used to signify the extent of property right in an estate. Each estate or village was
considered as an integer of one bigha, which is again divided into imaginary Biswas to show the right of any particular party. Thus a holder of 5 Biswas was the holder of 1/4th of the village, estate.)

Next, the whole village joined in cutting and threshing, each cultivator helping his neighbor and the grain from the fields of each cultivator was heaped in a separate pile on the community threshing floor. The slave – ploughman – a debt-bound attached from servant of the cultivating family, took his share from the harvested crop which varied from 1/5th to 1/7th of the heap. To this share the cultivator added a pansari. (Pansari is a 1/22nd of a maund of 82 lbs., but was probably between 50-60 lbs. before the British standardized the weights.)

Next, the cutters and threshers, who had participated in the harvesting operations took from each pile a sixteenth of rice crop and the “fattest sheaf in thirty” of other crops. Then the carpenter, blacksmith, barber, washerman and watchman took 12 pansaris of threshed grain from each cultivator for each 4 – bullock plough he owned and 6 pansaris for each 2 – bullock plough. (A plough unit is the extent of land one pair of bullocks can plough.)

When these shares, which were in the nature of cultivation and harvesting costs and were called “bhatta” had been passed out, the grain heaps were divided between the cultivator and the Raja in half. However, their carry-home share was subject to further deductions as follows:

From the Raja’s heap the cultivator received one seer (i.e. 1/40th of a maund) in ever maund. Another seer was received by the Patwari and a “double handful” by the priest and a tenth of the remainder was received by the headman. Similarly from the cultivator’s heap, the blacksmith and carpenter each received three more pansaris, the herdsman one more pansari and a seer or two went to the patwari.

When this or similar in all essentials was the method throughout Gonda District, it is significant to note who took from the common grain heap and who from the finally shared heaps of the cultivator and the Raja. It is further significant to note that while the Patwari and priest had a charge on the Raja’s share only and not on the common heap, it was the carpenter, blacksmith and the herdsman, who had an extra charge over and above their claim on the common grain heap on the cultivator’s share, with headman having charge on both the shared heaps. There were few classes not included in the agricultural community and of these the principal were the Raja’s servants, the grain dealer, moneylender and shopkeepers, etc. The staff maintained for superintendence of Raja’s cultivation and collection
of his dues was paid on terms freely agreed to, by either cash wages or arbitrary assignment in Raja’s rights, and formed no necessary or integral part of the community. The relations between the grain dealer, moneylender or shopkeepers and the rest of the society were regulated by the ordinary principles of commerce. They had nothing in common with those which governed the remuneration of the artisans and the ploughman.

Neale discusses the significance and importance of grain distribution under the following heads: (a) The operational simplicity of the distributional device, (b) the built in provisions in the distributional system, and (c) the economic rationality. We briefly summarize the same.

Noting that the above distribution is a sort of a mathematical problem, Neale spells out its intricacies due to various factors as also the unknown volume of the gross produce as follows: “The proportions vary with the number, size and distribution of ploughs, the number of bullocks, the number and distribution of slave ploughman, as well as the amount of gross produce. Not only do the deductions depend upon the variation among these factors, but some of the deductions are stated in proportions and some in absolute terms.” “Given all the data it would still be possible to compute the fraction of the total going to any cultivator, artisan or servant or to the Raja” but it is not possible to express it in any shorter formula manageable in practice. “Besides the inordinate length of the formula, the fraction could still not be converted into actual figures since the total gross produce was unknown.” And Neale remarks, “here lies the true strength of the system employed”.

Even so, the system was not confusing to the participants as it was simple operationally and the device is described in simple and understandable phrases used, such as “one seer in every maund”, “one seventeenth of the heap”, etc. Each step in the distribution was carried out separately. For example, if some ploughman was to get a seventh of the heap, six measures were set aside and the seventh was given to the plough until the heap disappeared. The same process was followed for each proportional division as per rules of precedence, probably without replacement, so that at no point was it necessary to know the quantitative size of the grain heap in advance. Even in the case of measures all that was required was two containers, one for pansari and another for seer of grain. Any measure could be used in the sharing process, for all that was necessary was to dispose off the grain heap as so many measures to this pile and so many to that. Such a simple
device served many claimants in different ways without the need of accounting. Again honesty was assured as the distribution was public, in the presence of the villagers involved and the Raja or his representative.

Besides the importance of the operational devices to the villagers, Neale analyses the built – in devices in the distribution which assured every member of the community a minimum share so long as the whole village was not suffering from famine. The fixed quantities going to the artisans and servants gave them a basic minimum even if the harvest was so small that their shares would not be sufficient to support them.

Further, the built in devices of the system tended to equalize the incomes of the villagers. For instance when the cultivator took his share in the Biswa on his land, there was a partial equalization of incomes, which Neale likens it a dependant’s allowance exempted under a modern Income Tax. As the cultivator received a fixed Biswa share before his outturn divided with the Raja, the result was that similar holdings paid similar proportion of the outturn to the Raja than larger holdings. Again, as each cultivator helped others in the harvesting operations the real burden of the Bhatta deductions on this account fell upon the Raja’s share of the produce, since his division followed other deductions. This too, therefore, amounted to an income – equalizing operation, for the sixteenth share of the rice heap and a thirtieth share of other crops given up by the small peasant was more than counter-balanced by his share from larger cultivators.

Discussing the economic rationality in the system, Neale finds “scant regard for economic rationality in the distribution”. There could have been very rough approximation to economic justice in relating artisan and servants’ share to the size of the plough unit as an indicator of the amount of work rendered or required of the blacksmith or carpenter, and might have roughly represented the relative size of fields. The same may be taken in respect of the watchman as the area protected. But the size of the plough unit must have had little direction to the amount of work done by the barber and washerman.” In their case, “it was really a matter of the well – to – do paying a larger share for a public service”. The only approach to payment based on service rendered was that of the herdsman per bullock cared for.

Commenting on the distribution system Neale observes that “the devices made it unnecessary to develop a concept of ownership in the Roman sense, for land never came into the allocative system but only its produce. The system of
interdependent rights and duties was expressed in the form of definite operations which resulted in each person getting his share and these operational devices filled the function performed in the market society by prices, wages, rents and taxes.”

Let us now turn to Neale’s application of Polanyian categories of reciprocity and redistribution to Bennet’s data of Gonda village. To begin with the above description of the distribution of the grain heap clearly constitutes a redistributive system operating in the village in which each member of the community participated in the division of the grain heap. There was no bargaining and no payment for services rendered. There was no accounting, yet each contributor to village life had a claim on its produce and the whole produce was easily and successfully divided among the village community. As noted earlier, similar distributions in kind on the threshing floor are still widespread in the villages in different parts of the country and continue to be customary shares rather than bargained ones. This is reminiscent of the redistributive system that prevailed in the country, throughout history, before market economy made a violent dent into the system as we will notice it subsequently.

As Neale notes, below and above village also the redistributive pattern continued to operate. Below, the share remaining to the cultivator’s joint family was managed by its head who parceled out to its members as a matter of household administration. The principle here also was redistributive as the grain was held in common and its consumption regulated by handing out from the family store.

Above the village level there might be one or many political authorities depending on the size of the kingdom and the degree of central control which the king was able to exercise. Whether any economic function was performed or not by the authorities, the division of the grain heap at the village level was the foundation upon which the political authority rested. As the size of the kingdom increased the number of intermediate authorities multiplied. The ruler’s share collected over villages in the kingdom was distributed among competing levels of military and political bureaucracy according to their relative strengths. In a large kingdom like the Mughal empire there was a hierarchy of redistributive centers with the village grain heap at the bottom and the king’s houses at the top. In between the local powers and provincial governors maintained their own store houses, retaining stipulated share and passing on the remainder to the level above. In regard to the grain, notes Neale, the whole political and social structure was founded on redistribution. Thus above the village level economic integration was achieved
through the rulers and the rulers' share i.e. the land revenue system.

Before we consider the reciprocity aspect of the village economy it is necessary to recall the substantivist view of the usual distinction between the formal economists' categories of “production” and “distribution” which we have noted in section 2.5.1. The term “distribution” is used in two different ways: one referring to locational movements such as transportation, the other to appropriational ones as in retailing. For the substantivists, while the locational movements refer to “production” including transportation, the appropriational movements refer to “distribution” and modes of organization in conformity with the existing social structures.

In the light of the above Hopkins78 points out that the traditional Indian village exemplifies that the above two types of economic activities are instituted at different levels. He clarifies that in the Indian village “labor – the principal factor of production, or more strictly the locational actions, is instituted through the caste system.” “What contributions, apart from grain, a person makes to the supply of material means are organized through his more inclusive caste role. On the other hand, the appropriational movements – who appropriates how much from what pile of the produce – do not appear to follow caste lines. Within the total community they are organized through different community roles such as cultivator, priest, herdsman, etc., while within the joint family they are organized through the patriarchal structure of that social unit, the head parceling out shares to the family members.”

Thus interlinked with the redistributive system, discussed above, was the caste system through which different crafts, and skills and their services were organized. As Neale points out, “no contract, no bargaining will account for its structure. It was founded on reciprocity.” Every member of each caste resident in the village contributed his services and skills to support every other member of each caste. While the sanction was broadly religious, its function was largely economic. “Rather than a simple dual symmetry, a multiple symmetry underlay the caste system; a large number of groups were sharing out their services among each other although they acted independently. Each caste was economically dependent upon the performance of their duties by other groups. The members of the society could survive only if each caste did its job for others, yet each caste remained a ‘self-governing community’ and set up its own standards of life and conduct.

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Territorially the castes cut across the village and political boundaries and functioned whatever course political life was taking."

Briefly it can be said that in the traditional Indian village economic relationships were reciprocative in regard to services and redistributive in regard to the agricultural produce. But "the reciprocative caste system as a whole was itself an element within the redistributive system of the village." The functions of the watchman, carpenter, priest, etc., were caste functions and it was by virtue of each member of each caste within the village fulfilling his religiously sanctioned duties that the grain heap was there to be divided at the harvest time. The cultivator – artisan and servant relations might therefore be said to be both reciprocative and redistributive. For example, the artisan was supplying the cultivator with his skills and the cultivator in turn, and regardless of the specific services the artisan had performed for him, supplied the artisan with the agricultural produce grown by him. At the same time the artisan and the cultivator jointly contributed to the production of the village grain heap, which was in turn redistributed to all residents of the village.

But to say that the Indian village economy operating under non-market conditions in which services were patterned by reciprocity and the grain produce by redistribution "still leaves open for detailed description the particular procedures used and shares received by the participants." These, however, varied from village to village and from region to region and were dependent on very many factors specific localities and regions. But the above analysis, as Neale claims, "does acquaint us with the structure of the manifold village activities so that we perceive how it came about that these activities were made to mesh."

As noted above, since "labor", the principle factor of production was instituted through caste system which organized the different crafts and skills, and further since land never came into the allocative system but only its produce, Morrison’s79 statement that "it is under the heading of distribution rather than production that the singularity of Indian system is to be found" stands vindicated.

4.2.5(b). Criticism of Neale’s Model.

In this section we round off Neale’s discussion of the Indian village economy in terms of substantivist categories, by briefly referring to the comments and criticism it has attracted in literature.

Mortal Klass, an anthropologist, considering Neale’s analysis finds that the self-confessed substantivist economist, has discussed not much about production in contrast to the discussion he has indulged in about distribution/redistribution. Klass asks: “How does production take place? Are the rules of this dimension of the economy the same as for distribution/redistribution? And, who sets the rules, interprets them and supervises the allocative processes? Most of all, what has this to do with ‘caste’? Could not such a system occur in a non-caste society?”

Neale has discussed relatively very little about caste and caste system, for “he perceives these as phenomena essentially separate from the redistributive economic system. In fact”, Klass notes, that Neale “sees caste as having an economic dimension of its own, one having to do with the exchange of services”. According to Neale, as we have noted, “briefly it can be said that relationships were reciprocal in regard to services, and redistributive in regard to agricultural produce”. Thus, he gives an impression, by implication that “castes are concerned only with services; it is almost as if Neale forgets that those engaged in crop production are equally members of castes of their own”. “In any economic analysis”, Klass observes, “the caste system must be approached in terms of agricultural production. Exchange of services is clearly a secondary function and as such must be considered only after and in terms of agricultural production”.

Further Klass complains that Neale is also “a bit too brief” when he says: “Every member of each caste contributed his services and skills to the support of every member of other castes”. This has familiar ring of Wiser’s classical statements. “Each caste in the village at some time during the year is expected to render a fixed type of services to each other caste.” “Each serves others. Each in turn is master”. “No doubt” observes Klass, “such a thoroughgoing and all – encompassing exchange is called for if we are to apply terms such as ‘symmetry’ and ‘reciprocal exchange’. Nevertheless, it is simply not true – and I doubt that it never has been – that every caste contributes services and skills to every other caste. After all, what need have landless laborers of carpenters and blacksmiths?” We may further note that while the potter and barber exchange their services with each other, the barber has not much to take from the cobbler, nor does the former shave the latter. The relations are thus limited. The inter-relations among these

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artisan and service castes are conditioned by differences in social status and ideas of pollution associated with their traditional occupations or materials used in the crafts. It is well known that “certain castes, such as those of priests and barbers, everywhere limit their services by their own internal caste rules so as to exclude from the exchange system certain low – ranked castes of their region.” “If such exclusion is structural rather than exceptional, what happens to notion of ‘reciprocity’?” asks Klass.

To examine the village economy and to see “how caste system in actual manifestation relates to Neale’s system of redistributive economy” Klass uses Kathleen Gough’s account of caste and agricultural production in the Tanjore village Kumbapettai82 a Brahmin Mirasi village in Tamil Nadu. Gough’s account has been found useful for the purpose as it provides data roughly comparable in time to that used by Neale, but for a distant and seemingly different part of the country. While it is not necessary for us to narrate the details of the caste and social structure of Kumbapettai, Klass finds structural principles to be essentially the same, whatever the variation in detail, indicative of pan – Indian structural regularities despite all regional and other variation. But it is necessary to remind ourselves that both the villages – Gonda of Oudh Kingdom and Kumbapettai of Tanjore – are landlord villages, however distant and apparently different.

While the Maratha Raja’s share in Kumbapettai varied over years from 40 to as much as 60 percent of the total harvest, the rest of it belonged to the Mirasdar Brahmins. But a substantial part of their portion went towards the subsistence needs of the entire village and the remainder, if any, “was sold for cash, apparently by separate Brahmin households to merchants of the town”. This was the distribution of the “grain heap” between family, village and kingdom – a system that Neale has described for Gonda from Oudh kingdom in the same period. Even so, Klass observes: “Throughout India, as in Kumbapettai, we find that families in a given village who control agricultural production constitute the dominant caste of castes. Further they supervise the distribution of services as well as production and distribution of the crops.”

According to Klass, “reciprocity – or reciprocal exchange – may be present, but it does not appear to be a meaningful diagnostic characteristic of the socio-economic system. What Gough noted in Kumbapettai is simply one example of what Neale predicted for all India as the instituted economic system; a redistributive exchange system, in which the dominant caste of the village, under the authority of the government, controls the production of the crop, the distribution of it, and – as we have determined from Gough’s account – even the allocation of services.”

Further, the participation in the redistributive exchange system was through the mechanism of what Gough calls as “dyadic” relationships between families or individuals representing different regional castes. In the literature these “dyadic” relationships are termed as “Jajmani relationships”. Such a system “worked despite absence of magistrate or mayor or other political authorities, because the economic system itself provided the socio-political center”.

Martin Orans, an economic anthropologist of the “formalist” school is more forthright in his criticism of Neale. Neale argues that the structure of the village economy can be far better explained by the substantivist concepts of reciprocity and redistribution than by the more usual terms of economic theory. Use of the tools of economic theory offers only limited advantages in centering attention on individual choices, while it interfaces with the institutional analysis that is at the heart of anthropological study. But “what is it that Neale is able to explain?” asks Orans. Neale finds that services were “reciprocative” and the distribution of agricultural produce “redistributive”. “Assuming”, Orans argues, “that such patterns of the flow of valuables are found in the Indian village economy, what is explained by naming them thusly? All that could then be claimed is that the terms are here applicable and that such patterns are perhaps widespread. But even with respect these claims, there seems considerable doubt or at least room for ambiguity”.

Commenting on Neale’s Gonda District village economy as fitting the substantivist categories of reciprocity and redistribution, Orans notes: “To call such a system of grain distribution ‘redistributive’ is to classify it with such practices as the familiar Polynesian redistributions, in which, for example, goods are presented to a chief or king and then in a large measure redistributed to the contributors. The Indian example is only alike in that some of the grain crop, (in

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separate piles for each cultivator) is placed at the central point. It never ‘belongs’ to a set of statuses who then transfer it to a single status, who then relinquishes his right to it by redistribution; only the centricity of the gathering point bears a resemblance to the polynesian example. If exactly the same kind of division took place in each cultivator’s field (as part of the division does) or at each cultivator’s home, Neale would apparently have to call it ‘reciprocity’ i.e., the convenience of the central collection point seems to be the decisive matter for classification”. Thus for Orans the utility of Neale’s distinction between categories is not impressive.

Continuing Orans notes: “As for reciprocity, it seems by definition to include any pattern of flow based on prescribed status, e.g., reciprocal or chain-like, the only exception by implication is ‘redistribution’ by prescribed status. It is therefore hardly surprising that whenever one encounters the flow of valuables between prescribed statuses it can be assigned to one of the two boxes ‘reciprocity’ or ‘redistribution’; there is nothing of empirical regularity in this finding since, by definition all prescribed flow between statuses is either reciprocity or redistribution. Indeed there are many services given on command of those with political power, and for these all that one may receive is not being hit on the head. Such a ‘flow of valuables’ may be described as reciprocity if one chooses, but then it is best that any implication stemming from the ordinary connotations of the term be explicitly removed.”

So much for Oran’s criticism of the claim by Neale that the substantivist categories are found to fit the Indian village data. However, Orans notes that, as regards “explanation based on the recognition that it is reciprocity, redistribution or market”, nothing is forthcoming other than the contention that if it is non-market, economic theory will not apply. “What then would apply?” asks Orans and notes that “so far as explanations are concerned we are left with a formulation that needs only the terms ‘market’ and ‘non-market’. In the former, economic theory is to be applied and in the latter, one examines flow of valuables in terms of status.” Hence it is necessary to pay careful attention to the actual patterns of flow between statuses and “not to cover ignorance with vague concepts”.

From the above comments and criticism we observe that both the parameters, viz., reciprocity and redistribution, in Neale’s model of the Indian village economy have been faulted. Since the institutional precondition for reciprocity is that the transactional connections should be between symmetrically placed social groups,
Klass observes that every caste contributes service and skills to every other caste in the village society is not true at all. In the hierarchically ordered caste society of the village certain castes limit their services by their own internal caste rules so as to exclude certain low-ranked castes. This structural feature of exclusion renders the concept of reciprocity not applicable to the exchange system of the village. While reciprocal exchange may exist as such, it cannot, observes Klass, be a “meaningful diagnostic characteristic of the socio-economy.”

For the second parameter of the model, viz., redistribution, the social precondition is centricity and not symmetry. Traditionally, most villages, if not every, were endowed with a common threshing floor outside the village habitat, a fact which continues to exist till today in some localities84. While it catered to the sense of security of the produce of the peasantry, the collection of the village produce on the common threshing floor was administratively necessary as the “State share of the grain heap” was to be physically assessed by the state assessors and collectors and the village headman. It was not that all the grain produce from all holdings was thrown into one common heap. Writing in the context of payment of ‘baluta’ remuneration to village artisans and servants in Maharashtra Fukazawa85 quotes “a record of 1774 A.D. which recollects the state of affairs of Junnar region under Mughal rule, perhaps in the 17th century and states “formerly when batai system of the village was practiced under the Mughal rule, the whole products of the village were collected in one place and after weighing the products by the hands of weigher, baluta remuneration was paid’ ... In other words the headman, responsible for the collection of the revenue, made each peasant bring his products to a certain place in the village and let him pay certain amount of them to each baluta-servant and then fixed proportion of the rest was collected as revenue.” However, this centricity seems to have vanished in the later period when the method of revenue collection changed to one where the revenue was prefixed in kind or cash.

Despite social precondition of centricity, what Orans points out is the theoretical ambiguity in classifying whether a given transaction or flow of goods and services is reciprocal or redistributive. In this context we draw attention to

84. Vide, e.g., Appadorai, A., Economic Conditions of Southern India (1000-1500 A.D.), University of Madras, 1936, Vol. 1, p. 87.
our discussion in Chapter II about the theoretical status of these socio-economic transactional modes, particularly to Hopkin’s observation that the “theoretical underpinnings of these forms of integration” have not been clearly stated and “they need to be developed if the concepts are to be the basic tools as well as pragmatically useful designations”.

4.2.6 Gradual Disappearance of the Grain Heap

The gradual fading away of the village grain heap is the story of the non-market village economy of land and grain involving transactions in kind into one wherein transactions in cash and coined money as a medium of exchange entered leading to the development of “market” for agricultural commodities as also for land, based on the supply-demand-price theorem. The principle channel through which money entered the village was what the British government in India termed as land revenue for the share of the state in the grain heap.

From the earliest times a division of the crop was the principal revenue of the ruler. This share depended upon the kind of crop and the way it was cultivated rather than upon the value that could have been extracted from the land by the cultivator. The Raja or the emperor took his share from the grain heap at the harvest time. As we have seen from the examples quoted earlier, the share of each person – the emperor, Raja, official, priest, the cultivator, the artisan and servant – was determined by custom, the crop being grown for the use of the villagers and not in responses to price.

Innovations in the traditional system of dividing the grain heap were made by the Mohammedan kings, particularly by the Mughal emperor and the effect of these innovations was to confuse the issue. Akbar did not attempt to alter the principle of grain heap. With a view to eliminate the various intermediate layers of pretty chiefs and Rajas who had grown up between the emperor and the cultivator, what he did was to substitute money-payments for the share in grain, based on the average of 10 years’ collections in kind and the prevailing prices in the areas. While cash was substituted for kind, the principle remained the same, for the annual payment by the cultivator was not a fixed tax upon his land, but depended on both area cultivated and the crops grown. But this change applied only to the

86. This section on Economic history is mainly based on W.C. Neale’s Economic Change in Rural India – Land Tenure Reform in Uttar Pradesh, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1962.
districts firmly under Akbar’s control and even in this case it was not complete and was optional. Elsewhere, “when grain payments were changed to money payments it was more common to assess the revenue as so many rupees per plough. Assessment by plough provided an entering wedge for profit motivation and competition for land, since two farms of varying productivity might easily have same plough assessment.” While, in principle, Akbar’s system allowed for revision of revenue demand, what happened after a while was, instead of revising the revenue, the sum assessed upon land was left constant, while cesses, dues and benevolences were added and in time these too acquired the dignity of custom. While the revenue assessment proper was a specific customary share or so much money, actual exactions varied upward.

With the decline of Mughal power, the centralized system of land revenue collections gave way to revenue farming and holding revenue farmers responsible for a given contribution to the treasury, presumably in excess of his costs of collection. But the revenue farmer could realize a larger sum abusing his position. The same system was adopted in the Sikh kingdoms and the Maratha Empire. The system was oppressive, as it delegated the rulers’ function of revising assessment to the revenue farmer. Since the revenue farmer obtained his position by virtue of striking a bargain with the ruler, he had to offer a goodly sum and was thus compelled to raise the assessment upon the cultivator.

Thus, “as a result of the cash payment and deterioration of public administration it was difficult to find evidence of the principles governing the division of the grain heap among the welter of different local rates and practices”. Economic historians adduce three conditions that seem to have led the conversion of grain shares into money rents. The increase in the number of cultivators and the number of villages and estates made it increasingly difficult to collect revenue in kind. At the same time coined money was becoming more plentiful, so that there was no difficulty in effecting the change. Thirdly crops cultivated for export and crops not easily divided or handled such as sugarcane, spices, cotton, vegetables, etc., were growing in importance. Land bearing such produce was easily addressed to cash revenue and always bore a higher rate than that foodgrains. Although these conditions made a change from grain to cash payments, the change did not result in market activity, nor did the assessment become a tax upon income derived from cultivation. The cash rates of revenue soon took on the sanction of custom and remained unchanged for long periods. Though they were sometimes revised and more frequently increased by levying other charges, it was without reference to
the principle upon which Akbar’s minister originally fixed cash rates.

Another source of cash rates or rent was the custom of appraising the crop before it was harvested and fixing the Raja’s or landlord’s share at so many maunds. Already, possibly, by the 14th century, if not the 13th, when cash payment for land revenue id recorded, the Kankut system had been introduced which relied on making estimates of harvest before hand. This was followed by the Zabat system developed by Akbar’s ministers on the basis of which revenue rates were fixed in cash for each crop in each revenue district and applied every year irrespective of price fluctuations from season to season. This was continued during the British rule and was a short step to the practice of paying the share of the grain heap in cash at current prices instead of harvesting and paying the appraised share in kind. After a few years the landlord and cultivator would agree to fix the average payments for the preceding years. Thus “instead of leading to a rental market, the introduction of cash rents resulted in the creation of cash rent tradition to replace the grain-share system”.

Bennet found in Gonda that “in the original form of the society money did not enter at all into the relations which subsisted between purely cultural classes… except in the case of such crops as sugarcane and poppy, whose division is effected with difficulty and which occupy an infinitesimal portion of the whole area”. Only in rich and old areas had money rents been common before the British, due to the absence of supervising authority for the division of grain in each of the villages. The general result of their introduction was that revenue ceased to a fixed proportion of the total produce. This meant that the revenue became more stable, but at the same time it permitted speculation, since the grain share which the speculator could claim as a revenue farmer varied from money revenue he had to pay. People did bid to hold villages. The sums paid for them began to be essentially similar to ordinary rent on the farm.”

Another reason for change to cash rates was the heavy burden of rates. The share of the cultivator was at the minimum so that as population increased and subdivision of land proceeded, the percentage of the crop which went to the Raja or landlord had to decline. But where the Raja would not accept a reduction in his share, he would accept cash payments, which was facilitated by large increase

in circulating coin which took place at the beginning of the 19th century. However, “cash rents were adopted without the adoption of market behavior.”

Thus, as Neale notes, “money payments led to the gradual effacement of the old lines on which the original form of rural society had been constructed. There could have been no competition for land while produce was divided by shares, but with cash rents the value of lands paying the same amounts could diverge. Outsiders could be tempted to bid for a more valuable farm. It is sure that this kind of competition was so opposed to the old fixity of tenure, which was the result of payments in kind, that it was rarely to be seen in practice, but it became for the first time possible.”

Even so Baden Powell wrote, as of 1892 A.D.: “So tenaciously is the old custom clung to in India, that in many native states the ruler still takes his revenue in kind.” Bennet writing in 1870 A.D. also comments on the slowness with which a monetized economy was accepted and notes that “payments in kind for village servants generally survived the introduction of cash payments to the Raja, but they are gradually falling into disuse. Instead of their contributions from the grain heaps, the Patwari and Chaukidar are now generally remunerated by fixed annual salaries or assignments of land free rent. The assistance of field laborers at fixed wages is taking the place of mutual cooperation of different cultivators. The whole frame of the old society is passing away with use of money operations, the ordinary principle of supply and demand is becoming more prevalent. This application is, however, as yet far from universal.”

Considering the interaction of money and market with the village service system of artisans and servers or the so-called ‘Jajamni’ system of the following elaboration may be made.

While the “land revenue” and rents got delinked and monetized, what remained of the truncated grain heap was the subsistence share of the cultivator and the remuneration dues of the village artisans and servants. The latter, which were originally customary shares in the grain heap, also got delinked and redefined as fixed quantities of grain to be paid at harvest, without any reference to the size of the heap. Since the services were need-based, both the cultivators as well as the servers accepted the changed situation and thus the old “Jajmani” continued

to co-exist with the market forces. The situation may be best expressed as a dual economy in which the closed ‘jajmani’ oriented, non-market transactions in kind co-existed with an open market-oriented cash economy within the village.

Reviewing the “Jajmani system” in North India across two centuries of the colonial regime, Simon Commander\textsuperscript{91} observes: “While it has been generally argued that development of exchange relations and commercial ethics were destructive of the Jajmani structure, this argument relied on the typification of the system as grain-based, village level one animated by ‘the pursuit of material self-sufficiency in a context of low productivity, simple technology and extensive poverty. This characterization has possessed a more formal than a real air about it.” “While it is clear that the technological innovation has tended in the longer term to subvert the position of village artisan…” notes Commander, “it is far less obvious that the fragmented and rather partial sense in which the Jajmani system can be found to be functioning in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, derived its fragmentation from its co-existence with market forces.”

The retention and continuation of the old “Jajmani” relations adjusted to suit the changed situation can be explained not only on the basis of “peasant moral economy” and the force of custom. As argued by Simon Commander for North India, the security of employment and assured subsistence income in grains were of utmost importance to the artisans and servers, under conditions of unintegrated labor market and limited options of employment outside the village. Further, the organization of village or weekly bazaar-level foodgrains market tended in certain respects to favor persistence of “jajmani” relations. While revenue and rental payments tended increasingly to be in cash, the timing of these payments anticipated the maturation of crops. This resulted in pronounced liquidity problems for the bulk of cultivators. Additionally, there was a very pronounced trend towards subdivision of holdings in the context of rapid population increase. In the complex combination of these factors, it became increasingly clear that a great majority of cultivators were indebted to intermediaries whose role hinged on bridging the cash and kind spheres, including interest payments which are into cultivators’ subsistence share of the grain heap. “Effectively dissociated from direct argument with the market, most agriculturists chose to minimize the degree of contact with the cash sphere,

\textsuperscript{91} Jajmani System in North India: An Examination of Its Logic and Status Across Two Centuries, Modern Asian Studies, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1983, pp. 283-311.
making the necessary conversions to fulfill their revenue and rental dues.” The conservative performance for dealing in familiar grain terms was itself “a major reason for the retained logic of jajmani relationships and why ‘jajmans’ were as willing as their ‘Kamins’, other than through the force of custom and duty, to continue with such transactional forms.” The picture for villages south of the country seems to be no different than that noted above for the north.

Presenting evidence to demonstrated the wide variations between villages in the rates of remuneration fixed for different artisans and servants, Commander notes that “such rates were clearly determined by very local factors, the conditions of settlement, the distribution of power within the village, and above all, the land/labor ratio and the state of labor supply.” “Recognizing this”, he observes that “we should modify the original conception of customary grain payments. Rather than a time honored set of rates tending to equality they appear on closer examination to be closely related to the type of labor, the quantity of labor power expanded, and the relative availability of labor. The fact that there is no formal adjustment vis-à-vis price does not really subvert the fact that what we are speaking about is a wage-in-kind, where the wage rate is determined, in the context of an improperly integrated market, by relative bargaining powers.” He further observes that “while jajmani structure may be greatly distanced from a situation of perfect market conditions, it is not, on the other hand a structure characterized by an archaic rules of custom and equality”.

The above interpretation indicates the “loss of status”92 of the village artisans and servants as compared to that they had in the structure of the earlier village community which had decayed and disappeared.

As already noted, in order to pay each revenue and rents, the cultivators had to sell the requisite portion of their crop, and this they did to the traders and merchants, most of whom belonged to the specialized trading castes. Grain was generally sold in small and nearby rural markets. According to Raychaudhari93, “the collection of revenue in cash generated a pressure to sell; the towns, providing the necessary demand, were dependant on the villages, for the supply of not only primary products but most of the manufactured goods they consumed”. In other words, the demand for cash revenue was a major factor serving to integrate villages in a wider monetized economy.

The above contention, however, has been challenged by recent historical research\textsuperscript{94}. The assumption that cash revenue payments alone linked villages into the wider economy has been criticized; so also the assumption that pre-colonial villages remained outside the domain of market economy. In this context it may be noted that the role of money in Indian history, particularly in the context of agrarian relationships has not been given the attention it deserves\textsuperscript{95}. Also as pointed out by Fuller, the implications of historical evidence on money use have remained open to debate.

4.2.7 “Misconceiving the Grain Heap”

In this section we will consider and summarize the critique of grain heap and the Jajmani system defined as a system of exchange of produce, goods, and services within the Indian village community with a moneyless economy not subject to market forces, by C.J. Fuller\textsuperscript{96} who shows how this so-called Jajmani system has been used to exemplify a radical opposition between “traditional” and “modern” economic systems and ideologies and, how in the services of this objective, anthropologists and others have managed to ignore the overwhelming historical evidence for the importance of monetary exchanges and market interaction in the “traditional” Indian village economy to which their models purport to refer. In the following we will briefly summarize his criticism and contention.

In regard to morality or values associated with the exchange within the jajmani system, Fuller notes, that Dumont has put forth arguments stating that “these values, characteristic of ‘traditional’ Indian society are fundamentally different from those of the modern western society dominated by its monetized capitalist market economy. In other words, the village jajmani system has exemplified the radical opposition between traditional and modern economic systems and ideologies.


\textsuperscript{95} Habib Irfan, Caste and Money in Indian History, op.cit., pp. 21 and 33.

Moreover the argument has been extended so that the pre-colonial Indian economy as a whole has also – if not always explicitly – been firmly consigned to the traditional side of the dichotomy.

“To this dichotomous picture in which shares in the grain heap stand ideologically opposed to monetized transactions in the market place”, Fuller emphasizes that “the evidence on money in India is not only embarrassing” but also “it is virtually impossible to fit that evidence into the conventional wisdom about the traditional Indian economy”. He bluntly observes that, “the grain heap has been a powerful but misleading image and anthropologists in particular have been too readily beguiled by it.” The one result has been “the construction of an anthropological fiction, the jajmani system itself, which has had serious implications for understanding – or misunderstanding – the economy and exchange relations in India”.

Developing his analysis about jajmani system into a wider discussion of ideologies of market and non-market economies, Dumont contends that the “so-called economic facts are encompassed with in the religious ideology” and takes us to the threshing floor. He writes “were we to travel in our imagination to a threshing floor in traditional India, we would see there the farmer measuring one after another the kings share, the person who is found to have a superior right over land, then the shares of the Brahmin who serves as a domestic priest, the barber and so on until perhaps he reaches the untouchable ploughman”97. Since “these shares are not defined by the market, the distribution of grain is not strictly an economic phenomenon; rather the whole distribution takes place within the religious order”. He continues “The needs of each are conceived to be different, depending upon caste, on hierarchy, but this fact should not disguise the entire system’s orientation towards the whole”98. For Dumont the “hierarchical collectivity is the referent to which the system is oriented and the division of harvest displays interdependence”. “An economic phenomenon presuppose an individual subject; here on the contrary everything is directed to the whole… This view of an ordered whole, in which each is assigned his place, is fundamentally religious99.”

While it is significant that Dumont does include the king, Fuller notes that “the whole to which he refers is not congruent with the village community per

99. Ibid., p. 107
se”. Since the division of the harvest, according to Dumont, does not express exclusive rights in land, “the interdependence of castes is expressed here by the existence of complementary rights, where that of the king and that of the cultivator are only the main links in a chain which was sometimes complex,” due sometimes, to the intermediaries between the king and the cultivator. Hence Dumont argues, that “the values of the castes are antithetical to those of property rights 100. “In short, the caste system is strongly contrasted to what we call land ownership 101.” According to Dumont, property rights directly connected with the conversion of land and labor into marketable commodities only developed fully during the British period and only then did a “distinct sphere of activity which may properly be called economic came into being 102.” “In traditional India, the political encompassed the economic and the politico-economic was itself encompassed within the religious” 103.

Reviewing Dumont’s views Fuller notes that the former accepts Marx’s idea of Asiatic stasis and aligns himself with the “classical European image of Asia”. Dumont argues that “the idea of individual is closely linked with a certain idea of time and history” and that the “individual” is absent in traditional India, he concludes that India has no history, Indian civilization being unhistorical by definition. Apparently agreeing with Marx’s idea of history and his perception of the fundamental difference as compared with the modern west lands him to see not a development but stagnation. However these conclusions of Dumont are nevertheless old and are entirely consistent with the view voiced by Marx that only the British rule set real historical change in motion. As Marx noted, “the age-old union of agriculture and domestic industry, the core of India’s unchanging economy and society, had been shattered, thanks to British steam and science.” “By blowing up the economic basis of India’s villages, Britain was producing ‘the greatest and to speak the truth, the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia’. 104” “No doubt” writes Dumont, “there is in India today a distinct sphere of activity which may be called economic, but it was the British who made this possible”. And the emergence of the economic, he argues, is accompanied by the development

100. Ibid., p. 157.
101. Ibid., p. 158.
103. Ibid., p. 165.
of individualism and the breakdown of holism, characteristic of traditional Indian society. As Fuller notes, Dumont’s interpretation of jajmani as expressive of an “orientation towards the whole” is thus inseparable from his premise of India’s stasis and exclusion from history. This premise, Fuller insists, is untenable and that an “abrupt historical discontinuity was unshared in, when the British gained in India is now seen to be a mirage” as the empirical evidence, which Dumont scarcely refers to, clearly shows. It also proves that a static “traditional” economy did not actually exists at all.

Fuller discusses the evidence from the point of view of money in the Indian economy. Reviewing the history of ‘land revenue’. He notes the impossibility of isolating the village exchange system from its wider context. The revenue due of the ruler, conceived as a share of the harvested crop, stood sharply distinguished from a fixed monetary tax on land itself, which came into enforcement during the British period. While in practice kind and cash were not mutually exclusive, and despite the persistence of payment in kind, Fuller observes that “revenue payment in cash was very widespread and almost certainly more common than payment in kind throughout most of India by the 18th century and indeed earlier”.

Disabusing the impression that money is a modern phenomenon overlooking the Indian numismatic history and the fact that money-lending was sufficiently widespread to require the attention of law givers and fixing of fines in cash, nearly millennia ago, Fuller notes that cash payment of revenue in northern India is recorded at the end of 13th century, although it was widespread in the eastern part of the country by the 9th century. Throughout south India, it was common for revenue from wet land to be paid in kind but from dryland always in cash. From the historical evidence adducted by him, it is important to reiterate the unmistakable evidence “first that the majority of cultivators in most part of India had been paying their land revenues in cash, not in kind, long before the colonial rule and second, that during the 16th and 17th centuries, millions of cultivators… did so according to an assessment system which in practice had ceased to depend on shares in the actual harvest at all”. Thus cutting into grain heap, the above shows “how misleading is Dumont’s description of the division on the threshing floor. The same applies to Neale’s presentation, based on the evocative assertion by Bennet – a 19th century British revenue officer, that the basis of the whole society was the grain heap, in which each constituent rank had its definite interest”. According to Fuller, “this emphasis on the division of grain on the threshing floor, totally fails to give due weight either to the importance of money in pre-colonial revenue systems or to
the degree to which the most sophisticated of these systems had been detached from the actual harvest”. While money was “plainly an indispensable element in the politico-economic system within which the pre-colonial cultivators were located”, it is “entirely mistaken to characterize the pre-modern rural Indian economy as non-monetary as so much anthropological writing tends to do”. Further, Fuller asserts that, in the said literature, the extent to which in pre-colonial India were integrated in the wider economy and were penetrated by a market mechanism by monetary exchange has probably tended to be underestimated, while the “customary” non-market exchange in kind, is over estimated despite the incompatibility of weight of historical evidence.

While the absence of private property in land and the existence of multiple complementary rights in the produce of it have been highlighted as the characteristic of unchanging “traditional” village, Fuller notes the existence various kinds of agrarian proprietary rights such as zamindari, mirasi, inam, etc., in pre-colonial India, which had the all the hallmarks of private property which was inheritable and could be freely bought and sold, and there was an extensive market in them. While it is true that these proprietary rights rarely amounted to proprietary rights in the soil itself and continued to exist even in the early period of British rule, land itself was not “commodified” and “landed property” in the “full capitalist sense” did not exist on any widespread scale. In this context, Fuller observes that it would be wrong “to deny the significance of the property right by trying to fit these data into a scheme primarily characterized by the co-existence of multiple rights or shares in a non-market ‘redistributive’ system. It is a vital aspect of such a redistributive system that it is held together by a set of exchanges different in kind from those found in the market economy and it is governed by a different logic. In Dumont’s terms, the logic is determined by the values of interdependence expressed through complementary rights, which do not permit any claim to exclusive proprietary ownership. At one level, the zamindari (or similar) right did not amount to an exclusive right over land itself”. However, “the very fact that the right was a species of alienable property shows that this redistributive system incorporated within itself a type of right, which being private and exclusive, stands as the antithesis of complimentary interdependence”. But it could still be argued that “zamindari ownership was encompassed or dominated by complementary interdependence or redistributive exchange, so that any claim to exclusive ownership qualified only marginally the collective orientation of the total system” and a proprietary zamindar could still continue as a traditional lord maximizing his power
and prestige even if the lordship itself was a marketable commodity.” Even so, Fuller notes the evidence that “peasant cultivators were not insulated from the effects of market, even if they recognized the zamindars, like the local chiefs, as lords with whom they maintained relationships not governed by the values of market exchange”.

Fuller contends that proprietary zamindari and similar rights have to be seen along with market and monetary exchange, cash revenue systems and agricultural production. Such an assessment leads to the conclusion that it is impossible to treat it all “as marginal, as if it had no significant bearing on the characterization of pre-colonial Indian economy” without denying the importance of “non-market relationships of jajmani or baluta type in Indian villages”. The importance of these non-market relationships has to be assessed, similarly, within the context in which proprietary rights, market exchange, etc., even in pre-colonial India, which were also major features of the economic system as a whole.

In other words, Fuller submits that “the historical evidence shows that pre-colonial India simply does not fit the model of a ‘traditional’ or ‘archaic’ economy and it is wrong to assume that the establishment of British rule was the only begetter of ‘modern’ economic features”. Further, he observes that “the anthropological model of ‘traditional’ India only really shaken by British rule has been a grossly distorting lens through to view the Indian economic evidence. One distorted image has been the concept of the jajmani system, hypothetically located in a traditional economic universe which in reality, did not historically exist”.

To continue with Dumont, while “it is possible that the above-noted internal developments were not accompanied by any real shift in values or ideology, gaps in historical evidence do not validate a historical premise”. Even so, in Dumont’s analysis, it is apparent that “the contrast between holistic interdependence said to characterize jajmani and individualist exclusive rights, characteristic of capitalist market system, is most subtly developed into a comparison of two opposed value systems”. While the functionalist approach of the formulators of the jajmani system and the antipathy to history have certainly contributed to the persistence of the concept of “traditional” India in contradiction to the modern west has “not only served to obscure change over time but also indirectly deflected the attention from regional variation”, “simple ignorance” has also played no less a major part.

Considering the overall framework within which the concept of jajmani system was developed and the importance given to the way in which jajmani relations
stand contrasted with those found in market exchange systems, Fuller observes that the analysis of jajmani has generally followed the tenants of “substantivist” rather than “formalist” economics and “the basic paradigms of substantivism can reasonably be said to underlie most analysis of jajmani systems.” Perlin\textsuperscript{105} also confirms this and notes that “the concept of jajmani, so popularized by anthropologists, is also substantivist”.

As discussed in the earlier chapter, the central premise of the substantivist theory is an axiomatic dichotomy between “traditional” and “modern” economics. There is, of course, a convergence between Polanyi’s approach and that of Dumont, as the latter recognizes\textsuperscript{106}. Modern economies are those which have undergone the “great transformation”, the rise of industrial market capitalism in western Europe and North America, in which market exchange has become the uniquely pervasive mode of economic integration.” Obversely, “traditional economies are those which have not undergone this transformation.” “The contrast in broad terms between these opposed ideal types is certainly real, though the dichotomy is asymmetrical. Since its thesis is ‘modern’ and antithesis ‘traditional’, the concept of traditional economy is generated as the negative of the modern by isolating and defining its traits which are not characteristic of modern economies or rather those which are not susceptible to interpretation by western economic theory”.

Although it is generally admitted that market exchange is rarely wholly is absent in traditional economics, the very definition of the category “traditional” according to Fuller, tends to underplay its importance, “so that the interaction between the market and non-market exchange in any one economic system is lost sight of when comparative generalizations about non-market exchange are made.” Also, assessment of indigenous historical change within a category is largely precluded by the fundamentally ahistorical character of the grand dichotomy itself where the two categories “modern” and “traditional” have been turned into “atemporal absolutes” and the only movement deemed significant or “structural” is across the categories. There is thus “no place in the scheme for genuine change within the traditional category, since no such change could replicate the ‘great transformation’ by definition, the sole begetter of significant structural


\textsuperscript{106} Home Hierarchicus, op.cit., p. 313, n. 75.
development in the economic domain. Traditional economies have, therefore, only really begun to change as western market systems have impinged upon them as a result of colonialism and capitalism's expansion; the possibility that structural change could actually have occurred in pre-colonial societies is effectively ruled out. In the end, therefore, economic anthropology, (especially in its substantivist form) reproduces yet again the classical European view of Asiatic stasis, but extrapolated to the whole non-western pre-colonial world.”

Behind the conventional concept of jajmani, as Fuller observes, “lurks the assumption that the system is ‘traditional’, the economic institution of villages falsely assumed to have remain stagnant for uncounted previous centuries. Consequently, but equally falsely all evidence of cash payments, sales of rights, responsiveness to market forces, etc., tends to be explained as a result of very recent pressures now breaking down the old economic order. In addition, the jajmani concept has tended to prevent genuinely comparative analysis of different types of exchanges in India and their different normal connotations. Revenue payments, gifts, grants, alms, wages and so on – and each of these gross categories answers to a range of indigenously differentiated forms – have all too often been swallowed up by a monolithic category of non-market jajmani exchange, and thereby accorded a distorting uniformity which needs to be dissolved.”

4.2.8 Village Economy as Jajmani System.

Ronald Inden\textsuperscript{107} while discussing the political economy of fixed share payments from the point of view of caste lists the following determinants of the economy as theoretical requirements of the western orientalist discourse:

1. “It should not be socially undifferentiated as in tribal society, yet neither would it have class divisions and class exploitation.”

2. “The surplus labor value, whether in the form of products (agricultural or manufactured), of cash, or of labor itself, would be appropriated, therefore, not by any exploiting class within the village, but by state outside the village.”

3. “The relation of castes in the village would be characterized by ties of group cooperation and solidarity rather than of competition between

\textsuperscript{107} Imagining India, op.cit., pp. 143-144.
individuals.”

4. “The payment made for goods and services would be determined not by a market but by considerations internal to the village community.”

Inden then concludes that “scholarship has obligingly produced just such a village economy, which has been referred to as the jajmani system, after the relationship the village priest was supposed to have with his patrons or sacrificers (Yajamana, Jajman)”. Let us elucidate on the above determinants before we refer to the general conclusion he has drawn about the nature of substantivist economics.

As regards the nature of the society in which the economy was embedded, we have already discussed the nature of the village society as one of multiple gradations containing within itself the caste hierarchy, presiding over the agrarian and other occupational hierarchies. Further we have also noted the class and caste controversy and have stated that the Indian village society was caste society was caste society and the conflict of interests of groups unequally placed did not get polarized into classes. In fact we have noted that the internal structure of caste is characterized by class-level differentiations and there are also classes which cut across the boundaries of castes. Indian village society, we have noted, thus offers an excellent example of stratification system where the two modes of inequality have so remarkably meshed.

In the matter of surplus product of the village we have to hark back to Marx’s “Oriental Despot” who symbolized the “total unity” of the village communities. “The comprehensive unity standing above all these little communities appears” Marx wrote, “as the higher proprietor or as the sole proprietor, the real communities, hence only as hereditary possessor”. “A part of the commune’s surplus labor belongs to the higher community … and this surplus labor takes the form of tributes, etc., … as well as common labor for the exaltation of the unity.” The accumulation of the surplus product by the higher unity takes the form of “revenue” which is spent as labor fund, i.e. in the remuneration of artisans and servants and in public works.” In his lectures on political economy, Jones pointed out that in Asia, the labor fund was formed out of income derived from the land. This was similar to conditions throughout Europe in earlier times. The agricultural laborer ‘raised his own wages’ from the soil while the non-agricultural

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laborer employed in a craft or service occupation was maintained either from the ‘joint revenues of the villagers’ or from the revenues of the land holders and the state. The payment for non-agricultural laborers came from the same source – the surplus from land\textsuperscript{109}.”

The royal share or the revenue collected from the village by the state was conceptualized as a “share in the grain heap” of the village from time immemorial and was considered as the payment for the services the ruler rendered to the kingdom. However, many, if not most, of the rulers had in fact, were badly motivated and exploited too much revenue. Even so, it remained as an important element of the village economy.

In his classic description of the Indian village community (Capital, Vol. I, pp. 351-352) Marx presents the following picture of what happened to the surplus product in India: The production within the village community “is independent of the division of labor brought about in Indian society as a whole, by means of exchange of commodities. It is surplus alone that becomes a commodity, and a portion of even that not unlike it has reached the hands of the state, into whose hands from time immemorial a certain quantity of these products has found its way in the shape of rent in kind”. “The assumption here”, Habib\textsuperscript{110} explains, “is implicit that the surplus extracted from the village is converted into commodities: when it is paid in kind, the appropriator puts it on the market. Here we have extensive commodity circulation responsible for the division of labor outside the village; the extent of surplus alone sets the limits to its sway.” Thus towns and their commerce were entirely dependent on the system of “static enforced agrarian exploitation”.

In our earlier discussion on caste we have noted that in cultural and social behavior castes are never completely self-sufficient or isolated, nor is economic dependence complete in all cases. We have distinguished two types of activities involving economic interdependence of castes. The first involves rendering of certain traditional services in the village service system such as jajmani/balutedari, etc., where inter-caste interdependence is the hallmark of the system. The other type is characterized as inter-caste dependence where mutual exchange of goods

\textsuperscript{110} “Classifying Pre-colonial India,” Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 12, Nos. 2 and 3, 1985, p. 46.
and services on terms of equality bears a sort of quid pro quo relationship. The mutually complementary existence in the milieu of the village society brings individual from one caste into contact with individuals from other castes. This link, despite the comparatively self-contained character of caste, is a fundamental characteristic of caste society which necessitates the relations between them to be cooperative between them to be cooperative rather than competitive.

We have already discussed that the traditional Indian village economy was a non-market economy where transactions involving goods and services were based to a large extent on reciprocity and redistribution in kind and coined money played a peripheral and subordinate role in the village. Moreover “the domestic union of agriculture and manufacturing pursuits” and “an unalterable division of labor” limited or dispensed the domain of commodity exchange within the village. In the matter of regulation of transaction, it was the internal village custom which was the sole arbiter.

While Inden’s list of determinants of Indian village economy is a neat summary of previous discussion we have indulged in, we fail to understand why this “natural economy” should be labeled by a loaded term “jajmani economy” and why all exchanges of produce, goods and services within the village, executed without the use of money, traditionally uniting service castes in ritual and craft services to the cultivators, should be called as ‘jajmani’. Is this not, by using the term ‘jajmani’ an attempt to impose the feudal model of dominance and dependence between the lord, tenant and laborers of the manor? In fact Beidelman111 defines jajmani as “a feudalistic system”. While “feudalism” in India has been highly debated112 the feudal model restricts the alleged universality of the jajmani system to such villages only. Even so, Inden raises the theoretical question: If “the economy of shares is recognized as a determinate, unchangeable essence of the village as an ancient community” “then” whether economics can be a naturalist, universal and formal science or has to be concerned with the historical, particular and substantive. The debates on the embeddedness of the economy in traditional societies still continues”.

4.2.9 Summing Up.

In the foregoing we saw that the substantivist model of reciprocity and redistribution does not give a good fit to the Indian village economy. Also, its basic postulates of tradition, modern dichotomy does not yield any good results and has been criticized by Fuller. This model assumes a sharp polarity between what are posited as traditional and modern in society. Further, it is assumed that change must proceed towards a single model of modernity, which turns out to be an idealization and abstraction of social, economic and political processes that took place in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, subsumed under the title “great transactions”. Such a change from traditional to modern order, it is presupposed, is destructive of the traditional order, without emphasizing the change-potential of traditional institutions. As Marx noted, “no social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed, and new higher relations of production never appear before material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of old society”.

Further, as Fuller has pointed out that, Indian tradition is not static as envisaged in the Marx/Dumont model. He has pointed out important historical changes in the economy in the country during the pre-colonial period. It is important to note that Indian tradition is always reinterpreted tradition, adjusting the old and assimilating the new. The paradigm of this “coalition model” is “adaptive change and evolutionary absorption of the challenge of change”. “Ideas and institutions in India that are commonly labeled traditional are actually the product of long – term historical change, and do not transcend time. Even when something like the village or caste appears unchanged in form, its meaning in a new social, economic, political or cultural context may be different”.

Even so, the economy of the village has been the subject of much study in India and an impressive body of literature has gathered round the theme, especially at the hands of foreign scholars. But “this literature is somewhat unsatisfactory.

for two reasons as Ishawaran points out\textsuperscript{116} "firstly, there is a tendency to look at
the Indian village from a foreign point of view, which fails to enter into the spirit
of the system. Secondly, there is no awareness that it is an integrated whole, and
to reduce it to a mere economic system is to distort it. Moreover it is not realized
that this society has survived essentially on a traditional foundation which was
once economic, social, moral, political, legal...".

\textsuperscript{116} Ishwaran K, Tradition and Economy in village India, Allied publishers Pvt. Ltd.,