CHAPTER SIX

AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN UTTAR PRADESH

The British Colonial rule had created class relations in Indian agriculture. These class relations have been found in both Zamindari as well as ryotwari sort of land tenure. Walter C. Neal, a historian has put forward an argument that it is land tenure (system) which is important, not land. An attempt has been made to study or trace this land-tenure system in a historical perspective. Walter C. Neal seems to have taken socio-cultural perspective into consideration when he differentiates Indian land tenure system with European and African ones. He again distinguishes precisely between what he calls it an English idea of estate and the Indian idea of mahal, accepting the latter to be closer to the idea of a village. Mahalwari system of land tenure was an improvement made over the earlier existing zamindari system of Calcutta Presidency. Mahalwari system existed and was operated on in the area

2. Ibid, pp.4-5.
3. Ibid, pp. 5-6.
today known as Uttar Pradesh. Mentioning typically about Indian society Walter C. Neal argues his case for what he calls it "land is to rule" which includes "land is to own".

Uttar Pradesh, as it is known today was known as the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh during the British rule. It is possible to work out the two different nature and types of agrarian relations in these two areas. The differences are tried to be worked out on the basis of agrarian social structure(s) and units composing it. It is being argued that despite some similarities (like both were the creations of the British rulers to fulfill their colonial interests), there were some structural differences which to some extent are reflected into the differences between the eastern and the western - part of Uttar Pradesh.

I

Significance of the East - West Divide in the History of Uttar Pradesh

There have been some efforts to examine the agrarian conditions in Oudh and Agra. A few such attempts

4. Ibid, pp.6-7.
could be referred here. The endeavours of B.H. Baden Powell, Thomas R. Matcalf, Asiya Siddiqui, Majid Hayat Siddiqui, Waler C. Neal, Daniel Thorner, Eric Stokes, A.R. Desai, Elizabeth Whitcombe need a special mention. An attempt has been made to examine and then construct the agrarian social structure. These works of some historians would provide us the setting in which the present agrarian conditions could be examined. It is being argued here that it would be possible then to relate the agrarian social


structure of the British period with the one reflected in later sociological and anthropological writings of A.R. Desai, D.N. Majumdar, Yogendra Singh, B.S. Cohn, P.C. Joshi, Rajendra Singh and a few others.

The history of agrarian social structure and of agrarian conditions could be traced in various writings of B.H. Baden-Powell. His writings are basically descriptive in nature, attempt to cover almost every then existing or even rarely existing category of the agrarian social structure. He has written too much from the point of view of land revenue officials and on the basis of their records. For any work on agrarian relations, at best his writings could be

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utilized to provide data rather than its analysis and interpretations. Baden-Powell attempts to establish the relationship between what he calls it 'historical science' and 'statistics'. Although it is not possible to agree with his notion of class simply because it means a particular way of classification, but his attempts to include every possible category into the scheme make it almost exhaustive. Any attempt to trace the history of agrarian relations could get benefits from his writings. He has traced the advance of Aryan race in the northern part of India and also their limitations to reach the southern part of India dominated by the Dravidian culture. The Rajput casts was thus confined to the Upper part of India including plains of the Ganges upto Bihar. According to B.H. Baden-Powell the population of the Ganges Plains - Ganges Doab upto Oudh and further still upto Bihar and Bengal included what he calls it Aryan and mixed Aryan races. Apart from Aryan immigration, their relationship to land, their notions of property in land have also been dealt with carefully. In

22. Ibid, pp.121-129.
general the works by B.H. Baden-Powell could be used in two ways. One to construct the agrarian social structure of India by using the modern aids like computers. It could be attempted to construct the agrarian social structure of India in a historical perspective. Computers and the modern aids could serve a great deal to carry on researches in the areas of what could be called as 'macro sociology'. Two, Baden-Powell's writings could be used to trace out the historicity of the phenomenon under examination. Methodologically, Baden Powell's work could serve to trace the history of the phenomenon in a particular region or place. For example the nature and types of village settlements in Oudh for higher as well as lower castes could be traced. In Oudh villages were not a collection of several houses constructed together but they were constructed on and near to agricultural fields and each generation had tried to build houses around the main house. The construction of houses at the fields and their extension by the next generations provide certain new insights and help in understanding the phenomenon under examination with a little more clarity. Similarly the process of village

building in the North Western Provinces could also be referred to. Here the main characteristic of village formation had been 'fission of the family groups' as he calls it. Apart from the works of B.H. Baden-Powell two more scholars from history need a mention here. Asiya Siddiqui has attempted to construct the agrarian conditions in Oudh for the period between 1819-1833. Her attempt has been based upon the examination of historical materials. Another scholar Majid Hayat Siddiqui has also tried to construct the agrarian social structure of Oudh for the time period between 1850-1870. While both of these scholars have based their writings on the critical examination of the historical records, the questions raised by Majid Hayat Siddiqui seem to be more closer to the sociological ones in comparison to the work by Asiya Siddiqui.

The transformation of Raja (King) into landlord during the British rule has been examined by Thomas R. Matcalf. The previous rulers of Oudh who were known as

26. Ibid, pp. 70-71
27. Asiya Siddiqui, op.cit.
taluqdares were successful in retaining the power during the British rule. A careful reading of the writings of B.H. Baden-Powell reveals that at the first instance the Britishers had tried to wither away the taluqdares but then realized their mistake and established them as mere intermediaries between actual cultivators and themselves. The previous rulers of Oudh were merely reduced to the status of landlords. The dynamics of change in agrarian conditions have been examined by Majid Hayat Siddiqui. He has referred to six-fold classification of the agrarian social structure in Oudh like: (1) Taluqdares; (2) Zamindars; (3) Pukhatadars (under proprietors); (4) Occupancy tenants; (5) Tenants at will; and (6) Agricultural labourers. It has been argued by Majid Hayat Siddiqui that in 1857 Taluqdares who had fought with the British rulers were reduced to mere landlords and zamindars struggled for the status of under-proprietor. Virtually the much of the resultant of this war of 1857 had been settled around 1880 when each category of the agrarian social structure was able to identify and locate its place in it. Moreover, the most notable change had been the decline in the power of zamindars. However, the entire process of change along with

the six-fold classification could be meaningfully reduced to the following three categories: (1) Landlords; (2) Tenants; and (3) Agricultural labourers. From writings it appears that since the distinction between 'sir' and 'Khudkasht' concerns with different sorts of landlords it is not of much importance. 'Sir' being the inferior right in land than 'Khudkasht' from landlords' point of view. It could have not been taken back from tenants if they had cultivated it for the last twelve continuous years.

The most significant departure from this trend had been witnessed in the North Western Province or what is today known as the Western part of Uttar Pradesh. The most important phenomenon had been the more egalitarian nature of the agrarian social structure in the N.W.P. than in Oudh. Perhaps the most important insights could be drawn from the works of Eric Stokes who had seen the process of decline of the big landlords and Nawabs in N.W.P. He has convincingly argued that beyond Aligarh almost every big landlord lost land - it had happened in Bulandshahar,

31. This reduction of agrarian social structure of oudh during the British rule is based upon a careful reading of M.H. Siddiqui's material while keeping an eye on the relationship between ownership of land and the people who actually worked upon it. Siddiqui's facts have been analysed while keeping the Marxist framework in mind.

Muzaffarnagar and Saharanpur. Canal irrigation was introduced much earlier in the N.W.P. and even small piece of land had its value from the point of view of the cultivator. That is why according to Eric Stokes, it was cultivator who did flourish. From sociological point of view there emerged yet another category to be known as owner cultivator, Canal irrigation increased the quality of land and production, owner-cultivator even on small piece of land did better. This new category of owner - cultivator seems to be very near or almost equivalent to the Marxist category known as peasant proprietor. According to Eric Stockes, "the most dangerous enemy of the great landlord was the small cultivating landlord who here (in the N.W.P.) was the Jat peasant proprietor". Jat peasant proprietors were spread in the areas like Agra, Aligarh, Bulandshahar, Mathura, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and some parts of what is today known as Haryana and Punjab. At the level of conceptualization Eric Stockes points out that in any classification of peasantry if rich peasant is equated with

33. For a detailed account of this argument please see Eric Stokes, op.cit. pp.205-227.

34. Ibid, pp.218.

the Marxist notion of 'Kulak', than it looses its scientific neutrality.

The conceptualization of peasant proprietorship and its place in the agrarian social structure needs a fresh examination. Marxist scholars like A.R. Desai have refuted the very existence of the peasant - proprietor. A.R. Desai has attempted to interpret the question of the existence of peasant - proprietorship along with the traditional and orthodox Marxist theory. According to A.R. Desai this category did loose its very existence since it came into existence and later got divided into richer and poorer sections of rural society. But the existence of peasant - proprietorship in the western part of Uttar Pradesh suggest the need to enquire this phenomenon in a historical perspective. An attempt has been made in the following chapter to enquire into the nature, type and the organic composition of the category known as peasant proprietor. The concept of peasant proprietor vis-a-vis its place in the agrarian social structure shall be analysed in an empirical setting in the Western Uttar Pradesh in the following chapter.


The significance of the East - West divide in Uttar Pradesh has been the matter of historical significance. The subjugation of zamindars to taluqdars in Oudh has been referred by Elizabeth Whitcombe. Whereas the more egalitarian distribution of land, canal - irrigation, decline of big landlords, rise of peasant - proprietor as an important category of the agrarian social structure had been the phenomenon of the N.W.P. In the N.W.P. the following four categories emerge as comprising agrarian social structure during the British Rule: (1) Landlords; (2) Peasant - Proprietors; (3) Tenants; and (4) Agricultural labourers.

With these important distinctions between the East - West divide of Uttar Pradesh during the British rule, an attempt could be made to understand the nature and process of change after national independence. In the following section an effort has been made to understand the changes in the agrarian social structure in Uttar Pradesh. An attempt has been made to examine various studies in sociological and anthropological literature from the point of view of agrarian question. Some studies in economics and history have also been included. Village - studies in Uttar Pradesh have been examined from agrarian point of view.
II

Agrarian Social Structure After Independence

Agrarian social structure in Uttar Pradesh has been reflected through or could be constructed on the basis of documents related to the much acknowledged ZAC (Zamindari Abolition Committee) Report, studies conducted by historians like Daniel Thorner who tried to examine the agrarian question from the point of view of economic history happen to be the main concern. Apart from it the construction of the agrarian social structure in Uttar Pradesh has been enriched with the contributions from the relatively new discipline like social anthropology and sociology. An attempt has been made throughout this work to construct the agrarian social structure. And to do that an attempt has been made to take the help from various disciplines. Whenever the questions related to agrarian social structure are attempted, it was tried to locate various social categories which comprise it. The stand taken on it has been that various studies conducted in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh need a different interpretation. If village studies conducted in the rural areas could be said as reflecting a particular (functional) perspective, then at least the structural part of it may be
retained. Here village-studies are seen as providing the rich data on which new interpretations could be attempted. It seems however to clarify one point at this stage. The purpose of this attempt has been to examine the agrarian question although help from various disciplines have been taken. But in this process every possible care has been taken to keep the sociological perspective above all.

38 Daniel Thorner has attempted to construct the over all and a very general sort of a picture of agrarian social structure in India, Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere. His account, of the construction of agrarian social structure is based upon documents like the ZAC Report and a partial field work. This notion of field work by Daniel Thorner is not to be equated with one that has been the requirement of anthropological studies. But even then efforts of Daniel Thorner are to be appreciated on the grounds that unlike earlier historians he tried to meet the people directly and has used certain local terms to clarify what he intended to say. His contribution needs appreciation for another reason. His attempt to try and to some extent construct the agrarian social structure help if there becomes a need to inquire into the macro-area.

researches on agrarian question. For example Daniel Thorner's construction of agrarian social structure of India includes the following three categories.

(1) Malik
(2) Kisan and
(3) Mazdur

The term malik refers to the erstwhile landlords like zamindars of Uttar Pradesh (including taluqdar of Oudh), Jagirdars of Rajasthan and the like. The term Kisan refers to small and middle peasants and the other term mazdur refers to the agricultural labourers. Apart from it Daniel Thorner has also taken note of the peripheral (although not unimportant in any sense of the term) categories like moneylenders and their role in Indian agriculture and that of patwaris in Uttar Pradesh. Daniel Thorner was well aware of the role played by Patwaris in Uttar Pradesh. Patwaris were the only available government personnel who kept land records with them. Daniel Thorner has identified a good number of misdeeds of Patwaris. The area in which Patwaris did most of the wrong doing was the transfer of land in the name of Khudkasht by zamindars. The

39. Ibid, pp.27.
term Khudhasht refers to the land cultivated by zamindars themselves. A huge amount of land which otherwise might have gone to tenants working on it, was actually kept by zamindars themselves. Before the abolition of zamindari system in Uttar Pradesh, zamindars virtually ruled over peasantry and artisans of the villages.

The power - structure and its transformation after the abolition of the zamindari system has been analysed by Yogendra Singh. According to him with the abolition of the zamindari system in Uttar Pradesh the nucleus of power structure was broken. Yogendra Singh has pointed it out that the old power structure was not replaced by a new power structure but he visualised a vacuum - like situation instead. Under the conditions when the ex-zamindars were no longer in power, the most possible logical outcome could be the emergence of new forces. The rise of the Jat peasantry in the Western U.P. and that of the Yadavas as strong peasant force in the central and the Eastern U.P. could be seen as a process which might influence the formation of a new power - structure. The decline of zamindars as well as that of taluqdas have also been the

40. Yogendra Singh, op.cit.
important phenomenon after the national independence. Both of these processes i.e. the decline of the earlier intermediate like zamindars and taluqdars and the emergence of new forces like the peasantry drawn from the Jat and the Yadava could be seen as parallel processes. Moreover the phenomenon of rise of the middle section of society could not be limited to castes like Jats and Yadavas. In fact the entire process resulting from the vacuum like situation in the rural power structure of Uttar Pradesh could lead towards the rise in the middle peasantry as a category in the overall agrarian social structure. This rise of middle peasantry might result in the rise of middle class in the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. Some more insights could be developed from the study of the changing power structure of Uttar Pradesh conducted by Yogendra Singh. His study examines the phenomenon in the six villages of Eastern U.P. Nevertheless, social anthropologists and sociologists have hardly gone beyond the study of six villages. For example the studies of six villages were conducted by Ramkrishna Mukherjee and K.L. Sharma, they had worked in the

41. Ibid, pp. 711-23.


villages of Bengal and Rajasthan respectively. Although these studies treat the phenomenon at micro level, but on the other hand there had been a very few attempts to work out these things at macro level. In a different context however, scholars like S.C. Dube felt difficulties in working out the question like what should constitute the Indian culture. In other words it seems difficult to work in the areas of macro-sociology and particularly if these questions are concerned with the Indian society where not only rural urban but several other dicotomies exist. In fact not only this but the Indian society is full of complexities perhaps resulting in from its traditions and long historical period. Macro-sociology of Indian society, in the true sense of the term has yet to take shape. But even this seemingly distant possibility of developing macro sociology (out) of Indian society stands some chance if sincere studies are conducted at the level of micro-sociology. In a sense the possibilities of having a sociology of Indian society rest upon several micro level studies. At the present status of researches conducted on the basis of field work could at best be categorised as

the examples of empirical generalizations. M.N. Srinivas had realised this point much earlier when he insisted on as much village studies as it were possible at that time when his edited work India's Villages came out. His argument was that the phenomenon of national independence has increased the pace of change and insisted upon that villages be studied before much has changed. In a country which has more than half a million villages with all multiplicities and complexities of cultural structures, it seems necessary to conduct a good number of studies at empirical level. These empirical studies shall definitely benefit the future researches aimed at broader generalizations.

Yet another look at the earlier work of Daniel Thorner might be relevant here, where he has attempted to visualise certain changes in the agrarian social structure after national independence. Daniel Thorner points it out that in the villages of Uttar Pradesh some five to six people were able to construct the pakka houses. In the villages of Uttar Pradesh where Daniel Thorner had

travelled these neo-rich people were known as pakkahaveliwale. These people according to Thorner could be easily located in those villages which he had visited. Thorner has also attempted to inquire into various possible reasons of the emergence of a very few affluent people. According to Daniel Thorner the crisis of food grains existed in the nineteen sixties and early seventies. The crisis of food grains was more intensified because of the wars Indian had to fight against Pakistan and China. During the period of the late 1960s and early 1970s the prices of food grains shot up and a few who could retain some large quantity of it became the neo-rich. The construction of these pakka houses in the villages of Uttar Pradesh was a new phenomenon and it needs an empirical examination. This question shall be taken up for empirical examination in the following chapter.

47 Daniel Thorner has come out with yet another sort of a classification of agrarian social structure which is based upon land tenure system. It follows like this -

(1) Khudkasht/Bhumidhars

47. Ibid., pp.24-25.
(2) Sirdars
(3) Asamis and
(4) Adhivasis

Khudkasht was the most superior sort of a land tenure. This right was given to those who paid Rs. 250/- p.a. or more to the state and others were given the rights of sirdar. If a sirdar could afford to pay ten times of the land revenue he could have got the rights of a Khudkasht. The rights of asamis were confined for non-occupancy tenants. Daniel Thorner however equates adhivasis with agricultural labourers. Bhumidhars had all the rights like to sell or mortgage their land whereas sirdars were not allowed to do so, it was in fact much lower right in land in comparison to that of bhumidhars. Bhumidhars could also utilise their land for non-agricultural purposes. After the abolition of the zamindari - system and by the act of 1951 the heredity tenants were given the status of sirdars. But it seems that in the views of Daniel Thorner nothing like revolutionary has happened for the peasantry even after the abolition of Zamindari system. Daniel Thorner states "for the bulk of the peasantry who

49. Ibid, pp.27.
were classified as sirdars, the tenure remains substantially the same, rent remains exactly the same and the most important new feature is that the rent is collected by government rather than by the Zamindar". It seems however important at the moment to attempt some construction of the agrarian social structure on the basis of a few village studies conducted in Uttar Pradesh.

III

Significance of Village Studies for the Analysis of Agrarian Social Structure in Uttar Pradesh

In this section an attempt has been made to critically examine a few village studies by sociologists. This seems necessary from another point of view. Scholars like Daniel Thorner who mention about villages in India and examine the agrarian question have not mentioned even a single village study conducted by social anthropologists or sociologists. It amount to a serious gap between the scholars who wish to work on and examine the agrarian question in India. There is a need to fill in this gap among not only the scholars but also the discipline they come from. The whole of effort of the present work has been to break the boundaries of various disciplines and identify and make the phenomenon as precise as possible. The
phenomenon of the present work has been the agrarian situation in India. Every possible effort is to be made to work and bring out this phenomenon from the researches conducted in various disciplines like history, economics, anthropology and sociology. Apart from it, identification of the phenomenon includes one empirical exercise as well. In other words this endeavour attempts to modernise the nature of the research itself on agrarian question. After a precise identification of the phenomenon, the effort has been made to put the agrarian question in a proper perspective. And in this effort a major help has been taken from the Marxist perspective. To be more specific and precise, the structural component (Part) of Marxism has been helpful in the identification of various categories that comprise agrarian social structure. But, apart from the structural component (part) of Marxism, the overall perspective in the present work is more closer to the Marxist perspective in the present work rather than any other perspective. Apart from this every help has been tried to be taken from other perspective if they come anywhere closer to the structural one. It could be substantiated by the material and perspectives on castes in India. The agrarian issues centered around caste - structure could be found out with the material available in several anthropological and sociological studies. One more
clarification seems necessary at this state. From these studies on castes, to be taken up for discussion a little bit later, an effort has been made to retain the structural part of it and its functional part has been tried to be removed. The functional part of castes in India has not been the area of inquiry since the very beginning of the present work. What some anthropologists or sociologists refer to as "functional" part of castes in India could however be examined from the perspective adopted for this study if the same is analysed from the point of view of exploitation. Castes co-operate and do not compete sort of a notion need a reexamination from another perspective where "functional" part of castes has to be seen as exploitation of some castes by the other. And if possible, to attempt to answer why and through what mechanism this exploitation work as a process. With these few clarifications and comments on the caste - system and its analysis in India a few such attempts could be made in which it has been analysed from certain fresh insights and another perspective.

A very illuminating study on inter - caste relations has come from D.N. Majumdar who has attempted

to study and analyse what he calls it "tensions" in the relationship between different castes. His study has been based upon fieldwork conducted in a village in Uttar Pradesh. In Uttar Pradesh according to him, three different social categories basically the primordial ones did hold the apex of the pyramidal social structure. These three primordial categories were Thakur, rarely a Brahmin or a Muslim ancestral family. The traditional division of labour was full of customary obligations including its stresses and strains. Loyalty and cooperation from all were thrust upon the lower castes. But his study reveals that the lower castes did not accept these conditions loaded with a value system typically in favour of ruling or dominant castes, but there were protests from the below. Some instances of tension and conflict, however small in its nature and scope has attracted the attention of anthropologists. Here the academic stand of an anthropologist is very clear. On the other hand such events of small nature might not attract the attention of historians who would perhaps like to record social movements which are bigger in size and scope and have some macro-implications. But the small events of conflict are also

important in the sense as they reflect the social structure of which they are a part of. Even just after the abolition of zamindari-system, the Thakurs were in a position to exercise the role of the dominant caste and they did not have much difficulty in getting the legitimacy based upon traditional grounds.

D.N. Majumdar points it out that the lower castes like Chamars, Pasi etc. were not inward looking up to the village only but their caste associations had an inter-village character. Chamars were very much dissatisfied on the conditions and grounds under which they had to do begar or forced labour. There are certain instances of what could be roughly referred to as feudalism. D.N. Majumdar had referred to the issues like, to make a person of Chamar caste work for Thakurs which could result in a partial-or even in some cases non-payment. D.N. Majumdar has seen a change in that system of values and nature of work. He says that now (after independence) chamars not only resented begar but also refused to work even if money was

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52. Ibid, pp. 398.
54. Ibid, pp. 398-99
55. Ibid, pp. 399.
offered to them. Similarly Chamars started taking water from the wells of the village where Thakur previously prevented them to do so. There were certain other instances of lower castes attempting to raise their social status. D.N. Majumdar mentions that Ahirs tried to stop Thakurs passing from their locality during the festival of Holi but could do nothing against the armed Thakurs. Pasis who tried to improve their social status as a consequence of a pamphlet circulated among them were resented by Thakurs. Thakurs who were once time confident of Pasis are not so anymore. Thakurs in one way or another tried to win over the lower castes. Wearing of a sacred thread (Janew) by the Pasis was also resented upon by Thakurs. The instances and exact narration of these by D.N. Majumdar suggests that the traditional power-structure was weakening. At this stage it could be referred once again to Yogendra Singh's work where he had pointed out that the traditional power structure was being broken as its nucleus zamindari-system had got broken earlier. For our purposes Thakur-Pasi conflict or Thakur-Chamar conflict need be interpreted as agrarian questions. The rural Uttar Pradesh was divided not only along the caste lines but it was such a situation where absentee landlords ruled over the entire peasantry and agricultural labourers. Any such conflict even if it appears in the name of Thakur vs other lower
castes, could be seen and interpreted from the point of view of the agrarian question lying behind it. Primordial categories of social structure come into conflicting situations and it seems to be apparently usual and natural, but the forces lying behind them and their mechanism need some serious academic endeavours.

Another pioneering study of caste relations has come from Bernard S. Cohn. It is an empirical study of a village Madhopur in the Jaunpur district of the Eastern part of Uttar Pradesh. This study too points it out that the members of the lower castes did not accept their degraded position in the social structure of the village. Bernard S. Cohn has traced the political position of a particular caste Camar and attempted to trace it in the then recent history of the village. Thakurs of the village who were the absentee landlords dominated over Camars, Nonias and other lower caste people. Bernard S. Cohn had referred to the weakening of traditional modes for influence among the Thakurs of the village, their caste association lost control over

the Rajputs if they had shifted to the urban areas. But on the other hand the organization and influence of the caste council of camars increased. At one time, when U.P. Panchayati Raj Act of 1947 was passed the one time tenants camars put a strong challenge to the Thakurs. Thakurs did not take part in election for village council because they had a fear of being defeated on the grounds of adult franchise. Camars, Nonias and a Brahmin of Madhopur put a strong political challenge to Thakurs. A purely regional party known as the Tenant (Praja) Party was formed which had its links with the Indian National Congress. They won elections and got the political and administrative powers within the village.

Although the anti-Thakur forces won elections of the village council but their Tenant party started loosing its organization and even failed to collect its own taxes from the village. Camars could not go to the court because of their poor economic conditions. Certain individual cases were filed against the camar influentials in the court of law. As a result camars succumbed to the power of Thakurs. Tenant Party finally faced a blow when one of


60. For a detailed discussion please see Ibid, pp. 358-360.
its leaders was killed by a Thakur.

This whole process could be seen from the agrarian point of view. In the beginning of this article Bernard S. Cohn had admitted that even after the Zamindari abolition in 1952, the Thakurs had almost 70 percent of the total land of the village. The whole processes of protest against the Thakurs by lower castes of the village need to be seen in the form of absentee landlord-tenant relationship. At one stage Bernard S. Cohn has himself accepted this position. These lower castes of the village included, camars, Nonias, Ahirs and Telis. But it would be quite logical to argue that when the Tahkurs had owned about 70 percent of land, it would have been difficult for the camars as well other lower castes to fight against them. Political defeat could be the most likely outcome of this conflict and the same has happened. Camars who were very weak economically had another problem to face. Economically weak position of Camars led towards their degradation in terms of social status too. Another process almost equivalent to that of Sanskritization began among the

61. Ibid, pp. 359.
63. Ibid, pp. 359.
Camars who wanted to improve their social status. A comparatively stronger association of camar castes put several restrictions on their members and those who failed to abide by those always had a threat of ex-communication. Apart from it in some cases Canars succumbed to Thakurs and preferred their traditional alignment in order to get benefits from them who had urban connections.

Here in the study quoted above two processes were clearly visible. One was somewhat revolutionary in nature in which lower castes attempted to resolve their agrarian problems and a backlash was also not unexpected. Camars in association with Ahirs, Telis, Nonias and others challenged Thakurs and to this extent it was revolutionary in nature. But the second process in which camars of Madhopur started to put restrictions on their caste members and began a sanskritization like process is not revolutionary in any sense of the term. A radical interpretation of sanskritization and sanskritization like processes is being offered here. Processes like sanskritization are the outcome of what is happening at the level of infrastructure.

64. Ibid, pp. 361-363
of society. If radical interpretation of sanskritization amounts to the maintenance of the status quo, then it is far away from being a revolutionary one. Sanskritization simply suggest that the lower castes have succumbed to the domination by upper castes which is in no way different from the submission of the tenants to the absentee landlords.

66 Bernard S. Cohn in his restudy of the same village has noticed some changes like Nonias became independent of Thakurs but Camars had to suffer comparatively a greater loss. He has pointed out that after the zamindari abolitions Camars who cultivated approximately 124 acres of land as tenants at will were to become sirdars. But only 12 out of 122 camar households get the land. The most striking feature had been that out of these 12 households of Camars 10 had less than half an acre and only two had more than one acre of land. These facts are striking from the agrarian point of view. Facts like these where Camars got so little that they could work upon, lead us to interpret it like this that almost nothing

substantial has changed. And it would be dangerous from the point of view of research to count the number of families that have been benefited by the abolition of Zamindari system. If the facts reported by Bernard S. cohn are correct, then it clearly indicated that Camars have been defeated yet once again. An empirical study on how much land has actually been owned by Camars elsewhere in Uttar Pradesh could be taken up. Land ownership question in the case of Camars shall be taken up in an empirical study of Western Uttar Pradesh in the following chapter. A few more comments need a mention here. It is quite possible that these Camar household might not retain even that small piece of land under the threat of Thakurs. This question shall also be taken up in the empirical study, to be reported in the next chapter. Moreover if not much has changed from the point of view of Camar, then once again it is quite possible that these acts of Zamindari abolition might result in an eye-wash. It could also mean that the land has been distributed among the Thakur households in such a way as it could not come under the land ceiling act of the Uttar Pradesh government. It could again lead towards the maintenance of the earlier existing status-quo. All these questions shall be put to an empirical inquiry.
Yet another study of a village Kishan Garhi by McKim Marriot needs a mention here. This study could be important in its own right, since the questions of religious processes have been examined. But it is a remarkable example of the field work conducted between the period of 1950 - 52. McKim Marriot refers to two types of religious structures - one known as "Great Tradition" and the other as "Little Tradition". Any process from the latter towards the former is known as "Universalization" and its vice versa is known as "Parochialization". There is no need to further clarify these terms, because in the sociological literature today these terms could be taken as self-explanatory. But from our point of view it is important to know that two sort of cultures exist within the same village. Sanskritized text has been referred to as Great Tradition and its local version has been called little Tradition. This dichotomy of culture within a single village needs to be interpreted in terms of its bases. A careful regarding of McKim Marriot's material suggest the two sort of cultures had almost an exclusive identity. Some


68. Ibid, pp. 171-222.
questions of our interest could be like this. Who were the people upto whom the great tradition was confined to? Who were the people to pull on or exist with the little tradition? It is possible in Kishan Garhi to examine the economic bases of people who had practiced great- or little- tradition? Little tradition could be interpreted as the inability or structural constraints of those who depend upon it. Little and great traditions could also be interpreted as contrary to each other rather than as complementary to each other. In other words the very existence of little- tradition (along with great- tradition) in the village means the existence of economic inequalities that got manifested into cultural inequalities. The process of Universalization does not go hand in hand with sanskritization. Mckim Marriot would also possibly mean that. In fact the process of universalization could be seen as a denial of sanskritization. And any such denial of sanskritization refers that people who practice little tradition, could have not been co-opted so far in the great tradition. It leads us to interpret that clashes are inevitable, could well result into cultural conflicts. This interpretation of 69. Ibid, pp.197.
McKim Marriot's study is not being offered without any ground. McKim Marriot, has accepted the existence of certain agrarian categories like landlords, tenants, sharecroppers, labourers alongwith certain others like domestic servants and shopkeepers. Apart from these inequalities, which are bound to produce social tensions and contradictions, McKim Marriot has also referred to some social implications of the Mahalwari system. It had encouraged the Kinsmen to keep the mahal or village together as a property, village is segmented on the basis of residential pattern and cleavages were developed among the kinsmen of the same village. McKim Marriot's study could be seen as relevant from at least on two points. One, it has not to be rejected as an example of a study of a particular pattern of culture and needs be interpreted from fresh perspective which could examine the cultural and economic contradictions. Two, the agrarian social structure as it has been referred to, needs to be highlighted which would mean to bring the agrarian question out of it for its proper study and examination.

70. Ibid, pp. 174.

71. Ibid.
Yet another study of two villages in the Western U.P. needs a mention here. It was conducted by S.C. Dube. Earlier to this work S.C. Dube wrote a book on a village Shamirpet in Andhra Pradesh. It became not only a pioneering study but was also among the first ones to appear as a single village study in India. After that work S.C. Duby came out with another work in which he studied two villages in the Western U.P. This study had some sort of similarities with his earlier study like team work and also to assess the impact of change on rural people. S.C. Dube has referred to two villages - one as "Rajput Village". He has tried to see the impact of planned change in the form of the then widely known community Development Projects (CDPs) on these two villages.

It highlights the lack of communication between government officials and the people of these villages.


Another work had been M.N. Srinivas Religion and society Among the Coorgs of South India, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952.


74. Ibid, pp.56.

75. Ibid, pp. 102-131.
Among the multifaceted Community Development Programmes it was only the agricultural extension that got most of the success. It has been argued therefore that the beneficiaries of the CDP were drawn mainly from among the agriculturists. And the section of the village who got most of the fruits were very few. S.C. Dube evaluates these as, "A closer analysis of the agricultural extension work reveals that nearly 70 percent of its benefits went to the elite group and to the more affluent and influential agriculturists". The ideas and plans of the government might have received a shock as the benefits of the CDP went to the rural elites and the upper strata in the villages. It could have been a major concern later and that is why perhaps the very idea of the CDP was dropped. The government that wanted to do something for the poor had failed in its objectives as far as the CDP is concerned. From our point of view it is important to note that the CDP had helped not only in the maintenance of the status-quo but on the other hand helped in strengthening it. The point before us is not to assess the success or failure of the

76. Ibid, pp. 82-84; other component parts of the CDP were communication, education, health, training, social welfare, supplementary employment and housing, please see pp.18-23.

77. Ibid, pp. 82-83.
government but to point it out rather that the agrarian problems could not be solved. It could be argued here that any such planned change need consideration at least at two levels one, as in the form of analysis of the state policy and programmes and two, the problems rooted at the level of the agrarian social structure itself. The failure of the CDP in the two villages of the Western U.P. could serve as an important indicator to point out that the problem could lie at the level of agrarian social structure itself. Then, the agrarian social structure could be expected to have inequalities of its own nature. These inequalities are expected to lead to contradictions. S.C. Dube has said elsewhere in this study that the social structure puts some problems of its own and that factions in the village has often puzzled the development workers.

This sort of an analysis in which an effort has been made to identify the phenomenon from different available sources at the present moment from several village studies conducted by anthropologists and sociologists in Uttar Pradesh, could be put later to understand and analyse the causes behind this phenomenon. Throughout this exercise

78. Ibid, pp. 56-59.
the effort had been made to bring out the phenomenon as clearly as possible and to analyse the contributions by scholars in such a way as the agrarian questions could be brought out of it. Next, the effort had been to construct the agrarian social structure and if possible to bring out some questions that could be taken up sometime later, if not in this particular study. One such question could be to study and examine the nature of inequalities among the Muslims of the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. In his study S.C. Dube has referred to castes like groups among the Muslims vis-a-vis castes among the Hindus in the earlier referred "Rajput Village". But the questions of rituals and restrictions on the basis of it are not found among the Muslims as they are traced among the Hindus. S.C. Dube has put it like this: "However the beliefs and observances regarding ritual purity and pollution that largely govern intercaste relations in Hindu society, are not found in the Muslim group. The Muslim Rajputs, like their Hindu counterparts, are an agricultural case, the rest of the Muslim castes are occupational."

From our point of view the relevant questions could be like the following.

How far the agrarian inequalities get reflected in the super-structure among the Hindus as well as among the Muslims? What are the main areas of agrarian tensions in the village? In what way agrarian tensions are resolved on the basis of class relations and to what extent or under which circumstances they were taken over by the primordial interest?

While dealing with the problem of the agrarian question, after a proper identification of the phenomenon the reason behind it or causes of it could be understood methodologically. Emile Durkheim's way of indirect experimentation could help in explaining the phenomenon properly. It would help in understanding the phenomenon in a better way. But one point needs a mention here as a way of caution. Although Durkheimian method of indirect experiment is called for, but causes are not to be seen in terms of function that they fulfill, but as mechanisms that could explain historical processes.

The entire argument presented in this chapter could be summed up now. In Uttar Pradesh two principal types

of land tenure viz. taluqdar and zamindar were introduced during the British rule, however in the Western part of the state peasant proprietorship was found. Uttar Pradesh was also known for another type of land tenure mahalwari. Mahalwari system was a critique of zamindari-system and the meaning of mahal was roughly equivalent to that of a village. The state of Uttar Pradesh was somehow different from the zamindari sort of land tenure as it was introduced in Bengal. While making any analysis of agrarian relations in Uttar Pradesh, particularly during the British rule it is important to keep in mind the significant East-West divide. In the eastern part of U.P. zamindari – and taluqdar-system of land tenure exhibited heavy concentration of land in the hands of the few, greater inequalities and uninnovative sort of an agriculture were some other attributes. This eastern part of U.P. resembled with other areas of exploitation somewhat like Bengal, Bihar, Orissa whereas the western part of U.P. exhibiting more egalitarian nature of agrarian class structure was more nearer to what is known today as Punjab and Haryana. However the ethics of work was very strong in the western U.P. and the development of irrigation facilities increased the fertility of land in that area. Early consolidation of land in Punjab attributed to the development of the region as a whole. In Uttar Pradesh land-consolidation began after
national Independence in the late fifties. In Bihar it has yet to take place. After national independence and the abolition of the zamindari-system in Uttar Pradesh, there has been a rise of middle castes like Jats in the western and of Yadavas in the eastern part of U.P. as a powerful categories of the agrarian social structure. After national independence there has been a growth of cash crop sugarcane in western U.P. which has seen a development of sugar-mills. This cash crop has its own impact on the living conditions of people. Peasant-proprietors of the western U.P. have tremendous amount of self confidence, they have build-up new pakka houses in the village and their children are acquiring comparatively good education. Some innovative people have started business like activities e.g. acquiring a petrol pump, running tempos etc. in the nearby areas. A lot of purchase has been done in the areas of agricultural implements like tractors, threshers etc.

In western Uttar Pradesh, peasant-proprietorship has a powerful base on which it could launch its political activities. The rise of the leaders like Charan Singh and now that of Mahendra Singh Tikait and Ajit Singh exhibits the strong base of peasant-proprietorship in that area. So powerful has been the base of peasant-proprietorship along with comparatively egalitarian
distribution of land that the western U.P. is almost free from trade unionism in agriculture. The temporary immigration of agricultural labourers, particularly at the time when crops are cut, from the areas like Bihar and Bengal indicate towards the better conditions of agricultural labourers in the western U.P. The area is dominated by strong sense of "peasant culture" which gives them additional confidence. The agrarian class-structure of Uttar Pradesh after independence has been constructed as the following.

1. Absentee landowners
2. Peasant proprietors
3. Sharecroppers and
4. Agricultural labourers.