CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

An effort has been made in the present study to examine various conceptual issues in the context of our study of agrarian relations in Western Uttar Pradesh. Marxist perspective has been put to a scrutiny to find out its relevance for studying agrarian relations in India. Studies on agrarian relations gained momentum in the latter part of the seventies. Earlier to the studies of agrarian relations the studies on social inequality with special reference to caste primarily received attention of the sociologist and social anthropologists. Village studies preceded the studies of social stratification. We have discussed the varying emphasis in sociological literature with a view to bring home the significance of agrarian relations and social structure. The study of agrarian relations is not confined to sociology. It draws from other disciplines such as economics, history and political science. We have thus gone beyond narrow limits of the discipline of sociology as it is evident from the sources cited in the study.

Earlier in the seventies it became evident that neither caste alone nor caste in association with class and
power could explain the changing scene in rural India. In fact such was the influence of 'caste' that a majority of sociological and anthropological studies were trapped by it.

In our study, neither the existence nor the conceptual significance of caste have been denied. But what has been argued in our study is that studies based on "caste" needs a fresh look. An alternative approach based on "class" and "power" separately as well as in conjunction with caste as a system of social ties and emotional binding alone cannot explain economic and power dimensions of our social life.

How peasants and class are related? Can we apply the concepts and framework which are found relevant for analysing class relations in an industrial society? With these observations we may sum up briefly the main points of our study.

Marxian notion of class has been examined in relation to Weber's notion of class. The relevance of these notions of class has been examined from the point of view of our study. Weber refers to a situation of competition which he characterises as 'market situation' to determine different classes in terms of buyers or sellers or gainers and loosers or propertied or propertyless. Market is an
arena of competition, hence it implies a 'class situation'.

Weber's theoretical formulations on class exhibit two weaknesses at the level of operationalization. The first and perhaps the most important is concerned with the definition of class itself. "Chances at market" in Weber's definition of class leaves much in the hands of the researcher who conducts a given inquiry. It depends on the researcher how to define a market situation and then to arrive at the identification of various classes within it. Apart from this it is possible for us to limit the number of classes ranging from three to six. Also the same 'market situation' might be interpreted differently in terms of prevalence of classes. Thus Weber's formulation permits a certain degree of arbitrariness in regard to the classification of classes. The second problem with Weber's formulation of class is that it provides sufficient ground for subjective interpretation of objective social reality. The element of 'subjectivity' could also be discerned in the formulation of Marx on class but in the Marxian approach classes are first established on the basis of objective criteria, and the 'subjectivity' element is subsequently located within the given classes. Another point about Weber's class analysis is that it is also based on attributional criteria as these are not concrete classes as such, and therefore, they do not interact in a concrete
situation like the owners and the wage-earners. In Weber 'classes' are 'constructed' based on certain given criteria in a 'market situation'. An analysis of agrarian relations calls upon observation of landowners, peasants and agricultural workers as concrete interacting groups rather than just as categories formulated based on certain attributes like occupation, income and education etc.

Another important debate is about the concepts of 'mode of production' and 'social formation'. Both of these concepts were formulated by Marx. However the concepts of social formulation can explain the prevalence of different modes of production in the same society. The concept of social formation provides every empirical possibility for different modes of production. These modes bear basically a dialectical character.

We have studied (i) peasantry as a class, (ii) agrarian relations in a historical perspective (iii) the contemporary situation in Western Uttar Pradesh and (iv) a village in Saharanpur District. In this we have a comparative focus and evolutionary perspective in our study. Our study suggests that concepts and categories related to agrarian structure have become distinct because of sharpening of relations between different agrarian classes. We have collected both quantitative and qualitative data
with a view to gain from the mix of the two. Along with this as we have mentioned earlier our effort is to establish linkages between micro and macro structures keeping in view the changing character of agrarian relations.

Conceptual formulations around "Peasantry as a class" are sharply divided into two broad categories. In one the emphasis is on the peasants as an exploited class of people, incapable of waging a struggle against their oppressors. The other view is that peasantry is capable of carrying on a class-struggle against their oppressors. At the level of praxis, Lenin having all the possible considerations regarding peasantry in mind was opposed to give up before peasants demands. On the other hand, Mao-Tse Tung carried on a successful revolution in China in 1949 which demonstrated peasants' strength.

Shanin explains the demographic strength along with the possible inherent capabilities of peasants to carry on their struggle. However at the moment not only the capabilities of peasants for action against their exploiters are being assessed but it is also being related with the social conditions in which they are existent. The emergence of peasants' movement under the leadership of Mahendra Singh Tikait in Western Uttar Pradesh requires a serious attention. It is opined that with the election of the Lok
Dal (Devilal being its leader) peasants were able to show their strength not only in voting behaviour but also as a vital part of the state. The questions of social divide between village and town became important once again. Shanin observes that when the urban forces penetrate into the rural areas the superior sections within the peasantry survive and the peasantry as a whole suffers a great loss.

1 Bukharin's class-analysis vis-a-vis industrial proletariat and lumpenproletariat makes it clear that peasantry eventually lacks two important characteristics of class, namely (i) freedom from private property and (ii) conditions of union (association) in production and common labour (vis-a-vis its industrial counterpart). On the other hand, peasants have four characteristics of class. These are, (i) economic exploitation (ii) political oppression (iii) poverty and (iv) productivity. Bukharin's analysis of class relations also shows that peasants form a 'class in itself' and not 'class for itself'.

Apart from peasants representing conservative forces having inability to carry on a struggle at the national level and rural-urban divide, there are other

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questions that need a serious probing. One such important question is: whether agrarian contradictions are resolved at the grassroot level or at the macro level. An observation may be made in this context. We have found that in Rankhandi village in Western Uttar Pradesh most of the conflicts are concerned with public property. For example, a Brahmin family has been tilling a piece of land for more than 30 years. A case is in the court of law against the family, because the land belongs to a temple and its managing committee wants the land to be restored to the temple. Wider linkages of Rankhandi could be traced through the adoption of technological implements and devices.

Some methodological points too need a consideration at this stage. Colloquial notions such as Rama, Rais, Khot and Muqquadam have been found quite useful in understanding the legacy of 'feudalism'. Similarly the village groupings through the expressions of Chaurasi (84), Sadi (100) and Hazar (1000) can be understood in terms of extensions of village life and social networks. R.S. Sharma observes existence of feudalism in ancient period without significant class contradictions. Here another important question concerning with the relationship between state and peasantry emerges.
During Mughal period strong protests were made by the peasants. Maratha power in the South-West India and particularly the forces led by Shivaji threw challenge to the supremacy of Mughals. Thus, the peasants were exploited by the rulers and their agents.

Decline of the Mughal rule and the rise of the British rule in India brought about certain far reaching changes in rural economy. For the first time market economy in conjunction with a class of zamindars was seen in the countryside. A new system of land tenure known as zamindari was introduced in Madras presidency. In colonial India the following agrarian classes existed.

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

In Independent India, with the abolition of zamindari system rural power structure also changed. After independence the questions related to the agrarian situation were made a part of the State's list. Due to land reforms, adult franchise and education, middle peasant castes have started asserting their claim over the opportunities available to the traditionally dominant castes and
communities. In our study the rise of middle castes in the form of middle classes has received a considerable significance. In fact, to a large extent the middle castes and the middle classes coincide. The rise of the Jats and the Yadavas as middle classes is a case which needs a thorough probing. Kammas and Reddis in Andhra Pradesh, Patidars in Gujarat, Jats and Gujars in Rajasthan, Kurmis and Yadavas in Bihar etc. are other examples of the rise of middle peasant castes and commensurate economic standing in the post-independence period. Alongwith above structural change we have also observed a sort of continuity or transformation of the traditional structure into a new situation without much real change.

The zamindars and landlords have changed themselves keeping in view the new set up. Today they occupy positions of power and formal offices by entering into modern polity and economy. In Western Uttar Pradesh they are known as Pakkahaveliwale, but their number is limited normally upto five or six families in a village. Several factors can be attributed to this change. The main reason for their reemergence is the amount of compensation paid to them by the State in lieu of the zamindari abolition. The price rise of agricultural products during the war is another important factor.
The zamindars have succeeded in grabbing the available opportunities under the new dispensation as the land reforms including ceilings on land did not yield significant results. The best lands were transferred in the name of zamindars as self cultivators a little before the actual implementation of the abolition of zamindari system started. This could be done by conniving with the revenue officials who also hailed from the upper castes and communities like the zamindars.

Canal irrigation and a culture of arduous agricultural work have contributed to higher agricultural productivity and prosperity in Western Uttar Pradesh. Eric Stokes has noted that beyond Aligarh district towards the Western part of Uttar Pradesh, even during the colonial rule, the big landlords including Nawabs had lost their land. Not only this, but it has been argued that big and large estates which flourished in Eastern Uttar Pradesh during the colonial rule, represented by nawabs and taluqadars did not exist at all in Western Uttar Pradesh. In Aligarh, Bulandshahar, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar big landlords lost their land. Consequently, due to irrigation facilities and some what equitable distribution of land and peasant proprietorship, Western Uttar Pradesh became quite different from its Eastern counterpart. In Uttar Pradesh (during
colonial rule known as United Provinces of Agra and Oudh) the following agrarian class structure was in existence.

(A) Eastern Uttar Pradesh:

1. Absentee landlords,
2. Tenants,
3. Sharecroppers and
4. Agricultural labourers.

(B) Western Uttar Pradesh:

1. Absentee landlords
2. Peasant Proprietors
3. Sub tenants
4. Sharecroppers and
5. Agricultural labourers

Since Independence green revolution has made incredible impact. Big and middle peasants in Western Uttar Pradesh have taken advantage of it. But if looked from a different angle, the agrarian inequalities have increased after the green revolution. On the other hand the data collected from Rankhandi suggest that sharecropping also exists in the village. There are some people who cultivate their own lands and also cultivate lands of others. It is therefore, thought that instead of using a blanket term like sharecropper, the phenomenon and process of sharecropping
need to be studied carefully. As it was pointed out earlier that 47.50 percent of total land of the village is under sharecropping.

From methodological point of view, it was considered proper to begin with the analysis of sharecropping. There are people who are landowners as well as sharecroppers. In fact, the middle peasant has taken a larger chunk of the land available in the village for sharecropping. It could be interpreted like this that the land owned by middle peasant provides it a sufficient material base and puts him in an advantageous position compared to a small/marginal peasant. Big peasants also take land on lease but it is lesser than that by the middle peasant. Big peasants have a command over resources by which they can cultivate on the leased-in lands. Though they are in a position to buy land, but avoid it due to land ceiling act since 1968. A share-cropper may be an owner-cum-cultivator of a small piece of land, thereby he has control over both land and labour. Sharecropping in Rankhandi includes 47.50 percent of the total cultivable land. We have found that the absence of a monolithic character of sharecropping speaks of a variety of reasons which also indicate at social and economic realities of the village community. Despite such a pre-eminent place of sharecropping the independent middle peasant families own
A good number of well off middle peasants do not own tractors etc. as they prefer to hire them from others in the village or from the neighboring villages. This is found economical and also viable. In such matters kinship plays least role as they are mainly taken as commercial transactions.

To understand the people in terms of 'landowners' and 'landless' has more potential than studying them on the basis of caste. The non-agricultural castes like Banias and Sunars have over a period of time developed links with the outside world, and are in a ready position to leave the village, if situation demands it and an occasion arises for their out-migration. Their readiness to leave the village is caused by their non-involvement in agriculture, and partly also due to atrocious behaviour of the Rajputs of the village. The traditional ties based on the jajmani system have almost disappeared, and there is hardly anything in the village which can hold back the families which have already migrated or are just on the verge of leaving the village.

Yet another point needs some discussion on Sharecropping. Does sharecropping lead to stability of agrarian social structure? Or alternately, Does it bring about some change in it? We can respond to these questions by analysing relations between the landowners and the
sharecroppers. Out data indicate that out of the land leased 24 per cent has been taken away by landowners themselves. About 53 per cent of the total land is under self-cultivation, and also nearly one-fourth of the land for sharecropping is made available by the owners themselves. These facts indicate that all this goes in favour of the continuity of the agrarian social structure in Rankhandi.

In other words, about 64% of the total land is still with the substantial landlords. This suggests that agrarian social structure in Rankhandi has remained unchanged much more than the changes which it has witnessed since Independence.

As pointed out earlier Rankhandi is largely an irrigated village, and generally unirrigated land is given on lease or for share-cropping. Generally the land given for sharecropping is for rice cultivation. Since rice-cultivation involves a lot of intensive labour and inputs, only the substantial landowners can afford to take land on lease for share cropping. It may thus be inferred here that substantial change may be brought about by the active landowners. The well off peasants are represented in the state's legislature and government, hence their interests are not hurt. On the contrary a movement for the better prices of agricultural produces has come up in Western Uttar
Pradesh. This is why the critiques of the movement refer it as a kulak movement.

Agricultural labourers in Rankhandi constitute 12.5% of our sample, and they are drawn mainly from among Jatavas, Gadarias, Julahas, Koris, Mirasis and Valmikis. Besides the agricultural labourers from the village some also come Bihar and West Bengal. These seasonal labourers prefer to work for big farmers as they could get facilities like shelter and food besides better wages.

Multiple patterns of leasing in, leasing out of land and sharecropping reflects upon ramifications of caste and class and their nexus. Additionally people have taken up modern occupations and entrenched into power politics at various levels. 'Composite status' based on caste, class and occupation and power in terms of their permutations and combinations has become the reality of village social life. The dominant casualty of the composite status in Rankhandi is economic rather than caste.

Alternately, the marginally agricultural castes of the village are the following.

1. Gosain
2. Gadaria and
3. Bania
Families of the following castes are mainly engaged in agricultural labour.

1. Jatava
2. Gadaria
3. Julaha/Kori
4. Mirasi and
5. Valmiki

Our sample of 160 families shows that Gosains are not working as agricultural labourers. Where as Julahas, Koris, Mirasis and Valmikis do not own any land in the village. However Gadarias and Jatavas are both landowners and agricultural labourers.

Our study starts with a non caste perspective but finds it difficult to avoid it in the study of agrarian relations. After the initial discussion on the concepts of class and peasantry we have examined agrarian relations in a historical evolutionary perspective. Study of agrarian relations in the medieval, British, post Independence periods has provided us the necessary ground for seeing continuity and change. The dynamics of agrarian relations has sharpened our observations about western Uttar Pradesh in particular. The case study of Rankhandi has facilitated linking of the macro factors of continuity and change with the structure and process of agrarian relations in the village.