PREFACE

Present study undertakes to examine agrarian relations in India from a sociological point of view. It seems necessary to clarify this at the present stage itself because the topic has been attempted by the scholars of various disciplines of social sciences chiefly by economists and historians. No claim is being made here that the present study approaches the agrarian question from the interdisciplinary perspective. On the other hand every effort has been made till the finalising of this draft has been complete, to accommodate whatever came in the way even in the form serendipity - which it seems has the bearings of its own kind on social research. But in the entire effort or process of research, the sociological angle has always had an upper hand.

It has been argued and shall get reflected throughout the work that it is perhaps not possible to make a study which is issue based and gets completed after acquiring knowledge from various disciplines in which each one has been considered at par with the other. This study thus carries sociological - bias with it. In the following chapters - it shall soon become evident that an attempt has been made to come towards certain (social) categories that are likely to constitute agrarian social - structure. Thus
in the present study there would be no input-output or cost-benefit analysis, it is perhaps the peasant does not know about it. When agrarian social structure has been constituted for a particular time and place then contradiction between principal categories could be seen. Throughout the study two overall approaches have been applied namely (i) Historical - evolutionary and (ii) Structural dialectic. And these two remained complementary to each other depending upon the nature of question that is being examined.

The present study traces the nature and types of agrarian relations since the medieval period of history, through the British, till the contemporary period. After making a thorough analysis towards the end of each chapter it has been attempted to constitute the agrarian class structure. Structural dialectic approach has its own advantages - it clarifies the hitherto vague phenomenon and help in understanding the changes in it. Structural and material dialectic does not have any meaning till it makes use of history. This endeavor attempts to shift from one perspective to another, tries to establish the relationship between theory and fact, and undertakes the exercise to use both primary - and secondary - data. An effort has also been to make the reading material listed in the form of a
bibliography supplied towards the end of this work.

In the present work as we proceed ahead a continuity of framework could be specifically seen. In every chapter framework happens to be such a thing that it was never lost sight of. The framework as seen throughout the work happens to be structural. In other words, how we could arrive at the structural components of agrarian social structure, which units constitute it and how the relationship among those could be explained with the help of material dialectics. Thus, as we move from one historical period to another or from one specific area to the other within the same period this framework on agrarian relations gets modified. Even after such modifications the basic integrity of the framework has remained intact. This integrity of the framework happens to be the strong point of this work. However some other issues worth mentioning in this work are like: a rigorous examination of the issues around "peasantry as a class", an effort to study and examine peasant - proprietorship both as a phenomenon as well as its conceptualization; an empirical study of the agrarian question and testing the validity of the framework developed earlier. On empirical investigation several issues became clear and some of them could be worth mentioning here itself. In the case of sharecropping, it has been found that
in the village of the Western Uttar Pradesh (where field work was done, between 1984 to 1988 during vacations of course), in general land was leased - out for rice rather than for wheat or sugarcane. The Western Uttar Pradesh is also known for peasant proprietorship and it was found that the strength of middle peasant comes partly from sharecropping. Yet another prominent finding was that on the basis of fieldwork there came a category of peasant families, which could neither be placed in the category of peasant - proprietors nor in the category of sharecroppers exclusively. The challenge was empirical and also important at the level of conceptualization - specifically when the middle peasant owns a piece of land and leases-in almost an equal amount of land. This empirical challenge was resolved with yet another modification in the framework. If a person can do more than one sort of a work then, it is argued that there comes a need to differentiate him as performing different roles. At the level of conceptualization, it could be safely said now that rural India has entered in such a stage when multiplicity of roles could be attributed to one single individual. Apart from this multiplicity of roles, this issue could be solved, if the apparently exclusive looking categories like peasant - proprietors and sharecroppers pave their way for various processes of agricultural production. For example instead of locating
several peasant into various specific categories like peasant - proprietors and sharecroppers, there emerges a need to study the processes related to peasant - proprietary sort of process of agricultural production and also of sharecropping as a process. And if it is done it might lead towards several implications at the theoretical level. The multiplicity of roles in the process of (agricultural) production might result in the reduction of agrarian contradictions. Nevertheless it goes in the interest of the petty landowners to keep the process of sharecropping alive and this ownership provides a solid base for them to lease - in more and more land under their cultivation.

Throughout the study - when the framework is clear, all methodological issues have been raised and discussed at their appropriate place and are not put as a seamless whole that could lead towards addition of one more chapter. Methodology as it has been argued,, cannot devoid itself of empirical and theoretical connections. It seems futile and very often criticisms are made if methodological issues are discussed without maintaining the relationship with theory and facts. But certain methodological issues need a mention here. This study attempts to bridge the gap between macro-studies on the one hand and their micro referrents on the other. When data were collected an interview - schedule was prepared. It has been realised now
that the interview schedule although helps in understanding the phenomenon at initial level, does not take us to the desired extent of investigations. Once a general information about the village has been gathered, the use of interview schedule might be abandoned and indepth interviews should replace the structured interviews.

As stated above from the point of view of methodology it appears to examine various theoretical and conceptual schemes and to test their validity later. For theoretical part the basic orientation has come from the Marxist point of view, it has also been examined vis-a-vis others at appropriate places in the discussion to follow in various chapters. The basic approach has been the one referred to as structural dialectical. Before making an analysis of agrarian relations in India during the British rule, an effort has been made to understand wider forces which were at work (at the macro level). For such an examination of wider forces some concepts have been used, some of them are like: colonialism; imperialism; underdevelopment; hegemony; and world society. Apart from these certain other concepts have been examined from the point of view of the present study, a few of them are like: mode of production; social-formation; class (inclusive of multi-faceted discussions around it); oriental despotism;
and little republics. For this purposes an effort has been made to examine various issues in the disciplines like: anthropology; sociology; and history. This also includes an effort to vet contributions made in the areas like: political - economy; economic-history and social anthropology. Wider forces, conceptual-examination and empirical study are the three basic and essential components of the present study. Some other issues like the position taken on caste - class dialogue, the preference for Marx's definition of class over Weber's notion of it, find appropriate place in the discussion spread around several chapters to follow.

References:


